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Being and beholding: Comparative analysis of joy and awe in four cultures

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Being and Beholding: Comparative Analysis of Joy and Awe in Four Cultures

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all the wonderful people who shared the most precious “eternal moments” of their lives with me. To all of you, I offer my heartfelt gratitude. I have rejoiced in reading and rereading your stories, living with your memories, learning from you all how to be *be-filled* and *beholding*.

I write in remembrance of two beloved people who died in 2008 – my brother Ivaylo, whose bear hugs, warmth and sharing nature were a shelter for me, and my friend Mirela, whose pure soul, tinkling laughter and sharp intelligence are irreplaceable. I miss you both!

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Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Chapter I: Introduction and Overview of the Study.....	1
Overview of the Existing Literature	2
Definition of Terms.....	5
Problem Statement	6
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions.....	8
Significance of the Study	8
Overview of the Dissertation	8
Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....	10
A Note of Caution.....	10
Procedures.....	12
Positive emotions	13
Plato’s Inquiry into Cultural Vitality	13
The Ultimate Experience	18
Positive Psychology and the Ideal Internal State	23
Function of Positive Emotions.....	25
The Phenomenon of Joy.....	30
Definition	30
Physical Manifestation.....	32
Etymologies	32
Understanding Joy	35
Joy’s Dimensions	35
Conditions for Joy.....	35
Joy’s Shadow	36
Joy Outcomes and Counseling.....	44
Qualitative, Quantitative Studies:	37
The Phenomenon of Awe.....	37
Definition	37
Physical Manifestation.....	37
Etymologies	38
Understanding Awe	39
Awe’s Dimensions	40
Conditions for Awe.....	41
Awe Outcomes.....	41
Awe’s Shadow	42
Quantitative, Qualitative Studies:	42

Culture and Positive Emotions	44
Basic Human and Cultural Values	44
Values and Desired Emotions	51
Cultural Scripts and Emotion	58
Communitas of Culture	59
Culture and Joy	61
Cultural and Awe	64
Chapter Summary	64
Chapter III: Methodology	66
Methodological Fit	66
Positionality and Personal Bias	67
Participants Sample Population and Selection Criteria	69
Data Gathering	72
Data Analysis	75
Research Trustworthiness	85
Chapter IV: Results	
Categories Promoting Joy and Awe	85
Descriptions of Joy and Awe	85
Unity of Souls	89
Joy and Awe in Nature	101
Spirituality	105
The Original Self	109
Other Emotions	116
Other Contributors	120
Barriers to Joy and Awe	125
Family Troubles	125
Illness	127
Political Systems	129
Globalization and Consumerism	137
The Electronic Childhood	138
Joy and Awe and Collectivist Values	143
Chapter Summary	146
Chapter V: Discussion	
Cultural Discoveries	148
Connection to the Literature	156
Significance	162
Relevance of the Study	169
Limitations	170
Directions for Future Research	171
Conclusion	172
List of References	174

Appendices

Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Research.....	187
Appendix B: Giving of Consent	190
Appendix C: Interview Guide	192

List of Tables:

Table 1: Values and Desirable Emotions.....	55
Table 2: Interviewee Sample Demographics	71
Table 3: Categories Promoting Joy and Awe	85
Table 4: Categories Hindering Joy and Awe	125

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Mental state in terms of challenge and skill level	21
Figure 2: Basic human values	46
Figure 3: Cultural values.....	49
Figure 4: Affective States	52
Figure 5: Comparison of ethnic archetypes	58
Figure 6: Joy, awe, and systemic attachment.....	151

Abstract

The emotions of joy and awe have received some attention in the psychological literature with few studies comparing the two phenomena across cultures. A phenomenological study of joy and awe in four countries – Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, and the USA, examined both emotions. The inquiry was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The phenomenological methodology was supplemented with grounded theory procedures to ensure research rigor. Four categories were identified that contribute to the experience of joy and awe: unity of souls, nature, spirituality, and the original self. Freedom, humor, face-to-face communication, innocence, time, and space were facets of the joy and awe experience. Categories hindering joy and awe were: family troubles, illness, political systems, globalization and consumerism, and the electronic childhood. Childhood innocence and posttraumatic growth were personal variables enhancing joy and awe. Culturally awe was expressed: in linguistics, the supernatural, death, the original self, and education. Joy in culture was connected to the supernatural, freedom, and sorrow. This study represents the first phenomenological exploration of joy and awe to include human development, cultural values and comparison of childhood experience before and after the rise of the virtual world.

Chapter I: Introduction

In 2000, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi wrote an introduction to a special issue in *American Psychologist* defining the territory of the new field of positive psychology. This new field included past experience of wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction, present flow and happiness, and hope and optimism for the future. Individual traits that promoted these positive experiences were the capacity for love, courage, perseverance, authenticity, mindfulness, spirituality and wisdom. These were considered to be values that would promote responsibility, tolerance and work ethic. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's personal stories were telling. Csikszentmihalyi was a child in WWII noticing the returning adults in his life who gave way to despair and hopelessness, yet also recognizing there were a few who retained their meaningful life despite the chaos. Seligman possessed the personality of a cynic who learned a lesson from his 5-year-old daughter on making a decision to be happy and positive. These two very personal culturally nuanced stories brought two men from different places in the world to collaborate on a common goal – finding how people could thrive in times of adversity.

Practitioners and researchers worldwide who have promoted the science behind positive psychology's hypotheses followed pioneers like Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi and mapped out the territory of positive emotions. Seligman (2002) generally defined happiness as an experience of the *good life*, using personal signature strengths to produce gratification. The more enduring aspect of life is the *meaningful* life, which is one of belonging and purpose in the service of something greater and more lasting than oneself. Seligman united both searches for individualistic happiness and strive outward toward improving the lives of others.

Overview of the Existing Literature

This dissertation research and the literature review were organized under a governing question: What makes people feel most alive and heightens vitality? The two emotions that stand out when considering a state of the subliminal human experience are joy and awe. Therefore, these two emotions are targeted in this research. Because this is also a study of cultural comparison of these two emotions, cultural impact on emotions was considered.

The Phenomenon of Joy

Joy is a spontaneous emotion associated with positive energy and increase of resources (Meadows, 2015). Joy is one of the eight basic emotions and etymologically is similar across the cultures studied, except the USA. In America, the word happiness is often used instead of joy, which could be confusing. American psychologists have defined joy and happiness differently, considering happiness temporary and joy – a more permanent state, which is contradictory to how it has been viewed in other cultures. Because joy is very closely tied to the American understanding of happiness, there is an important difference that has to be made. Dick-Niederhauser (2009) distinguished two different states of happiness depicted in the English language: an affective state called joy and a cognitive-evaluative state known as life-satisfaction or subjective wellbeing.

Joy could be serene or excited, individuated or affiliative, active or passive (Meadows, 2015). Unsurprisingly, it is characterized by similar features as peak experiences: unity with the world of others, harmony, self-potency, creativity and productive energy, ecstasy, and expanded sense of space and depth of field (Meadows, 2015). Time is experienced as rapid, brief, or altogether transcended (Meadows, 2015).

The experience of ecstasy is also connected to joy. People, who have accomplished great achievements in life, reported states of ecstasy (joy and awe) during the process of discovery (Jamison, 2004).

The Phenomenon of Awe

Awe is an emotion evoked by a perception of greatness and the cognitive effort to accommodate the new information (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). The current English use of the word is understood mostly by its positive connotations (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). In comparison, in other languages fear is usually dominating and awe is connected to the religious/spiritual experience of the person with a dominant higher power.

Awe is inspired by danger, beauty, exceptional ability in others, virtue, and the supernatural (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Like the peak experience, awe is characterized by inner transformation and change to accommodate the new information. Time expands during awe, supporting a sense of availability to care for others and to experience a greater sense of the surrounding creation (Piff et al., 2015), wanting to take responsibility for the natural world (Halstead & Halstead, 2004) and engage in advocacy for social change (Shiotam, Jektber, & Mossman, 2007).

Keltner, Shiotam and colleagues (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Shiotam, Jektber, & Mossman, 2007) have conducted quantitative studies on awe. Schneider (2009) has looked at awe through qualitative research, asking deep questions regarding the person's notion of awe, what role awe has played in healing personal life, and how is awe part of the greater society. Both sides, qualitative and quantitative research, have contributed significantly to understanding the territory of an emotion that had been neglected in the past by psychology.

Culture and Positive Emotions

Many psychologists assume that emotion is the same everywhere no matter what culture, while sociologists and anthropologists see vast differences in cultural expressions of emotion (Tsai, 2013). Tsai (2013) claimed that cultural norms and beliefs inform the ideal affect one strives for, and may explain the differences of emotional expression. The main difference in ideal affect, noticed by Tsai, is the high arousal vs. low arousal or excitement vs. serenity. Ideal affect shapes one's definition of happiness, the interaction of positive and negative affect, the affective response and how affect is being regulated (Tsai, & Fung, 2006). Not only is ideal affect different, but desirable emotions culturally also differ (Tamir, et al., 2016). The more people value certain emotions, the more they want to experience them. People who endorse self-transcending values would want to feel more empathy and compassion, people who value self-enhancement would want to feel more pride and anger, people who value openness to change would want to feel interest and excitement, and people who endorse tradition would want to feel more calm and less fear. Therefore, there may be direct causation of cultural values and desired emotions.

Cultural scripts and positive emotions. Cultural norms are expressed in cultural scripts (Wierzbicka, 1997). This is why no language should be considered superior to another. Cultural scripts and positive emotion are expressed most vividly in communities. Turner (2012) wrote an effervescent book called "The Joy of Communitas," observing that *communitas* is culture at its best, coming together in work, crisis, festivals, and nature. Communitas is a state where structures and status do not matter, ego is lost, and long-term ties are built. The emotions throughout the experience are joy and awe, flow,

alignment with others, nature, and spirit. There is a changed sense of time, entering the sacred of collective prayer and worship. *Communitas* with nature is culture connected to its birthplace – culture at its best is an extension of nature.

Culture and joy. There is little said about culture and joy in the literature. Joy is expressed differently through cultural scripts of the group (Wierzbicka, 1994). Elation is found more frequently in cultures that encourage imagination and wishing. Joy in America is connected to the American Script – Americans value high enthusiasm, are pressured to feel happy all the time, and stress the importance of cheerfulness and friendliness (Wierzbicka, 1994).

Culture and awe. Research has been done overwhelmingly only in the West. There was one study on culture and awe. Razavi, Zhang, Heriart, Yoo, & Howell, (2016) discovered that dispositional awe is different among United States, Iran, Japanese, and American subjects. The study showed that Japanese people are more negative but socially more engaged and allow for greater co-occurrence of both negative and positive emotions. Japanese experienced awe with death, unlike American participants.

Definition of Terms

The main terms in the literature review and this research are explained below for the reader:

Positive Emotions – are pleasant situational responses characterized by positive affect and positive valence (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). These emotions mark people's ideal positive state or happiness. Positive emotions typically occur in a safe situation, seeking of new resources, and an expanding view of life.

Ideal Internal State– is a state of equilibrium, internal harmony, a sense that all

is well with the world. Plato defined the ideal internal state as living according to a higher purpose, characterized by the virtues. The ideal internal states could be understood as happiness or as wellbeing.

Joy – is a spontaneous basic positive emotion, embracing the authentic self and the world. It has been described as a fulfillment of “deep yearnings” (Meadows, 2015) and heightened sense of being fulfilled. Joy is distinct from happiness, being experienced in the brevity of the moment, while happiness is a general state of positive feeling.

Awe – is a basic emotion of beholding something outside the self. It is evoked by a perception of greatness and the cognitive effort to accommodate the new information (Keltner & Haidt, 2003)

Culture – is a multifaceted interplay of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values shared by a society of people (Schwartz, 2009). Cultural values impact the choice of desirable emotions and their expressions.

Problem Statement

In reviewing the literature on happiness and positive emotions, a significant gap emerged pertaining to the depth of understanding regarding two emotions in culture setting – *joy* (Vaillant, 2008) and *awe* (Razavi et al. (2016). Joy and awe are transient, deeply immersed in the present moment, yet significant in the development of the good and meaningful life. Even though transient, joy and awe are considered transformative. Could it be that transient emotions reflect the more enduring worldview people have and in turn impact the way individuals make meaning about their lives and happiness (Fredrickson, 2004)? There is significant research on the negative transient experience of trauma, for example, but only recent interest in the transient positive experience of joy

and awe.

A qualitative situational study of participants living in several countries would provide a nuanced understanding of the role of cultural values and history; and promote an examination of the phenomenon of joy and awe, observing difference in ideal affect and cultural scripts. The review of the literature on culture and emotion revealed that little thorough research has been done in cultural comparison, with most of it comparing Asian and Western cultures. Qualitative research, which explores cultural scripts and values in relation to both joy and awe, has not been conducted.

There are eight cultural regions in the world identified by their distinct cultural values (Schwartz, 2006; Ingehart & Baker, 2000): West European, Anglo, East-Central European, Orthodox Eastern European, South and South-East Asian, Middle East and Sub Saharan African, Confucian, and Latin American. Tamir et al. (2016) studied 7 out of the 8 for desirable emotions, except Orthodox Eastern European, and did not explore joy and awe.

Purpose of the Study

This research study involved qualitative phenomenological inquiry of the experiences of joy and awe across four distinct cultures. Semi-structured interviews designed to bring to life the essence of lived phenomena were conducted within three Balkan cultures (Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey) and in the State of Virginia, USA. Interview transcriptions were analyzed for significant statements, meaning, descriptions and essence of the experiences. The study considered the childhood experiences of joy and awe, cultural values that promoted these experiences and the impact of globalization and consumerism. To create minimalistic language and thick descriptions, joy and awe

were compared to images and metaphors, exploring how ideal affect, desirable emotions, and cultural scripts play a role into meaning creation. The phenomenological qualitative approach minimized the impact of Western psychological and sociological constructs attached to the two emotions.

Research Question

The primary research question to be investigated in the study is:

How are the emotions of joy and awe experienced among people currently living in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, and the USA?

This primary question could be presented as two more specific questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the experiences of joy and awe *within* each country?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the experiences of joy and awe *between* countries?

Significance of the Study

Very little has been done on joy in culture and awe in culture. This is the first study to explore childhood, cultural values and the recent global changes in culture and their impact on joy and awe. The study attempts to show the ingredients to vibrant living in times of increased technological intrusion, institutionalization and flattened emotions.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter one provided a broad overview of the proposed research. The chapter explored the overview of the literature for joy, awe, and emotion in culture. Key terms were identified. The first chapter also outlined the purpose of the study, the primary research question, the study's significance

and limitations.

Next, Chapter Two begins with a more detailed and comprehensive look at the ultimate experience, as studied by Plato, Maslow, Laski, and Csikszentmihalyi, then describes in detail Frederickson's discoveries of the function and purpose of positive emotions. The phenomenology of the two emotions joy and awe is discussed with particular etymological differences across the four cultures of the study, expressions of these two emotions, domain, impact, shadow side and importance in the counseling process.

Chapter Three includes a brief description of qualitative methodologies and the best methodological fit for the present study, which is phenomenology. The interview protocol is discussed in detail. Personal bias and unique contribution are considered. In-depth design of the research follows, addressing sampling procedures, participant selection, data collection and data analysis as well as credibility and reliability of the research.

Chapter Four discussed the analysis and results of the study and Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings, limitations, and directions for future research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to joy and awe in culture. Related background research in happiness and positive emotions is provided to create the base for the inquiry into the specific emotions of joy and awe. Because joy and awe are so closely intertwined with the greater experience of feeling most alive, the study begins with the writings on the ultimate human experience and the ideal internal state. A brief exploration of Plato's writing, along with a review of the works of Maslow, Laski, Csikszentmihalyi, and Fredrickson, set the stage for investigating the most recent research on joy and awe. The literature explores two domains – positive emotions (more specifically joy and awe); and the experience of these emotions in different cultures. The review of cultural facets investigates cultural values, values and desired emotions and cultural scripts, finally looking at the few cultural studies done on joy and awe in particular.

A Note of Caution

This study is an exploration of emotion and culture written in the English language. English is a language of convenience that brings together a vast amount of information and sharing, but by the virtue of this type of communication, it also leads to exclusions. For example, the research conducted by Russian psychology, which is mostly available in Russian and only accessible to Russian speakers, was not included, even though Russian thought and culture is much more similar to Bulgarian, sharing Slavic and Eastern Orthodox roots. Therefore, it is important to stress the fact that even though culture is one of the important variables of this study, it focuses primarily on English

literature, which is most accessible to the writer. With more resources and time, data from other languages should be explored and studied. Yet, non-Western scholars, bringing a much-needed global perspective, have written some of the seminal works discussed under culture and emotion.

Furthermore, there is reasonable damage when one “lingua-culture” is used to define key concepts (Wierzbicka, 2012). The uncritical use of English as the way to describe universal cognition and emotion has led to “absolutization” of English, with words like emotion, mind, and stress that are readily acknowledged and not considered as language specific (Marini, 2016, June). As a result, the humanistic science is “imprisoned in English” (the title of Weizbicka’s 2012 book), counseling being a profession heavily influenced by concept definitions of these two: cognition and emotion, shares that affiliation.

Counselors, more than other professionals, are taught how to have an attitude of “I am not from around here” with every client, considering their experiences always unique (Gladding & Newsome, 2010). But even counselors may be confined within their own culture and if it happens to be the dominant one, the meanings of words are taken for granted from what they believe to be true. Wierzbicka (1992) noticed languages differ in the size and character of affective lexicon. Given her observation, it is possible when researching word meanings to look at clusters of words that are interrelated linguistically to express meaning for basic feelings like surprise, distress, joy, and others. What is much more difficult to navigate and of high importance in research on culture and emotion is the isomorphism of individual concepts. One word in English like “happy” could mean something different in its equivalent in another language (Wierzbicka, 1992).

Wierzbicka's conclusion: there is no reason that the English words for happy, sad, angry, etc. should have a favored status in understanding psychological states of worldwide significance (Wirzbicka, 1994). One language cannot be the norm of expression, since it reflects unconscious cultural norms expressed in cultural scripts, which: "shape different ways of behaving, different styles of interaction, different modes of communication, and different personality structures" (p. 188). With these cautions in mind, we will proceed to reviewing the literature and later will look more closely at word etymologies for joy and awe and the American use of happiness, which is different than the other three cultures studied.

Procedures for the Literature Review

The literature review is focused on the search of relevant terms and concepts. The terms examined were: joy, awe, positive emotion, and culture. The databases searched were PsychNet, Worldcat, ProQuest, Dissertation and Theses Global. University general search focused only on academic articles and finally Google Scholar was explored for some older articles that I was referred to from reading the current authors. The PsychNet database search on joy produced only 24 articles, out of these there were several book reviews, five articles were a century old, most were decades old, and just four were from the last decade. Much of the research used joy to describe general positive emotions and happiness (e.g.: "Grief and Joy: Emotion Word Comprehension in the Dementias" by Hsieh S. et al., 2012). Other investigations were too narrow to be included in the current study. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global brought back over 84 results on joy and psychology. Most were irrelevant to the topic or joy was a very small portion of the research. As a result a broader approach to the emotion of joy had to be taken. Short

descriptions and function of joy in bigger studies on positive emotions were used. I also searched for appropriate books on the topic.

There were 49 articles on awe in PsychNet, more than two thirds of them from the last five-ten years. Several did not cover the specified topics; some were reviews of other work. In ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global there were 15 articles on awe and psychology. Scholastic research has not expounded on awe and culture, as only one article is present in the database from 2016.

The study of positive emotions was vast. I narrowed the research on positive emotions to exploring the ultimate human experience, and Fredrickson's work on the function of positive emotions, which is fundamental. Positive emotion and culture as a cross search was more difficult. Specific focus in this review of the literature is given to the broader understanding of culture and values, the way values have formed cultural regions in the world and the role values play in desirable emotions. The seminal works of Schwartz, Wierzbicka, Markus, Gerganov, Tsai, and others have helped established the concepts in the field of culture, values, and positive emotion through which the proposed research was grounded.

Positive Emotions

Plato's Inquiry into Cultural Vitality

Plato's work is described the beginning of this review. It serves as a thought-provoking idea on how qualitative research on positive emotions is done in a unique cultural setting, who the researcher is, why the participants and the topic of study matter. Plato lived in the 3rd century BC. Later pronounced the founder of the school of Athens, Plato was a disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. Plato is responsible for

providing some of the grounds of Western philosophy – “all Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato” (Whitehead, Griffin, & Sherburne, 1979, p. 39), his influence far reaching into 2000 years of human thought. This study focuses on several important pieces of his work: a) place and culture; b) types of questions about emotions; c) joy and awe; d) ideal internal state.

Plato: Culture and place. No original works have survived from Socrates. There is an assumption that a lot of the ideas and the method Plato used were those of Socrates’, further developed by him. The Dialogues are conversations, one could say arguments and debates between a small group of like-minded people, including teachers and students, sometimes strangers, prophets, and women. The settings are long walks in the heat, feasts and drinking parties till daybreak, not unlike the settings of Balkan men’s celebrations who still gather together, sing, argue and discuss politics and life – signs of a vibrant culture at work 2000 years later! The teacher in Plato is a substitute parent, mentor, guardian, fellow traveler, object of affection and honor. The stories are told while preparing food, eating, and working together. These stories are time and place oriented. They are stories of context, community, and history. One cannot escape the dominant narrative and how it is woven into the concrete stories told about positive emotions. Plato created his best work in the culture of the people he questioned and to which he belonged (The Symposium, The Republic, Euthydemus, etc.).

Plato: Questions. The Socratic dialogues do not follow everyday norms, they have been characterized as paradoxical. The assumptions behind the arguments are that people are simply ignorant and in need of understanding their own implicit values and points of view in order to be happy. Plato did not develop a set system of theory, rather a

hypothesis, acting like a student to the many “teachers” who present the opportunity for a debate. By fleshing out people’s ideas and ignorance through a maddening barrage of questions, his main character Socrates is able to establish the more likely possibilities and truths (Plato, Euthydemus). These conversations portray the language culture of that time and its emotional meanings.

Statements are altered as questions: “Do not all men desire happiness and what human being is there who does not desire happiness?” (Euthydemus, p. 212). It is worth observing the difference of impact if this question was made into a statement – “We all desire happiness.” By being asked a question to an obvious answer, the reader is engaged to ponder it and think for herself. Given the similarities between the Socratic method and the counseling approach, the logical application of Plato’s method is the necessity for conscientiously questioning cultural identity and language usage of the client, what has formed the experiences that bring vitality. The teacher/counselor does not tell the student/client what to think, but asks a question that will set them both on a journey of discovery together.

Plato: Joy and awe. Plato believes in separateness of body and soul and the eternity of the soul. All souls have a sense of the greater world within them, but they have forgotten. Few are those who retain memory. When they behold an image here they are “rapt with amazement”, shall we say awe, but they do not quite understand what that means, as they cannot perceive with clarity. (Plato, Euthydemus) The emotions and physiological changes when one falls in love are described through a true Socrates/Plato way of reasoning – awe steals over the person, shudder runs through, heat and perspiration are present. Eternal beauty and the sublime are connected to the object of

love in beholding the beloved. Awe and joy make the person expand, understand better the world, feel more connected, perceive greater purpose and beauty and become who they are meant to be (Plato, p. 1914). It is an intuitive discovery – vulnerability is a must, spirituality is heightened, and the peak human experience, as described 2000 years later by Maslow, is in full display. The feeling of awe allows the person to push through pain and discomfort and transform reality with joy.

The soul is all in a state of ebullition and effervescence...beginning to grow wings... and then she ceases from her pain with joy. And this state, my dear imaginary youth to whom I am talking, is by men called love (Phaedrus, p. 250).

Joy and awe are to be found by people striving for the divine in beauty, wisdom, nature, music, art, and love. Love is the eternal ownership of the good. These precious emotions of joy and awe are possible when one is trained to understand the difference between pleasure and the higher good that will bring ultimately happiness. Through the attainment of the virtues, being taught on how to harmonize one's life, the soul grows wings.

Plato: Ideal internal state. The transient emotions of joy and awe are situated within a greater understanding of what life is for, the ideal internal state (Euthydemus). A word loaded with meanings by definition, which will be discussed more later, is the word happiness, also the concept of ideal affect and how each culture defines the ideal internal state. There are many ancient writers who discuss the ideal internal state (also see Plato's Phaedrus). Plato's ideal internal state of happiness is achieved through virtues, namely: temperance, justice, courage, wisdom and piety. Seligman raises the same ideal standard for human existence in his book *Authentic Happiness* (2004) adding one more virtue –

humanity. Why are the virtues important in looking at joy and awe? The rest of the studies do not make an explicit connection between virtues and joy and awe, yet the virtues are present as part of the background for such experiences. The second part of the review looks at values.

An example of a specific virtue considered by Plato is the cultural/philosophical reasoning of friendship as the means to happiness (Plato, Euthydemus). Friendship, Aristotle later argued, was the goal in and of itself. In comparison, current American culture supports friendliness and being liked to achieving happiness, not distinguishing between friendship and friendliness (Wiezbicka, 1997). For Plato, friendship is a unity with one another, the good are friends and only the good can be friends and achieve harmony. Therefore, if one wants to be happy and achieve the ideal state, one needs to strive to be virtuous. Happiness does not depend on external things, but rather on the way they are used. Only through wisdom one knows how to use external things, such as health, beauty, money or influence, well.

Summary. As a researcher from the Balkan Peninsula one notices the echoes of an ancient civilization in Plato's works in modern reality. Some of the values of that time would feel foreign, wrong or outright evil (old men in mentoring, sexualized relationships with pubescent boys). But there is a reason Plato's work impacted someone like Saint Augustine, inspired the Renaissance ideals, and still has universal draw to so many fields of science today. The reader is not only learning about happiness, the good life, the virtues, and the ideal community. There is a thick description on how the soul can grow wings (Phaedrus, p. 250). Joy and awe within culture could promote the soul's growth, expansion, and rise above circumstances toward reaching human potential.

The Ultimate Experience

The ultimate experience is one that makes a human feel most alive (Maslow, 1964). Keats (2017) exclaimed: “A thing of beauty is a joy forever, its loveliness increases, it will never pass into nothingness”. Poetry, creative writing, art and music, are full of treasures exploring the utmost striving of the human spirit and the ultimate experience of joy and awe (Seligman, 2008). The first search on joy in the ProQuest domain before specifying the field brought back over 7,000 articles, most of them describing joy and Christian spiritual writing. Religious literature could have been another very valuable component in understanding joy and awe. This research is like walking into a sun-lit room of mirrors. Each one reflects the light of the phenomenon and each other. The choice of one mirror, the psychological domain, narrows the search to psychological thought.

Maslow’s peak experience and Laski’s transcendent ecstasy. Maslow’s ultimate peak experience and Roger’s client-centered therapy both focus on the human potential for self-reflection, restoration, meaningful connections with others and resilience. The first time the idea of positive psychology was used was as early as 1954 again by Maslow in his book *Psychology of Motivation* (Maslow, 1954). Maslow noted that for too long psychology has focused on the negative instead of the positive side of the human psyche, exposing “illness and sins, but not virtues and potential” (Maslow, 1954, p. 354). The types of people Maslow considered capable of experiencing the ultimate human experience were healthy, self-actualizing individuals. What struck him about his subjects was the notion they were people who had reality checks, accepted self and others, were childlike, but not prone to follow the rules of society. Self-motivated

people are focused on problem, rather than ego-centered. They have a mission in life, some big task to fulfill, and an ethical and philosophical call. They work within a framework of values that are broad and not petty, universal and not local, and in terms of century rather than the moment. Maslow's description of the peak experience undoubtedly included the emotions of awe and joy. Based on his interviews with hundreds of people, Maslow (1964) outlined 25 features of the peak experience such as: the universe is an integrated whole; the world and others are detached from human concerns; perception is ego-transcending and unselfish; the experience has self-validating value to it; these are end-experiences and no means to an end; there is a characteristic disorientation to time and space; the world is perceived as beautiful, good and worthwhile; there are frequent emotions of wonder, awe, reverence, humility, surrender and worship before the greatness of that experience. Also, Maslow noted that polarities in life are transcended; there is a loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition, defense confusion and conflict; the person is forever changed; the person becomes more their real self in expression of their uniqueness and idiosyncrasy; creativity, responsibility and self-determination follow the experience; becoming more loving and more accepting, becoming spontaneous, honest and innocent; the polarity between humility and pride is resolved; a sense of the sacred is glimpsed. These experiences are same across all cultures and religions, given the ineffable nature of the experience, according to Maslow (1964), they are like a man born blind having a dream. People have heard of these experiences from others before them and use the religious language and the culture they are in to express in a stumbling way something that does not lend itself to language. This is why people have visions of the cross or of the goddess Khali (Maslow's explanation)

according to their cultural heritage. Maslow's discovery poses the question: how would culture and religious communities express the nuances in expressing something beyond reach?

While Maslow is a household name in current psychological literature, Laski (1961) is virtually unknown, even though she worked around the same time as Maslow. Her sphere was journalism and literary writing. A Jewish woman born in an English family of great influence, Laski wrote one book that echoed many of Maslow's ideas – "Ecstasy: A study of some secular and religious experiences" (1961). Maslow interviewed hundreds of people. Laski used three sources of information– interviews with 63 people, literature, and religious texts. She discovered that triggers to ecstasy are nature, sexual love, childbirth, movement and exercise, religion, art, scientific or poetic knowledge, creative work, beauty, and introspection. Just like Maslow, Laski noticed that during ecstasy there is a loss of: time, limitation, materialism, desire, sorrow, self, and words. What was gained during ecstasy was unity with everything, timelessness, joy, perfection, mystical knowledge, new knowledge, and new life. There were some obvious problems with Laski's work: her research was not rigorously controlled, she could have summarized her work more clearly, and questions on culture remained unanswered.

In summary, Maslow discovered that self-actualizing, motivated people are those who have peak experiences. Both Maslow and Laski defined the territory of experiences that could be life-changing, transforming worldviews, and healing. The feelings of joy, wonder, worship, and surrender accompanied that transformation.

