# CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

# Humor Styles, Gelotophobia and Self-esteem:

# A comparative study between

# the Chinese and the Indians

A Report Submitted to
Department of Applied Social Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology

by

Hiranandani, Neelam Arjan

April, 2010

**Abstract**

**Objectives:** Humor Styles has been studied intensively in recent years. Till date, there have been reports on individual and cultural differences on Humor styles; however, there have been minimal studies on the Indian humor styles and less research in the Chinese on this issue. This paper addresses the styles of humor in two cultures – the Chinese and the Indians. Furthermore, this study is an attempt to reveal empirically the relationship between humor styles, gelotophobia and self-esteem in the Chinese and the Indians.

**Method:** The participants of the present study were sampled from universities in Hong Kong and India at a random basis, consisting of a total of 203 undergraduate students (57.6% females, 42.4% males; 49.8% Chinese, 50.2% Indians) who aged above 18 and below 26 years.

To evaluate the findings, the data was collected through a questionnaire which was a combination of three standardized instruments namely, the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003) and the GELOPH-15 scale (Ruch & Proyer, 2008). Participants were also required to rank the importance of humor and their self-humor. Moreover, they had to list three most humorous people according to them along with reasoning. The data were then analyzed using SPSS, Independent t-tests, Repeated measures ANOVA, Univariate analysis of variance, Pearson correlation and Regression.

**Results:** Firstly, the results reported that Indian students rate the importance of humor significantly higher than the Chinese students and also consider themselves as being humorous. Secondly, this study affirms that collectivistic cultures use more adaptive humor

than maladaptive humor styles. In terms of gelotophobia, results indicate that the Chinese demonstrate signs of the fear of laughter more than Indians. Lastly, a relation of gelotophobia and the following has been recorded: low self-esteem, low affiliative humor, low self-enhancing humor and high self-defeating humor.

**Conclusions:** All in all, this study brings out the empirical data in the Indians and Chinese. Indians use the adaptive styles of humor more than maladaptive styles just like other collectivistic cultures; nonetheless, they use it more than the Chinese. Similar results were found with the gelotophobia. Lastly, the significant relation between gelotophobia and self-esteem indicates that low self-esteem scorers may have signs of expressions of fear of laughter.

**Acknowledgements**

**City University of Hong Kong**
**Department of Applied Social Studies**

**Thesis Submission Declaration Form**

**Student Name:**      Neelam Arjan Hiranandani

**Student No.:**

**Title of Thesis/Dissertation:**      Humor Styles, Gelotophobia and Self-esteem: A

comparative study between the Chinese and the Indians

**Course Code:** SS4708

**Programme:**   BSSPSY

**Supervisor's Name:**      Dr. Yue Xiao Dong

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Humor - a universal activity in which humans have the ability to interact and communicate laughter. It stirs an emotional response bringing out a positive mood through the exposure of humorous stimuli (Szabo, 2003). Ideally, humor can occur in any given social situation for example in a political leader's speech (Martin, 2007). Socially, it is often used as an ice-breaker to meet new people, interact, or as a form of play.

According to Martin (2007), "humor serves three functions, namely, for the purpose of social communication, the cognitive and social benefits of the positive emotion of mirth and its' influence as a tension relief and coping." These functions translate emotions as adaptive roles in which individuals focus their attention on environmental threats and motivate them to deal with it (Levenson, 1994). There are four styles of humor – affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humor. They are further categorized as either adaptive (healthy) or maladaptive (unhealthy) in nature. When one communicates humor in a serious and direct tone or manner, there are high risks of it resulting in embarrassment or confrontations. This occurs formally or informally in everyday social interactions such as spontaneous conversations (Martin, 2007). Thus, one can say maladaptive humor can cause mixed feelings with stress and influence one's reaction. The positive or negative reaction is determined according to how one comprehends the joke. Therefore, one's mental health can be improved through emotion regulation which relives the stress between the communication differences. In other words, the positive mirth replaces the depression and feelings of anxiety, allowing one to think broadly and perform clear problem solving.

The individuals' different humor styles can be accounted by their individual differences which can be attributed by their cultural backgrounds (Alonso-Rodriguez, Carbelo-Baquero, Thorson, & Valero-Garces, 2006). Furthermore, Bilge and Saltuk (2007)

reported that differences in styles of humor are more observable during one's university education where many personal and social exchanges take place. Thus, the purpose of this study is to measure cultural divergence in Humor Styles and Gelotophobia among students in Hong Kong and Indian Universities to reaffirm that humor style can vary among different cultural groups.

