A New Pathway to Awe: A pilot study
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**Awe** is a distinct positive emotion that has positive associations with factors like well-being, prosociality, cognition, religiosity, and physiology (e.g. Piff et al., 2015; Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012). A key elicitor of awe included in most studies of this construct is vast and sweeping nature scenes, such as standing before the Grand Canyon. While such sweeping landscapes have been shown to elicit feelings of awe, relatively little research has explored whether a non-nature stimulus can do the same and to our knowledge no study has investigated whether an auditory stimulus alone can elicit feelings of awe.

**PURPOSE:** We investigate whether the mere act of hearing an awe-inspiring story, rather than witnessing a vast nature scene, can elicit feelings of awe.

**STUDY HYPOTHESES**

1. An auditory stimulus (as opposed to a visual nature stimulus) will elicit feelings of awe.
2. Participants will report significantly greater awe responses in the experimental condition as compared to the humor control condition.
3. Feelings of awe will not result from participant disposition.

**METHODS**

**Participants**
Participants included 91 undergraduate students from a private university in the northwest United States. The sample consisted of 74.3% females, and was 87.8% White. The mean age was 20.37 years (SD=2.368).

**Procedure**
Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: An awe-inducing story or a humorous audio clip (positive emotional control).

**Measures**
1. **Single Word Emotional Assessment (ONE-W):** Participants were asked to rate the appropriateness of certain words, such as awe, to describe their emotions during the presentation (1= not appropriate at all; to 7= very appropriate) (Shiota et al., 2007). The work “amusement” was added.

**RESULTS**

An independent samples t-test found higher average reported feelings of awe in the awe condition compared to those in the control group for both the ONE-W scale (t(89)=6.786, p<.001) and the APRS (t(89)=3.714, p<.001; See Figures 1 and 2). No significant difference in the DPES-awe scores for participants across groups was found (t(89)=-.235, p=.814), suggesting no unique sensitivity to feeling awe by condition (See Figure 3).

**CONCLUSIONS**

Initial evidence supports the ability of a non-nature and solely auditory stimulus to elicit feelings of awe. Our findings may support additional theory proposed by Shiota et al. that stimuli need not be physically vast to influence feelings of awe (2007) as originally purported by Keltner and Haidt (2003). This preliminary data encourages further inquiry into the elicitors and outcomes of awe with a more comprehensive experimental design.
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