Csikszentmihalyi's flow. Three decades later, a Hungarian scholar pioneered a new idea on peak experience. In both Laski and Maslow's writings, the ultimate/ecstatic

experiences are predominantly passive and receptive. Csikszentmihalyi's flow (1997) is an "optimal experience" retaining some of the same characteristics in the midst of strenuous mental or physical activity, people feel "strong, alert, in effortless control, unselfconscious, and at the peak of their abilities" (see illustration below).

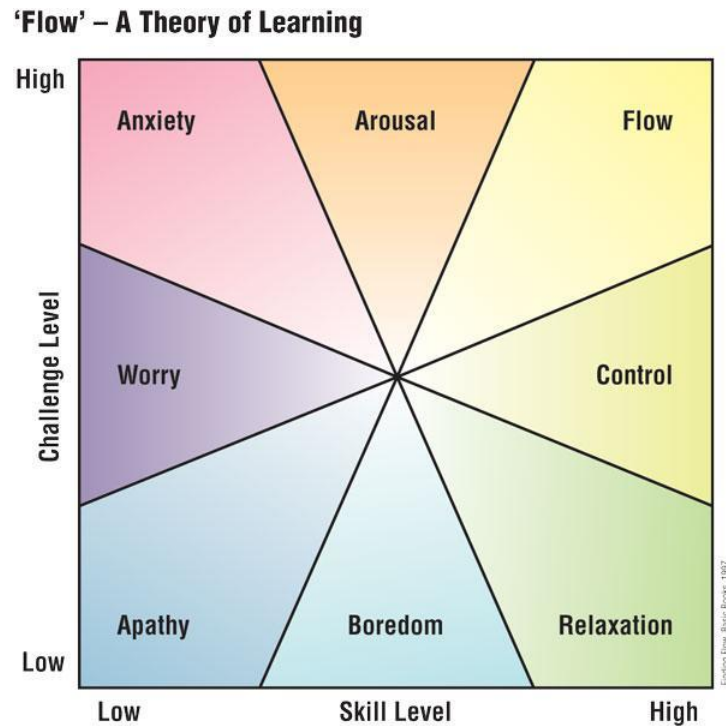


Figure 1. Mental state in terms of challenge and skill level (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 1997).

Flow and mastery. Flow is within one's control and something that could be achieved by anyone who loves what they do, has mastery over it, and desires to keep being challenged (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 1997). "Joe the Welder" refuses to take a higher paying job in order to do what he loves best – simple welding. He knows each part of the job and is able to enter the "zone," feeling happy in the life he has. It is happiness different from pleasure, not dissimilar to the type of happiness Aristotle described, attained after great effort and well-defined goals. In the context of flow, the actual

feelings of joy and awe or any other positive feelings are not noticeable. It is during flow that the critical mind takes the back seat while the whole being is absorbed in the task. In that height of performance emotion is not needed to correct the trajectory (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 116).

Kairos time. Flow is known for the changed sense of time. One appears lost in the task of the moment. A wonderful ancient way of describing this different time is the Greek word – *kairos*. There were two types of time in ancient Greece – *kairos* and *chronos*. In rhetoric, *kairos* is "a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved" (White, 1987, p. 1). *Kairos* is the right time, appointed time according to the New Testament. In the Eastern Orthodox, the Deacon exclaims to the Priest at the beginning of the Liturgy, “*Καιρός του ποιήσαι το Κυρίω*»», *Kairos tou poiesai to Kyrio*, " ("It is time [*kairos*] for the Lord to act"); “indicating that the time of the Liturgy is an intersection with Eternity” (Kairos, 2016). *Kairos* is time when joy and awe signal intersection with an essence that connects in profound ways to ours. It happens in time, but it expands and stretches it to accommodate something that seems to come from the outside, not contained within us.

Flow and culture. Flow could be easier to achieve in certain cultures compared to others. Csikszentmihalyi gave examples with indigenous people who sing, dance and tell stories when they are not at work, everyone entering a sense of flow through creativity. An Indian tribe of British Columbia moved every 25-30 years after life had become too predictable. Without challenge there was no meaning, proving that even calamities could provide the opportunity for meaningful new lives.

In summary, Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990, 1997) flow is a complex experience of

time as a stream the person is immersed in. Flow happens when a task absorbs all attention and focus, but also when talking with friends, or watching a show. There are flow experiences that stretch and deepen and ones that seem to steal time and offer temporary reward. The ultimate experience is achieved when one is willing to sacrifice for the attainment of skill and knowledge to get to the “zone” in the right time – *kairos*. Joy and awe don’t seem to be present in this, yet in her book “Exuberance,” Johnson (2005) noticed that all great discoveries are connected to this exuberant state of searching, pushing forward, enduring for the sake of the big price.

Positive Psychology and the Ideal Internal State

There has been prolific research on happiness in the past two decades. A few examples of some recent titles by positive psychologists: *Authentic Happiness – Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (Seligman, 2004), *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2007), *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (Haidt, 2006), *Stumbling on Happiness* (Gilbert, 2005). This review does not go into the rich exploration of the topic, partly because this is not the objective of the study, and also because the American value on happiness seems to be a cultural one. In the American cultural scripts (discussed more later under culture and emotion) there is a pressure to be happy and projecting a positive image of self (Wierzbicka, 1997). This is a reason according to Wierzbicka for American psychologists to elevate the state of being happy to a basic human emotion and study it profusely. However, happiness has been of great interest not just in America, but worldwide in recent years.

World Happiness Report. The World Happiness Report is a groundbreaking survey of the state of happiness around the globe. The first report was published in 2012, examining 156 countries and their levels of happiness. The experts involved in the study come from field of economy, psychology, national statistics, health, and public policy. The World Happiness Report for 2016 used individual and cultural predictors for happiness: GDP per capita, life expectancy, social support, freedom to make life choices, generosity, perception of corruption, positive affect from the previous day, and negative affect. The research revealed a worldwide demand for attention to happiness in shaping government policy, using happiness measures to compare quality of human development.

The USA is one of the happiest countries and moved up to 13th place. Turkey has kept a stable place and it is 77th in the report. Greece has dropped down 25 places from 174 to 199. Bulgaria is number 139, having moved up from 144 in 2013. The report noted that countries located within the same region had similar results and means. It is not surprising that Greece and Turkey used to be close to each other three years ago. But the situation in Greece has changed in recent years, giving way to volatile economic, political upheaval in recent years and the European Union's instability after the big refugee influx. Turkey, which accepted the most Syrian refugees of all other countries, remains unexpectedly at the same happiness level, even though democratic process is questionable and the economy is struggling under the weight of so many new people who need provision. Bulgaria is an Eastern European country, but instead of staying close to ex-Communist countries, rates closer to the African countries on the happiness scale and is more unhappy than Haiti. What could explain the big differences?

A different study of the European nations shows that Bulgarians are the most

pessimistic people in Europe (Gerganov, 2015). On a 10-point rating scale Bulgarians rate their satisfaction with life at 4.5, while their Romanian neighbors are at 6.2, the newest EU members are at 6.1 and the oldest – 7.2. Bulgarians are afraid of losing their jobs. Both rich and poor are dissatisfied equally. One out of five Bulgarians considers their health poor (Gerganov, 2015). Boasting about positive things in Bulgaria is viewed with suspicion because it could cause envy. Complaining seems the better option. As a result, Bulgarians have a national psychology of complainers according to Gerganov (2015).

In summary: happiness is impacted by the state of internal affairs within the country, the cultural values, scripts and personal predispositions. The next section will explore how the positive emotions function and why they are vital for human survival and thriving.

Function of Positive Emotions

Positive emotions all share similar characteristics – positive valence and strive toward pursuit and attainment of rewards (Campos & Keltner, 2014). Campos and Keltner (2014) describe the structure of positive emotion as a tree-like organization with a shared positive valence trunk and branches that show levels of differentiated experiences produced by specific environmental opportunities.

Impact of positive emotions. Fredrickson (1998, 2004) made a considerable contribution to the field of positive psychology by exploring the function of positive emotions and the processes through which they occur, creating the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions broaden the personal awareness and lead to expansion of new thoughts and actions. The

building of resources and broadening of the person happen in several ways. First, there is a momentary broadening in thought and action leading to pursuit of wider range of thoughts and actions like play, exploration, savoring, and integration (Fredrickson, 2004). For example, joy is often connected to play. Through play children grow physically, intellectually and socially, broadening their knowledge and building new resources. Narrowing that happens during negative emotions is connected to specific threatening situations while the positive emotions are more adaptive in the long run.

Second, the resources built during positive emotions could be physical, social, intellectual and psychological. This includes resilience, creativity, and optimism (Fredrickson, 2004). These resources will outlive the short moment of the emotion and indirectly promote survival in the future.

Third, positive emotions also could undo lingering negative emotions from stress and trauma (Fredrickson, 2004). By broadening a person's momentary thought-action repertoire, a positive emotion may loosen the grip of the negative emotion and the internal preparation for a specific narrow action paired with the negative emotion.

Finally, not only do positive emotions undo the mental power of negative emotions, but also they could change physical outcomes (Fredrickson, 2004). If the heart rate is high after the experience of a negative emotion, a positive emotion could settle it back down and help restore balance, protecting physical and psychological wellbeing.

Positive emotions and cultural scripts. Fredrickson tested and retested her theory in the years that followed (2004). In one of her tests of the theory's validity, Fredrickson (2005) used five video clips: two on positive emotions, a neutral one, and two negatively charged emotionally clips. The clips changed the emotional experience of

participants. After each viewing, participants were asked about their strongest emotion, and then were to take a moment to imagine a situation they were in with this particular emotion and what they would like to do. A higher score of the number of statements showed a larger thought-action repertoire compared to a lower score. What this experiment showed is that even short stimuli connected to a particular type of story could create different emotions. Culturally and individually, one could imagine these types of stories as tapes stuck on repeat, or new experiences in the brain. If a cultural group chooses to repeat and perpetuate some stories over others, then logically there will be more emotions connected with the type of clips stored in the brain. Some nations tell stories of grief better than stories of joy and visa versa. The Russians and their *toska*, for example, which may be translated as melancholy or sadness, but has no English equivalent, and the Russian writers who have talked about human suffering in ways unmatched, show that suffering in the Russian psyche is a strong national metanarrative (Wierzbicka, 1998). It is possible that stories are told in such ways to answer particular questions. What are the questions cultures are answering that propel cultural scripts? Fredrickson basically promoted a short emotional response to a short stimulus, which in personal and cultural narratives play out for a much longer time. If it is discovered that some stories are more harmful than others to personal thriving and group wellbeing could asking questions about resilience, joy, and awe, inspire the making of new stories?

The Upward Spiral Model and Positive Resonance. There are two offshoots of the broaden and build theory: the upward spiral model of lifestyle change and the positive resonance (Fredrickson, 2013). The upward spiral indicates that positive emotions are predictors for sustained lifestyle change. Often people know that a change in diet or

exercise could lead to better health, but are unable to sustain the new habits. Individuals with a higher standard deviation from the mean in the experiencing of positive emotions paired with a new habit show higher percentage of keeping the habit 15 months later (Fredrickson, 2013). The early positive response is the single psychological indicator that the behavior will be maintained.

Positive Resonance. The second offshoot of the Broaden-and-build Theory is the positive resonance or the experience of love (Fredrickson, 2013). As early as 1998, Fredrickson introduced four positive emotions: joy, interest, contentment, and love. In her later work she added gratitude, serenity, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration and awe (2004). Fredrickson defined love as a positive emotion shared between two or more people, experienced in its different varieties, including romantic, passionate, compassionate, nurturing, and attachment. She also distinguished love experiences from love relationships. In the context of loving relationships people continue a mutual interest in each other, which increases deeper understanding of the other that brings joy, a cycle which could recur endlessly. What characterizes love is shared positivity, bibehavioral synchrony and mutual care. Love motivates and promotes mutual care, each participant investing in the care of the other. Love, is greater, than the other emotions and broadens and builds with a greater capacity because it is shared between two or more people, and through the resonance of bibehavioral synchronicity, sharing and mutual care it is amplified.

Clusters of positive emotions. Fredrickson's introduction of love and the positive resonance poses the tricky question to other research on specific positive emotions. It is much easier in negative emotions to distinguish anger from pain or

anxiety. It must be that the broadening of psychological capacity during positive emotion makes them appear many times in cluster, not in pure form – just joy or just interest.

Such is the case with flow and exuberance as well.

Universality versus specificity of emotion. Not only could emotions appear in clusters, but they may be different types of clusters in the studied cultures. To test this in the 1970s, Ekman (1971) studied positive emotions in different cultures and confirmed that there are universal positive emotions, stating “there is robust, consistent evidence of a universal facial expression for anger, fear, enjoyment, sadness, and disgust” (p. 176). He also claimed that every basic emotion stands for a family of related affective states (1992) rather than a single one. Anger and sadness are distinct feelings, yet if one is asked if s/he is sad, the answer isn’t easy to give. This suggests that feelings are also arbitrary. Therefore there is a dance between extremes – all positive emotions are difficult to distinguish or they can be put into certain types of groups. Ekman (1992) suggested that each emotion family constitutes a theme and variations. “The theme is composed of characteristics unique to that family”(p. 173), concluding that “one of the major empirical tasks ahead is to isolate the theme and variations for each emotion family” (p. 173).

Mapping of positive emotions. Campos and Keltner (2014) mapped out the positive emotional domain by emotion names, structures and boundaries, summarizing eight emotions out of 544 unique positive emotion words sample collected from participants. They discovered that the most used words were happiness, love, joy and excitement. The eight emotions they researched for core relational themes, physical sensations and behavioral displays were amusement, awe, contentment, gratitude,

interest, joy, love and pride. Campos and Keltner's mapping of positive emotions is very helpful when trying to discuss each of them separately. Given the nature of these emotions, when one emotion is discussed very possibly there are others in the background magnifying the experience.

In sum, positive emotions are the ingredients that make life worthwhile, expressive of the ideal internal state and the meaning of life in general. Positive emotions broaden resources, expand horizons, help recover from illness and undo the damaging effect of negative emotions. They are difficult to differentiate and often appear in clusters.

The next section of the review focuses exclusively on the two phenomena in question – joy and awe. For both phenomena the material is organized under: definitions, physical expression, etymologies, understanding, dimensions, conditions, outcomes and shadow side.

The Phenomenon of Joy

Definition. Joy is a spontaneous emotion, born in a situation of strong connection to others, nature and beauty, a fruit of fulfilled “deep yearnings”, and “a fundamental response to human possibility” (Meadows, 2015, p. XV). Joy is the authentic ability to be (Heidegger, 1962) and to being-fulfilled through realizing that existence is a gift (Robbins, 2014). Joy is associated with a sudden increase in positive energy (de Rivera et al 1989), an overflowing power of vitality as the driving force of the universe (Nietzsche). Joy increases the positive emotions when shared with others, especially when initiated by infants and children (Campos & Keltner, 2014). It is a desire to be playful and connect (Fredrickson, 2004). Joy is the thrill of exploration, a “zestful

pursuit” of interests (Russell & Fosha, 2008), a revelation of what was unknown before, the byproduct of “rightly confronted despair,” experienced as possibility, freedom and open future (May, 1953). Even though joy is on every list of positive emotions, it is the one least studied (Vaillant, (2008).

Physical Expression. The typical open-mouthed Duchenne smile of joy raises the corner of the mouth and the cheeks by forming crow’s feet around the eyes (contracting of the zygomatic major muscle and the orbicularis oculi muscle). It is easily differentiated from the non-Duchenne smile, which doesn’t touch the eyes (Campos & Keltner, 2014). Physiological changes accompanying joy are altered breathing, pleasant warmth, increased heartbeat (Campos & Keltner, 2014). Leaping, dancing, running, shouting, sometimes even tears of joy show the intensity of the emotion.

Joy produces activation in the ventral striatum and insula/operculum, the key nodes responsible for the processing of hedonic or appetitive stimuli (Nicholson, Takahashi, & Nakatsu, 2000). Joy is more multidimensional than the pleasure center (Izard, 2000; Vaillant, 2008):

Joy involves more of our central nervous system than just the septal area and the nucleus accumbens, which serve the pleasure of cocaine or heroin addictions, more than the hypothalamic centers moving sex and hunger or the amygdala nuclei that ignite anger and fear. (p.124)

Joy is the most recognizable of human emotions. In a study of nine literate cultures there was a greater than 70% agreement across cultures regarding a total of eight emotional categories, with over 90% agreement on the emotion of joy (Izard, 1971).

Etymologies.

English. The etymology of the word joy in English comes from Middle English borrowing from old French *joie* “pleasure, delight, erotic pleasure, bliss, joyfulness,” from Latin *gaudia* “expressions of pleasure; sensual delight,” plural of *gaudium* “joy, inward joy, gladness, delight, source of pleasure, delight,” from *gaudere* “rejoice,” from PIE root “gau- “to rejoice (cognates Greek *Gaio* “I rejoice,” Middle Irish *gauire* “noble”) (joy, 2016).

Bulgarian. In Bulgarian ‘*радост*’ (radost) or joy’s etymology is confusing. Just like the English words, there seem to be a lot of influences, and it is impossible to trace the roots. Two words interestingly connected to *радост* in their roots are *радея* – (fighting for, taking care of something, melancholy when missing something – untranslatable Bulgarian emotional expression) and *поради* – because of. The word’s present use means an internal satisfaction, pleasure, which is expressed in excitement and emotional arousal. Also *радост* could relate to an event – “this is our joy” (радостен, 2016).

Greek. The Greek word for joy *χαρά* is very close to the two words for grace – *χάρη* and *χάρις*. *Χαρά* means joy, delight, exhilaration, rejoicing, glee, gladness (*χαρά*, 2017).

Turkish. The Turkish word *sevinç* means joy, delight, pleasure, rejoicing, gladness, elation (*sevinç*, 2017). *Neşe* is another Turkish word for bliss, cheer, glee, joy, and sprightliness (*neşe*, 2017).

Understanding of joy.

Joy and happiness. The terms used for joy across cultures are similar: *freude*

,joie, gioia, rudost, hara, and *sevinc* express a basic human emotion. It is not so common to say: “I am joyful”, rather: “I am happy” in the American context. Americans are prone to use the term happiness instead of joy (Meadows, 2014), which is confusing. If a Bulgarian describes a positive experience as joyful, an American would classify it as happy and sometimes joy and happiness are used interchangeably – e.g. Izard’s (2000) definition “joy or happiness is an innate emotion” (p.1) did not distinguish between the two. And a book titled *The Joy Compass: Eight Ways to Find Lasting Happiness, Gratitude and Optimism in the Present Moment* (Altman, D., 2012) merged emotions and definitions. Some of the different definitions of joy in culture will be discussed further under emotion and culture.

The straightforward meaning of joy becomes more problematic when there are differences of opinion in the American context as to what happiness and joy are. Rollo May (1981), for example, defined happiness as dependent on one’s outer state and finding ways to solve problems while joy is an inner energy that “leads to awe and wonderment” (p. 241) in taking risks to break new ground. Joy is the goal of life, accompanying the fulfillment of our human nature and affirming of our identity as worthwhile against all others and the material world (May, 1953). Most current researchers concur: happiness is tied to transitory things, while internal joy is deep and abiding. Being joyful requires connection to others, nature and life itself, joy is a lasting emotion in comparison to the blurred emotion of happiness (MacDonald, 2015). Stated this way, the American idea differs from Plato, who viewed joy as transitory and happiness is tied to the virtues (Euthydemus). Seligman’s (2004) affirmation of the classic view of happiness as based on virtues and character, clashes with happiness as

outward and joy as deep and lasting as defined by May (1953) and Brown (2012).

In summary, there seem to be two different states of happiness depicted in the English language – an affective state called joy and a cognitive-evaluative state known as life-satisfaction or subjective well-being (Dick-Niederhauser, 2009).

Elation, joy, and gladness. A further issue with the basic emotion of joy is that sometimes it is used to describe other distinct emotions. Bagozzi (1991) researched the emotions of elation, joy and gladness, finding them to be similar emotions in practical point, but based on discriminant validity somewhat distinct on the basis of statistical interpretation. Elation contains a fulfillment of a wish, while gladness requires fulfillment of a hope, and the joy structure involves a meeting with some other person or presence that is perceived as unique. Out of the three, gladness and elation are distinct emotions, while joy lacks a distinct structure, but is still a consistent unit (De, Rivera, 1999). Robinson (2014) argues that joy and cheerfulness are to each other as anxiety and fear, with one connected to the state of Being, while the other more situationally bound.

Joy and awe. Joy and awe combined bring on the heightened emotion of exuberance (Jamison, 2004). Great minds, creators, innovators, Nobel Prize winners, artists, beloved book characters were moved by the fuel of exuberance – Muir and Roosevelt, Bentley, Mary Poppins, Tiger and Toad, and even Snoopy.

Joy and pain. Finally, in comparing to other emotions, it should be mentioned that joy is the opposite of pain and is suffering removed (Vaillant, 2008). Much of the Christian literature stresses the joy amidst suffering as a way of being victorious (Romans 5:3-5). After looking at the many definitions of joy and its etymologies in different language, this study defines joy as a spontaneous emotion, expressing the authentic

ability to be and to be-filled with the gifts of life and connection with others.

Joy's dimensions. The descriptions of joy, gladness and elation could also be expressed as types of joy: serene (associated with quiet, calm and pervasive feeling of harmony and unity) and excited joy (associated with vitality, boundless energy, and potency); individuated (focused on personal triumph) and affiliative (focused on social context) joy; and anticipatory and consumatory joy (Meadows, 2014). Types of joy also relate to colors: the excited joy is associated with red-orange warm and stimulating colors while serene joy favors the more cool and relaxed colors like blue and green (Meadows, 2014).

The factors describing the dimensions of joy according to Meadows (2014) are: perception of beauty, self-potency, positive world, time immediacy, time brevity, rapid time, productive effects and ecstasy. From his interviews Meadows outlines five dimensions of joy: 1) Joy is characterized by *harmony and unity* that stems from personal integration, acts of creativity, newfound insight, meaningful relationships, feeling harmony with nature or reunion with a loved one. 2) Joy is characterized by *vitality*, and feeling alive. 3) Joy is characterized by *transcendence* when “one senses or has the feeling that he is moving or has moved, soared, or passed beyond ordinary existence” (p114). 5) Joy is characterized by *freedom*, expressed in leaping and dancing. 6) Joy *heightens perception* of time and color.

Conditions for joy. If anxiety is about the future and depression is about the past, joy resides in the present moment. Joy can be discovered through revising inner language, seeking laughter and marveling at nature (Altman, 2012).

Joy outcomes (Izard, 2000). Joy helps reducing stress and increases wellbeing.

Joy increases mutuality and affection – people become warmer and friendlier when they experience joy. Joy promotes confidence and increases vitality. Positive feelings toward self and others increase. Joy also brings on the creative flow, helping perform imaginative tasks, but does not improve critical thinking.

Joy's Shadow. Joy's shadow side is based on a negative attitude toward another experiencing their misfortune in a positive way (Campos & Keltner, 2014). If joy at its best opens us to others and the world, the shadow of joy would isolate us further.

Qualitative and quantitative studies on joy. Meadow's study on joy was empirical. He collected short descriptions of the phenomenon of joy from 333 students. Robinson (2003) conducted a qualitative research on joy using a therapeutic technique called the Imagery in Movement Method. He introduced drawing, gesture, and role-play to induce a rich emotional memory, which was subsequently written down by participants. He discovered that through the experience of joy the world was felt as powerful yet benevolent. People were open to new possibilities, feeling the freedom to be. As a result people felt connected to others, experienced affirmation and nurture, awe at the power of life. They were filled with gratitude as a result. Robbins concluded that joy is an ontological emotion and it is "a revelation of the meaning of Being" (Robins, 2014, p. 20). The two studies came to many similar conclusions and brought rich understanding of the phenomenon of joy. Robinson's study (2003), being qualitative, engaged people more fully through recreation of events. The researcher admitted that he was often moved to tears with the participants in experiencing vicariously their sense of profound joy.

The Phenomenon of Awe

The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. It is the power of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. Einstein (1936, p. 44).

This research on awe includes the definition of awe, physical expressions and changes, etymologies, understanding awe, awe's dimensions, outcomes, and qualitative and quantitative types of questions regarding awe.

Definition. Awe is an emotion evoked by a perception of vastness and a cognitive effort to accommodate the new information (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Vastness is “anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self, or the self’s ordinary level of experience or frame of reference” (Keltner & Haidt, 2003, p. 303).

Physical Expressions. The facial expression of awe involves raised inner eyebrows, raised upper lip and jaw drop. Physiological changes observed during awe are altered breathing and warm sensation (Campos & Keltner, 2014). Awe is accompanied by a withdrawal of sympathetic nervous system influences on the heart, leading to an increased intake of information from the environment (Shiota et al., 2014) and differences in theta and beta activity throughout the brain (Reinerman-Jones, Brandon Sollins, Callacher, & Janz, 2013). Also in certain states of awe mingled with fear, the initial goose bumps could indicate an intense positive experience through contrast or a form of approval to the superiority of another (Schurtz, Neufeld, Danvers, Osborne, Sng, & Yee, 2012).

Etymology.

English. The etymology of the English word “awe” comes from Middle English, which replaced the word *agi* in Old Norse. It describes a feeling of fear and reverential respect mixed with wonder, in submission to power, usually divine power. As the origin of the word suggests, in the past awe was used to describe only an experience of refined fear, often in religious writings (James and his classic work on religious (James, 1902). Awe was comprised of admiration, fear, curiosity and subjection, which promoted stricter community rules and strong customs. Instead of keeping up with tradition as it was in the past, awe now is a promoter of innovation in the West (McDougall, 1926). Synonyms of awe are words such as dread, fear, respect, reverence, veneration, curiosity, shock, surprise, incomprehension, enchantment, fascination, excitement, stimulation, engagement, engrossment, enthrallment, involvement. The great scope of synonyms shows the presence of paradoxical emotions – fear mixed with fascination, involvement, amusement and pleasure. In recent English language the meaning of awe has significantly shifted (Keltner, Haidt, 2003). If fear was predominant in the early understanding of awe, it is now closer in meaning to wonder and reverence (Haidt & Seder, 2009), being characterized by mostly or only positive emotions toward nature and extraordinary human achievement. “From its use in reverence to the Divine Being this passed gradually into: Dread mingled with veneration, reverential or respectful fear; the attitude of a mind subdued to profound reverence” (Keltner & Haidt, 2003, p. 306).

Bulgarian. There are two Bulgarian words for awe with different etymologies - благоговение (*blagogovenie*) and страхопочитание (*strahopochitanie*), both almost exclusively used in religious texts. Страхопочитание (*strahopochitanie*) literally means

fearful honor, very similar to the old understanding of awe in English. *Благоговение* begins with the part *благо*, which means sweet or good. It is a part of many other words such as *благочестие* - virtue, *благословение* – blessing, *благородство* – honor, *благодарност* - gratitude. The second part of the word *говет* comes from old Slavonic, still being used in Russian and means: to be, to live, or to prepare, in old Bulgarian it probably meant to fast. *Благоговение* then in its etymology means sweet goodness of being present and ready, describing reverence (veneration) while in the presence of divine power in a state of contemplative worship. Veneration is linked to a specific place – the Orthodox temple and the surrounding icons, the encounter with the eternal through quietly observing and praying and being observed and measured by the Divine. The Bulgarian word *благоговение* then connects awe to vastness and eternity, but without the fear and dread in the old English meaning (*благоговение*, 2016).

Turkish. In Turkish the word *huşu* describes awe, submission to God, dread, reverence (*huşu*, 2017). Another Turkish word *müthiş* describes something that is awesome, impressive, terrific, splendid, marvelous, etc. (*müthiş*, 2017).

Greek. In Greek an old word for awe is *εὐσεβεία* from two words that mean *εὖ* - godliness and *σέβας, τό*, awe, from classic Greek (*σέβομαι*):—reverential awe, worship or an object of awe, holiness, majesty object of wonder, wonder, originally described as the fear of the gods (*eusebeia*, 2017). Another word currently used is *δέος* (*deos*), which means awe as a feeling of fear and reverence (*δέος*, 2017).

Understanding awe. Awe is a state of puzzled apprehension and perplexed wonder (Pearsall, 2007). The cognitive model of awe contains indispensable components including perceived vastness and accommodation (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Stimuli,

threatening or non-threatening, experienced as larger than oneself, radically enlarges the observer's frame of reference (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007). The usual process of assimilation is recognition of new stimuli as fitting within preexisting schemas.

Accommodation is needed when previous schemas have to be changed or made new.

Therefore, people who are more open to experience will be also open to exposure to the unknown and the feeling of awe that accompanies it, being able to revise their mental structures (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006), and the need for cognitive closure is negatively associated with awe (Shiota et al., 2007).

Dimensions of awe. There are four elicitors to awe (Shiota et al., 2007): a). rich novel stimuli; b). stimulus-focused and self-diminishing thoughts; c). above average cognitive change, d). and identification with a larger group (p.946, 947).

The types of situations that inspire awe are: perceived threat, beauty, ability, virtue and the supernatural (Keltner, & Haidt, 2003).

1. Situations that feel threatening could inspire awe characterized by fear. Natural scenes like thunder, the Great Cannon and the Pacific Ocean during a storm inspire awe mixed with fear versus a serene sunset that lacks the fear element. Across cultures people prefer natural environments compared to man-made ones (Kaplan, 1992).

2. Beauty in people, art and scenery carries the positive valence of awe. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and to some what is beautiful is not to others, yet biological harmony and sexual attraction could explain the inner draw to what is beautiful (Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

3. Ability and exceptional talents cause natural admiration that sometimes borders on awe. The moral goodness and virtue of others bring "elevation" and awe.

(Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

4. Finally, supernatural events that could not be explained, bordering on terrifying, seeing angels and demons, ghosts and dead people, could produce a response of awe (Keltner & Haidt, 2003).

Conditions for awe. Life conditions that support the experience of awe as positive, life-giving force are: an appreciation for the fact of life, the pain as a teacher and the need for balance; contemplation alone, in nature, or with others; having the basics to live; time to reflect; capacity to slow down and note the present moment and see the big picture; doing what one loves; openness to the mystery of life and its meaning (Schneider, 2009).