Similarly, one may assume that self-esteem can be influenced by the difference in humor styles or by cultural elements that one acquires. For instance, one may have low self-esteem due to lack of confidence caused in situations where jokes are directed towards one's weight (Hoffmeister, Teige-Mocigemba, Blechert, Klauer, & Tuschen-Caffier, 2010). Such people may also develop a fear or grudge against humor if they are exposed to large amounts of maladaptive humor, such as aggressive humor, thereby triggering gelotophobia. Another element examined in this study is gelotophobia. Basically, it is defined as the fear of humor that might be explained in terms of the styles of humor and the level of self-esteem collectively. This study intends to measure this variable in the two above mentioned cultures.

All in all, the meaning of humor has developed from positive mirth to more aggressive forms of wit referring to laughter. Nowadays, people use humor for multiple purposes such as sarcasm, satire or insults. Having said this, the significance of this study is to figure out whether people adopt the maladaptive style of humor when communicating with others. Moreover, some people are afraid of confronting people who say jokes simply due to their low self-esteem. Thus, this study would like to measure and examine the humor styles, level of self-esteem and fear of humor in two cultural groups.

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1   Definition of Humor

Humor is defined as "the quality of action, speech or writing which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun", according to the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). This definition refers to the humor stimulus people say or do to make others laugh. The involvement of mental processes, the funny jokes or creative acts of people result in an affective response drawn in the enjoyment of laughter.

Moreover, one's 'sense of humor' signifies a personality characteristic or individual trait (Ruch, 1998). Furthermore, Ruch (1996) conceptualized 'sense of humor' recognizing that one understands, enjoys and laughs at others' jokes using it as a method to cope with stress as a cognitive ability, an accustomed behavior or an emotion-related temperament trait.

1.1.2   Theories of Humor

The first theory to interpret Humor is the Psychoanalytic theory. This view was the most influential theory in humor research during the early twentieth century (Freud, 1935). The baseline of this theory is addressing the question why people laugh (Matte, 2001). Freud defined humor as "the highest one of the different types of defense mechanisms that enables us to face difficult situations without being affected by unpleasant emotions and to avoid them by maintaining a realistic perception of the situation", (Martin, 2007). He revealed that the release of excess nervous energy is the cause of laughter (Martin, 2007). According to Freud, laughter is psychoanalytic in nature due to the similarity of its fundamental dynamic of tension between the conscious and the suppressed idea and the

tension found in an incongruity (Matte, 2001). One can say the reason we enjoy jokes is because of the illicit gratifying experience which allows us to satisfy our aggressive and sexual impulses. In other words, cognitively, the jokes distract our conscience superego mind. According to Martin (2007), Freud believed that humor occurs in stressful or aversive situations when one experiences negative emotions like fear, anger or sadness. Therefore, humor is referred to the tension-release function of mirth and laughter and its use in coping with stress. Likewise, this theory explains the individual and cultural events as the Incongruity Theory. The clear translation of this theory can be seen in stand-up comedy. The comedians can comprehend the conscious resistance of their audience and continuously incur ways to break down this resistance by reminding them that they are joking (Matte, 2001).

Secondly, the Superiority/Disparagement Theory can be used to explicate the reasons for social and emotional aspects of humor. This theory views humor as a form of aggression which can be referred to as disparagement, aggression, or degradation (Martin, 2007). In simple words, one enjoys humor by laughing at others' foolishness or ridiculous acts to spread joy. Simply, it is a form of verbal play. It emphasizes "humor as a way of insisting a sense of victory over the people and situations that threaten us, mastery over the circumstances of life that can otherwise oppress us and liberation from life's constraints" (Martin, 2007). A positive expression of this theory includes the level of self-esteem, feelings of competence and personal well-being in humor (Gruner, 1997).

Lastly, the Incongruity theory's focus is contrary to that of the Superiority/Disparagement Theory. The former focuses on the cognitive aspect instead of the social and emotional factors. Highlighting the meaning and perception of the jokes are more important to determine if something is humorous (Martin, 2007). In other words, whether a joke is truly 'funny' or simply 'lame' is a reaction, the Incongruity theory argues.

### 1.1.3  Styles of Humor

One's humor style can be accounted as their individual differences. There are four styles of humor; each one can easily be differentiated from one another (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), specifically, affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humor.

Firstly, affiliative humor promotes and improves interpersonal and social relationships and increases group morals, identity and cohesiveness (Klein & Kuiper, 2006). Moreover, this style of humor increases others' feelings of well-being and reduces conflicts.

Secondly, self-enhancing humor always maintains a realistic yet a harmonious perspective on life even when one faces a stressful or aversive situation. It serves to buffer or enhance and protect oneself but not at the expense of others. As such, individuals using this style of humor as a coping strategy to minimize negative emotions are said to benefit the most (Klein & Kuiper, 2006).

Thirdly, the self-defeating humor attempts to gain approval of others inappropriately to enhance their interpersonal relationships. It enables one to boost and improve relationships at the cost of self. Klein and Kuiper (2006) declare this style is generally used to conceal unfavorable feelings or avoid dealing with a difficulty constructively. The visible traits of such individuals may include low self-esteem, avoidant and emotional neediness due to the excessive use of self-disparaging humor.

Lastly, the aggressive humor serves a potentially negative impact on oneself or others. The chances of hurting and alienating significant others or friends are high with this kind of compulsive expressions of humor which tend to impair social and interpersonal relationships (Martin et al., 2003). Janes and Olson (2000) state that aggressive humor is a way one manipulates others. Aggressive humor is said to be positively related to

neuroticism and hostility such as anger (Martin et al., 2003). Therefore, it can be perceived as a ridicule threat.

The four styles can be further divided into two types of humor - adaptive and maladaptive humor. On one hand, adaptive humor is a healthy style of humor while on the other hand; maladaptive humor is unhealthy and detrimental to oneself and others. The positive adaptive humor styles lessen interpersonal tensions and facilitate relationships with others by joking and bantering. Whereas, the negative maladaptive humor styles involve teasing, ridicule, sarcasm and disparagement to put down others, thus is harmful to either themselves or others (Klein & Kuiper, 2006).

Ziv (1984) described humor as oiling the wheels of communication and establishing social relationships by minimizing conflicts. More specially, people could establish, improve and increase the quality of their social relationships via humor. Wiggins (1991) proved that the adaptive humor could increase group moral, group cohesiveness, identity and create an enjoyment atmosphere. Adaptive humor could also reduce conflicts and strengthen ties between individuals. Hence, it is a stress or tension relief or a coping strategy (Martin et al., 2003). Interestingly, humor also increases and maintains creativity in people (Rouff, 1975), increases one's attractiveness (Martin et al., 2003) and helps to increase a worker's sense of self-actualization (Mauldin, 2008). In contrast, the hostile uses of humor can be quite damaging and injurious in social communications. One reason for this could be its' excessive usage and involvement in criticizing oneself and repression of one's own emotional needs (Martin et al., 2003).

1.1.4    Studies of Humor

Theorists and researchers alike have adopted several perspectives reflecting humor, its' styles, the fear of humor and self-esteem. For instance, academic studies have discovered that inspirational and effective leaders have the ability to use humor (Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Holmes & Marra, 2006; Lemer 2003). Holmes and Marra (2006) recognized the need for humor for good leaders to be challenging. One can see how humor can be influential in any settings.

Bilge and Saltuk (2007) compared the subjective well-being, trait anger and anxiety in college students controlling humor styles. They reported students with affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles scored higher in their subjective well-being and lower in trait anger and anxiety. In contrast, students with aggressive and self-defeating humor styles had higher trait anger scores and lower subjective well-being scores. This is to say that students with self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles affirm a greater degree of psychological health. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that using healthy styles of humor increase psychological health and well-being (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007; Martin et al., 2003; Yue, Hao, & Goldman, 2008).

Similarly, Abel (2002) concluded that university students with high sense of humor demonstrated less stress and anxiety than students with low sense of humor when dealing with everyday problems.  More notably, student with a good sense of humor tended to use more positive reappraisal and problem-solving coping strategies in comparison to those with inferior sense of humor. Likewise, humor has evidently shown to have a relationship with pain and discomfort control and overall psychological health including a healthy self-concept (Abel, 2002).

On one hand, Martin et al. (2003) argued individual differences are observable when using humor to examine the following: self-esteem, optimism, mood, well-being,

intimacy and social support. On the other hand, Hampes (2006) found that shy people lack the ability to relax well in social situations. His study significantly concluded the relation of shyness and affiliative humor. All in all, the significant indication of a positive link between shyness and self-defeating humor proves the existence of low self-esteem in shy people.