Conditions adverse to awe are: preoccupation with money, status and consumerism; a steady diet of junk, alcohol and screen time; enthrallment with mechanization and simple answers; poverty; haste; rigidity and dogma; self inflation or deflation; compulsive positive or negative thinking; coercion; polarization; or fixation (Schneider, 2009).

Awe outcomes.

Awe and time (Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012). Awe expands the perceived time availability leading to many positive consequences. If one's perception of time shifts, then there will be more time for healthy habits and choosing experiences over material goods. Expanded time will help engaging with others, helping when one is needed, and volunteering. Expanded sense of time is also connected to better health. Time constraint could lead to hypertension, poor sleep quality, headaches, and/or poor digestion. Feeling always rushed is also connected to depression symptoms. Cognitive effects of awe are

different from many other positive emotions including critical approach in processing persuasive messages (Griskevicius, Shiota & Neufeld 2010) and on internal event scripts in processing new stories (Danvers & Shiota, 2012 - unpublished).

Awe and care for others and the world. Awe diminishes the self with something or someone else becoming more significant, providing perspective of the greater surrounding creation (Piff et al. 2015). An awed experience of contact with the natural world inspires greater sense of responsibility to the natural world (Halstead & Halstead, 2004). Awe dissolves the sense of individualism and being one-of-a-kind, prompting the individual to identify with others and forego self-interest (Piff et al. 2015). At its extreme, some of the most profound experiences of awe are reported by astronauts viewing the earth from space and identifying with the entire human race and the planet (Yaden, 2016).

Awe could inspire people toward social action and advocacy, creating the conditions for collective identity and working together against natural and social threats or through moral inspiration for social change (Shiotam, Jektber, & Mossman, 2007). Awe guards against polarization either in the form of “hyper-humility (humiliation)” or “hyper-boldness (arrogance)” (Schneider, 2005, p.170).

Awe’s shadow. The less researched dark side of awe could lead to being abused and taken advantage of by powerful leaders and institutions when the self is diminished and merged with harmful group identities (Benjamin & Simpson, 2009).

Quantitative and qualitative research on awe. The research mentioned has used mainly quantitative and some qualitative approaches to reach conclusions. For example, dispositional awe (internal tendency to feel awe in general) is measured through a 6-item

questionnaire using a 7-point Likert type scale (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006).

Statements such as: “I often feel awe”, “I see beauty all around me; “I feel wonder almost every day”; “I seek out experiences that challenge my understanding of the world”, measure the personal openness to the experience of awe.

Qualitative studies have used in-depth semistructured interviews to describe the phenomenology of awe. Schneider’s study on awe (2009) posed questions such as: What is your notion of awe; What role has awe played in healing in your life; How did you initially become stirred by awe; What role has awe played in your specialty; What role do you see awe playing in the larger part of society.

It is important to notice that the type of questions lead to specific types of discoveries. Schneider’s (2009) qualitative questions on the notion of awe and what role awe plays in someone’s life led to the extrapolation of the conditions that foster and block awe, making some very important discoveries from a handful of in-depth interviews. Keltner and Shiota and Haidt (2003, 2006) with their quantitative research discovered the characteristics of the awe experience, and found its place among other positive emotions. Both types of research have much to offer. Awe being a relatively new studied phenomenon would need both types of research methods.

Conclusion. This first section of the literature review explored positive emotions, the ultimate human experience and how the emotions of joy and awe enhance and transform the self in relation to others and the greater world beyond. Joy is the presence of being and being filled while awe is a presence of beholding. Both emotions are vital to human thriving. As evident in this material there has been little research done on both emotions, and joy in particular, and qualitative work is sparse. Given the richness of both

phenomena and the few qualitative studies that show the possibilities within this type of research, the present study fills a gap in understanding both joy and awe better and contributes to the counseling field in offering new insight into curative processes that could be used within the therapeutic relationship and in the community. Given the universal acknowledgment of these emotions, the next section will explore how culture, cultural values and norms interplay with the desired affect and expression of positive emotions.

Culture and Positive Emotions

Culture is a multifaceted interplay of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values shared by a society of people (Schwarz, 2009). It is logical to assume these cultural beliefs are somehow expressed in the understanding and experience of positive emotions, yet it was not until recently that solid research has confirmed this assumption. In the 1950s and 60s, psychologists believed that emotions were “automatic” and “natural,” ingrained and universal (Tsai, 2008). Recognition of emotions around the world supported that idea (Ekman & Friesen, 1978). Yet anthropologists and sociologists assumed that humans adapted to a variety of environments and their emotions were therefore culturally different. For example, 95% of US participants identified the smile of happiness and only 69% of Samatran (Ekman et al., 1987). There are many ways to account for these differences. Because the current literature on culture and emotion is vast, this review will explore three big concepts: cultural values, desired emotions, and cultural scripts.

Basic Human and Cultural Values

Cultural values are at the core of culture. People learn from early age what is good and what is bad, what appropriate behaviors and emotions are, and how to express them (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). In order to understand how emotions are experienced culturally, one must know first the role and function of values. Schwartz (2012) outlined six characteristics of cultural values: Values: 1) are beliefs that are inseparably linked to affect; 2) refer to desired goals; 3) transcend specific situations, which in turn are related more to norms and attitudes, 4) are the standards that guide people's actions and evaluation of actions; 5) have different importance and together create a system of priorities; and 6) guide action (Schwartz, 2012, p.3). Let's explore the first characteristic of values that is directly linked to the study of culture and emotion: values are connected to the experience of affect. The moment values are activated "they become infused with feeling (Schwartz, 2012, p. 3), Schwartz gives an example, if a person values independence s/he will become activated when it is threatened, feel despair if it is taken away, and happy when it is present.

Schwartz (2012) outlined the ten basic human values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism (see figure below). The basic human values, Schwartz noticed, were distinguished in all cultures with particular values being more valuable than others: benevolence and universalism are ranked top two in their importance, being the two self-transcendent values, learned early on through secure attachments and contributing to social relationships within culture.

One value could represent a cluster of other values, expressing what a culture

considers good, right and desirable for their members (Schwartz, 2012). Social status, prestige, control and dominance over others could be represented as one value: power. Stimulation value is represented as excitement, novelty, and challenge in life. As Schwartz noted in his outline on values, it is important to consider how values are grouped together or ordered within a system of beliefs. Some values are in conflict with each other like benevolence and power, while others are compatible like conformity and security.

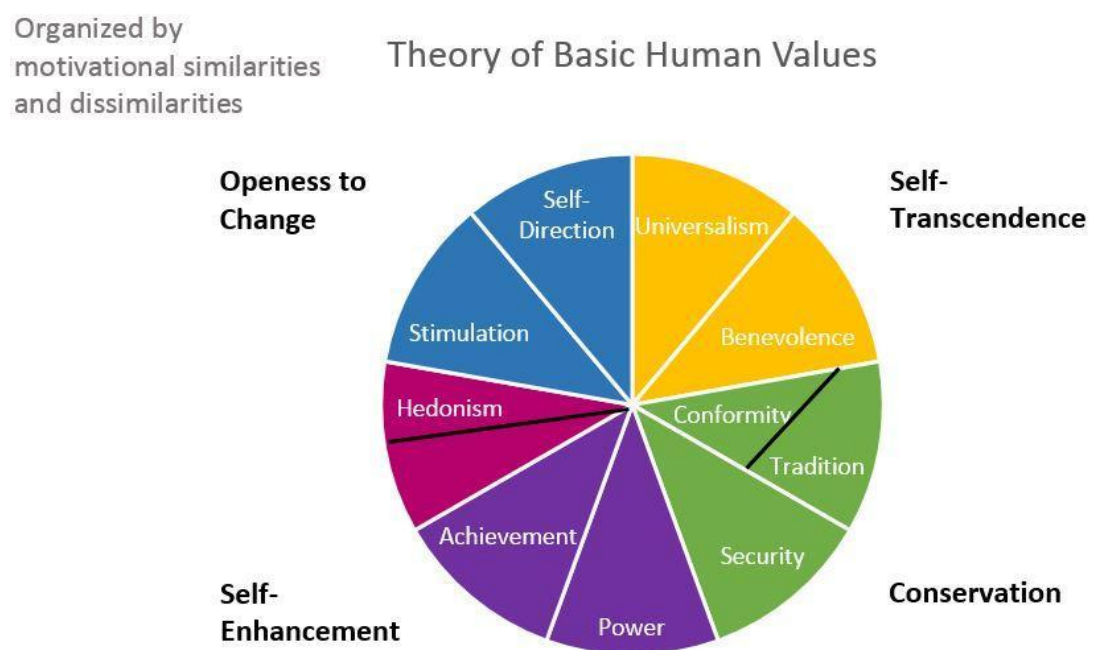


Figure 2. Basic human values (Schwartz, 2012, p. 9).

Individual vs. communal values. The most widely used distinctions today in speaking about cultural values are the traditional vs. individualistic or East vs. West divide. The values differ according to the locus of importance – self or the group. In communal cultures one is expected to adjust inner needs and desires to others in the group. Individualistic cultures value action and achievement, changing the environment

to fit personal preferences (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). Another way to describe traditional and individualistic worldviews is through *selfways*. Selfways are different types of individual participations in different cultures (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). These different selfways impact cognition, emotional expression, and motivation.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) wrote an anecdote of two different approaches to employee motivation in America. A small Texas company told their employees to look in the mirror and say 100 times “I am beautiful” before they come to work. A Japanese supermarket in New Jersey told employees to hold hands and tell each other, “You are beautiful” (1991). The example confirmed what other studies had shown. American selfways were considered independent, focused on achieving a positive self and the Japanese selfways were interdependent, adjusting to the social environment and avoidance of negative relationships (Markus, & Kitayama, 1991). In relation to joy and awe, it is worth noticing that Plato believed that both joy and awe are experienced when one perceives the beauty of the beloved – “You are beautiful” (Plato, Euthydemus). Love, as Fredrickson (2013) confirmed, is an amplified emotion, because it is experienced together, therefore “you are beautiful” could bring one closer to the ability to experience awe and joy in contrast to the statement “I am beautiful,” which is a closed statement centered on the self.

Emotional regulation in individual and communal cultures. The different approach to self and others begins, as one would imagine with early age and first attachments. In interdependent cultures emotional regulation is achieved through social engagement, focusing on the wellbeing of others, and maintaining harmony within the group (Thrommsdorff & Rothbaum, 2008). In contrast, independent view of self leads to

emotional regulation through personal self-esteem, individual wellbeing, and socially disengaging emotions (Thrommsdorff, & Rothbaum, 2008).

Cultural values regions. Ingehart and Maker (2000), followed by Schwarz (2006) independently identified eight regions of distinct cultural values: West European, Anglo, East-Central European, Orthodox Eastern European, South and South-East Asian, Middle East and Sub Saharan African, Confucian, and Latin American. Schwarz (2006) compared the dimensions of both studies and made some seminal conclusions on the way cultural values differ.

Schwartz (1994) identified seven cultural values in relation to the individual and the group: Embeddedness vs. Intellectual or Affective Autonomy; the requirements for responsible behavior: Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism; and the connection with the natural and social world: Mastery vs. Harmony. Inglehart and Baker used the traditional/secular-rational dimension, while Schwarz measured the autonomy/embeddedness dimension. Traditional/secular-rational dimension measured orientation toward authority with some societies stressing high importance on religion, nation and family, while these are not as important to secular-rational societies. The highest items on this dimension were connected with religious beliefs and attitudes. Schwartz autonomy/embeddedness dimension similarly measured individual connection to tightly bound structures of mutual obligation. The other two similar dimensions were the egalitarian/hierarchy dimension and the survival/self-expression dimension.

It would be important to note that although the two dimensions looked the same, in measuring 72 countries Schwartz found big differences in three specific countries. Bulgaria, China, and Estonia ranked in the top 10% on tradition/secular-rational and were

bottom third on autonomy/embeddedness. The discrepancy was a result of the breakdown of traditional morality and religious faith during decades of Communism. While embeddedness continued to play a huge role in society, the religious values connected with tradition had severely declined. The example shows that the two dimensions captured different aspects of these countries. Schwarz also found that Sweden and Norway were very high on both dimensions being egalitarian and self-expressive and Bulgaria was very low on both. Turkey was higher on egalitarianism and autonomy and lower on hierarchy and embeddedness, than its Middle Eastern Muslim neighbors. This reflected Ataturk's legacy, secularism, long intermingling with Eastern European cultures and its recent interest in joining Europe.

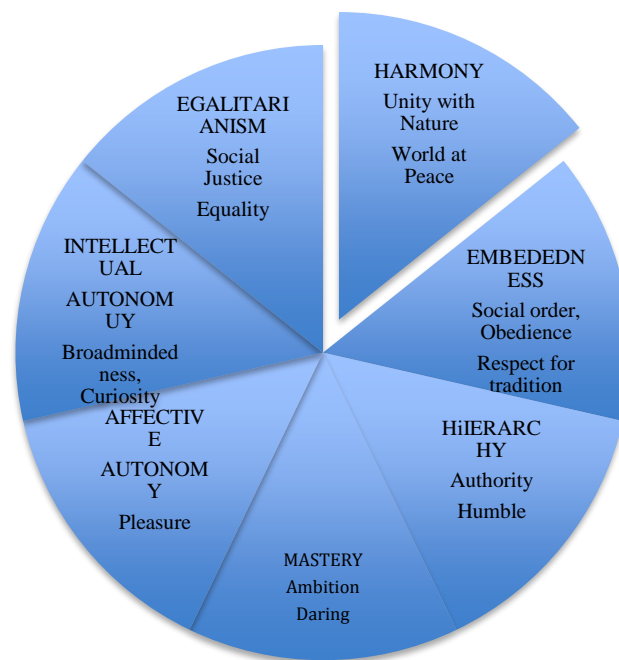


Figure 3. Cultural values (Schwartz, 2006, p.142)

There are several other major discoveries from Schwartz' (2006) study in relation to this research. In the United States egalitarianism, intellectual autonomy and harmony

were lower than in Western Europe, while mastery, hierarchy and embeddedness were higher. Individualism in Western European countries was connected to egalitarianism and harmony stressing the importance of the welfare of others, belonging to the natural and social worth – Western European individualism was more of an intellectual and affective autonomy. In the United States, contrary to Western European countries, mastery was the most expressed at the expense of harmony, which could explain the perception of the American culture as egocentric and egotistic. Yet, this statement is also not correct according to Schwartz (2006): intellectual autonomy surprisingly is not valued in the States, and collectivism also surprisingly is higher compared to Western European cultures. This fits with the emphasis on religion, hierarchy and the family. In summary, this type of profile in the USA “encourages an assertive, pragmatic, entrepreneurial, and even exploitative orientation to the social and natural environment” (p. 159). This astute observation begs a big question: if exploitative tendencies are connected to American values, would awe, which is precisely the lack of mastery, and joy, which focuses more on connection and being-filled, be less possible when such values are very high on the cultural priority list?

In summary, values matter. They are the driving forces motivating emotion and behavior. Value differences could be separated through the big Western-Eastern divide of focusing on the individual or the group. By introducing more key values Schwartz (2006) and others were able to map out eight distinct world regions. And in each of these, the ethnic group has its own diverse ways of organizing lived experience. How do values propel the seeking of certain types of emotions? The next section will explore the process of choosing and living emotional lives within the natural habitat people are born in.

Values and Desired Emotions

“The desire to prolong, intensify or terminate emotions depends upon one’s self-construal, situational demands, and cultural factors” (Thrommsdorff & Rothbaum, 2008, p. 87). Culturally, people want to experience the emotions that are congruent with their values.

Ideal Affect. Affect Valuation Theory (AVT) developed by Tsai (2006) claimed that there has been a discrepancy between how people study and understand emotion. While psychology in the past claimed that people everywhere experience the same emotions, anthropologists noticed the vast differences in cultural expressions of emotion. Tsai discovered that the focus of study was different. Psychology in the past has studied people across cultures, asking what their response to a meaningful affect was, what they feel (“How often on average do you feel this emotion?”) not how they want to feel (“How often do you want to feel this emotion?”). As a result, psychology focused on actual affect and ignored people’s ideal for positive emotions, which Tsai coined as ideal affect. Ideal affect is dictated by cultural values and norms. Because culture teaches us what is good, beautiful and virtuous, culture suggests what the ideal emotions should be.

Ideal affect and arousal levels. Tsai understood ideal affect primarily different arousal levels. Feeling states have two dimensions – valence and arousal. Arousal is how high or low the emotion should be that one is comfortable with. For example, there could be exuberant joy and serene joy – one is high arousal level and the other low. (See Figure #). Both high and low arousal levels could be pleasant or unpleasant. In the high arousal level a person who experiences pleasant emotions could feel enthusiastic, elated, and excited. In the low arousal pleasant experience the individual would feel peaceful and

serene. The values of culture would dictate what type of arousal one wants to feel. American culture values high arousal positive states such as excitement and enthusiasm, much more than Chinese culture. Chinese culture emphasizes low arousal positive states like calm and serenity (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). Americans value and continue to value excitement as they age. Even 80-year old Americans want to be excited about life, while Chinese Americans strive to be healthy, but not to be young (Tsai, Louie, Chen, & Uchida, 2007). The best ways to determine culture values are by examining cultural stories represented in books and media (Tsai, et al., 2007). Children learn early how they should feel through the perpetuation of self-narratives of their cultures. Best selling children's story books in the States and Thailand, for example (Tsai, et al., 2007), showed preference for characters who were engaged in exciting and stimulating activities in the States ("Where the wild things are"), compared to the Taiwanese story books that preferred more quiet states.

Two-Dimensional Map of Affective States

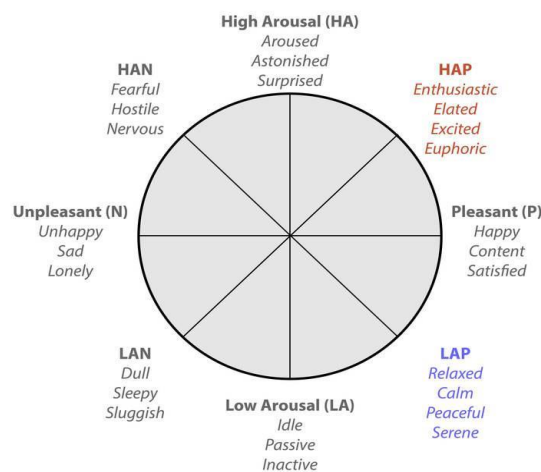


Figure 4. Affective states (Tsai, 2013).

Ideal affect, individualistic and communal values. The difference in ideal states

is based on the locus of culture – the individual or the group (Tsai, 2013). Individualism vs. communal identities influences the ideal affect in cultures. In communal cultures one is expected to adjust inner needs and desires to others in the group. Individualistic cultures value action and achievement, changing the environment to fit personal preferences. Action requires excitement, while collectivism requires quiet and decreased physiological arousal to discern what the group needs first. How a person wants to feel predicts what they choose in life. A person chooses the ideal affect, which is defined by their understanding of happiness and unhappiness. If we look again at the figure on affective states, there could be high and low negative states. All people experience affective states such as dull, sleepy and sluggish in the low arousal and fearful, and nervous in the high arousal. As a result even when different culture groups talk about something as depression, their definition could be very different from the one used in the *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed). European Americans would be more likely to talk about low arousal negative states while Chinese about high arousal negative states (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). This fact impacts Western-developed measures, which sample excitement for happiness and equate lack of excitement with depression. These measurements would work in American context, but should not be measuring how others feel; therefore they are culturally bound while assuming validity (Tsai, et al, 2006).

Religion and ideal affect. Religion is another type of culture. Consequently religious differences in ideal affect are also to be expected (Wolfe, 2003). Religion differs from national culture in overarching themes that relate to the supernatural, death and suffering, relating to the world of others and their needs, and most importantly, the

sacred (Tsai, Koopmann-Holm, et al. (2013). Current American Christians strive for high arousal positive states while Buddhist teaching is associated with low arousal positive states (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007). Research of the Buddhist and Christian classic texts and recent religious literature shows that high arousal state is more desirable in Christianity than in Buddhism. Surprisingly, even though low arousal state is desirable in both religions classic texts, recent Christian literature and religious followers preferred low arousal states less than Buddhists (Wolfe, 2005).

Religion impacts emotional wellbeing and increases the frequency of experienced prosocial emotions; religious people are more hopeful and optimistic with greater grasp of the meaning of life and its purpose, which leads to less depression and anxiety (Tsai, & Park, 2014).

Ideal affect and the ideal internal state. There are five ways in which ideal affect impacts the ideal internal state or happiness. Ideal affect shapes (Tsai, & Park, 2014):

1. the definition of happiness: in American context it is defined as excitement and elation, and in Chinese context – as calm and relaxation.
2. how positive and negative affects interact.
3. affective response – people enjoy the states they value more.
4. what people regulate.
5. how positive states are socially perceived. People who value high arousal states would perceive someone who has them as more friendly, warm and trustworthy.

For example, a comparison study of German and American research concluded that something as simple as sympathy greeting cards expressed the German honest stating of negative facts, while Americans preferred cards on good memories and positive thoughts (Koopmann-Holm, & Tsai, 2014), showing American avoidance of negative

feelings. The ideal affect would impact people's choices of cards and of people they want to be around. This was shown to even impact the types of physicians they choose, with Americans choosing more excited physicians over more serene ones (Sims, & Tsai, 2015).

Specific values and desirable emotions. Tsai and colleagues (2007, 2013, 2014) have been working on the ideal affect concept for over a decade. The newest research broadens their concept arguing that values impact desirable emotions, not just the high and low arousal levels. Tamir et al. (2016) studied how values of self-transcendence or self-enhancement, openness to change or conservation (Schwartz, 2012) cause certain types of emotions, offering a more complete theory of desirable emotions.

Table 1

Values and desirable emotions (Tamir et al. (2016).

<u>Self-Regulating Values</u>	<u>Change Regulating Values</u>	
<u>Engagement</u>	Self-Transcendence	Openness to Change
	Love	Interest
	Affection	Curiosity
	Trust	Excitement
	Empathy	Enthusiasm
	Compassion	Passion
		NOT (Sadness Depression, Despair)
<u>Disengagement</u>	Self-enhancement	Conservation
	Anger	Calmness
	Contempt	Relaxation
	Hostility	Relief
	Hatred	Contentment
	Pride	NOT (Fear, Anxiety)

Tamir et al. (2016) discovered a link between values and desired emotions. The more people valued certain emotions, the more they wanted to experience them. The more they experienced an emotion, the more they wanted to experience it again, creating a cycle between desiring and experiencing! There was significant difference other than zero cross culturally. Also gender showed different preferences. Females desired self-transcending, conserving and opening emotions more than the males. The conclusions of the study were that people who endorse self-transcendent values would want to feel more empathy and compassion, people who valued self-enhancement wanted to feel pride and anger, people who valued openness to change would want to feel more interest and excitement and people who endorsed tradition wanted to feel more calmness and less fear (Tamir et al. 2016). Awe and joy were not among the emotions described in the study. Yet, both could be placed under openness to change and self-transcendence values, given the previous research of their phenomenology. As previous studies confirmed, both joy and awe are connected to the experience of love, engagement with others, compassion and advocacy and mostly excited and enthusiastic feelings. But calm and restful states are preferred by many cultures as attainment of the ideal state (Tsai, 2006).

Archetypes. A concept connected with desired emotions that has not been discussed so far, but is very important for the study of the Bulgarian culture is *archetype*. Gerganov (2015), a Bulgarian psycholinguist, who devoted 40 years of his life to the study of the archetypes, adopted the theory of Tversky about the asymmetric relations in

order to uncover unconscious prototype deep structures within culture. Deep structures were not mentioned under Schwartz' study (2006) on values or covered by Tsai (2013) and Tamir et al. (2016). With his team, Gernagov studies opposing language pairs, e.g. day and night, and through free association measured the distances between the two. Some of the word combinations Gerganov studied were man-woman, white-black, good-bad. The asymmetry in the distance between words shows that the archetype is first and the word that comes from it is the product – PARENT – child. The distance between the archetype and the product is greater in comparison to the distance between the product and the archetype: MOTHER – baby. It is easier to think of the archetypal word when one is prompted with the product. A big transcultural study looked at 200 word stimuli for Bulgarians, 100 words in each of these languages: Russians, Belarus, English, German, French, and Kyrgyz. Other studies examined language pairs in Europe and the USA. In all ethnicities *white* was the archetype, except in Bulgaria and Kyrgyzstan where the archetypes were *black*, *night*, *evil*, and *illness*. Bulgarian born Turks and Roma archetypes were similar to other European groups, not to ethnic Bulgarians. See the table below:

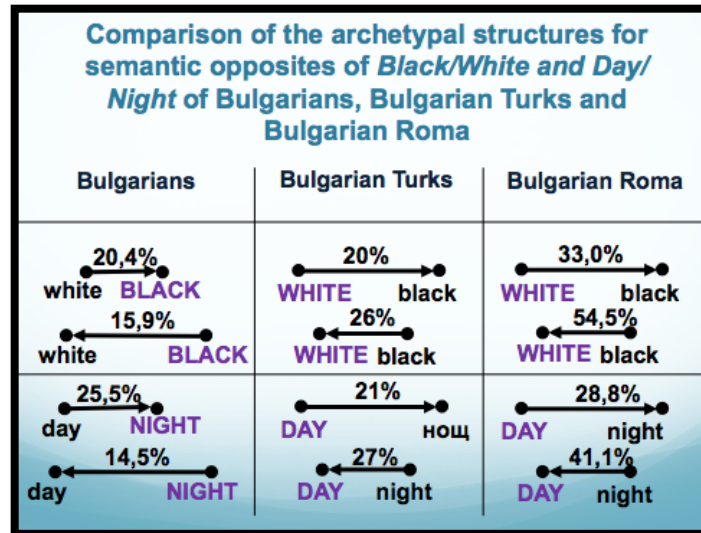


Figure 5. Comparison of Ethnic Archetypes (Gerganov, personal communication, May, 2015).

Surprisingly, in Bulgaria joy is also an archetype (shared by all other European nations and the USA). Joy is the archetype of the product - pain. The literature on joy and the archetypes in Bulgaria is important as it shows how deep-seated narrative structures play into the ideal affect, values, and expressed emotions within a culture. Viewing the world as evil, but joy as primary in Bulgarian context will have a cultural specific impact different than other cultures.

Cultural Scripts and Emotion

So far the literature review examined values and cultural regions, desired emotions and ideal affect. Cultural norms and beliefs are expressed in cultures through cultural scripts and their construction. An example of how Wierzbicka (1994) analyzed cultural scripts is her work on American and Polish cultures. A long exposition on both came to defining their very different cultural scripts, in Wierzbicka's own concluding words: AngloAmerican culture encouraged people to feel good all the time and be aware

of any given moment, to analyze and verbalize feelings and control them (p. 189). Polish culture encourages people to express freely their feelings and act upon them, to be spontaneous and free with both good and bad feelings without self-monitoring or delay (p. 189).

When discussing cultural scripts and emotion, there are other variables to consider as well – intimacy, closeness, harmony, sincerity, which mean different things in different cultures (Wierzbicka, 2003). Spontaneity, autonomy, turn-taking, also cordiality and courtesy, directness will have an impact (Wierzbicka, 2003).

In summary, cultural values and ideal affect could be monitored through breaking down complex language to more simple expressions of cultural scripts that show clearly cultural preferences and ways of interacting with reality. The next section is a description of cultural values at their height, transcending and open to change and being with others, embodying two of the big basic values discovered by Schwartz (2012) which include self-transcendence and openness-to-change, the same ones that are connected to joy and awe.

Communitas of Culture

Turner wrote a vibrant book on communal culture and joy (2012), making some brilliant observations on the creation of full meaning of life in the community. Even though the book is on joy, it is more helpful to discuss the discoveries in light of a cultural qualitative study of positive emotions. Turner's description of communitas helps describe the many sides of culture, especially communal culture. The current Western literature does a poor job of that, while Turner paints a colorful picture of cultural vitality.

The peak experience of *communitas*. Turner's *communitas* (united community) strongly resonates with Plato's awe at the beauty of the beloved, Maslow's peak experience, Bowlby's attachment theory and Csikszentmihalyi's flow. *Communitas* is culture at its best: the community coming together through festivals, work, crisis, and/or nature. *Communitas* is a gift of liminality, a state between where structure and status do not matter and face-to-face bonding can occur. Loss of ego and unity with each other, genuine help and long-term ties are built. In such places the often ignored by psychology rituals of communities are performed, angels and spirits enter. Given the many types of *communitas*, cultural expressions differ, yet what occurs is flow – bonding and alignment with others, nature, and spirit (Turner, 2012). Liminality is in and out of time, just like flow. Liminality in change is a “flowerbed” (p. 5) for joy. In a strikingly similar way Meadows (2015) calls joy the seed-bed for “beauty of human relationships and nature.” Situations that create joy (and awe) are full of human possibility and flourishing, even disaster could have bonding power, humans are no longer lonely and alienated, but participating, at full awareness and capacity, introducing the sacred in the ordinary tasks and entering into collective prayer and worship.

Communitas with nature. The connection to nature is a powerful *communitas*. According to Turner (2012), nature includes culture, a powerful insight. The four locations of this research offer great diversity in nature. When one is in Istanbul, it is evident that the city is so breathtaking partly as a result of inhabiting two continents, Asia and Europe, bridging the Bosphorus. The town of Bansko in Bulgaria is in a circle of mountains, the stones of the old houses and streets are brought down from the mountain. Thessaloniki, Greece is a seaport, exposed to the high temperatures in the summers. The

houses are marble floors and tables, and the quarries are close and produce marble in abundance. Harrisonburg, Virginia, a place of old-order Mennonites and modern Anabaptists, one of few refugee resettlement places in the area, is situated in the Shenandoah Valley. Culture in its many varieties is a reflection of nature where culture began. But the perception of nature differs greatly in cultures. The West wants to tame and subdue nature, while indigenous communities around the world holding premodern worldview strive for *communitas* with the land, giving it honor and place (Turner, 2012). The striving for reunion with nature is evident in the current eco movement for return to nature, in awe of its greatness and preservation of its fragile equilibrium.