Besides, Carbelo-Baquero, Alonso-Rodriguez, Valero-Garces and Thorson (2006) demonstrated several differences in humor patterns of Americans and Spanish people. The Americans scored higher on humor creativity whilst the Spanish scored higher on coping humor. This study highlights that humor can be characteristic of culture.

There have been several humor studies measuring variables like culture, gender and age. An Armenian study in Lebanon reported lower scores on all four of the humor styles when compared to Belgians and Canadians (Kazariam & Martin, 2006). Additionally, the study suggested that males used all the styles of humor significantly more than females, especially aggressive and self-defeating humor. As stated earlier, the high aggressive humor signaled higher individualism and lower collectivism. This study illustrates the notion that there are cultural and perhaps, gender and age differences when evaluating humor styles.

Since there are relatively a small number of humor studies in the Chinese society and barely any humor studies in the Indian society, this study attempts to focus and empirically examine humor in the two cultures.

Chen and Martin (2005) examined humor styles, coping humor and mental health of university students in a Canadian and Chinese sample. Overall, they reported Canadians scored significantly higher particularly on the aggressive humor than the Chinese. To be specific, the males used more aggressive and self-defeating humor than females in the Canadian sample. Furthermore, younger participants in both cultures were more likely to

use affiliative and aggressive humor. Alternatively, the collectivistic Chinese culture used less maladaptive humor and more adaptive humor (Chen & Martin, 2005). It would be interesting to investigate whether this culture-related finding is true for all collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

Moreover, the Chinese university students placed high importance for the need of humor but rated and perceived themselves low on self-humor (Yue, 2009 in press). Chinese males considered themselves more humorous than Chinese females. In addition, Chinese students used mostly affiliative humor and very little self-defeating humor (Yue, Hao, & Goldman, 2008). The reason for such different findings in the Chinese culture as compared to others might be due to the different humor they employ and exercise as Chinese humor emphasizes on dialectic and aesthetic (Chen, 1985).

Limited literature could be found on the topic of humor in the Indian culture. Panday (2006) referred humor as a factor responsible for health and concluded that humor is the medicine for all sorts of health. The extremely limited research of humor in the Indian society doesn't conclude that Indians don't have any humor at all. There have been laughter Yoga practices in India, due to the belief that laughter is the best medicine (Panday, 2006). Krishnamurti (2008) traced the first English-language comic 'Amar Chitra Katha' origins back to 1967. During the 1970s and 1980s, these comics were popular and widely read by Indian students and South Asian children. The comics introduced themes of religion, history and folklore. Krishnamurti (2008) expressed that the themes in the comics from past till present are indistinct. In recent years, the Indian television has brought standup comedians and comedy shows which cover a wide range of themes such as political and self-enhancing jokes (Star TV, 2010). The Indian film industry transmits messages on healthy living to the general public all over India (Star TV, 2010). This is one of the sources where people review humor acts apart from their daily social interactions, at

school, work, etc. However, despite the ancient humor practice in India, there haven't been many studies to examining humor styles of the Indian people.

### 1.1.5   Definitions of Gelotophobia

Affirming to the notion that humor in social interactions provides numerous benefits such as a stress relieve and coping, Ruch (2009) proclaimed "there is a narrow gap differentiating the use and abuse of humor". Crossing the fine line may cause one to abuse humor. This implies that some people instead of enjoying humor may fear it. Laughter, a positive emotional expression has shown to be primarily associated with the phobia of being laughed at (Ruch, Proyer, & Popa, 2008).

Dr. Micheal Titze introduced the term *Gelotophobia* (1996) after verifying cases of fear-related humor consequences from social contacts. In simple words, the definition of gelotophobia is the fear of being laughed at (Ruch, 2009). The formation of this term came about from the word *gelos* and *phobia* which means laughter and fear respectively. It is seen as a type of social phobia and has been a study of interest in recent years (Ruch & Proyer, 2008a). Furthermore, Gelotophobia results from the menacing effect of laughing with others making them deeply frightened. This can create serious disturbances and hence, affecting the closeness and intimacy of their social relationships (Titze, 2009).