Communitas of shared values. *Communitas* could also represent members who are not necessarily together in a physical place. Turner (2012) gave an example with bus drivers who have special language on the road to communicate, and show courtesy. By the communities of counselors, the gatherings at regional and national conferences, are places where like-minded people come together to learn and bond, begin new projects with others, be introduced to strangers who become new friends.

Turner's (2012) *communitas* is an important piece to add to the study of culture and positive emotions. It is the sublime within the cultural, the transformational power of peak experiences together and the vivid world where joy and awe help the soul grow wings. The next two short sections discuss the little that was found on specific research of culture and joy and culture and awe.

Culture and Joy

Because little has been done on other cultures, this review looks more closely at the American script for joy and happiness. It is helpful to consider in comparison to the

other cultures studied and also in looking at the results of this study, since the American script is the unspoken local one that could impact interpretation.

Joy and the American script. Through ideal affect it was determined that Americans highly value enthusiasm, which was confirmed by Somers (1984) in comparing Americans to Greeks, West Indians and Chinese. Also ideal affect showed that Americans want to be positive and ignore negative feelings. Cultural scripts confirm that observation. Feeling good all the time (being happy) is an American cultural norm that was keenly described by Baranczak (1990), professor of Polish literature at Harvard University. Happiness was the most frequently used word in Basic American. But there were vast differences between the understanding of happiness in American and Polish languages. Where in Polish the word was restricted to “rare states of profound bliss (p.12):

I don't mean to say that Americans are a nation of superficial, back slapping enjoyers and happy-makers, as opposed to our suffering Slavic souls. What I'm trying to point out is only one example of the semantic incompatibilities, which are so firmly ingrained in languages and cultures that they sometimes make mutual communication impossible. (p. 13)

American culture script stresses the importance of cheerfulness, happiness, friendliness, and enthusiasm (Wierzbicka, 1997) In America, there is a pressure to smile, projecting “authentic warmth” and positive self-image, emphasizing the feelings of others and a need to be liked by many people. Friendships are not necessarily the condition for warmth, but success. In other words, people are friendly, but they do not mean much by it. There is a cultural message of feelings needing to be controlled to avoid negative ones.

One is to be aware of feelings at any moment, analyze and verbalize them. An example of controlled feeling is – enjoyment, a word that does not have an equivalent in other European languages, which supposes that one has joy while doing something, something under their control (like “have fun”). Also Americans exaggerate through overstating “You look great; great weather; this is great.” This type of American expression has no equivalent in Polish culture or Bulgarian for that matter. Even ways of rituals for saying good-bye are different: Polish people focus on the sadness of the moment and the gravity of life and tragedy while American students write “Fun knowing you.”

Cultural scripts impact the emotion one wants to feel and how to express it to others. De Rivera (1999) noted that elation states occur more frequently in cultures that encourage wishing and may even be absent in cultures that discourage fantasy. Persons in cultures that encourage dependence implicit in hope should exhibit states of gladness, while persons in cultures that discourage such hoping should neither recognize nor experience the state (De Rivera, 1999).

One final study worth mentioning is a qualitative cultural study on joy in a Native American community (Hill, 2006). Hill’s reasoning behind the idea was how little space had been given to remember and share experiences of joy. The researcher created a Joy circle where 12 women from the Turtle Island Chautauqua and the Eastern Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania shared their joy experiences through word association and storytelling and then were invited to be a part of an artistic project. Hill discovered 6 qualities of joy – it was mysterious and elusive; it reflected spiritual beliefs; was associated with light; present in different states of consciousness; recognized through bodily memories; communicated through somatic language and in all these interrelated

with the self, others, nature, the Creator, and the community. The event of being with others and sharing for these 12 women was found to: help raise awareness of the body states of joy and the language of joy; affirm women's roles as mothers and daughters, women in community and in nature; promoted respect and desire for dialogue with others; created a mirror experience of the joy talked about; prompted self-reflection in affirming a life of gratitude and a call to action to remember joy.

Culture and Awe

Most of the current research on awe has been done in the West, with a few exceptions. Razavi et al. (2016) compared United States, Iran, Malaysia, and Poland, and discovered extensive variations in cultural values including power distance and preference to extroversion and openness. Dispositional awe showed the greatest difference between United States and Iran, USA scoring the highest on extroversion while Iran scoring the lowest. A comparison of Japanese and American subjects (Taylor & Uchida, 2015) showed more negative but socially engaged emotions and greater co-occurrence of both negative and positive emotions in Japanese subjects. A prominent theme in the interviews on awe in Japan was death – a theme completely absent from previous research in the States.

Chapter summary

Chapter Two reviewed the relevant literature and founded the present study within the appropriate context of similar research. This chapter began with the exploration of Plato's study of the ideal internal state and the emotions connected with love, his work still holding up under scrutiny and comparison to vast modern research on emotion and culture. The review set up the background for research of specific positive

emotions within early psychological work and Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. The phenomena of joy and awe were discussed in detail with corresponding etymologies from the four cultures in question. The research on joy and awe is very recent and what has been written on joy surprisingly seems even less than the available research on awe. It is clear that there is a significant gap in the understanding of joy and awe in cultural context. Cultural values and their connection to desired emotions made an important bridge toward a qualitative study in culture, supplying the concepts and language needed for this research.

The present study utilized a phenomenological qualitative design to give rich descriptions of the emotions of joy and awe in the context of four distinct cultures – Bulgaria, USA, Greece, and Turkey. Chapter Three will provide the introduction to the qualitative inquiry and outline the procedures for participant selection, data collection and analysis.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter includes a description of the research methodology and is organized into several sections that provide the structure for the research plan. It discusses methodological fit, positioning, participants, data gathering, analysis procedures, credibility, and transferability.

Methodological Fit

Qualitative research is a study of meaning people ascribe to their lived experience and situations in their spoken or written words (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Qualitative research is a type of constructivist inquiry that aims at understanding of constructs, and reaching more informed reconstructions through trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1984). Qualitative research is used best when it is congruent with the nature of the research problem, is employed to explore areas about which little is known, and when it compliments the personal experience and scholarly interests of the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

There are five major types of qualitative research: narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study (Creswell, 2013). This current research project is an inquiry grounded in the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenological research exploring joy and awe across culture. Phenomenology explores the individual experience with a particular occurrence. The analysis of the data is a blend of phenomenology and rigorous, interactive tactics from constructivist grounded theory. The focus of the study includes the themes through which meaning is conveyed in the cultural process of experiencing joy and awe, and the way individual narrative has been constructed within the community. The phenomenological interviews provided rich data,

exploring in-depth understanding of the individual experience, grounded in specific communities and cultures.

Positionality and Personal Bias

This study of culture is done from a viewpoint of a person situated in two distinctly different interpretive communities – Bulgaria and the USA. I was born, raised and educated in Bulgaria. I was indoctrinated in the Communist value system, witnessed its collapse, and the beginning of the democratic movement. I have studied and worked in the States for the last 15 years and have observed the rocky start of democracy in Bulgaria from afar. My country is in the center of the Balkans, a region known for the protracted conflicts and historical trauma experienced by its diverse population. Beyond this is the recent economic crisis in Greece and unparalleled flow of refugees with their impact. Western and Russian interests, humiliating historical losses, and ethnic/religious hostilities have defined communal identities and perception (Todorova, 2009).

On April 5, 2013 a BBC article on Bulgaria described the despair that had swept the country (“Bulgaria holds prayer”). During the first three months of 2013 Bulgarians witnessed mass protests against high electricity bills, government corruption, and extreme poverty. Religious leaders, under the urging of the president, came together to call all people to patience and more faith in the aftermath of seven self-immolations and 200 suicides in that time period. Hospitals started offering free psychological counseling. Twenty years after democracy and the fall of Communism, the disillusioned public protested against the devaluing of life and meaning in the country.

I began the research on Bulgaria five years ago, trying to understand the underlying individual and transgenerational trauma. As a result, I am already primed to

look for more negative emotional expressions in Bulgaria. This study is personal to me. There is a lot at stake in finding mechanisms for healing and positive change for my community.

I began the research with preconceived notions, especially regarding what I would find in the American interviews. I did expect more superficiality in the American context. Like Weizbicka (1994) I notice cheerful friendliness, but rarely find deep friendships in the USA context. I reflected on my values and resistance points throughout the research and was careful to inspect the data from all possible angles. The American participants I had chosen challenged some of my strongly held beliefs about who Americans are and how they connect to the world of others. I came away with gratitude in discovering authentic, deep people I would love to have as friends.

In Greece, I was given a warm entry through the common Orthodox roots of both countries and life-long friendships that opened doors. The most difficult country for entry was Turkey, the dominant culture being Muslim. Considering that Bulgaria was occupied by the Ottoman Empire for 500 years, there is a lot still in common between the two countries, even though there are significant religious differences. I have studied extensively the culture and community of Bulgarian Turks and ethnic Bulgarian Muslims in the past, which is a valuable base for my research in Turkey.

I found that my approach to Turkish men, in particular, drastically changed when I went alone to conduct the interviews in Istanbul. This was my third visit to the city, but my first time alone. I was stared at shamelessly and rudely in the buses because I was an unaccompanied female. I was afraid to walk by myself in Istanbul after dark. It took me a long time to process the visit and to let go of the sense of diminished agency while I had

been there without my husband. I let go of this one occurrence while coding the interviews, as it did not bear weight on the way participants had shared their experiences and hospitality with me. Some of the most beautiful stories and acts of sharing and closeness came from Turkey! I hope to show this side of Turkey, not what is on the Western news these days – terrorist attacks and political upheaval.

I continually examined my impact on group participants and the interactions that transpired. For minority people in the Balkans, I was a person they saw as a way to share their story with the world. Bulgarians themselves gave me all of themselves with the desire to reach the wider world and be known by others. I hope to honor that need, our need to be known for our goodness, not our failures and chaos.

Participants Sample Population and Selection Criteria

I chose participants through criterion-based convenience sampling (Cresswell, 1998). Phenomenological study requires that the participants are people who have experienced the phenomenon and are able to articulate it (Cresswell, 1998). The experience of joy and awe is universal – therefore, the convenience form of non-probability sampling is suitable. Participants in the interviews resided in the countries of Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, and the USA. They represented the dominant cultures, but also minorities' narratives. I wanted to include more ethnocultural representation: there are significant minority ethnic groups in the Balkan region, particularly Armenians and Jews. I chose one Armenian from Bulgaria and one Jewish participant from Greece for the final analysis. In the States I interviewed two European Americans, two African Americans and one Latino.

Participants were identified through my contacts and interactions with cultural

liaisons for populations for whom English was not a primary language. I asked to interview people encountered during my travel in various places I stayed, with whom I shared meals and other activities. Also people in each country suggested potential interviewees. Given the nature of the cultures in which I traveled, some unanticipated willing participants emerged. Because I relied heavily on others in choosing participants sometimes I was unable to control how many male vs. female participants I was able to interview. In Turkey I interviewed a total of four men and two women, I chose three of the men and two of the women, to achieve better gender balance.

To arrive at saturation of the themes and patterns of the interviews and ensure credibility for phenomenological inquiry, I interviewed at least six participants from each country: Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, USA, but stopped the analysis work at the fifth interview when saturation had been reached and I noticed repetitions in the themes. I chose my state of residence in the USA, Virginia, for the interviews, considering how vast the country is. In Turkey, I interviewed people only in Istanbul, which has a population of 16 million alone compared to the entire country of Bulgaria, which is over six million.

Table 2. below illustrates interviewees' sample demographics. There were 11 female and nine male participants; 14 Christians: eight Orthodox Christians, three Protestants, One Armenian Christian, one Catholic, one Christian Agnostic; five Muslims; and one Jew. Represented ethnicities were: two African Americans, one Armenian, four Bulgarian, two European-Americans, four Greeks, one Latin American, one Jew, and five Turks. The age span of the group was between 30 and 70 with eight people between the ages of 30 and 40, eight between the ages of 44 and 55; two between

the ages of 56 and 65, and two between the ages of 66 and 70. The group consisted of highly educated individuals with 13 out of the 20 with master's degrees and one PhD. Five participants had a bachelor's or an associate degree and two had completed high school. The majority were successful and accomplished individuals. There were three published poets, a university faculty member, a university high administrator, a nurse practitioner, a high school teacher, a director of a national TV station, two lawyers, an artist, a nurse, and a music director. The majority of participants (16 out of 20) were married, one was divorced, and three were single.

Table 2.

Interviewee Sample Demographics

Interviewee Sample Demographics	N	%
Total	20	
Gender		
Female	11	55
Male	9	45
Religion		
Christian	14	70
Orthodox Christian	8	40
Protestant Christian	4	20
Armenian Christian	1	5
Christian Catholic	1	5
Muslim	5	25
Jewish	1	5
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	2	10
Armenian	1	5
Bulgarian	4	20
European-American	2	10
Greek	4	20
Latin-American	1	5
Jewish	1	5
Turkish	5	25

Age		
	30-40	8 40
	41-55	8 40
	56-65	2 10
	66-70	2 10
Education		
	Highschool	2 10
	Vocational/Trade/Bachelors	5 25
	Graduate	13 65
Marital Status		
	Single, never married	3 15
	Married or domestic partner	16 80
	Divorced	1 5

Data Gathering

Data collection with participants was in the form of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were an hour to an hour and a half long. They were recorded, transcribed and (if necessary) translated to English before they were analyzed. Given specific cultural considerations, I used a universal design with options for either written or audio consent, and the type of information (i.e. choice of name, age, country) that was reported in the analysis. All information was securely stored (as outlined in the IRB) and participants had the option of receiving transcripts from me at the completion of the study. Some of the participants I had known for years from my travels. They shared their homes with me, took me around their city and showed me the changes in their environment. As I continued with the transcription of the data and the analysis, I kept in touch with some participants and sent them parts of their interviews with my specific observations, keeping the dialogue open. The process helped maintain prolonged engagement, persistent observation and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which assured credibility (credibility is further described at the end of this chapter).

I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) by using some of the concepts of narrative. I considered how people tell stories and how the interactional process naturally unfolds. The questions were piloted and were well paced. The interview protocol ensured a comfortable level of sharing and trust building before the harder and richer questions. I used responsive interviewing, which views both interviewer and interviewee as human beings having a relationship, aiming at depth, rather than breath of the data, remaining flexible and open (Rubin & Rubin, p. 30). I set up the tone of the process by offering not to disclose subjects that participants deemed inappropriate for public sharing (refer to Appendix B: consent form). I also developed my own style of responsive interviewing – with some participants I was more comfortable to sit back and listen, while with others I asked further questions to explore the reasoning behind certain statements they made.

Childhood, Family, Change

The interviews began with questions about participants' childhood. There are several reasons for that. 1). Because this is a study of culture, the questions track types of families, environment and communal experiences, and values that shaped individual worldview and the emotions of joy and awe. "Tell me about your family roots? What was it like growing up here? What in your community values and upbringing are the sources of joy and awe?" As far as I am aware, there has been no other phenomenological study on emotion that has begun the research with childhood experience. 2). The idea of doing qualitative interviews with participants cross-culturally, having them reminiscence and return to vivid experiences from childhood before they answer the questions on joy and awe, is a type of intervention that broadens their mindset and opens them to the questions

that follow (the premises of Fredrickson's broaden and build theory, 1998). For example, "What is your happiest childhood memory?" 3). Participants are asked to compare their childhood to how things are currently: "How has life changed since?" This question helped see culture through change and the influence of globalization processes on positive emotion in the places studied.

Metaphors and Stories of Joy and Awe

The next set of questions explored directly the experience of joy and awe. Instead of asking what they think joy and awe are or describe an experience, participants were asked to use metaphors or draw: "If you are to finish this sentence what would you say or if you want you could draw a simple picture to illustrate your thoughts: Joy is like... Awe is like..." The metaphors could get to the representative cultural ways of knowing and the ideal affect, sharing first image and memory that came to mind. After exploring the metaphors on joy and awe, participants were asked more in-depth questions: "What has been the most joyful moment in your life? What takes your breath away? What do you get lost in?" Because sometimes contrasts help to understand phenomenon another metaphor question was asked: "When have you found light in darkness?" The rationale behind the question on light and darkness was my attempt to understand how people hold together joy and trauma. Because I studied for a long while Bulgarian trauma narratives, I was interested in knowing how past victimization (sometimes generations ago) plays out in current lives of people in the Balkans and colors their understanding of good and evil, joy and pain. And because America is such a new place in comparison – Bulgaria was founded in 681 AD, how does the narrative sound and feel different in their understanding of the contrasts of pain and joy? The final question was: "When have you

experienced joy and awe together and what were the lessons learned?” It gave participants a chance to summarize and find possible themes in their own story, thus helping with the later analysis. This second sets of questions could be asked in any culture and cultural differences might be difficult to track, but because of the introductory childhood questions, it is more likely that the tone of the interview would be situational and connected to a certain time, place, language, community, and family.

Photography

Profiles of the research participants were developed to help the reader of a wider audience formulate an image of the people who were a part of the study. The photography part of this project creates immediacy and brings further depth to the stories. Since “stories are data with a soul” (Fields, 2012), creating individual portraits with pictures for public viewing with the use of portraiture is a powerful way to disseminate the data. Portraits are in vivid color, close ups, and short quotations will be used in the future to introduce participants’ understanding and experience of joy and awe.

Data Analysis

The goal of the data analysis was to understand the views of participants and answer the research question(s). The interviews were transcribed and translated. There are advantages and disadvantages when coding in the original language or translating the interviews into English and then coding them. The benefit of translating was the accessibility of the data to non-native peer reviewers.

Phenomenological Analysis Procedures

In phenomenology, “the intent is to understand the phenomena in [participant’s] own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the

person herself” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96). Moustakas (1994, p.120-121) presented a modified version of the van Kaam method, suggesting breaking the data down first into meaningful units, organizing it with horizontalization, or listing of every expression relevant to the experience. After trying to follow the horizontalization method, which I understood as writing all quotes relevant to the experience, I got more and more confused. I outlined the horizons for three interviews. Horizontalizing the data was making it unmanageable. From what the material was presenting, there could have been hundreds of units before beginning to group the data into patterns and themes. Reading of the literature suggested that others had had similar problems with phenomenological inquiry and had chosen some of the techniques of grounded theory to ease the process. In my analysis I engaged in coding, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, and construction of a composite description of the experience of joy and awe.

Coding

Lin (2013) suggested open coding to get to the core and meaning of the phenomenological data. Open coding helps identify the concepts and categories by breaking down the data into manageable units (Lin, 2013, p. 473). DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, and McCulloch (2011) described the circular process of code development and coding. The research literature, theory, and raw data are all used for the development of codes and the codebook. The codebook is a set of codes, definitions, and examples from the interviews, which is used to analyze the interview data. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) suggested two ways of developing the codes: through theory-driven codes, reviewing and revising the codes within context of the data, or through data-driven codes – identifying subsample themes and comparing these across subsamples. For both types of code,

developing the final result should be establishing reliability and trustworthiness of the analysis, which was done through comparing and reaching consensus with the coding team.

Open coding. I began with the initial or open coding method, driven by the original data, which dimensionalized the issues (Charmaz, 2006). I also followed the *Epoche* by remaining “open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Moustakas (1994) suggests setting aside personal bias in the stage of *Epoche* by interviewing oneself with the same interview protocol. I recorded an in-depth interview with myself, which helped me get in touch with my own values, memories of childhood joy and awe, and perception of both emotions and cultural connections. Through this, I was able to make my bias transparent and look at the interviews with fresh eyes.

Throughout the process of the first cycle of coding, the primary research question, ‘what is the experience of joy and awe?’ was the focus. For the coding book I looked at three interviews initially and created separate codebooks for each. I then merged them and did open line-by-line coding for all 20 interviews, creating an extensive coding book. I had a hunch before reading some of the literature that values are associated with the experiences of joy and awe. The literature confirmed that notion. As a result, the codes for cultural values were both theory and data-driven. After the initial open coding I continued with analytical coding, which was a step “beyond descriptive coding” (Merriam, 2009, p.180) toward discovering the meaning of the experience.

Coding team. To ensure data validity and trustworthiness I engaged a coding team to do independent open coding and compare their codes to the codebook, which I

created and sent to each member. The two team-members I chose were both faculty members, holding a PhD in Counseling and Supervision and a PsyD in Clinical and School Psychology respectively. They have worked extensively with qualitative data analysis. One is a native of England and the other is from Croatia, a neighboring country to Bulgaria and Greece with similar history and cultural values. The work we engaged in together had integrity. I was not to continue with the coding until the other members of the team had done their work and had given me their agreement to proceed. Through Skype meetings, emails and shared Google docs, we discussed the codes and came to a consensus on the codebook of the first two interviews.

Even though phenomenological inquiry does not require open coding, we decided that the most rigorous way to approach the data was to code all of the interviews, which I did. I also sent team members the consolidated codebook for review before writing chapter four. Their feedback was incorporated in memos and notes I took during our conversations and then included into the coding book, the analysis of chapter four, and the main themes for discussion in chapter five.

Reduction and Elimination

The modified van Kaam method as described by Moustakas (1994) follows horizontalization with reduction and elimination – or making sure the data contains the experience and is sufficient for understanding it. If it does not, it is eliminated from the list of horizons, in my case – the list of open codes. The initial coding and the codebook were used instead of horizons to consolidate the data and reduce and eliminate parts of the interviews, which did not contain the experience. For example, one participant spoke a lot about his recent illness and retirement. These were human developmental issues

very important to him. I included parts of that discussion into the theme on illness as a block to joy and awe, but it was a specific topic, which I could not give full attention and space.

Also, I had asked interviewees to connect values of their culture to joy and awe. I had an entire section of the codebook connected to values, but some of the values did not connect directly to the research question. For example, one participant spoke of honor, dignity, and responsibility as family and community values. There was not a meaningful bridge offered between these values and the emotions of awe and joy. As a result, these codes were eventually eliminated. I had to be careful not to exclude values that seemed unrelated, but needed further understanding. The value of education in connection to joy and awe was not easy to understand, even by me. One member of the coding team with an etic positioning was surprised by it and found it misguided. The member with emic positioning and similar culture helped me decide to keep the code for education as a value connected to joy and awe in the Balkan region. The etic member of the team agreed after seeing the arguments given by participants and the analytical explanation offered.

Clustering and Thematizing

I clustered and thematized the constituents of the experience by labeling them, following the modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). I first grouped the codes under the specific questions I had asked in the interviews. For example, I had many codes under childhood – parents, grandparents, extended family, community, poverty, nature, the safe-street, dreams, and innocence. Each cluster of codes had sub codes: the safe street code contained codes for play, safety, emotional expression, friendships, etc. Because I could not afford to use NVivo, I had three separate codebooks – one on the

childhood experience and joy and awe, one on values linked to joy and awe, and one on joy and awe, tracking the separate responses that connected to each. The final consolidated codebook had 73 clusters of codes, which included descriptions for each code, and direct short quotations from participants. The sub-code *role-models*, for example, was described after the first few interviews as: spiritual development, education and people who have led us outside the darkness. These are individuals one knows personally or has read of. They offer light and are an example to follow. Here is one of the quotes used with the code on role-models:

I accept that Jesus in his human body, Buda, Shiva, and geniuses like Leonardo, these are people sent to pull us upwards toward the lighter and the more spiritual, so that we could build ourselves up to achieve the halo in some manner. We are becoming brutes on this earth; we will kill each other in another WWIII, if we don't listen to these people what they preach to us. It is not about equality, for every man has to upgrade himself and is not equal to the one who is lazy and drinks beer all day. So equality – there never was and never will be. But the spiritual development is needed, because we are at a standstill, digging ourselves into a hole (Bulgaria).

Although there was no explicit connection between spiritual models to joy and awe in this quote, other participants spoke of learning awe from their role models – a grandmother taught her granddaughter how to feel awe of the natural world, etc. The sub-code *role-models* was placed under the category of spirituality and awe.

Some of the codes would not fit under the categories I was building. I discovered that there were other emotions expressed as they related to joy and awe. I opened a new

category *Other Emotions*, which described gratitude, pride, hope, kindness, surprise, admiration, love, sorrow, etc.

Constructing a Composite Description

The modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994) suggests creating an individual structural description for each participant before writing out a composite description of the phenomenon. I made an attempt to do that with three interviews, but discovered that it would be difficult to create cultural understanding of joy and awe if I focused too much on the individual story, making it hard to compare and unite the themes across individuals and cultures. Many of the separate codes for joy and awe were the same – both were experienced in families, in nature, in relating to the spiritual. As a result, I consolidated the information from all the questions and themes into more composite descriptions of both emotions of joy and awe. Furthermore, even though the research was on what brings joy and awe to the individual, I received answers on what contributes to the suppression of both. I expanded the subject to include barriers to joy and awe. Under barriers to joy and awe, all the systemic values that blocked joy and awe were connected to some kind of political oppression. As a result, I focused on political systems and their negative impact on individuals and groups of people in expressing authentic positive feeling.

The final step of the process was to create a composite description of the meanings held by all participants and then compare and contrast in-group, out-group similarities and differences, making sure to note the outliers. There was only one outlier in the experience of awe as darkness and spirit in Turkey, but it brought a nuance that was lacking in the other 19 interviews. This outlier was discussed further in chapter five.

The final, most difficult part of the coding were the values people had discussed as connected to joy and awe. These were my cultural markers and I had to find the best places to group them. Values were grouped with the codes under family and community, nature, and spirituality. I discovered that all the values, which I had not already discussed under categories promoting joy and awe and categories blocking joy and awe, related to collectivist identities. I wrote about collectivist values at the end of the results section.

Research Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1997) outlined four ways of establishing research trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (2007) identified six techniques to increase credibility for qualitative research: prolonged engagement, personal observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks (p. 19). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I ensured *prolonged engagement* with many of the participants, spending quality time, engaging with their families and work environment. This gave enough time for the flow of the conversation during the interviews. I also did some *member checking*. Ideally, I would have liked to have time for feedback-groups to share my conclusions and observations and get participants' feedback. I kept in touch and shared some of the data with two people in Bulgaria, one in Turkey, one in Greece, and two in the States. Their feedback went into the writing of the results section and the discussion. The most recent conversation with an African American participant was on my discovery of the use of awe of self in her community as a protective factor against racism. It was a rich discussion we will continue, as it is potentially transformative for her community.

Peer debriefing was vital for this particular methodology and the topic that I chose. The two members of my team kept me honest, challenged my assumptions, and helped shape the final product. For example, I had noticed the prevalence of stories on awe and joy relating to achievement in the three Balkan countries. I interpreted that as prideful and self-promoting. The emic member of the team had a very different interpretation, and described the Balkan pride in success as surprised wonder – people did not expect to do well, given their background and ethnic identities. When discussing achievements and dreams, these topics were important to them. The discussion on success and failure led to the uncovering of systemic attachment issues connected to joy and awe (as discussed in chapter 5).

I also used *negative case analysis*, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (2007) mostly to discover the cultural differences in the expressions of joy and awe. Where only one or two individuals spoke of a topic related to joy and awe, it pointed many times to a specific cultural experience. For example, only the Catholic member of the group spoke of awe of God and fear of hell. This was something that could have been personal or a specific religious upbringing in a South American country.

Transferability

In order for the results to be transferable, there must be a *thick description* of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 2007, p.19). My narrative stayed as close as possible to the context and to participants' own words. I kept the original quotes till the very end of the work on the results section when I distilled stories to their essence, making sure to keep important details and include some of the most telling direct quotes. For example, the Bulgarian negative description of sorrow was unique – I kept the longer quote by one of

the Bulgarian participant to illustrate that.

Dependability

The dependability of the research through *external audit* (Lincoln and Guba, 2007) was ensured by the peer review of the coding team, who had access to three complete interviews, three code books from three interviews, the consolidated codebook and the drafts for chapters four and five. Both members of the team offered significant feedback, which was incorporated throughout the process of this work.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1997) connect confirmability to confirmability audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. I established an *audit trail* that could be checked by any outside researcher. It includes the raw data (transcribed interviews in Bulgarian and English, and field notes); the data reduction and analysis procedures (line-by-line-coding of interviews); data reconstruction and synthesis products (memos, e-mails, codebook), etc. *Reflexivity* was followed through *Epoche*, the coding team, and monitoring my positionality and values throughout the process.

Chapter IV: Results

The data were analyzed to answer the primary research question: “How are the emotions of joy and awe experienced among people currently living in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and USA?”. Chapter four begins with the broad descriptions for joy and awe in each country. The chapter was organized under three big sections: categories that promote the emotions of joy and awe, those that inhibit the two emotions, and cultural differences.

Categories Promoting Joy and Awe

Table 3 below describes the qualitative categories promoting joy and awe. Unity of souls, nature, spirituality and the original self are the four major themes connected with the emotional experience of joy and awe. There were also other emotions connected to these two and other contributors such as freedom, innocence, time, and space.

Table 3

Qualitative Descriptions of Categories Promoting Joy and Awe

Category	Subcategory
Unity of Souls	Family: parents, grandparents, extended family, intimacy, children Friendship Community: communal identity and communal heritage Unity with Other Creatures
Nature	Approachable Nature Magnificent Nature Nature in Childhood
Spirituality	Awe and the Supernatural: venerating icons, divine justice, spirits, visions and dreams Childhood Role models

	Goodness Letting go
Original Self	Body, Soul, Spirit Longings and Dreams Vocation Art Awe and Death
Other Emotions	Gratitude Mindfulness Serenity Hope Kindness Pride Surprise Admiration Love Sorrow
Contributors	Freedom Humor Face-to-face Communication Innocence Time Space

Descriptions of Joy and Awe

Joy. The descriptions on joy varied. They were metaphors that painted vivid pictures. From Bulgaria: “Joy is like a falling leaf, it is never here too long.” “Joy is eyes that are joyful looking at you.” “Joy is a free white dove.” In Greece the metaphors for joy were: “Joy is like ice-cream;” “joy is innocence, remaining a child;” “joy is the shimmer of the sun of the Aegean;” “a glass of wine with good friends.” In Turkey, joy was: “To be free like a bird, to not be tied down,” “a sparrow flying in the sky,” “a picture of my children with my wife,” “a long drive in a car”. And in the USA, joy was

described as: “Life is a joy to live, just to live, just to live, because you know Jesus;” “a mountain meadow,” “a meadow and a bubbling stream that is very blue,” joy is like the sun.” It is easy to note how many similarities there were in some of the descriptions – the free bird metaphor was used in both Turkey and Bulgaria, the mountain meadow was the first metaphor that came to mind to both European American participants and one Bulgarian woman. The sun of the Aegean might be a very different experience than the sun in Virginia, yet there were two people who connected the sun with joy as their first spontaneous metaphor when asked the question. “Eyes looking at you” was the description of shared joy – with friends and family, feeling loved – something participants of each country talked of. The small pleasures in life, like eating an ice-cream, was recognizing the simple joy in the mundane and everyday life. And life in its totality is joy, “because you know Jesus”.

Awe. If people had quickly responded to the prompt to draw a picture of joy, there was a sense of confusion in participants in the three Balkan countries regarding awe. It was difficult to translate and many connected it first to intense fear, reverence, and worship of God. In all interviews in the Balkans, I had to describe what awe is as a picture – you go to the top of the mountain, you look, and you say: ‘Oh!’ This began the conversation.

One participant said that he had used the word for awe 10 years ago (Bulgaria). A Greek woman agreed with him, describing the word as a big word, ancient and religious. For all Orthodox participants in Bulgaria and Greece, awe seemed to be connected to the Orthodox temple, venerating icons, the fear and respect toward God (Bulgaria). People were confused if awe was experienced as a good or a bad feeling. One person in Turkey

asked: “Awe in a good way, right?” Another Turkish participant tried searching the dictionary and still could not understand what the word meant, bouncing ideas on miracles, surprise, strong feeling of fear and enjoying something too much. At that point she thought she could not remember such an experience, because she had no word to describe it. It took two interviews in Turkey to come up with an explanation of what happens during awe in order to induce people to think of experiences that connect to the emotion.

After people had understood the meaning, some descriptions came up, but translating between all the languages – Turkish-Bulgarian-English, Bulgarian-English and Greek-English, proved very difficult during the interviews and afterwards while transcribing. For the three Balkan countries, it seems, awe was mainly connected in the original languages with the religious experience. After understanding what awe could mean as a wider emotion, participants offered their own definitions: “That is when it feels tight inside – not from pressure, but when you feel good. It is like the freedom of spirit” (Bulgaria). Another tentative description of awe connected it to joy, but also fear, insecurity, and the sad heavy emotions (Bulgaria). After a long discussion on different words that describe the experience, one Bulgarian offered that awe is like hypnosis when time has stopped and the very being stops. Awe was “crossing a boundary and being allowed within” in relation to the temple and icons, as an Orthodox theologian described it. His was the only purely religious description that connected awe to God, the boundary between earth and heaven, saints and fallible beings. People in the States had an easier time finding descriptions for awe. People connected awe with the stars, with finding their spouse, with something that leaves one speechless.

After these preliminary discussions on awe, I asked participants what takes their breath away and when time stops. I was in for another cultural surprise. “What takes your breath away” was perceived as a negative thing – people spoke of their heart stopping, of frozen time, of death. Time couldn’t stop in a good way. This confusion is part of the interviews. I probably should have kept the questions exactly the same, but I asked when time stops in a good way and what takes the breath away in a good way in later interviews.

“Crushingly Soaring”. A description of a student going to Seminary in Bulgaria to submit his papers captured best joy and awe experienced together as feeling “crushingly soaring.” This phrase describes the feeling of being allowed within, crossing boundaries, unable to accommodate what one is seeing, but also the bubbling exuberance of joy and soaring freedom.

Joy and Awe and the Unity of Souls

This one section is surprisingly under a code that came up later when looking at awe experiences of participants. The description of the code was: unity of souls, it came to represent an entire section connected with the loving world of others:

I was very tired after work and I sat on a bench. By me walked a lovely girl: 6, 7 years old short, and a very big dog. They were like one – they were not a girl and a dog, but a dog with a girl, because the dog was mindful of her. Because if it was to pull hard the girl would fall, and the girl very gently was guiding it and talking to it. It was very beautiful; the two objects were one object, they had their communication, like a ball of yarn, like one unity, one soul. (Bulgaria).

Family

The greatest joy in being loved and loving was experienced in families. Early childhood memories were connected more to the emotion of joy than awe, in relating to significant adults like parents and grandparents. Finding an intimate partner and love inspired joy and awe. Childbearing, witnessing deliveries of babies, was the most awe-inspiring and joyful experience. Watching children grow, discovering the world by themselves, induced joy and awe in parents, grandparents, and other caretakers.

Parents. Early memories of childhood that brought joy were connected with sweet and quiet moments with parents coming home: “My father would come around and pick me up and take me inside. And I just remember feeling so loved and protected. It was like *being passed from love to love*” (USA). People spoke differently about their parents, some in great vivid detail, some with a sentence or two. They described family relationships, number of siblings and an overall feeling of childhood and home. Similarities and differences related more to the type of parents and attachment of the family than cultural background. There were supportive and less supportive parents, those who shared joy and warmth and those who did not. Strikingly, the really happy children sounded very similar to each other. A Bulgarian participant said: “We idealize our childhood, of course” and an African-American woman, as if she had heard his statement, exclaimed: “I had the best parents in the world, but of course, everyone thinks they had the best parents in the world.” A European American added: “My early childhood is extraordinarily happy.” family acceptance, playfulness, and secure attachment were part of the “kooky, nutty” families, where people accepted each other as they are.

The Armenian participant in Bulgaria talked with pride and joy of his parents, the father who was the only Armenian miner, the amateur theater his parents were involved in. Participants shared of their parents' humor, singing, hobbies, education, and vocation choices. As a Greek woman keenly observed, she remembered the stories of parents and grandparents as if they were her own.

There were other themes connected to the nuclear family: death of other children, sibling relationships, taking care of family members, supporting family financially, which related to the complex world of childhood. Family travels, vacations, camping trips, festivals and traditions emerged as important facets of a happy, carefree childhood. There were stay-at-home mothers in Turkey and the USA, mothers who went back to work after the children were born and made successful careers. A woman in a Turkish family left three kids home to become a civil engineer, an important story shared in a Muslim country to show that one source of joy for women anywhere was vocational fulfillment, and role models helped a girl reach for more.

Grandparents. In Bulgaria, it was not unusual for three, four generations to live under the same roof. The same was true for some Greek and Turkish families. Loving grandmothers were central in the childhood of several participants from Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, and USA. Grandparents were a source of joy and awe, just as parents. One grandmother had picked up her granddaughter when she was four months old and carried her back to Greece from Germany where the parents worked. It was the beginning of a wonderful relationship. "My mother was a bit envious afterwards, because my grandmother was my first love, not my mother (laughs)." A USA participant claimed that her ability to have wonder of the world began with her grandmother, being delighted in

what her grandmother delighted in. Every flower was beautiful as if seen for the first time. “I got a little bit of her.” A Turkish male who immigrated to Turkey in his 20s mentioned his grandfather throughout the interview. His grandfather was still with him – his big house and hospitality, his understanding and living of the Muslim faith, his wisdom, his difficulty in adjusting to the life of Istanbul, his old ways and keeping of tradition. There was respect mixed with awe in the memories. Being with grandparents through their aging brought their stories to life through awe, made them part of participants’ own stories. “I was in awe of her stories, her beauty. Time just disappeared” (USA).

Grandmothers were strong source support for the entire family system; many times widowed the woman was “for a man and for a woman”, taking on the typical male and female responsibilities in the house. Even though a grandmother was sweet, she set the family rules and schedule: “You will not tell by her appearance, but literally, we all obeyed her” (Bulgaria). Grandparents developed trusting, life-binding relationships with grandchildren. One grandmother told her granddaughter in Bulgaria what to do when she died, a letter was to be sent for 40 days of liturgy in an Orthodox Monastery. That one memory was a source of pride and awe for her granddaughter – her grandmother had trusted her to take care of her legacy. Big families gathered around tables set for the adults and many children, served by the grandmothers (Bulgaria).

Extended Family.

In the big families (aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives) and the big community you could carry a lot, because there are many pillars around you, strong standing solid supports, who could help you handle the pressure. (Bulgaria)

Extended families were part of the many-peopled world of childhood in all the countries where people were interviewed. Family members were pillars, different kinds of support, which helped individuals to handle more pressure through life. In Greece, a relative brought fruit and clothes from town to poor relatives. Another relative paid for English lessons for the children. Childless adult siblings enjoyed the grandchildren of others as their own. African-American families gathered for lunch after church, big extended family affairs with as many as 40, 50 relatives congregating, something not typical for the European American families. Orphans were a topic of several Balkan interviews – boys who had lost fathers early on. They, too, managed to create big families and become a part of other families. As one Greek participant noted, everything revolved around the family. It was a place where character formation was produced through relations between relatives (Greece). Respect for adults and others was required, respect for the big family, mom and dad, grandparents, relatives, and all neighbors (Turkey). Not all lived next to family. Some moved to the big cities in search of economic opportunities. A woman living in Istanbul left her 13-year-old son to live with her mother, father, and siblings in Izmir. The family of a participant in Bulgaria still lives under the same roof as their parents. But noticeably, there were fewer people sharing a house with parents and grandparents currently.

The wider family circle is a source of joy. A participant who had a traumatizing childhood felt accepted by his wife's parents and counted them as his own, their love brought him joy (USA). When asked what made her such a positive and joyful person, one participant answered that the love in her family was still a source of joy for her, a foundation that couldn't be shaken with the acceptance and love she had received,

because there always is “the family that is going to love you no matter what” (USA).

Intimacy. An intense experience of joy and awe was falling in love, finding a soul mate, getting married, being loved by a wife or a husband unconditionally.

Awakening to love and first love was a shared human experience, counted as one of the most beautiful moments of awe and happiness (Turkey). It was “seismic,” a fullness of joy, “without it you cannot live” (Bulgaria).

Fourteen out of the 20 participants talked of intimate relationships as source of great joy. And some spoke of love taking their breath away (two from Turkey, three from USA). The intense longing for someone in the beginning of courtship was deeply touching, it meant finding the love of his or her life (Turkey). “If you have one woman and you love her and you want her and wait for her for months and you see her: that makes you feel the joy and awe” (Turkey). To be loved by a spouse was awe, someone who has understood deeply who one is and has helped through the process of life change (USA). Being forgiven when one did not deserve was joy and awe. One person, who was forgiven by his wife the day she decided to stay with him, remembered it with tears as a great moment for him (Greece). The moment of marriage, coming together, bringing two families to one was described as the most joyful memory by several participants (one from Turkey, two from Greece, two from the USA). Two people were married in their mid 40s for the first time. Both of her aging parents and his mother were present at the wedding and that was a very joyful day (USA).

The joy of sexual intimacy was related surprisingly to having children. A male participant in Turkey connected sex and the waiting for nine months for the child to come with the pleasure and joy of both. A female participant in the USA compared giving birth

to reaching orgasm, both sensual intense experiences of joy and tears.

The relationship is a source of joy. The wife and children welcoming the father home is an occasion for joy (Turkey). Being lifted out of a gloomy mood by a life-partner is life-giving. A Greek man's wife was able to do that through smiling or making him nervous, something he valued as a gift, to help him feel alive. Being comfortable, happy, and confident with the other who is accepting, always positive, and not critical is joy (Turkey). Joy and sorrow have to be shared, without the sharing "the one has no pleasure and the other has no passing" (Turkey). A lasting relationship brings joy: witnessing an elderly couple who have had a very long marriage (Bulgaria).

Children. Participants described their children as the number one most joyful event in their life. Even though some spoke of the relationships they built with their children in life, it was the birth itself that brought them the most intense joy they had experienced. Out of 20 people 11 spoke of the birth of their children. It was the most natural, quick response to the question, "What was the most joyful moment in your life?" Joy was often intermingled with awe, feeling fatherhood as awe (Turkey). The birth was a sensual experience (USA). Its intensity and relief brought on joy (USA). It was also a mystery: "He is my child, but not my child" (Greece). One person, who had been a delivery nurse, described every single delivery as joy and awe. She had tears every time marveling at the creation of life and its beauty (USA).

The growth of children, their development, and discovering the world and life for themselves brings intense joy (Greece). Parents rejoice in the child's growing, changing, expanding consciousness, becoming more critical of friends and adults, having opinions and strong arguments (Bulgaria). Single people could share joy with children in the

family. A participant in Bulgaria lived with his brother's family for a year and the first child grew up in his hands, an experience that could not be explained in words. The achievement of children, reaching important milestones is joy (Greece).

The reciprocal love and gratitude of children brings joy. Two three-year old girls came to a participant's bakery, thanking him for the desserts, delighted him, and it felt heavenly (Bulgaria). Being loved and respected as a parent, despite the person's many flaws, is joy (USA). Overcoming teenage rebellion and rebuilding a bond of trust is joy (Bulgaria).

Friendship

We have many sayings for Turkish coffee. We have a saying "it is not the drinking of coffee, it is the conversation" – it is the coffee break with friends. We have many things that are coming from the culture, which is changing. (Turkey)

Participants in the three Balkan countries discussed friendship and sharing with others more than those in the USA. Embeddedness in relationships outside the nuclear family was more common. Being with friends was simple – a shared glass of wine, a cup of coffee, watching sports, taking walks, enjoying each other's company. I noted that Balkan men spoke predominantly of friendships and being together. An Armenian in Bulgaria proclaimed that it is better to die than have no friends. Out of the eight men interviewed in the three countries, seven talked about their friends and how much they meant to them. One participant in Turkey spoke much more of his friends than his wife and children. He kissed his friends goodbye: "I kiss them twice and then go back and kiss them again, I value my friends very much" (Turkey). In Bulgaria, a man experienced friendships as more and more rare, but so needed. He had few remaining friends with

whom he would get together. He counted these occasions as joyful moments of great company with nothing big to discuss, but life, women, and sports: “That’s my joy in life” (Bulgaria). The Armenian man separated from his girlfriend because she was unhappy with him spending so much time with his friends. He exclaimed that he could not live without them. One of the men talked of the importance of people he respects – their very essence gives him needed support (Bulgaria). This person is rarely on the internet or even e-mail, his primary way of communicating is face-to-face. This is what the other men valued – sharing something little and being together often. Sharing seemed the most important in Turkey, compared to the other two Balkan countries. The quote this section begins with is a part of a long discussion by one Turkish woman on the value of sharing for her, her family, and the wider Turkish community. Sharing and generosity in friendships was very important and brought much joy.

All participants had one thing in common in their childhood – playing outside with others and childhood friendships. A big theme of the joyful and wonder-filled childhood was the interaction with other children. Interactions with other children actively in the free outside world brought joy and awe promoting many valuable lessons on friendship, intimacy, community, and creativity. I will discuss this code further under joy and awe in nature.

Community

Communities were sources of joy for many people in the Balkans and among the African Americans interviewees. Special holidays (like the Greek Orthodox Easter), weeks of celebrations, singing and dancing, were highlights of communal rhythm of festivity and joy. Minorities kept very strong traditions connected with joy and

celebration. The Armenian community in Plovdiv, Bulgaria was 4,000 people. The church, the school, and the Armenian cultural center were on the same property. All celebrations happened in that space, with the expressed goal for Armenian boys and girls to create new unions, keeping the bloodline and heritage alive. “It is not that I am against my wife being from Bulgaria or Greece. But it is different, really different.” A Jewish man from Greece came from a community of 100 people where identity was very important. Bulgarian Turks organized a big fair. It lasted an entire week. There were large tents for 100, 200 people, food, dancing, horses, and animals for sale. In the States, the community stories differed according to race. The African American women shared stories of big community events just like the ones described in the Balkans. Community and taking care of relationships were very important (USA). People did a lot more in the rural communities where the church, the Bible school, and the recreation center served as natural gathering places. In the African American communities the church was “the heartbeat of the community.” African American identity, sense of worthiness, relating to others, came from the church:

“In a world that sometimes wasn’t giving you this message, at church you got the message that you are beautiful, smart and you mattered. Church was an extension of family for me.”

The approach of the Armenians toward their church in Bulgaria was very much the same. The Jewish participants I interviewed in Greece also spoke of the religious traditions, even though they themselves were not religious. The Catholic Church was central to the Latin Americans (USA). The one Latin American male spoke of a Catholic woman who gave him understanding of God’s love and encouraged him to pray.

The sense of community and the importance of the church was not the same in the European American stories. The American white participants talked more about small family gatherings, going out to cut Christmas trees with friends, and hanging out with close people. The focus was on the nuclear families.

Communal identity. All participants acknowledged the role of family as the greatest foundation for finding love, security, bonding, joy, and awe. The greatest difference in describing these was the sense of the past as ever-present in the Balkan narratives. There was a much greater sense of communal identity connected to joy in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, than there was in the USA. But, one must stress the great similarities between African American and the ethnicities in the Balkans. African American participants showed a greater value given to community, church, and faith than the white participants. Community, as one Bulgarian participant noted, “disappeared in the West 100, 150 years ago, the trends of community disappearing here are in the last 40 years”.

Community Heritage. Heritage mattered significantly to the people in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. National history was described by a Bulgarian and Armenian as a source of joy, awe, and national pride. The Bulgarian participant had been to one of the national fortresses, the “city of kings” of ancient Bulgaria. The great history of the country and the nation, the society and values, took her breath away, but also brought her sadness. Current Bulgarian society showed forgotten values and shameful behavior. She did not feel worthy of the awe-inspiring past (Bulgaria).

An Armenian gave the most comprehensive description of national heritage and how it creates communities worldwide. He said that his mother tongue is of great value

and pride to him. His father had told him that anywhere he goes, if he connects to an Armenian, he will never be turned away, a universal knowledge among Armenians – if you knock on the door and ask for help, you shall receive help (Bulgaria). Being a part of such community and heritage gave him joy. When the same Armenian went back to Erevan, he recognized Armenia as his true home, a source of joy, pride, and awe, relating deeply to the history, cultural monuments, and his people. Spiritual heritage was described by another as deep roots in the genesis of existence, as history, faith and place that was prepared by others, something received with deep reverence, gratitude, and awe (Bulgaria).

Unity with Other Creatures

Everything is connected and these little interactions you are having every day with your patients or people at the grocery store, everybody comes from there... the stars. And if it is happiness and joy, it will spread. And if it is anger and fear and hatred, it will spread (USA).

The same participant went on to explain that she loved listening to the stories of her patients, listening for the beauty of love and acts of love. Love between people was creative, giving, joyful, full of awe (Bulgaria). Awe and joy produced a giving love. One participant, after describing her serene and peaceful joy, seemingly without connection, said that she had an idea to begin a house for elderly people in Bulgaria out of gratitude for what she had been given. She concluded that she wants to see the light of joy in the eyes of people who suffer.

Love is reciprocated with love that brings joy. A participant in USA was showered with love by patients. They gave her gifts – books, cupcakes, letters, cards. She

believed that if you throw enough love out there, love comes back always. Love encompasses all, because all are “earth people” and each one should be respected and honored, no matter where they live (Turkey). To honor others is to keep oneself from isolation and being forgotten by them, it is joy (Turkey).

Bonding with other living things is joy. One participant spoke of an incident at his house. A dove came in their closed terrace and made a nest in one of the pots, which hatched with a little bird. At first, the mother bird was scared, but during the night the participant would go outside and speak to her: “You are my great love” (Turkey).

In conclusion, the most important source of joy and awe was the connection with others, the unity of souls. The meaning of life was to know each other better and speak with an open heart (Greece). Loving a dog or a little bird counted as great love, too.

Joy and Awe in Nature

Approachable Nature

Several participants offered descriptions of joy in nature, and more of them talked about their sense of awe when they were outside. Nature was perceived as “breathing” and alive. “Let nature be your teacher,” one Greek participant quoted, referencing the British romantics and their idea of nature, while describing how she and her son loved to hug trees, feeling the joy in little things. She climbed Mount Olympus twice, which were wonderful experiences.

An American expressed the connection to the trees in a very similar way. She would sit and listen to the trees, find peace and wonder, feeling their energy (USA). Walking in a meadow, to “pick some nettles for soup and flowers” (Bulgaria), “a creek with some fish” (Turkey), “the smell of a crisp fall air” (USA), “the shimmer of the

water,” (Greece), “the sunrise on the beach” (USA) evoked joy. These moments of awe related to the seasons: “it is frost, dripping water from the roof, yellow leaves that fall” (Bulgaria).

Magnificent Nature

Joy and awe together in nature were connected to the small-scale wonder and beauty. The overwhelming grandeur of the outside world brought awe and sometimes fear, and yet a sense of connection, belonging, and significance.

Awe is the universe, foreverness, eternity, and space going forever. Sometimes I get very anxious and nervous, and that awe does have a little bit of fear. What is out there that I don’t know? How big is this world and I am nothing in the grand scheme. It makes you in some ways know how insignificant you are, but also in other ways, how significant you are and how every little thing you do affects everything. (USA)

Awe, as described by this participant, was something the mind could not accommodate – it was beyond the human ability. The sense of smallness and insignificance was paired with the realization that everything is interconnected and every little gesture matters. Another participant in Greece described the same feeling when she was younger. As a teenager, she was on vacation with her family in a cabin with no electricity on one of the Greek islands. She went outside in the middle of the night, while her whole family slept. As she stepped outside, there were billions of stars ready to fall on her head. It was a space she had never thought about. It was so scary to her, she ran inside. She described another very similar reaction to the stars and night sky, while backpacking with her husband. They were young, they walked up the hill in August,

there were no cars, no people, and the galaxy above. One aspect of experiencing awe was encountering the galaxy alone, feeling fear and anxiety “the stars falling on my head;” the other was a shared moment, bonding through awe.

Others connected awe with the splendor of the ocean (USA), Bosphorus (Turkey), the mountains (Greece), and a big river like the Potomac (USA). The sun and the play of light were awe-inspiring – strange colors of red and yellow at sunset (Greece), the Harvest moon coming out of nowhere (USA), and the colors of rainbows that would make a driver to pull off the road and stop to watch them (USA).

In relating to the grandeur of nature, participants recharged batteries (Greece), finding a sense of perspective (USA) and the courage to do what they can (USA).

Nature in Childhood

Some of the most joyfully told stories were those of childhood encounters with the out-of-doors. It was escaping the confinement of the house, breathing the air, being exposed to the elements, noticing day and night, the seasons. No matter where children lived – the village, rural Virginia, the center of Izmir, on the shore of the Aegean, they were free children running in the streets without fear, staying up late, creating their own materials and games, getting dirty, and exploring the world with almost no adult supervision (Bulgaria, USA, Greece, Turkey). They were swimming with 15-20 kids in the local river (Turkey), playing jump-rope (USA, Bulgaria), playing soccer (USA, Turkey), riding bikes (Bulgaria), etc. Many connected their emotions and ability to feel the emotional spectrum to the street play – navigating childhood relationships freely, and learning what the world looked like without the filtering perspective of adults. The outside world was open; it could be explored with many new skills learned effortlessly in

the process. That mastery – of relationships and outside places – brought on freedom and joy. The stories were exuberant. One participant, when comparing today’s children to his own childhood, realized that “we were happy to be born in those days” (Turkey). Another defined that period of free outside life as “the calm of our childhood” (Bulgaria).

Children in the Balkans also often helped adults in tending the land:

Being outside, the smell of the earth. The sensation that you give her little and she gives you much. That constant sensation that there is something, which center is outside of you. The constant need to conform with the forces of nature, which are not dressed in a human face, not institutionalized. To conform and be grateful for the abundance of tomorrow. Very small joys, part of that communication that the little ones learn from the adults. (Bulgarian Orthodox Man)

The connection to nature was different depending on where a child lived. None of the five participants in the USA spoke of nature as working the land and taking care of animals. In the Balkans participants were not from strictly farming families, but almost all of the participants above 40-years-old had had a small piece of land and some farm animals. It created a very different type of understanding of the natural world and the joy and awe connected with it. The quote this section begins with is telling of what a child learned while being taught how to connect to the land and understand the seasons, the natural rhythm. It was joy in seeing things grow, as another participant in Turkey exclaimed. He had fully lived each joy – a calf being born, a little lamb, planting of tobacco that grew to be a meter and a half. It was a pleasure to pick and to dry (Turkey). The knowledge that “you did it yourself” brought joy and awe to him. His family had raised turkeys, goats, sheep, and cows. It was hard work and difficult, but joyful with a

sense of accomplishment and pride. It must have been measured work, knowing when to involve the children and how much responsibility to give them.

The American participants (three out of five) spoke of the connection to the wild side of nature. Awe and joy of nature was hanging upside down from pistachio trees (Greece), waiting for a stork's nest each year (Bulgaria), collecting blue-belly lizards (USA), and catching fire-fly larva that glowed in the creek (USA). Interestingly, camping was part of the childhood experience only known by USA children. One participant in the USA remembered when camping how her brother would collect sap from the pine trees and put it in a can, let it boil over the fire and then dip sticks in the liquefied sap to make a sap wand. Nature in childhood was close, dear, explored, safe, the names of living creatures remembered. Nature was first-hand knowledge, intimacy and love that brought the natural response of joy and awe.

The Spiritual Dimensions of Joy and Awe

This section discusses awe of the supernatural and the spiritual dimension of joy and awe in the childhood experience, role models, goodness, and letting go. Awe of the supernatural was mainly apparent as a cultural expression in the three Balkan countries – Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece, but also with one of the American participants, who was Catholic. Themes that were culture specific: veneration of icons, spirits, visions, and dreams of Jesus and Virgin Mary.

Awe of the Supernatural

Venerating icons and awe. A theologian in Bulgaria described awe in the Orthodox sense. The word for awe in Bulgaria and Greece, the way participants understood it, was associated primarily with veneration of icons and being in the

Orthodox temple. The interiors of the churches are rich with meaning, pointing to another dimension, and form of time, reflecting a different reality and atmosphere (Bulgaria).

One participant described his first experience in the temple, looking at the analoya, the place where the icon is. He is reaching, but cannot see further. He has no idea what it is. It is beautiful, something colorful. What remains is the hunger and the hope, “the thirst for what you want further, it remains in your little soul, it is cuddled up in there waiting” (Bulgaria). In his description of this first experience of awe, there is a reaching toward, longing, something that has been woken up internally by the mystery, a spiritual hunger.

Divine justice and awe. A very different description of the supernatural and the connection to it came from a Catholic Latin American. His description was connected to fear, the fear of coming close to God. If one does not do what is right, God will destroy the body and the soul, the fear of hell and God’s punishment was his feeling about awe and the supernatural.

Spirits and awe. A man in Turkey told two intriguing stories of awe. An old man showed up in the darkness and asked him to drive him to the mosque. They went to the mosque and the coffee house, and it felt like a vision. Everyone greeted the old man, but acted as if the participant was invisible, he was terrified. He thought he had died. That day of awe was the heaviest day in this participant’s life (Turkey). The second story he shared was a reality, he says. They had a visitor in the house, an old man his mother fed. When he left, when the children tried to follow him, he had gone way further than expected for the time that had passed and then there was a great hail – huge ice balls. Many houses were damaged, but not theirs – “not a single brick.” The story was told without explanation. Both were stories of great awe for him.

Visions and dreams. A Greek Orthodox woman shared her dreams. Her grandmother and her mother had visions and so did she. She had a personal relationship with Jesus. Virgin Mary came later for her. She dreamed two very significant dreams. One was Jesus asking her to play the piano and swim in the pool. After refusing both times, because she couldn't do either, Jesus encouraged her: she could do whatever she set her mind to. It was during a crucial time for her and she grew in confidence and went on to pursue a degree in the USA accomplishing two things that gave her joy – travels and literature. Before her son was born, she had three miscarriages. She was married at 29, but could not bear children. After despairing and looking for other more aggressive treatments, she had a dream. Virgin Mary showed up in a hospital room and told her that she would conceive within three months. She was 43 at the time. Mary's message to her was the same as Jesus: "Trust in me and everything will be fine". Her awe and joy were connected to letting go and placing her complete trust in a higher power. She conceived two months later.

Awe and ritual. In connection to the supernatural, awe is also tied to ritual. Awe does not always relate to adventure and novel experience, for the Orthodox description awe is created through ritual. There is a need for rituals that help the person to put aside the daily experience and enter into something sacred. The Greek Orthodox Easter and carnival is a time set aside from the ordinary.

Spirituality and Childhood

There was only one reference in the interviews to joy and God by an African American from a Pentecostal Church. She connected joy to feeling alive, because "you

know Jesus.” Her entire interview contained joy as relating to Jesus, as a beloved friend, counselor, comfort, and goal in life. Most people in the Balkans connected awe to God and the spiritual, but not joy. It should be noted here that out of the five American participants, one was agnostic, one is Catholic and three are evangelical. Yet, the striking response to overcoming darkness in life and finding joy again was spirituality (Bulgaria) in its many forms.

Understanding of God and the spiritual and how these relate to joy and awe began early on. Not surprisingly, faith and God were part of this holistic picture of an individual – with family, grandparents, extended family and community, many times the religious community. It was received as a sacred experience of childhood, related to the church or an adult who shared their faith with the child. A participant in Bulgaria listened to her grandmother’s stories and miracles. Her relationship to God and the church came from her grandmother. A grandfather told his grandchildren what it is to be a Muslim and what makes a good Muslim and not a good one (Turkey). The longest story on conversion and the religious experience came from an Evangelical African American woman. Her relationship with Jesus permeated the entire interview. He was real and close to her, the greatest and most trusted friend, someone who guided her choices through life. After she was molested and felt rage and helplessness, she prayed. She made a promise to herself at age 10 that she will never get so angry that she would kill someone. She promised that to God and stuck to that promise. That was her source of greatest joy later in life – to keep her promise to Jesus and to live life as he wants her to. The time that one participant remembered as an experience of joy and awe was when he was home alone. He had cried again in his room, because his mother and father had left him. He went into his room that

day and told God to be his father. The belief that God knew him, understood him, and would watch over him gave him great comfort (USA).

Spiritual role models. Spiritual role models were described by two Bulgarians – both with the idea of teachers, whom they wanted to become like. Spiritual leaders like Jesus in his human body, Buddha, Shiva, someone like Leonardo, were given to pull others upwards to the light, discovering their own halo (Bulgaria). The icons represented the lives of the saints as teachers who give the person beyond measure, (Bulgaria). Being with others who one considered higher and better than oneself was a *crushingly soaring* experience. While that feeling remains, there is hope for the wholeness of the soul within.

Spirituality as Goodness. Spirituality was also experienced as goodness (Bulgaria). One man who overcame sickness returned to his workplace a changed person. No longer arrogant and angry with others, but quick to forgive and offer kindness (Turkey). Spirituality was dreams “colorful, full of light” (Greece). It was the belief that God gives what people need if they share it with others (Turkey).

Letting Go. Spirituality is letting go of burdens and not picking them back up. Laying them at God’s feet at the altar, giving God a chance to work them out and fix them (African American). Spirituality is knowing there is God, no matter what, just the knowledge of that gives comfort and ability to go on. In moments of doubt, fatigue and lack, to have hope and know that there will be light in abundance (Bulgaria). The shift that happens when one sees the light is to lose his sense of other things not worth seeing, but time is needed “to pass for repentance, reflection and understanding” (Bulgaria).

Joy and Awe and the Original Self

I can say awe, because God created me. He didn’t make a cheap copy, He made

me, He made me one and only and I am only an original. (African American woman)

This section under the original human self is about the human body, soul and spirit, what inspires us about ourselves or others, human achievement, and art. One unexpected theme that came under the original self was awe and death, which completes the human cycle.

The Human Body, Soul, and Spirit

Every individual is an original; no matter what their age, looks, or race, they are “wonderfully made”, according to one African American woman. It was the other African American who spoke of awe in the same way, that the human being is amazing – mind, body and spirit, how everything so intricately works, is awe inspiring: “Just human beings, the fact that we operate. It is taken for granted, but it is incredibly well held together, despite the fragility” (USA). Fragility and awe were part of the story of a Bulgarian participant, a story of her father when he was a young student in Budapest shortly after WW2. There was a girl, beautiful and charming, playing, laughing, running, and missing one of her arms:

She is wearing a short-sleeve shirt; she is not hiding, so beautiful. He said: “We were all in love with her”. When he told me that, this girl was constantly in front of my eyes, although I have never seen her. This is awe. Because she beamed naturally, she was not abashed that she had no arm and so people too were not abashed either (Bulgaria).

The unusual aspect of this story is that the participant told it as her own, her father’s awe of that girl was her own now, it was awe of overcoming human spirit and beauty. A rich description of awe and the spiritual as it connects to the individual came

from Orthodox theology. Standing in front of an icon, looking at it as if in a mirror “beyond your measure, which does not reflect your face, but you wish to. Which reflects a face, a biography, a life experience, tribulations, which are as much someone else’s, as they are yours” (Bulgaria). Here awe is not of oneself, but what one aspires to become. It is awe looking at the human best, the collective story of human virtue, courage, sacrifice and love for others and God. It is similar to the people beholding a fragile girl with a missing arm, being inspired to be one’s best self, to transcend after the war.

The ability to feel awe requires an inner eye. The outside world is important, but it plays a small role. It is the inner calm, soul stability and foundation that helps perceive with awe (Bulgaria).

Longing and Dreams

It did not matter if a country was more individualistic or collectivistic, as children, all participants had their own dreams and aspirations, activities done alone and individual pursuits that later developed into vocations and careers. The ability to pursue dreams was connected with joy and awe being within reach. It is tied to the sense of self, self-confidence, courage, and boldness. This small section is a cluster of several codes – childhood dreams, childhood hobbies, solitary activities, and education. The involvement of parents at this stage of development was important. One man described his early draw toward classical guitar. He had to pursue this all on his own very early, while his father made fun of him, something he couldn’t imagine anyone doing to children now. Children looked for guidance and support from their parents to accomplish dreams. These first attempts were connected with the first experiences of flow and awe of the process. A 1st grader in Bulgaria decided to create her own journal and gathered other friends, but it

soon failed after the first edition. Yet she learned a lot through that on how difficult it is to share and explain an idea and create a team. Dreams were difficult for some with no opportunities, money, or time, to pursue what they really wanted in life. Dreams were the deep stirrings and longing for more, for reaching further, wanting to find joy: “Always I was sitting and looking West of the village and I could imagine the city with the golf, the sea. In my imagination, just a child. It was the dream to go somewhere, to do something” (Greece).

Education was described mainly in Bulgaria as a source of joy and awe in childhood. One participant had to bring another high schooler to the school where she grew up. His first faltering exclamation was: “But this is as a temple!” A temple was a rare word in Bulgarian during Communism. But somehow deep in the “prehistoric” memories he found it, he described education, learning, that school as a temple – it was awe inspiring (Bulgaria).

Education as a code, as something related to joy and awe in childhood and as a specific value seems Bulgarian only. There were other participants in Turkey and Greece who spoke about education too, in somewhat different ways, mainly as attaining goals and dreams, not as a goal in and of itself, having its own merit. Education and finding joy and awe were connected to reading, one participant keenly observed: “I come from the generation that developed emotions and feelings from the books, from the first love-lyrics” (Bulgaria).

Children painted, had dance lessons, made mud pies outside, played with dolls, and watched TV. Only one participant mentioned television watching as a solitary activity in regards to her husband whose parents were working (USA). Another

participant spoke of TV as the community past-time. They got the first color TV in the neighborhood and everyone went over to their house to watch sports (Turkey), that was a source of joy and pride for the children.

Vocation

What one loves brings joy and satisfaction. There is joy throughout the process of acquiring knowledge, creating, completing, and being rewarded for hard work. One person loved interacting with her patients, finding in little tiny ways what they need, and delivering it. That gave her joy everyday (USA). There seemed to be two types of joy in vocation – one strictly relating to one’s own achievement and success and the other, which touched fellow humans and gave them love and joy. Being able to create is joy: when a publication comes out (Bulgaria), or getting a scholarship (Greece). Acquiring a new skill and mastering something is joy: learning to drive was the greatest joy for a Turkish woman. Being satisfied with every part of the journey, including retirement is the greatest of joys (Turkey).

Sharing with others one’s gifts is joy. The Armenian participant, who worked at a coffeehouse, loved to share the baked goods. It was not a worksite, but home for him, welcoming people, then seeing them out the door, the only difference being that they had to pay for what they consumed (Bulgaria). Cooking at home a good meal for two to share is a quiet joy (USA). A bigger gift, like a prophetic gift, was shared with others so that God could speak to them their story and tell them what they needed (USA).

Many participants connected a sense of awe with accomplishment of something in relation to themselves or others. Note only the non-American born (from El Salvador) out of the USA group talked of awe in connection to something he had accomplished, to

reaching a goal. These were dreams achieved, milestones reached. Having awe when one has finished a job (Bulgaria), passing examinations was awe (Greece), beginning to get straight As (Turkey), making a new fireplace (Turkey), buying a new car after saving for it (Turkey), and living on the Potomac (affluent neighborhood coming out poverty) (USA).

Learning a new skill, experiencing flow, is connected to awe, the process of creation. One participant described painting, putting on the colors, mixing them on the canvas. Sadness and stress disappeared. To see her art work framed and finished gave her joy (Turkey).

Art

Art appears to be hardwired in the human psyche, as it is an expression of deep internal needs. Participants experienced awe in listening to music, reading poetry, beholding great art, seeing a beautiful picture by Van Gogh or Vermeer, and a song by Indila (Bulgaria). The cinematography of a movie evokes awe of the creator (Greece). Stumbling upon the beautiful unexpectedly is awe – the ruins of an old castle (Greece). And art connects to the spiritual, listening to worship music that makes one feel God's presence (USA). Out of the many people writing in a generation, there may be only three or four true originals. Awe is in discovering them for oneself (Bulgaria). There was an interesting description of art from an Orthodox man in Bulgaria. He spoke of esthetical and subesthetical appeal to the self, of art as a product and art that speaks to the heart. Coming from an ascetic type Communist culture, to him the opulence of art he saw in Austria felt hollow and materialistic. Art could invoke a stunning sense of awe and joy when it connects the self and what one holds precious.

Awe and Death

There were two dark stories filled with spiritual light and awe, told in poignant ways by participants. One was of a woman who was living in a loveless marriage. She dreamed of being on her porch, looking outside. There was a pond with black water. She looked in the water and she saw a woman – drowned, face down “with a billowing white dress.” She was that woman. There were people, her friends and family, standing around her, looking on. She was upset and wanted to ask them why no one had helped her. They said: “This is a ritual, it is called the Awakening.” She pondered over the dream and found out that there was a book with that title, about a woman just like her, who had drowned herself in the ocean. It was that dream that made her decide to leave the marriage and seek life again. She told the story with tears and deep awe.

The most heartbreaking experience of spirituality and awe, holding good and evil together, was an account of a woman who went to the funeral of her niece after she was brutally murdered:

I still remember after C.’s funeral, the whole family: my parents, my brothers and S. and I. We were going to have a snack together. And the speakers on the radio was Louis Armstrong “What a Wonderful world.” It was so hard for me to be holding my sweet little baby and hearing these words and knowing what my brother had just been through, it was just hard (crying and choked up). (USA)

The world was still a wonderful world, she held her precious girl in her arms, but her niece was lost. It was awe of death, fear, sadness, and meaninglessness, yet the miracle of life was present in her arms, testifying to great mysteries beyond. A Bulgarian participant, who had watched the news of Bulgarian children drowning after a bus

accident, described that same awe of death and self-sacrifice. “Respect, honor, awe I have felt the last time when we lost these children in the River Vin.” One teenager had gone back to save others. He had saved one and returned for another one, but drowned himself. The closeness of death invoked intense fear and awe in strikingly similar circumstance in another boy when he was on a little ship with 15 people in the middle of a hurricane. “I felt life and death side by side” (Turkey).

Joy and Awe and Other Emotions

There are many other emotions experienced with joy and awe. The ones regularly revealed in the interviews were gratitude, mindfulness, hope, pride, serenity, kindness, surprise, admiration, love, and sorrow. The emotion of fear as it related to awe was not explored further.

Gratitude

One of the Turkish participants described joy as a picture of happiness. A picture of a small poor house, there is a room with a double bed and the whole family is asleep on it – mother, father, three children, and family dog. The room is cold, the blanket is short, and the roof is leaking. They are happy because their faces are soft and peaceful. They are grateful for having a room and not having to sleep in the street. The blanket is short, but at least they have a blanket and the roof is leaking but they have a roof (Turkey). Several people connected gratitude to joy. This one colorful picture shared by the woman in Turkey was repeated by a woman in the USA. She said that she becomes caught in what she wants people to be, she should remind herself – you have a roof over your head and a house. Even if there was no art on the walls, there were walls.

People were grateful that “no one died today” (USA), “people around me are

well” (Bulgaria), “my daughter – that was goodness, God gave her to me” (Bulgaria).

Things should not be taken for granted, “because life could turn on a dime” (USA).

Gratitude was connected to the realization that one cannot have everything (Greece).

Searching for other partners and places could take a whole life by not focusing on what one has and is grateful for (Greece). There was profound acceptance of life expressed in some of the interviews – everything about life was good. Gratitude and loving one’s life were key to joy (Bulgaria). “I think life is beautiful and I am so happy that I am able to appreciate it. People, skies, smells, foods... I don’t take things for granted” (USA).

Gratitude was learned in childhood. Receiving Christmas presents, even if they were little, kids were always overjoyed (USA). The key to enjoyment was not abundance, but gratitude, kids were happy with little things; they were easy to please (Turkey).

Mindfulness

A Turkish participant, who had started painting, began noticing details. She would start painting a magnolia and look carefully at all the little curves. She noticed the general before, but after she began drawing, she began to notice all the details in life. Her boyfriend would give her a single white rose when they walked outside, a small gesture that brought joy each time. She looked for these little details in everything – paintings, photographs, taking them as important messages, things to treasure.

Several participants in the different countries spoke of noticing the small details in life, from the cats and the trees (Greece), the early morning (Bulgaria), discovering something new (Greece), to becoming lost in prayer (USA) or reading a poem (Bulgaria). One participant told herself to notice, wondering how many times she had missed awe because she was busy; mindfulness was her one big resolution.

Serenity

Without inner peace, there cannot be joy. A joyful person has peace and inner balance, not being reactive and judgmental (Bulgaria). Five of the participants spoke of quiet joy and sitting alone as ways to feel at peace and in harmony. In the Christian way this was having quiet time, sitting patiently and waiting for the Lord to speak (African American). The one Catholic in the group repeated the same thought: trying to figure out God's purpose, trying to listen. A woman, who had had a very difficult time sitting with her negative emotions, best described the process. She would light a candle, block all noise and sit in silence. It is a time to relax and think, recharge emotions, appreciate the moments of doing nothing. It is the way to give later to others by being rejuvenated (USA).

Hope

Two participants spoke of hope as related to joy. Life is simple and people are making it complicated. At the end of the day it is black and white, yes or no. Yes to what matters and what is important, and retaining hope (Greece). Hope was founded in the relationship with Jesus and the knowledge that one is loved and secure in it (USA).

Kindness

Kindness and goodness to others, sharing with those less fortunate, was a part of several interviews. Volunteering in poor areas, working for those who were discriminated, showing kindness to the elderly and to children, were connected to joy and personal sense of wellbeing and finding meaning.

Pride

Pride in family, community and nationality were connected to both joy and awe.

Pride and confidence in one's own achievements and the accomplishments of children also was connected to both positive emotions.

Surprise

The unexpected, as the stunning play of light during sunset (Greece), was a source of joy and awe. Scary moments of negative surprise were connected with awe in the three Balkan countries, but not in the USA.

Admiration

As described earlier, admiration for others, their character and abilities, incited awe. The heroic in others evoked awe – a struggling mother with five kids (Greece). One kind of awe, not described earlier, was the beautiful in women. Something noted by men in the three Balkan countries, but not in the USA – A woman walking down the street, sharing wine with a beautiful woman, a woman like Monica Bellucci (Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey).

Love

Love was the most dominant emotion in the narratives connected to family, parents, children, intimacy, and friendship. Joy and awe were intermingled with love.

Bittersweet Sorrow

When I am with someone who is very close to me, let's say with my child, because we are so close in that moment, I feel the impossibility for this to be absolute, to know how temporary even this happiness is, fills me with sadness.
(Bulgarian woman)

There was a description of joy mingled with sadness only given by Bulgarian participants. Two people spoke of this thin boundary between sadness and joy. A

Bulgarian male spoke of melancholy in such ways that it seemed closer to joy than sorrow. He loved the alone moments, sitting at the bar, dissolving in his sorrow about the past. He thought of the relationships lost, what mistakes and sins he committed, how he is paying for them, and the “entire labyrinth of sadness.” Both of these people were poets and writers. The woman connected the feeling of sadness to a traditional song: “Where tears have fallen, there songs will grow from the ground.” The song according to her, grows not out of happiness, but tears. When a person cries, the soul is alive, it means happiness, feeling sadness is a very good thing. The only negative definition of joy also came from Bulgaria.

Joy is like a falling leaf – it is never here too long. It is short, because the joys of a Bulgarian are always short. A Bulgarian cannot be joyful for a week; a Bulgarian could be joyful for three hours at a wedding. Then he gets home and the problems start how to make ends meet, how to pay the electricity. The middle income Bulgarian lives with 250 Euros a month. If we get here one Italian and one Belgian, they would die on the second week with such money. Short is the joy of a Bulgarian.

Economic hardship blocks joy, as will be discussed later. This is the state of life, the reality for a Bulgarian. But even those who are well in the country do not have more joy than the others, the undercurrent of sorrow seems greater than joy.

Other Contributors to Joy And Awe

Freedom

Many participants in the Balkan countries connected freedom mostly to joy; only one connected it to awe as well. “Joy is to be free. No one should limit me. There is a

need for freedom (бг. волност) to achieve anything. That is also awe”. Not a single participant in the States connected joy to freedom, yet it was one of the dominant requirements for joy as expressed in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece. One of the reasons, as described by participants, was the compulsory military service expected of all males in the three countries. When asked about the most joyful experience, as significant as the birth of a child was for them, the males unanimously recalled the day they left the army. They felt the compulsory army experience as prison, being locked away in the two best years of life (Greece) in a place of abuse and confinement (Bulgaria). Prison, in comparison was better, one had their own cell, did not have to share it with “psychopaths” (Turkey). Leaving the army was going back to life, to the university, lectures, girls and freedom, a moment of intense joy (Bulgaria). Female participants in the three Balkan countries expressed that same need for freedom as a need for space, a place to find themselves (Bulgaria). Freedom from unhealthy marriages brought on the conditions for joy and awe, to live with adventure and find true self (Turkey). The most joyful experience of a Greek participant was going to the States, feeling really free and doing everything she wanted to do (Greece).

Humor

Light-hearted relationships with parents and family gave children space to creatively push on family members and laugh with them. Playing pranks on grandparents was a favorite past time for one Bulgarian family of nine cousins of similar ages. Memories included putting flour on their faces when they slept, disconnecting their phones, stealing their mule. Their grandmother as revenge would dump buckets of cold water over them from her terrace. Parents who worked very hard with their children

would let their kids count the money and the father always found something to laugh about (Turkey). Families could be “kooky and nutty” (USA).

Face-to-face Communication

Face-to-face communication is a source of joy – “the eyes of another looking at you.” Relationships were face-to-face, neighbor-to-neighbor (Bulgaria). The conversation is not just words, but the body posture, facial expression, gesture and pauses in the sentence (Bulgaria). Family dinners were a rule in families and characterized by participants as joyful occasions (African American, Turkey) where no matter what else was going on, everyone had to leave work and sit around, on the ground Turkish style, or the family table in the USA, to tell stories and be together. One participant said that he and his sister got to know each other and become friends that way (Turkey).

Innocence

One important ingredient to joy and awe is innocence and following Picasso’s urge to remain a child, because “the child is the father of the man” (Greece). Remaining a child, one doesn’t lose innocence, the inner self (Greece). To lose innocence is to become jaded, letting the negativity of the outside world get in (Greece)

Innocence and the joyful self. Some participants were more joyful than others and more in awe of the world. Retaining childlikeness and innocence is connected to the joyful self. Running with children and simply being a big child, simply loving brings much joy (Bulgaria). Keeping a childish vision makes things light, not heavy (Greece). The ability to retain innocence leads to transcending of trauma and past victimization (Greece). Like a the waves emanating from a pebbled tossed in the lake, instead of contracted within the self after negativity, the self expands and grows bigger, brighter,

more joyful (Greece), knowing who to embrace and allow in – beauty, life, and loving people (Greece).

Innocence and childhood experience. Participants spoke of the need to retain innocence in order to feel joy and awe. In their childhood they had been so competent in the matters of the immediate surroundings, yet they knew very little of the greater world and had little information (in comparison to children today). Children did not have much experience and knowledge of human sexuality: they did not pay attention to guys in high school (Greece), growing slowly, “but with quality,” because there were taboos, things not discussed with children (Bulgaria). One participant with astonishment shared a story of a younger neighbor who had to sleep on the same bed with him when he was in high school away from his parents “without me even thinking anything, that type of purity will not return.” (Turkey).

Without the overexposure to sexuality, the first encounter with love was profound. One participant vibrantly described her first witness of a kiss in the spring while the acacias and lilacs bloomed. As she walked in the park, she saw a boy and a girl kissing and her breath stopped. Deep down in her this word came: “Temple”. And because there had been not much television, she felt in her heart simple joy, just by witnessing a kiss (Bulgaria).

Time

There had to be time for the person to experience awe, to be at leisure to see, to not be rushed (Greece). Forgetting about the existence of time was easier to reach when not “driven by the clock” (USA). An American was talking about her time in Africa, being able to enjoy and savor life.

Timelessness. There is a sense of timelessness, eternity, or changed time when experiencing awe and joy. When in awe, the person experienced a coming out of the self, focusing outside, not on the ego needs. These moments of sublime happiness and astonishment are eternal moments (Greece). When expecting joy, time moved slowly. When being in the middle of something joyful, time went by way too fast (Turkey). When reading a book, time and the world did not exist, the words were transformed into wonderful images (Greece). People lost themselves in relationships (USA, Turkey), reading (Greece), cooking (USA), and “watching the Kardashians” (Greece).

Ritual and time. An Orthodox theologian gave an evocative description of awe and timelessness. The Orthodox service, where in the same sentence the priest thanks for the death and resurrection of Christ and for his coming in the present, past, and future. Through that ritual, through the atmosphere of the temple, the person is transported into another reality that is transcending, it changes the sense of time outside the temple, it becomes the more real present, a way to check “your watch” with the clear hope of returning again, because everything in the world hints toward it. It is a way to balance biases and become centered (Bulgaria). The religious ritual creates the conditions for awe. There is a need for rituals that help the person to put aside the daily experience and enter into something sacred. A Greek participant talked about the carnival and the Easter holiday – a time set aside from the ordinary.

Spaces for Joy and Awe

There are human places that evoke awe more than others. The Orthodox temple invites meditation, mindfulness, peace, and beholding, a deliberate creation of a place where one can be reminded of past and future in the present moment, thus experiencing

eternity. A participant described the places of significance she found herself in one time: a Roman amphitheater, a mosque from the Ottoman Empire, and the modern pizza shops. She felt caught in timelessness, outside of her own boundaries: the awareness of these places in relation to her evoked deep awe. Making space for awe and joy also happened in small scale decisions, such as learning to play classical guitar as a child, because the music called on to a boy's soul (Bulgaria), boarding an airplane (Turkey), and becoming more mindful (USA).

Barriers to Joy and Awe

Table 4

Qualitative Descriptions of Categories Hindering Joy and Awe

Category	Subcategory
Family Troubles Illness	
Political Systems	Migration Unreliable World Economic Hardship: childhood, adulthood Discrimination Communism Capitalism
Globalization	Technology Institutionalization Business
“The Electronic Childhood”:	Flattened emotions, Disconnection from others Lack of respect Sexual objectification Less innocence Less freedom Disconnect with nature

Family Troubles

When the security of the home is shaken, it is difficult to feel lightness, to find things one can be joyful about. In Bulgaria participants related their ability to be happy to the circumstances of their families. If the mother was ill, how could the son be happy and joyful, even if he was already in his 40s, living away from her? The last time one participant remembered being happy was when all his family were alive, when they gathered at the home of his grandmother, four generations, all healthy, younger, more smiley, still married, with jobs. Since that time, people died, his sister and himself divorced, and now the teens were rebellious and problematic. The same person noticed, “the internal dynamic in Bulgaria is still alive,” the greater family relationships impacted everyone in them. If the family functioned well, everyone was well. A divorce would impact not just the nuclear family, but also all those related to them. Possible divorce of a sibling disturbed a sister, a European American, she constantly prayed for her brother. Divorces of parents impacted children even when they were already adults. When the mother cheated on her father, a participant felt like discounting the entire happy and joyful past she had as a child. Loveless marriages were hard, loving someone and getting nothing in return (USA). People after divorces recovered with time, giving them space for new joy (Turkey).

A Bulgarian woman worried constantly about a child who was left in an orphanage by her sister-in-law, a boy who would be a little older than her own daughter. She worried in a country as small as Bulgaria if the two would meet and start a romantic relationship. Another out of wedlock pregnancy resulted in a prematurely born baby who died: “I cried a lot. There is only so much that people could say. They could say ‘I am

sorry about your loss.’ You have the lonely nights” (USA). A man, whose mother left him when he was five, still had a hard time coming to terms with that loss (Latin American).

From the 20 interviewees, there were just several who indicated troubling relationships with parents: usually authoritarian, unsupportive, harsh fathers. The clash of value system when a child really wanted to explore a new path that the father could not and would not affirm remained decades later as a bitter memory and a block to joy (Bulgaria). Good, kind, hard-working parents, who simply did not know how to encourage their child, did not provide the skills and nurtured their core self, for later healthy self-esteem and courage (USA). Authoritarian parenting did not necessarily produce fearful and insecure children. A Greek girl asked her father: “Who made you king?” She received a slap in the face for the first time in her life. She did not back down, but insisted that she spoke the truth. After sleeping on the park bench for three days, he returned a changed man. He still had the last word, but the abusive putdowns stopped. She was only 13.

There were two stories of predatory uncles in families. The Greek girl fought and escaped, and told only her mother. She discovered child pornographic materials years later in her uncle’s house and destroyed them. As a grown up, she would not allow her brother’s children alone with this one uncle, but never confronted him. Her attitude toward him was surprisingly kind and forgiving. He had married and had been a good man, according to her. The family transgression had remained a secret. They did not tell her father, because “he is going to kill him.” Under these strong, close communities sometimes there were terrible secrets everyone pretended never happened.

Illness

Illness could be physical and emotional. After a breakdown of a family, a man turned to alcohol (Bulgaria), perfectionism led another man to panic attacks and hospitalizations (Greece). A loveless family life caused depression in a woman (USA).

Illness could prevent one from realizing dreams (Greece). Making the effort to improve having faith, having supportive people could bring the positive emotions, joy and hope, in the midst of the difficulties, giving one courage to try (Bulgaria).

The life of a child was generally a healthy one. There were two stories of eye-problems of children in Bulgaria. One was a story of overcoming and joy in recovering and the other was a story of isolation. A child, who became more introverted as others constantly gazed at him, a child that grew up very closed and had to go to doctors, while others played (Bulgaria). The childhood need for belonging and being in the presence of others when blocked by illness, was keenly felt as emptiness.

Dramatic changes in health and reaching for the light could bring a paradigm shift and transformation. One man in Turkey shared many stories of joy and awe, of loving his family and friends, his life experience, and life in general. The place where he really changed and decided to become a different man – less cynical, grumpy, and critical and more open, loving and joyful, was when he was in a car crash. He suffered extensive skin burns on his face and hands, new skin has to be implanted; he lost his vision for some time. He was grateful for a new life, something more than birth (Turkey). The gratitude for the miracle of life, for survival, overcame the obstacles; it was the sheer exuberant desire to live that mattered most.

The most powerful story of prolonged mental illness, sadness, and awe was a

description of a mother with Alzheimer's and how the father dealt with the daily loss with a mixture of love and loneliness. His daughter described his love as *a real deal love*. Her father did not allow her mother to be taken to a care facility. He took care of her himself, he gave her flowers on each birthday, even when she did not remember. He wanted the daughters to dress her up for occasions so she looked beautiful, he never complained, and he watched his partner slip away. In that hardest, toughest time he gave his daughter a true portrayal of love. It was a bitter pill, told with deep emotion and sadness, but also awe. It could have blocked awe for the family, instead it was inspirational, a source of light in that unrelenting darkness (USA).

Political Systems

The context in which a person lives, impacts one's perception of the world and emotional experience. Changing political realities have a direct impact on the experience of joy and awe. For example, one of the participants showed the center of Thessaloniki, the place looked very much the same to an outsider, but an insider saw the shops that had been closed, the way people dressed, the different and depressed atmosphere. That difference impacted the way people talked about joy and awe and their recollections of the past.

The same was true in Bulgaria. Bulgarian reality in the past 25 years of transition from Communism to Democracy was described as rocky. Corruption, economic mass migration of young people, deepening mistrust in the public institutions, have led to disillusionment and cynicism. It has become a chronic state in comparison to the acute feelings in Greece. Current zeitgeist in a country shows the changing realities in culture and the interaction with cultural values.

Migration. A surprising code that appeared in interviews in the Balkans and in the USA was migration – forced, economic or work migration and how it had changed the family dynamic. Many of the participants in the Balkans, when asked about their roots, began speaking in great detail about their ancestors. One middle-aged adult interviewee considered herself still “a refugee girl,” even though her family had left Turkey in 1922. They left a family legacy from 7th century – olive groves, animals, bakery, and were forced on a boat with just the clothes on their back. When she went to Istanbul for the first time she could not help but feel anger. This had been a place where generations of her people thrived, a place of belonging no longer hers. The migration of Armenians was described with heaviness (Bulgaria). One side of the family had had seven children and some perished in the slaughter at Edirne. Both stories were century-old, yet the feelings expressed were opposite to joy. These “refugee” communities were not originally there and did not bond with other cultural groups, just their own.

There was also economic migration. Some families migrated from Azerbaijan to Istanbul in 1887 (Turkey). Greek families went to Germany to seek jobs. The same dilemma faced other Greeks who had to choose between migrating within or out of the country. Working a meager job in a small village was not enough for a father to provide for his four sons, they moved to the city. A mother left a participant from El Salvador at age five when she immigrated to the USA. She sent money home to his grandmother and all the other young cousins. These were stories of political upheaval, hate, and poverty, all blocking joy and awe.

In a much less drastic fashion, migration is part of the current economy of the US as many people do not live in the same state as their nuclear families. The pursuit of

better jobs and opportunities and the ease of travel make it harder for families to gather together, for grandparents to spend time with grandchildren and for cousins to grow up together – all sources of joy and awe in childhood.

Unreliable world. Two countries, Bulgaria and Greece, shared the code for the dangerous world. It was more chronic and deeply internalized in Bulgaria, paired with danger and lack of safety. One participant was told repeatedly by his mother and grandmother to watch out so nothing bad will happen. In comparison, the American would look for the good and push forward (Bulgaria). The same participant, when he spoke about blocks to joy, seemed to have internalized that message later in life, learning to protect himself, putting a shield around, because destruction could be great. Joy was temporary. Loneliness, on the other hand, was a permanent condition: “Lonely, the human being tries to protect himself from the euphoria” (Bulgaria).

Another Bulgarian participant tried understanding the national lack of joy, she affirming that it is harder for Bulgarians to be joyful, because they have misgivings about it. She thought it was a lack of trust, the constant bad news of catastrophes and robberies made people not only not joyful, but not willing to have joy, enclosed in shells (Bulgaria). A third Bulgarian blamed the lack of security on parenting. The parents gave emotional freedom, but no self-esteem. That type of parenting lacked security. Trusting children helps them trust themselves. Safety and security are connected with trust – being trusted by others, trusting oneself. The lack of trust leads to comparing negatively oneself to others, the constant Bulgarian comparison to others (Bulgaria).

If other poets have their voice, Bulgarian poets are forever doubting, doubting and suffering, or suffering (Bulgaria). These are deep beliefs connected to the reluctance to be

vulnerable and rejoice in life. Without trust, the individual stands constantly on a shaky ground, not knowing how to be in the world. Joy and adventure, joy and leadership, would be difficult, yet Bulgarians did venture out, they were not losers (Bulgaria). (add paragraph)

The one other value participants connected to the need for safety and no trust, was resilience. Bulgarians, in their own words, are resilient people, just not joyful ones. The one Bulgarian who did not speak about the lack of safety was an Orthodox theologian. His framework was different. The Armenian Orthodox, even though Armenians had suffered greatly through WWII, seemed to experience the world as a safe place to be explored and enjoyed life to the fullest. This Armenian had also grown up under Communism.

The Greek interpretation on safety was not based on the insecurity of the individual, but the unreliable outside world. If in the USA and the Western world the values were order, discipline and the common good (Greece), in Greece there is no common good, no trust in politicians, in any groups, the individual has to do everything for oneself. There are no volunteers, either (Greece). The Greek person, even though mistrustful of the institution, will not be blocked in expressions of joy or deciding on a direction, there is no sense of danger in the world, more – desire not to cooperate at all. A priest came to a Greek village and wanted people to work together and plant olive trees. Only two people showed up: the priest and the participant. Later, people set his fields on fire and cut down his trees, because he was from a different political system. The world is an enemy and the person has to survive, choosing one's own way (Greece). A person after she left Greece felt herself happier, because life in Greece was too harsh and too

intense.

Economic Hardship

Poverty in childhood. Many participants experienced poverty as children. Poverty was a big topic of their past. Backbreaking labor, tending to animals, and gathering crops was spoken of with bitterness and regret, the childhood had not been carefree and light (Greece). Childhood was working at an uncle's shop on the Bosphorus (Turkey), getting any job available (Greece). Great families of seven needed the children to begin work early. When one parent was ill, the other had to work harder (Bulgaria). Even necessities were not provided for – black rubber shoes is all one participant had to wear (Turkey), another boy didn't have books and a notebook and was punished with a stick at school (Greece).

The path of violence and the gangs was one option in El Salvador in trying to escape poverty (USA). Children of privilege encountered the poverty of others with the same degree of sadness and helplessness. One participant's family in the USA moved to a minor's town. It was an eye-opening experience for her. She biked by a friend's house that looked like a shack. The school had holes in the walls, and the wind and cold came right through, the source of heat were potbelly stoves. That one year in her life, feeling miserable, set her on a course to volunteer and give back to others. It was her first awareness of injustice.

Economic struggles in adulthood. Economic hardship was a big predictor for a sense of meaninglessness, lack of self-esteem and less joy. All the participants in Greece talked about the changing economic realities, the lack of jobs, the shrinking salaries, the meaningless education. One participant noticed that a dream cannot be made without

economic status. People are dressed like 50 years ago, they have no money to dress or to eat (Greece).

Poverty led to pessimism and cynicism. Without money, education and intellect did not prove the person's value (Bulgaria), all were educated, but there were no jobs (Greece). As a result the younger people felt betrayed, their hard work to get educated was for nothing (Greece). Entire impoverished communities remained closed in, outsiders couldn't come in and get integrated and people in the community did not leave (USA). The poor places of Eastern Kentucky, parts of West Virginia, the mountain hollers, were places where outside others would never fit in. When economic hardship pressed on everyone, emotional reactivity was one choice. A participant decided that there was no point to whining. Instead, being grateful for what he had was his answer to the situation in the country (Bulgaria).

Discrimination. The only big story on discrimination came from a Greek Jew who encountered it during his childhood. He was harassed, called names and bullied for being a Jew, because he was different from the other children. It was very difficult for him, but in his opinion as an adult, his family had wisdom. They did not go to anyone to resolve the issue; they talked to him and helped him through it. Discrimination in childhood and later in life, the outward or inner sense of difference from the majority others created isolation, the opposite of joy and awe.

Only in one interview, very surprisingly in Bulgaria, where many people are hostile toward the LGBTQ community, a participant spoke of a cousin who lived in Germany and was gay. Even though he was gay, he was still a valuable person, sensitive, intelligent, spiritual. He tried living with a woman, but finally told the family in Bulgaria

that he could not live a lie. His cousin distinguished between being different and being rebellious, the stage her daughter was during the teen years.

Minority issues in USA were expressed in the evangelical language of an African American. Following the path of sin led one to getting in fights and ending up in jail. But if one followed God's will and heart, then God's plan would be accomplished and there will be joy (USA).

The same joyful and connected Armenian, who spoke with such eloquence about relationships and love, when describing the Armenian genocide, showed his ingrained mistrust and dislike of Turks, the heaviness of 100 years still weighing on him. Overcoming the communal trauma was difficult; the fact that the world might acknowledge the genocide was a step, but not enough. Because Turkey had not acknowledged the genocide, made all Turkish people unworthy of trust. His belief was that no one likes the Turks as people, not just Armenians, but universally. He finished that side note with the remark that Armenian history was very heavy (Bulgaria).

Observing the suffering of vulnerable others, like children and the elderly, and people suffering for an empty cause, led to rumination and a sense of powerlessness (Bulgaria). A teacher in the States was crushed by the suffering on a massive scale of others. She tutored kids of refugee families that had suffered the violence and genocide of Cambodia and then volunteered teaching in the inner city in Chicago with African-Americans. She chose to use what she could in order to help and not be a helpless spectator. In her experience, because she chose to actively respond to meaningless suffering, by doing so she gave it meaning. It was no longer heavy sadness without answers. It was a place joy could enter again. Hers was the only story of volunteerism.

Communism. The two big political systems discussed as the greatest blocks to joy and awe were communism and capitalism. The newest reality of the capitalist world, blocking joy and awe was technology and the virtual world.

Bulgaria was an ascetic socialist republic as described by one person. Surrealism was considered a “rotten movement” in art within capitalism, and therefore forbidden. But Gorbachov came to power and did not rule with iron fists like the people before him (Bulgaria), giving them more freedom that brought joy. The participant was sure that people reading about communism in the West would not understand. It was “the great communist experiment”. There was art that was allowed and art that was forbidden.

A participant’s father went to take his exams in chemistry at the university the summer of 1949. He walked in and saw the question. He had not studied this particular question; he had nothing to say and was going to leave the page blank. When the exam started, it was interrupted with the radio to announce that comrade Georgi Dimitrov had died (the founder of Bulgarian Communism). Her father decided to write a poem about Dimitrov during the Chemistry exam. He got a B. That was Sofia University. They were all scared (Bulgaria). By emotionally cheating the oppressive system her father was able to pursue his degree in Budapest. A man in Greece saw communism very differently. He had been a communist his whole life, an assistant mayor and wanted more for his people, because politics worked for people, they helped them have dreams. The feeling in Bulgaria was different. Communism in Bulgaria was connected to flattened emotions, inability to feel, to express opinions freely, to want to feel joy (Bulgaria).

Capitalism. There was a shift that occurred in the lifetime of some of the participants. The modern city was the place of promise, where dreams were made. It had

opportunities: it brought education, the cinema, music, and civilization (Greece). The city has changed. No matter where they are, the village or the city, people are after goods, the fight for more goods that destroys relationships (Greece). The value of money and material possessions destroyed relationships and the emotions connected to them – joy and awe (Greece). In the Western countries the desire for more material things in affluent families showed up early, but it was still controlled in the past. A child always wanted nice things, but her mom said no (Greece). Having enough made people think of bigger things “a boat or a plane” (Turkey). In poor countries the strife for products was expressed in violence. If one could not pay the rent, the gangs would come and kill them (Latin American, USA). Consumerism and materialism kill people; make them lose their humanity. A woman falls off the bus and no one would pick her up. Everything is about money (Bulgaria).

Globalization and Consumerism

Technology. As one participant keenly observe, people are now more connected to technology than to each other (USA). She gave a somewhat ironic illustration of how she watched a commercial *on TV* on how people have to turn off the electronics so they could connect with each other – a group of women at a table. The same group of women at a table was described in real life by a Turkish woman: five people sitting at a table and all five of them playing with their phones. People visiting with each other has become more rare (USA). As a result of technology adults now try to “capture” everything, instead of living it. Parents taking pictures of a child’s graduation are so busy with the iPad, that they miss the important moments in the heart (USA).

Institutionalization. Individualism has become more important than the

community – everyone to themselves (Bulgaria). The community and the local connection have become institutionalized. If someone wants to have a wedding, graduation, they go to an institution to organize it in a client-administrator type relationship (Bulgaria). The comfort and ease of life has made people less dependent on each other (Bulgaria).

Institutionalized relationships need adults that work longer hours away from home: both parents working, one parent traveling and working away, both working longer hours (USA). This leads to less nutritious family meals, less time together, less attention to children, because people are tired. In families where adults choose to work against the changing reality, better results follow. Children who grew up exposed to travel, to camping, seem different, emotionally grown up (Bulgaria).

Business. The lack of time is connected with busy jobs or new challenges in life – a small child to take care of, aging parents. American life is driven by time and money (USA). People are watching the clock constantly (Greece). It is easier to miss awe-inspiring things, because life is full and job is full (USA).

“The Electronic Childhood”

Because so much is under the topic of the “electronic childhood” as one participant called it, even though it is connected to globalization and consumerism, it is discussed separately. Globalization and technology has led to a different type of childhood, never experienced before. As a result of the busy, preoccupied, individual life of adults, children are left with “fewer pillars” (Bulgaria). The local community is substituted with virtual communities based on their bias (Bulgaria). It is of no surprise that children’s relationship to adults have changed and their relationships to each other

and nature have too. Children are harder to please, having unlimited options of context through the Internet, which is not real life. As a result they do not know real happiness (Turkey). Parents want to support their children in activities, not into buying ready products off the internet that flatten children emotionally and make them into zombies (Bulgaria) Brand clothes, status, and vanity were among the topics discussed alongside entitlement, impatience, boredom, and lack of appreciation and gratitude (Bulgaria, Turkey, USA, Greece). Expecting things and expecting them right away, children could not appreciate the little things (USA). A girl in Bulgaria was all about looks and presentation, not realizing that she was not a furniture or a product, but a spiritual being with mental activity and ability to communicate (Bulgaria).

The first thing that came to mind to almost all participants when asked how childhood has changed in relation to joy and awe, was virtual reality and technology, which permeates the world (USA). Participants tried to be objective, suggesting that this is nostalgia talking and people in the future will miss Facebook as much as “we miss the village center and *horo*” (Bulgarian dance), or that being away on the iPad is the same as being absorbed in a good book (USA). Technology is good, but it has a flip side, affecting family life, and every relationship (USA). What followed from technology and access to the World Wide Web was flattened emotions (Bulgaria), disconnect from others and nature, and consumerism, which led to sexual objectification and loss of innocence.

Flattened emotions.

He wouldn't push him on the shoulder to tell him something during class, but writes to him and the other guy answers. Without eye contact and with these emoticons they miss the facial expression of the conversation...you cannot have an emoticon

substitute for that with one little smile or a wink. They are becoming such emotionally ironed out people. (Bulgaria)

This is a striking observation: virtual communication flattens emotions. A human interaction is so much more than the words and the emoticons, a lot gets lost in the virtual realm. Another participant noted that all the public over-sharing leads to cheaper emotions, her niece could not cry when a grandfather died. She acted as if nothing had happened (Greece). The lack of emotions leads to inability to understand oneself as a result of all the screen time (Bulgaria). The side effect is less reading of books, less recognition of words, fewer nuances for the emotions experienced and no recognition of the inner world: “As they don’t know the words, they don’t get the signal for that sensitivity, for their own feelings” (Bulgaria).

Disconnection from others. Two Bulgarian girlfriends were very close to each other on Skype, they had free communication and a wonderful friendship. But when they got together finally, they had nothing to say to each other, there was zero emotional expression, according to the mother, who was watching perplexed. They could not have eye contact, or confidence in being in the same space together. The same observation was made in USA with the woman wondering if technology was causing problems in kids interacting with other people. Children have become asocial, a Turkish man noted with concern, they cannot say welcome, sit together with cousins and talk about something. He laughed it off and suggested they will most likely marry a laptop (Turkey).

Lack of respect. The disconnect from others was experienced as lack of respect. Lack of respect was not connected only to technology, but to changing societal norms. One parent understood it as lack of respect and arrogance in the parents themselves

(Bulgaria). Parents felt the lack of respect through the loss of authority over children; they could not control them or tell them what to do anymore (Turkey). Children did not understand the difference between being assertive and being respectful to teachers, and others adults (Greece).

Sexual Objectification. According to some participants, consumerism led to sexual objectification. Early sexualization of preteens and teens was marked in three of the interviews, all countries except Turkey (which probably requires more modest clothes). Fifteen-year-olds with one-night stands (Greece), girls choosing boyfriends for their money (Greece), wearing provocative clothes (Bulgaria), and getting silicon lips and breasts (Bulgaria) were given as examples. Sexual objectification of girls was seen as the biggest problem in Bulgaria and Greece, more so than in the USA. One participant in the USA who talked about sexuality, said that her one objection is too much access to information, half dismissing the claim with the old wisdom that every generation thinks the next one as worse.

Less innocence. Participants connected loss of innocence to too much knowledge and access to information, and children growing up faster (Bulgaria). As a result something is taken away from their childhood, they become adults earlier (Greece). Access to the Internet gives children knowledge that otherwise would have been left to mystery, personal experience or something shared by peers. Going to a foreign country, a teen would now know the exact street and the family they would live with, instead of stepping into the unknown. They want to do many things (Greece), they expect more to accomplish, too (Greece). That access to the Internet and the entire world brings instead of more connection and confidence, less trust in adults and as a result in their children

(Bulgaria).

Less Access to the Street. Many parents expressed a sense of danger: the streets were dangerous, crossing streets, criminality, and influence of other children. It was an interesting juxtaposition. Children were given less time, yet they had also less freedom outside, what was left for them was the house, the outside world was perceived as dangerous by parents (Bulgaria). As a result ,they would not get out of the house and did not know the street games (Turkey), because the device is right in front of them (Greece). They are not active like the previous generation; they do not like to be outside (Turkey).

Disconnect with Nature. Nature is described as disappearing, cemented over, trees cut down (Greece). As a result, there is less nature experiences available for children. They also have expressed no need for it. They stay on their computer, I-phone, x-box, iPad and TV (USA). They cannot be bothered to notice the stars (USA, Turkey). The less need for nature seems to begin with the adults, who do not savor their natural roots anymore, the sights of nature, and its connection to the spiritual world (Bulgaria). A Bulgarian participant thought that it should be parents who teach children how to enjoy spring and the birds (Bulgaria). Yet, an enthusiastic participant in the States claimed that she tried and failed to teach, her wonder of the world did not touch her children (USA) She hoped to go backpacking with her son and experience joy together. The skills in working the land and tending animals in the Balkan countries were gradually lost to the next generation, too. The participant, who knew how to raise all kinds of crops and animals, could not make his daughter put two seeds in the ground (Turkey).

The way to counteract the modern trends was holding onto what is holy (Bulgaria). Looking as a cynic and skeptic, where everything culminates in profit, was to

lose the holiness of the step and dedication. One must be careful not to cross these boundaries, which will bring cynicism, and loss of faith. The only way to do that in such circumstances is to shelter the soul by putting an armour around it (Bulgaria). One does not need material goods and entertainment, travels and constantly doing – satisfaction comes from within (USA).

Joy and Awe and Collectivist Values

The previous sections of chapter four discuss the emotions of joy and awe for all participants. This section looks more closely at the collectivist values in Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and African American community as they relate to the two emotions. Individualism is discussed briefly.

Even though participants were asked to describe briefly their background and roots, those from Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece chose to identify themselves with people from generations ago. There is transgenerational transmission of pain and suffering through historical events in the Balkan interviews. No such background was given in the USA. All American interviewees spoke of two generations back, unlike many of those in Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece, where participants described events from 100 years ago as currently relevant. Therefore, one big part of identity creation, joy and awe specifically, that distinguishes Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece from USA, is the relevance and resonance of history. As observed earlier, people had emotional connection to events century old – the Armenian genocide in 1915, the population exchange in 1922. Participants in the three Balkan countries treated national history and ancestors as sacred. As a result, national history and the ancestors were sources of joy and awe and when threatened or taken away, evoked negative emotions like sadness, anger, and shame.

“From the Rose Remains the Name”

Communal identity is deeper than connection to history. It is encoded in the personal names of people in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. One participant in Bulgaria spoke of the name as a carrier of meaning, citing Umberto Eco’s “Name of the Rose” – *from the rose remains the name*. Once she went to visit her father’s grave. He had left the village very young and they had not gone back often. An old woman saw her at the grave, looked at the grave and at her, and asked her: “Are you L?” The woman who had known her grandmother and her father, when she saw her at the grave assumed that she carried her grandmother’s name: L., expressing a “deep” tradition of naming grandchildren after their grandparents, everyone carrying the name of their ancestor. The participant reflected on that tradition: “We keep the name. Through the entire human civilization what remains is the name – the name of what is. Everything that is material disappears, it is wind and fog.” One Turkish participant spoke with great pride and joy of being related to Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish State, of family resemblance and physical features. The individual is important as carrier, keeping the roots and connection to the ancestors.

A recent political forced migration in the Balkans was a result of an attempt to suppress religious and ethnic identity through name change of Muslims in Bulgaria. One of the interviews conducted in Istanbul Turkey was with a Bulgarian Turk. The double identity he carries was powerfully expressed in his introduction: “What name should I give you – the Bulgarian or the Turkish? In Bulgaria I am S. (Slavic name), here I am K. (Turkish name). I have lived 25 years in Bulgaria and now I just turned 25 years in Turkey. Two names, two country are on the balance right now.”

Not only were Bulgarian, Turkish, and Greek participants more connected to the communal past and ancestors, in general, they showed a much greater connection to extended family and the greater community as sources and barriers to joy and awe. Individualism and collectivism in the USA differed between African American and European American participants. African Americans spoke with vivid detail of thriving big communities and religious connections in similar ways to participants in the three Balkan countries. There were permeable boundaries in close communities, people going in and out of each other's homes, sharing food, caring for one another. Where communities were healthy, individuals were happy and connected. Where communities were dysfunctional and ailing, collectivist individuals suffered more.

Sharing

The value of sharing connected to joy was most powerfully expressed and lived out in Turkey, followed by Bulgaria and Greece. The distrust of the institution and the nation was missing in Turkey. The desire to share with others was not blocked and joy could flow in many directions. One Turkish participant, when asked the question "What is the value connected to joy?", immediately and emphatically answered – "sharing!" Sharing is her individual, family, and community norm. She prefers a piece of the cake rather than the whole cake. She almost never drinks her coffee alone, it has to be shared.

Friendship

Another big value in the three Balkan countries, as mentioned earlier, is friendship. Friendship is highly emphasized, especially by the males. The "greatest joy" in life is to share with friends, be with a group of trusted friends around a table, tell stories, and eat together. The joy of one's friends is also breath taking; they are a constant

source of awe, love and admiration. Being vulnerable and open is to be known and loved, and to know and love. That openness and vulnerability to others could be dangerous. Wounds heal slowly. In these communities loneliness feels heavier than in the States, because the value is in sharing and being together.

Religious Identity

In the States, even though there is joy and awe shared with others, the individual in the European American stories is perceived as carrying the answers within, being able to still feel connected if one chooses to do that. The focus is on enthusiasm, initiative, and personal choices. If in Bulgaria people identified themselves as Orthodox, even though not generally very religious, or as Muslim, even though more secular, in the USA people identified by their choices of religion, not by the ethnic groups' belonging. The Jewish participants interviewed in Greece also spoke of the religious traditions, even though they themselves were not religious.

In summary, there are collectivist values in the three Balkan countries expressed through emotional resonance with cultural history, the ancestors, the community, and even people's names in the Balkan countries. Values like sharing and friendship are expressed as very important. European Americans are the most individualistic in their narrative. In the Balkans the most collectivist joyful portrayals are in Turkey, followed by Bulgaria and Greece. African Americans shared same inclination for collective joy as the three Balkan countries.

Conclusion

Chapter four discussed the factors that enhance or hinder joy and awe, finishing with an overview of cultural differences. An integrated life of connection to others,

nature, the self, and the spiritual domain is a life of vitality expressed through joy and awe and other positive emotions. The greatest barriers to joy and awe were family troubles, illness, and political oppression. The most recent globalization and consumerism, paired with the spread of technology and the virtual reality, have led to flattened and cheaper emotions, especially in children in all four countries. Values observed in the interviews relating to joy and awe are related to individualistic versus communal identity.

Chapter V: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss briefly some of the surprising findings that emerged during the study, including the dark side of awe; bittersweet joy; and attachment, privilege and oppression. I elaborate on the study's discoveries in the context of the literature. I explore the study's significance for the counseling field. Specifically, the novelty of the research design, relating joy and awe to the therapeutic process, and the cultural discoveries made in relation to the two emotions are discussed. Further, I discuss the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research, concluding the dissertation with some of the final words of participants from their interviews.

Cultural Discoveries

The Dark Side of Awe

As Wierzbicka (2014) suggested, modern science is imprisoned in the English language. The literature review and the results in chapter four showed that the emotion of awe especially is tied to linguistic differences. The way I organized chapter four suggests that awe is a positive emotion. Yet, the one interview done in Turkey, an outlier, spoke of the dark and scary experience of awe. A hypothetical situation - If I had grown up in Turkey with that type of understanding and if Turkish instead of English were the dominant language in the world, probably this dissertation would have had a very different organizing principle around the emotional experience of awe. Awe is complex, as suggested in the literature it is perceived vastness and need for accommodation (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Dickens wrote "the Christmas Carol," describing an emotion of fear in Scrooge, but was it awe too? The spirits that visit Scrooge resemble the spirit that visited the Turkish participant and went with him to the mosque. Scrooge's awe and fear

of the spirits led to transformation of his belief system and life. He experienced something vast and had to accommodate the experience. Is it possible that the dark shades of awe, which are just touched on in the Western research right now, carry transformative power as well? Awe of death was discussed in the three Balkan countries and in one American interview describing the funeral of a beloved niece. I do not think the American participant herself would have thought of that moment as awe. It was definitely a moment of awe for me as one bearing witness to her moving account. I felt as if I was in the coffeehouse with her and her family, watching her cradle her daughter and listening to Louis Armstrong's "It's a Wonderful Life." I was in awe of her, of the experience, speechless, breathless, terrified, worshipful. She had touched the border experience of life and eternity, birth and death, simultaneously! The other experiences of awe in the Balkan narratives also suggested a close connection between awe and death. It seems that awe mitigates the fear and is able at time to make it productive and good for the person.

Bittersweet Joy

At the risk of oversimplifying a complex phenomenon, the metaphor I want to use for joy, after all the interviews read and analyzed, is chocolate. Joy could be white chocolate full of sugar or 80% dark and natural. Most people think of joy as sheer happiness and lightness. The Bulgarian interviews brought another dimension. The ability to hold opposing emotions in therapy, this dialectical experience is not to be feared, but rather to embrace. Recognizing the ephemeral nature of humanity, its fragility and smallness does not make human life insignificant. It gives it perspective. Bulgarians may be have something to offer a world that wants instant gratification. They have something

to offer themselves they are not aware of, either. Globalization has made consumerism pervasive, perpetuating a belief that everyone should achieve and have more. Recognition of reality as is and embracing hardship as normal make for a meaningful journey.

Discussing joy and awe together in chapter four made me realize how important it is to have both – being-filled and beholding.

Attachment, Joy and Awe

Comparison of cultural differences in experience of joy and awe yields distinct perspectives on freedom, safety, and achievement among different groups of participants. These three values naturally connect to a category not discussed since chapter two – attachment. Early insecure attachments lead to disappointment and self-doubt, threatening the sense of wellbeing, joy and awe of a child. It was easy to see secure and insecure attachments in the interviews as relating to families: children with less support continued to experience more fear, insecurity and restriction in pursuit of their dreams later in life. The bigger differences observed in the participants' narratives refer to systemic attachments within a cultural group. Participants from cultural groups that experienced dependence, restriction, danger, and failure on a larger scale, told narratives tied to violence, economic and political, historical and transgenerational oppression. Western privilege and secure attachment at the systemic level (i.e., relatively peaceful history without significant traumas of societal violence for the dominant groups) seems to make safety, freedom, and achievement invisible or taken for granted. Indeed, these three distinct values were not mentioned in the European American narrative in regards to self. As Peggy McIntosh keenly observed: "Privilege is an invisible, weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks"

(1988, p.1). The invisibility of these three values in relation to joy and awe signals a free, safe life full of possibilities. Privilege and oppression directly impact experience of joy and awe and their cultural expressions and nuance.

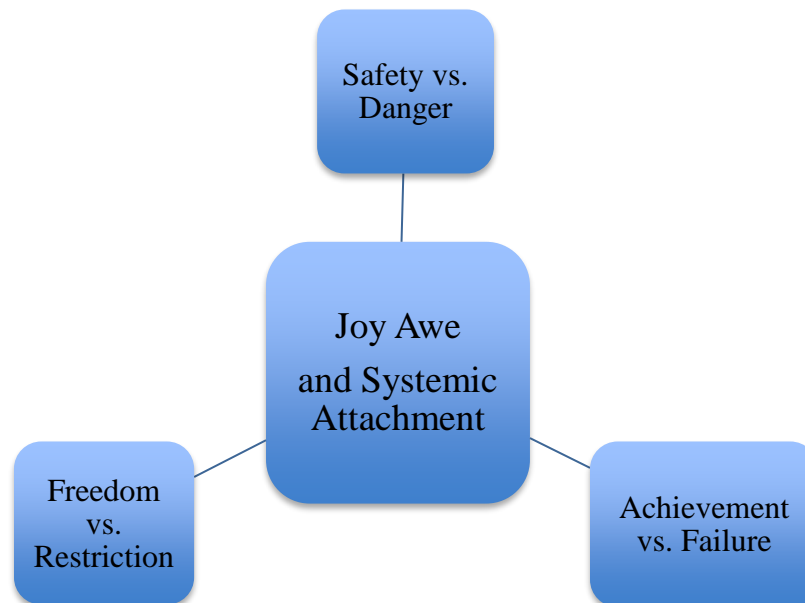


Figure 6. Joy, awe and systemic attachment

Safety vs. danger. Political systems, like Communism and capitalism, lead to forced and economic migrations, distrust of the greater world, economic hardships and poverty, discrimination of minorities. In places of endangerment, people create internal models to accommodate the reality they live in. As discussed earlier – Bulgarians and Greeks have a different sense of danger in the world. In Bulgaria, in the language of attachment, interviewees expressed self-doubt and perceived the world as unsafe. They preferred to downplay joy and hold joy and sorrow together. It is very possible that Bulgarian understanding of joy and sorrow is more connected to the Slavic roots – Russian and Polish (Wierzbicka, 1994), than to the Balkan countries – Greece and

Turkey. Bulgaria, Poland and Russia share Communist past as well. Could it be that formerly Communist countries experience the same feeling of danger and self-doubt? It is not surprising that the only negative definition of joy came from Bulgaria: “Joy is like a falling leaf, it is never here too long.” Bulgarians are successful abroad, but probably not happier than Bulgarians inside the country, as suggested by one Bulgarian participant. A value connected to the need for safety and no trust, expressed by Bulgarian participants, is resilience. They described flattened emotions, cynicism and despair more than participants in the other three countries. Openness to negative feelings rather than positive is logical, in unstable environment where safety is not guaranteed.

In contrast, the Greek insecure attachment is more of a dismissive one, it would be expressed as: “I am lovable, but the world is still not safe.” Greek sense of pride in their past is still present. After all, the entire Western civilization began with Ancient Greece. A sense of national pride and strong identity comes with such a history. Joy is not blocked as long as there is attachment with safe others, even though the wider world cannot be trusted. Nevertheless, at the communal level, there is a sense of too much intensity, according to one Greek participant. When a Greek person leaves the region, one feels freer and happier (Greece). The one person, whose narrative differed in Bulgaria and who looked to the future with hope and refused to internalize cynicism, was an Orthodox theologian. The Bulgarian metanarrative in his story was integrated into Orthodox theology. In his perspective even though there might not have been freedom and safety, through faith the person could hold to hope and move forward. He too was able to hold joy and sorrow together by using the life of the saints as guides for a good and meaningful life; they provided the lens through which he could see his future. It

would be worth exploring further Orthodox theology and its protective factors on personhood. It remains to be seen if Greece experiences continual economic hardship, the narrative would change to include a greater sense of insecurity and failure. With that assumption, if interviews were to be conducted in Turkey after the terrorist attacks in 2016, these experiences would shade people's reflections on joy and awe. One of the participants, contacted after the terrorist attacks, sounded more similar to Bulgarian and Greek participants in the expression of pessimism. Interviews with Latin Americans with unstable immigration status after the Trump administration would likely reflect the new reality. People's sense of their group safety and stability relate to individual wellbeing and the fragile emotions of joy and awe.

Freedom vs. restriction and domination. Participants from Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey discussed freedom, but not the participants in the USA. Freedom may have been taken for granted in the United States, but not in Balkan countries. Turbulent history of the Balkans resulted in a transgenerational transmission of pain and suffering vs. joy and awe, vividly presented in the Balkan Interviews. This should not be a surprise given that Balkan is at a crossroad between East and West, its people experiencing history of oppression by many conquerors.

Greece was once known as the Byzantine Empire, which exerted great political, economic, and religious influence over Eastern Europe. The Bulgarian Empire, in turn, during its Golden age, dominated over three seas – Aegean, Black, and White. The Turks are more “recent” inhabitants of the Peninsula. They came in the 13th century and expanded the Ottoman Empire over the Balkans for five centuries. They were in general tolerant to the other people of the Book – Jews and Christians. During the Ottoman rule,

the Jewish population in Thessaloniki grew to become the second largest after Jerusalem. It was during WWII that the Jews were taken on the trains and most of them perished in the concentration camps. The type of anti-Semitism expressed in the Jewish interviews in Greece, show local xenophobic attitude toward them. Another historic event discussed in the interviews was the Armenian genocide. In 1915, almost 1.5 million Armenians were killed or starved by the Turks. The State of Turkey still denies it 100 years later. Many Armenians were welcome in Bulgaria after they were expelled from Turkey. They settled down in strong, close-knit communities. In 1922, when the modern state of Turkey was established, the so-called exchange of populations occurred – forced migrations of families and communities who had lived in certain regions sometimes for centuries were forced to move from Greece to Bulgaria, from Turkey to Greece, and from Greece to Turkey. Freedom in the Balkan countries could not be assumed.

If lack of freedom in the past led to expressed connection of freedom to joy, the African American interviews should have mentioned slavery, which lasted over 200 years and had profound impact on their group. But they did not. Perhaps there are two possible explanations: 1) American culture does not seem past-oriented as Greek, Bulgarian, and Turkish; or. 2).Religion had a protective role in African American communities: “It is joy to know Jesus” and “I am not a copy, I am an original, because God made me.” Hope in Protestantism connects to joy and overcoming of hardship in the African American narrative. In contrast, in Bulgaria the Communist Government uprooted Orthodox faith. Religion serves as earned attachment, finding in God a secure other and becoming more securely attached as a result. Religion protected against cynicism and loss of joy and awe of the world: something confirmed by the Orthodox theologian’s interview. The one

interview that mentioned Muslim religion in Turkey also made a connection to religion as protective of the person and one's sense of freedom.

Achievement vs. failure. The final component of attachment discovered in the interviews as relating to cultural expressions of joy and awe is achievement. It was in the Balkans that people unexpectedly spoke with such sense of joy and awe about what they had accomplished. Whether it was passing examinations, or becoming better at their jobs, they were in awe of their accomplishments. This explains the strange appearance of education as connected to awe and joy in Bulgaria, which was also confirmed in Greece and Turkey. An explanation for the importance of education in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian revival, which came relatively late compared to the West (Daskalov, 2004). One of my coding team members, from former Yugoslavia, described this as the particular zeitgeist of the region. She portrayed former Yugoslavia as majority illiterate until WWII. Socialism and Communism made education compulsory and people who grew up after WWII had a significant privilege and advantage, which generations before them did not. The value on education showed up as positive emotional connection. Education cannot be taken for granted; it is a privilege to have, to own books, to read. If European American participants assumed mastery and privilege, that was not the case for people interviewed in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, and the African Americans and Latin American participants. These participants spoke of working hard to achieve, did not assume that achievement is guaranteed, and did not have a sense of entitlement. People groups, who did not have privilege or still struggle with oppression, connected achievement strongly with joy and awe!

Consumerism and privilege. Globalization and consumerism, technology and

institutionalization are the new changers of culture and privilege. They lead to busy lives, disconnection in relationships, and diminished joy and awe. They are changing attachment patterns. Parents in the four countries viewed their own children as more privileged than they had been themselves. There is an *electronic childhood*, which the participants interpret as leading to flattened emotions, detachment, lack of respect, sexual objectification, less innocence, disconnect from nature, discounting and disinterest in natural human experiences, which produce joy and awe. They are entitled and expecting everything readily and easily. It is hard to tell what that means for the future. The virtual reality is also a privilege: it means access to technology, to education. Children are the most threatened by global changes; this research raises critical questions about how to raise children with the current challenges.

In summary, freedom, safety, and achievement should be attainable by all human beings. But this was not the case for many of the interviewees' personal or communal life. In times where freedom, safety, and achievement were threatened, people experienced a heightened sense of joy and awe to feel safe, free, and able to reach their full potential. When danger, restriction, and failure encroached on the individual disillusionment, self-doubt and disconnect from the world followed. Protective factors mentioned by participants are relationships, strong communities and religion. Serving God and others, being part of something bigger than the self, made life meaningful, and filled it with joy and awe, even when reality was harsh.

Connection to the Literature

Some of the key sources in the literature are discussed in relation to the discoveries in the research. Positive emotions and their impact as described by Plato,

Maslow, Laski, Csikszentmihalyi, and Fredrickson were confirmed in the study. The more specific works of Meadows, Keltner, Schneider and other scholars on joy and awe, were compared. Cultural comparisons of emotions by Tsai, Tamir, Schwarz, Wierzbicka, and others were linked to the findings of the phenomenon of joy and awe.

Positive Emotions

The “crushingly soaring” experience of joy and awe, discovered in the interviews echoes Plato’s idea of loving and beholding that allows the soul to grow wings. Plato’s focus on the virtues: temperance, justice, courage, wisdom and piety relate to the interviews’ emphasis on innocence, sacrifice, and internal harmony. The individuals interviewed in the four countries are healthy and self-actualizing people, similar to the ones Maslow (1954) interviewed. Many of them are in a childlike state about the world and are accepting of self and others, they accept reality as is and have moral and ethical calls for vocation. The ultimate peak experience and transcendent ecstasy as defined by Maslow (1954) and Laski (1961) is confirmed in the interviews. There are experiences of transformation: ego-transcendent and unselfish; characterized by time disorientation; the world is perceived as beautiful and worthy; the person becomes more one’s real self; creativity is expanded; people become more loving and accepting. Experiences of joy and awe are also experiences of flow (Csikszentmihalyi (1997). Flow in the interviews connected people to eternity, experiencing the past and future within the present.

The study confirms Fredrickson’s (2004) observation that play connects to joy. Play expands children’s physical, intellectual and social capabilities. Positive emotions also could negate negative ones and even trauma, as discovered by Fredrickson. One participant did not view herself as a victim, because she chose to be like a child and chase

away negativity by living joyfully. The study also confirms Fredrickson's upward spiral: people with more positive emotions want to experience them more. Sustained behaviors connect to positive emotions – giving to others, volunteering, spending time with friends. The study corroborates Fredrickson's positive resonance theory (2013). Love is greater than all other emotions and broadens people's ability to experience them. Loving relationships in families and communities are the most important facets of joyful and awe-inspired living.

Joy and Awe

Meadows' (2015) is the most involved study on joy. Joy, according to him, is an emotion resulting of strong connection to others, nature and beauty, fulfillment of deep yearnings. The interviews support the definition, adding the African American connection of joy to the self as is. Joy is linked to authenticity (Heidegger, 1962). Joy is connected to happiness, even though different cultures prefer to use joy instead of happiness (Meadows, 2015). In the four countries studied there was a sense of joy as a temporary experience and joy connected to life-satisfaction in general. Meadows defined different types of joy: serene and excited; affiliative and individuated; anticipatory and consummatory. The study did not try to define these types, but they were present, participants spoke of calm and energetic times of joy, alone and shared moments, expectation and presence. Meadows described joy as harmony and unity, vitality, transcendence, and freedom, also discussed in the study.

Joy is connected to other emotions. Emotions close to each other in valence could be differentiated, e.g. elation, joy and gladness (Bagozzi, 1991). There was no such distinction made in the interviews. People described experiences that made them

exuberant and elated, joyful or glad when asked about joyful experiences. Joy is the opposite of pain (Vaillant, 2008). In some of the interviews joy and sorrow were experienced together and in the Bulgarian definition joy and sorrow coexist with preference being given to sorrow.

Keltner and Haidt (2003) conducted many quantitative studies on awe. They defined awe's dimensions and outcomes. Their definition of awe is: a perception of vastness and cognitive effort of accommodation. Crossing over boundaries and being allowed within is this study's working definition, which is very similar to theirs. The study confirmed Keltner and Haidt's understanding of awe as mostly positive experience in the States. Keltner and Haidt identified four situations that inspire awe: perceived threat, beauty, virtue, and the supernatural. This study verifies all four and adds the dimensions of the original self, and death. This study also explores conditions that favor and are adverse to joy and awe. Some of these are similar to Schneider's conditions for awe: appreciation of life; acknowledging pain as teacher; time to reflect, doing what one loves, openness to the mystery of life. Conditions adverse to awe in the interviews were: poverty, business, screen time, lack of freedom. This study is not primarily focused on the phenomenon of awe as Schneider's and some of the discoveries he made could be only indirectly inferred from the interviews. The study also revealed that awe of the great mysterious world makes the person feel connected to everyone and wanting to contribute be proactive in the world, confirming previous research (Piff et al., 2015). Also, in the interviews, awe of national history led to desire for social action.

Culture and Emotion

Tsai and colleagues (2008) revealed the difference in ideal affect in Western and

Eastern countries. The Western people favor ideal high affect, Eastern people favor ideal low affect. From the five interviews per country, there were small variations in the USA, Turkey, and Greece. Participants spoke of high positive emotions and low positive emotions – excitement and serenity, exuberant joy and peace. Bulgarians were the only group who showed preference for low positive emotions rather than high positive ones. Bulgarians were also the only group, who seemed not to value the emotion of joy as an ideal state. Tsai connected high versus low ideal state to individualistic versus communal cultural values. Even though Bulgarian, Green, Turkish and African American participants showed communal identities, only in Bulgaria low ideal state seemed to be preferred.

Tsai et al. observed that in the Western Protestantism high emotion is more valued than low. There was a slight preference for high emotions in the American participants in the interviews. Researchers have speculated that Anglo-Americans want to feel good all the time, be aware of their feelings at any moment, analyze and verbalize feelings, control negative feelings, and think before they say something to others (Wierzbicka, 1994, Tsai, 2008). Desire of Americans for high emotions was slightly confirmed in the interviews, with only one European American showing high desire for positive emotion, awareness of feeling, and wanting to feel good all the time. Surprisingly, in the American interviews, although good feelings were preferred, there was understanding of the range of emotions and desire and ability to hold very difficult and painful emotions, to be authentic and loving. It is possible that their age, personalities, education and experience might have accounted for the ability of American participants in particular to want to hold negative affect in contrast to the dominant preference in the country. In all four

cultures, Bulgarians were the most comfortable with their negative feelings, welcoming them as life-giving and good.

Other values also impacted the expression of emotion of the four countries. Schwartz (2012). identified seven cultural values in relationship to cultural groups: embeddedness vs. intellectual or affective autonomy; hierarchy vs egalitarianism; mastery vs. harmony. Embeddedness was more pronounced in the Balkan countries, African Americans, Latin American vs. USA European Americans. Hierarchy was more important for Balkan participants versus American ones. Harmony and mastery were expressed by all as important. Schwartz found mastery as one of the most important values for Americans, nonetheless it was participants in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey who spoke a lot more about the joy and awe experienced during achievement. This discrepancy could be described as the difference in expectation. If in the States the expectation is to achieve, as Schwartz claims, there is no reason to speak about it, it is part of the assumed territory. In the three Balkan countries if achievement is not assumed, when one got there, it was received as awe and great joy. Furthermore, Tamir et al. (2016) also linked desirable emotions and human values. According to these researchers self-transcendent value connects to love, affection, trust, empathy and compassion, while self-enhancement leads to anger, contempt, and pride. Conservation is connected to calmness, relaxation, relief and contentment. Openness to change leads to interest, curiosity, excitement, and passion. Openness to change in all four countries was connected to excitement and passion. Bulgarian participants seemed to have the highest preference for conservation and desire to experience calmness and contentment, followed by Turkey. All four of the values of self-transcendence, conservation, openness to change

were feasibly related to joy and awe in their different forms, but further research is required to explore that. Reporting of more negative, but socially engaged emotions in Bulgaria and co-occurrence of negative and positive emotions in Bulgaria was similar to Japanese subjects in another study (Taylor & Uchida, 2015). Similarities between the three Balkan countries and Japanese participants were in the use of the theme for awe and death as well (Taylor & Uchida, 2015).

The difference in emotion could not be described only by the types of values held. Gerganov's study (2016) of the archetypes revealed that Bulgarians are the only ones among the Europeans who have dark, night, and evil as archetypes as opposed to light, day, and goodness held by all the other countries. This study shows a possible way Bulgarians hold joy (which is an archetype) and the deep conviction that evil is stronger than good. By preferring sorrow and holding comfortably both joy and sorrow, Bulgarians live out their deep archetypal narratives.

Finally, emotions were expressed in communities people lived in. Turner (2012) defined *communitas* and the joy of togetherness in festivals, work, crisis and nature. All participants described the *communitas* of joy together. In all three Balkan countries working in nature and the connection to the land was most intimate. In Bulgaria, the word for earth is feminine, "земя", as such the earth was described as a giver, a Mother figure, who gives in abundance and is the center of one's world. *Communitas* in the four countries were expressed in African American churches, Greek Easter, the holding of the Ramadan in Turkey, etc. Collectivist cultures experienced more joy and awe in *communitas* than individualistic ones.

Significance

The study's contribution to the counseling field is in the novel research design, the importance of joy and awe in counseling, and the cultural nuances of positive emotion.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for this study is unique. It focuses on the phenomenon by placing it in the context of the entire human life, observing the impact of human development, community and culture. It creates a three-dimensional view of the emotions of joy and awe, exploring in the process many other topics relevant to them. The interview guide is similar to questions used in the counseling room reframing of client problems and negative feelings, opening up the possibilities for vibrant life.

The Importance of Joy and Awe in Counseling

The Western world and globalization have created major shifts in technology and free-market driven consumerism that strives for speed, instant results, and neat packaging (Schneider, 2005), promoting a sensationalist approach and striving for easy answers. Freedom is focused on "buying products, solving immediate problems and acquiring material goods" (Schneider, 2005, p. 168). Sensationalism and the quick fix culture have substituted the need for wonder and the joy of connection. Even though most Americans claim to be happy (80%), placing 13th on the World Happiness Report, other studies suggest that over half are overweight or obese, spend more on gambling than books, music and movies combined, and approve of violent ways of solving conflicts (Schneider, 2005). Communities are changing. The breakdown of a sense of community is evident in many places. Positive psychology has been around for over 20 years: 20

years that have witnessed racist clashes in the States, the war in Iraq, the unraveling of Syria, the birth of ISIS, the refugee flow to Europe and the paranoia that has swept the Western countries in relation to the Muslim world. This study confirms Schneider's findings. Virtual reality and consumerism lead to flattened emotions, disconnect from others, less respect, less innocence, sexual objectification, and disconnect from nature.

How can people live lives of vitality, not merely "a life of functionality or adjustment to the average" (Schneider, 2011, p. 248), because "it is hard to get enough of something that almost works" (Felitti, 2002, p.45)? This phenomenological study discovered that the experience of joy and awe together is a *crushingly soaring* sensation of being lifted up above what one considers possible, achievable or fair to a new level of understanding, love, connection to others and the universe. It is an eternal moment of the ultimate human experience. Joy and awe are felt in four big domains of human life: unity of souls, nature, spirituality, and the original self. These two emotions are possible when there is freedom, face-to-face communication with others, innocence of soul, the right time, and a natural or human-made space that invites the experience. Other emotions that could accompany joy and awe are gratitude, mindfulness, serenity, hope, kindness, pride, surprise, admiration, love, and sorrow.

One important way to help children in schools, college students and adults of all ages is to prompt them to return to the places of connection: home, intimacy, friendship, children, community, nature, spiritual revival. Counseling, counseling advocacy, and teaching in communities can help people remember who they are and what their roots are no matter the country and language.

Joy and the healing process. Dick-Niederhauser (2009) argued that psychology

has been looking for answers in the well-lit places of two opposing camps – outcome and process researchers – focused on randomized controlled trials or therapy process. What both fail to observe is the difference between two types of client processes – client experience in therapy and homework related to it and client experience outside the therapist's control that is more significant to therapeutic change. Therefore, the goal of finding what works should not be therapy, but rather what brings on lasting change (Dick-Niederhauser, 2009). Experiences that evoke joy are related to the ability to accept parts of oneself, others and life that have been previously rejected; overcome previous restrictions and move on; trust and rely on others, enjoy sensual experience; be creative; fulfill one's wishes; and experience the care of a benevolent higher power (Dick-Niederhauser, 2009). In sum, joy is an indicator of healing and a life well-lived. These curative processes of joy can be used in the therapeutic relationship through empathy and unconditional positive regard; encouraging client empathy; search for meaning and Socratic dialogue; Gestalt-techniques; trusting the therapy relationship; realistic expectations, etc. (Dick-Niederhauser, 2009). The important shift is to recognize that it is the curative processes that bring change, not the therapy, helping the client to recognize and use them (Dick-Niederhauser, 2009).

This study discovered that joy is mainly a social emotion of connection and love shared with others. A happy childhood is marked by joy and the secure attachment to others, the desire to explore the world around and be part of it. Childhood play, games with others, and unstructured time outside is part of the joyful and fulfilling life of a growing human. Nature is close and dear, wild and domesticated. Joy is possible, because the individual is loved and can love the self, be immersed in human existence, dreams,

achievement and vocation. Joy is connected to community and rituals. In times of darkness, joy is found through spirituality, gratitude and mindfulness, believing and hoping in goodness, connection to all humans. Family troubles and dysfunctional relationships could stifle the feelings of joy and awe— authoritarian fathers, unloving spouses, unfaithfulness, and sexual predatory relatives, unsupportive and discouraging others. Illness in all its forms is a heavy burden to lift daily, it dampens joy. However, in the overcoming of illness love shines through and inspires a great sense of awe.

Finding what blocks joy and awe in clients' lives is an important step of the healing process. Asking the client to remember and explore the joyful moments in life connects to their resilience, their playful nature, and the eternal moments that have power to offset the current negative circumstances and emotions. Establishment of a trusting therapeutic relationship and secure attachment, therapist humor, lightness of being, personal joy, and reframing the client narrative, unlock the potentials of joy and healing, which will be lasting.

Awe and the magic of life. If the human search is a search for meaning, awe goes beyond the meaning, touching the sacred, encompassing one's whole experience, taking seriously *being* and the *self-cosmic relation* (Schneider, 2011). Awe in the counseling relationship means approaching the client with wonder, being attuned to the sense of vastness inside and between counselor and client (in memories and experience) and surrounding space, the elements of life that “dwarf” and “elevate”:

Are we just sitting here having an ordinary conversation in an ordinary building? I think not: We're sitting here having an ordinary conversation in an ordinary building that rests on a gigantic ball that is whirling around the sun at 67, 000

miles per hour, which is situated in a galaxy that is hurling through space at 1.3 million miles an hour, surging toward a destination that is completely unknown. (Schneider, 2011 p. 250.)

This study revealed that awe is crossing a boundary, being allowed and invited within. It is an encounter that overwhelms the existing understanding of the world; feeling smallness, yet desiring to be involved and connected. Awe is approaching the mystery and splendor of the Universe with recognition of the small human capacity to understand and hold together so much. Awe is in the mystery of human life. It is beginning and marvelous entry into the world. Awe is in the way humans are made and function – their bodies and souls. Awe is intertwined with love of beloved and familiar others. Awe is admiration and honor of humans, their innate beauty and resilience, their heroic sacrifice and love. Awe is in the mystery of death and the terrifying ceasing to exist. Awe is in the supernatural – God and the mighty spirits, who sometimes visit the human world – to overwhelm and frighten, to sooth and give hope. The saints and the dead come into the visible realm through dreams and visions, to encourage the living.

This study affirms that awe infuses human life with sacred meaning and magic. Awe of the original human self, of the magnificent in nature, of the mysterious in existence, the passing of others and death, helps move the center of gravity from the small ego, the chaos in the world and the piling problems to something greater and bigger, beautiful and holy. Finding a *why* to live can help one to live through any how (Frankl, 1946). Awe is in the answer to why, understanding deeply the life of wonder and exuberant connection to all. Asking clients what takes their breath away helps them begin to find for themselves the places and people who are life-giving, reclaiming their vitality

and seeing the world with new eyes.

Personal Qualities Related to Joy and Awe

There are people who show a greater ability to feel joy and awe in each culture. They retain a childlike self and innocence and/or have experienced posttraumatic growth.

Innocence. Childhood innocence, retaining purity of eyes and soul, noticing the world fresh and unpolluted, is a main ingredient in the ability to feel joy and awe. Outside negativity, cynicism and materialism are not allowed to penetrate the soul and take away what is holy. People who have made a commitment to firm boundaries and what they allow to experience and feel, choose to get lost in goodness and loving the world. They remain vulnerable to others, but guarded to the evil in the world. Clients can be encouraged to find their inner child in order to feel joy and awe again.

Posttraumatic growth. “Posttraumatic growth,” as defined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996), is a concept describing how people grow after trauma and transform its meaning. Individuals can expand their horizons in five distinctive domains: changes in self-perception; changes in interpersonal relationships; changed philosophy of life; seeing new possibilities; and greater appreciation of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). These five domains, as discovered in the interviews, connect to a greater capacity to feel joy and awe. Difficult experiences do not always create barriers to joy and awe, but sharpen people’s awareness of the world. A loveless marriage, the murder of a beloved niece, a life-threatening car-crash, and Alzheimer’s could produce a deep desire to live meaningful lives, to connect to others more and to touch the sacred in life. Joy and awe are not just positive thinking cheerful emotions. In a culture like the American where one is told to feel happy and to ignore negative feelings (Wierzbicka, 1994), holding the

bittersweet of joy and the darker shades of awe would help achieve inner integrity and resilience. Joy and awe are often rooted in difficult painful experiences, which produce beauty: “Where tears have fallen, there songs will grow from the ground” (Bulgaria).

Understanding Joy and Awe Culturally

Cultural sensitivity and multicultural issues are taught in every mental health and school-counseling program. There are many untested presumptions majority Western counselors continue to operate under. This study revealed three issues in relation to culture and emotion. First, generalizations of culture should be tentative, encountering each individual as they are. The European Americans interviewed did not seem to hold what was expected about the American narrative of cheerfulness, friendliness without depth, and refusal to hold negative emotions. The one-on-one conversations helped get passed the generalization. Second, the study discovered sometimes-great differences in the experience, understanding, and values connected to emotions. Awe, especially, was very differently understood in the three Balkan countries vs. USA. Unlike the American understanding of awe, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey contained descriptions of awe connected to death and terror. Joy, too, was experienced in one country very differently. Bulgarians held joy and sorrow together and sometimes seemed to prefer the emotion of sorrow to joy, given specific cultural, historic and archetypal influences. Third, building communities of joy and awe is vital. Religious communities, interest groups, coffee houses, friendships, and rituals all serve to build individuals together in appreciation and openness to the totality of life, its beauty and mystery.

Relevance of This Study

This study is at its heart a picture of the human best – the loveliest and most

joyful memories. The study unexpectedly is linked to privilege and oppression, attachment and the importance of safety, freedom, and achievement. The study is a warning against all that can be lost by selling humanity for less, raising fearful and abused children, taking away freedom, crushing the human spirit under poverty and discrimination, feeding the soul with objects and virtual reality. It poses a question of what should be done systemically and locally by mental health workers in schools, colleges, and communities.

The study shows the importance of the past for people groups and the way internalized trauma continues through generations. Being welcome, making a new home, feeling rooted and safe, being able to achieve full potential are the issues current refugees face similarly to the refugee communities in the Balkans from 100 years ago. Current policies and approaches could impact generations to come. Protective factors are relationships, communities and religion.

Limitations

Research Design

The drawback in using phenomenological methods is the subjectivity of participants' responses and the small number of people engaged. These are countries with many minorities living on their territories, which were not included. A quantitative research in the four countries with undergraduate students could bring more reliable results, but it will not allow for the depth of qualitative research and will reflect the new realities of globalization and consumerism.

Educational Level of Participants

Because 13 out of 20 people had graduate level training, their answers were

probably more sophisticated than the general public. Yet, the ability to express in language sometimes-ineffable experience was an important asset to this research and answered the phenomenological requirement that the participant is able to describe the phenomenon.

Emic Positioning

What I discovered, especially in Bulgaria, was based on my insider status. People were more open and trusting, desiring to help me understand in depth, wondering with me, giving me all possible details and insight to promote my study. I am very grateful to all Bulgarians who participated in the research. I was surprised to encounter very similar desire to be open and vulnerable in the other three countries. Consulting with my coding team, it was suggested that my way of asking questions and inviting depth, might have created the rich interview data. If this is the case, the study would be difficult to repeat or reproduce.

Directions for Future Research

There are several areas for future research, uncovered in the study.

Research of Bulgarian understanding of joy and sorrow should continue through quantitative research to find out how joy and sorrow are connected and if the ideal affect in Bulgaria is actually negative. Conducting a comparative study of Bulgaria and other Slavic ex-communist countries could bring better understanding of metanarratives and the impact of communism.

Further research of African American understanding of awe and the human self could help in discovering a specifically African American value promoting resilience and healing. Given the needs of the younger African American population, it will be

important to find ways in which community wisdom can be passed down to the next generation that might not be as strongly connected to church and religion. The role of privilege and oppression in the experiences of joy and awe beg for further exploration, preferably through a quantitative method.

The intersection of culture, technology and emotions should be studied further: how does it lead to impoverishment of personhood and flattened emotions. A quantitative research done in different cultures, connecting social media use and emotional expression could bring more clarity on the topic.

Orthodox protective role in troubling situations and Orthodox ideal effect of low arousal positive feelings could be a new source of exploration for Western Counseling. Orthodoxy could offer a set of beliefs, rituals, ideas on how healing occurs and positive emotions are sustained.

A concept not discussed so far is authenticity of the qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (2007) discovered four types of authenticity – ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical. This phenomenological study uncovered the ontological constructs of reality connected to joy and awe. It was also educative – helping participants and those who read the work, to discover how their constructs are different than those of others and how to understand the constructed reality of another. What needs to be explored further in the counseling literature is the catalytic and tactical authenticity of such discoveries. How can the understanding that African Americans view the self as originally created by God become a catalyst, how can it be used then tactically through advocacy to bring forth change? A case study with African American youth where this particular approach is taken might show the impact.

Conclusion

This journey uncovered what looks like a blueprint. Joy and awe are to be found in the best of humanity. They encompass the human life from birth to death. They are in dreams, intimacy, raising children, vocation, in pondering our destiny and the stars.

The meeting is something mysterious, which God has prepared in His way for your scale, because you meet something mysterious in a limited context, local size, but it gives you the sensation that this is what God has prepared for those who love him and you know it is an aspect of another reality, which is much greater, ineffable, and unmeasurable. But the fact that God has allowed for it to happen in different fragments of time and wonderful things have happened, is to retain your taste, to keep the feeling of hunger for this particular taste and when you don't have it to know that it exists. And if you know, what does it matter if you have it today or tomorrow?! (Bulgaria)

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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

I am from Bulgaria and am doing a study on what kind of events in life have brought people joy and sense of awe. I am a doctoral student at James Madison University and working on my doctorate. I love listening to people's stories and reflecting on their journey together. I am currently interviewing people in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey to see how our stories are the same or different. This study will contribute to my dissertation.

I would love for you to be part of this study exploring cultural differences between people and their experience of the positive emotions of joy, awe, and flow. The interview contains several questions related to exploring your experience of joy, awe (wonder) and flow (sense of time) and how culture and background influence those experiences and their meaning. I will use a tape recorder, since I will not be able to remember everything you say. After I have answered all your questions or any concerns you might have about being interviewed, I will ask for your verbal consent or signed consent if you feel comfortable doing that. I would also like to take a few photographs of you if you are comfortable. The public information will be a short excerpt with your name, general age, location and picture much like the samples I am showing you from the Pax Balkana work. Let me know if there is anything you feel uncomfortable with. I am happy to use your photograph without any identifying information if you prefer. Once our study is complete, I will provide you with your transcript from the interview and any photographs I have taken if you would like to receive them.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require half an hour to an hour of your time. Interviews will be approximately 60-75 minutes in length.

Risks

I do not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

For certain types of communities, I recognize that sharing identifying information might not be desired. I consider your need for safety and we could agree not to mention name publically. In my recording and subsequent papers you will be identified only by gender, age and general background.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study will include a better understanding of

cross cultural experiences of the positive emotions of joy, awe, and flow. Sharing the stories will help raise awareness of the diversity and strength across and within separate groups. As a member of your own cultural group, you will have the ability to give voice and show the unique perspective and experiences within your cultural group.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented in my dissertation, to my colleagues, at conferences and publications. All results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be downloaded from this recorder and stored in my personal computer while traveling and will be accessible only to me by creating a personal password for access. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed. The separate creative project with photos and small excerpts will be shared publicly online or through exhibits to ensure individual ownership and voice are not lost as we try to retain authorship. *See: <http://paxbalkana.org/en/> as an example of how this will be shared for exhibit or presentation purposes.*

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

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Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Appendix B

Giving of Consent

(when verbal permission is more appropriate it will be given and recorded with the same points outlined)

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. I give official permission for the pictures, recorded interviews, also copies of given by me pictures and documents to be used by the researcher.

I give consent to be audio taped during my interview. _____ (initials)

I consent to be identified by my real name publically: Yes No

I consent to the public use of my name in this format:

I consent to be photographed: Yes No

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

From the interviewer

In your agreement to be part of this project you have chosen to share an important part of your life with me. I accept this as a precious gift and will treat what you have entrusted seriously. Any request regarding confidentiality will be respected. Your remarks and ideas will be considered. After the interview when possible you will receive a copy of the picture (pictures) and a recording (or text) of the interview

Signature

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Date

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Appendix C

Interview questions

- Questions to establish the interviewing relationship and situate the study:
 - Tell me a bit about your family and roots.
 - Where are you from? What was it like growing up there? How has life changed since then?
 - What is your happiest childhood memory?
 - If you were a child again....
 - What in your community values and upbringing are the sources of joy and awe?

- Questions to explore joy and awe:
 - If you are to finish this sentence what would you say or if you want you could draw a simple picture to illustrate your thoughts:
 Joy is like....
 Awe is like...
 - What has been the most joyful moment in your life?
 - What takes your breath away?
 - What do you get lost in?
 - When did you find light in darkness?
 - Please describe a particular incident or incidents when you remember experiencing the emotions of joy and wonder and felt like time had stopped?
 - What lessons did you learn?

- Anything else you want to add to what you have told me?