Ruch (2009) discovered that bullying or laughing at others frequently occurs in settings such as school or work place, where gelotophobia might result. Ruch and Proyer (2008) suggested that gelotophobia can be studied among psychiatric patients as well as normal individuals. Therefore, this study also aims to measure the presence of fear of laughter in university students in Hong Kong and India.

1.1.6    Theories of Gelotophobia

Gelotophobia arises due to the repetition of being ridiculed during one's childhood and adolescence and referred to as traumatic incidents (Ruch, 2009). A clear explanation of this is illustrated in Titze's model of 'the putative causes and consequences of Gelotophobia' (Ruch, 2004). The theoretical approach describes the causes of gelotophobia as the experiences of not being taken seriously or being laughed at during childhood, youth and adulthood. These causes are a result of the under-development of interpersonal bridge from the primary shame during infancy. Such that, causes like these lead to the development of Gelotophobia and one becomes afraid of humor. People tend to have several consequences when they develop the fear of laughter. These include social withdrawal, low self-esteem, lack of social competences, lack of liveliness and appear humorless. Sometimes, they suffer from psychosomatic disturbances such as trembling, blushing or Pinocchio-syndrome (Ruch, 2004). On the whole, this framework clearly clarifies individual formulation of Gelotophobia and its outcomes.


1.1.7    Studies of Gelotophobia

The research in the area of Gelotophobia is very recent and limited. Of the few studies conducted, Ruch, Proyer and Popa (2008) reported that women scored higher than men in gelotophobia in Romania. Likewise, this study depicted a slight sign of Gelotophobia in 13% of university students.

In contrast, Platt, Proyer and Ruch (2009) assessed gelotophobia in bullied victims by stating that emotions in teasing experiences are related to ridicule-type scenarios. They discovered that 13% of the participants exceeded the indicating gelotophobic symptom scores with 10% of them having slight, 2% with pronounced and 1% with extreme

expressions of gelotophobia. Interestingly, age and gender weren't correlated to gelotophobia (Platt, Proyer, & Ruch, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2008).

Ruch and Proyer (2009) studied the position of gelotophobia in the Eysenckian PEN-model. They concluded that to a certain extent the personality of gelotophobes can be described as introverts and neurotics. This study's sample also revealed 12.61% gelotophobes. They also detected that younger participants scored higher in gelotophobia stating with a significant correlation ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$).

Conversely, Platt (2008) reported that gelotophobes' perception is blurred when differentiating playful and good-natured teasing as they can't identify the safe and non-threatening quality of these teasing situations. Another study supported that emotion-related traits are involved in the comprehension of the fear of laughter (Papousek, Ruch, Freudenthaler, Kogler, Lang, & Schulter, 2009). They analyzed intrapersonal skills such as the 'regulation of one's emotions' and the 'control over the expression of emotions' can predict gelotophobia.

Lastly, Ruch and Proyer (2008a) realized that some gelotophobes can be agents or targets of being laughed at or laughing at others despite knowing the harmful effects. There have been signs showing that gelotophobia can be related to intense childhood memories, for instance, being laughed at by peers.

1.1.8   Definitions of Self-Esteem

A crucial element for one's mental health is having positive regard for the self (Taylor & Brown, 1988). This is to say that a relatively good self-esteem is fundamental for one's psychological wellbeing (Martin, 2007). The definition of self-esteem is "the degree to which one values their self-image or the amount of approval one has for the self-concepts they hold about oneself" (Rosenberg, 1979). In other words, self-esteem is a

construct derived from individual assessment of one's value and worth (Kwan, Bond & Singelis, 1997). One can comprehend self-esteem as an evaluative judgment of self-knowledge which can be ranged from negative to positive (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999).

1.1.9    Theories of Self-Esteem

There are three major theories of self-esteem. Firstly, the Social Identity theory states that one has to have consensus about the value of the attributes that make up social identity (Corenblum & Annis, 1993). Group comparisons are made very often in our daily lives. Therefore, it is very important to stand up for your own group and to show the sense of belonging to that group. Additionally, the social identity theory refers to the knowledge of one's attitude towards another racial group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This can be seen in various cases such as in majorities and minorities whether they are people of a different culture living in a completely different country or in social groups. For example, a winning basketball team maintains its dominant position; its members and fans acquire positive group identity.

Similarly, cultural differences can be a function of self-concept. Different aspects of the self are associated with Individualism and Collectivism (Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Individualism tends to focus on personal goals, uniqueness and personal control and the opposite is for collectivistic cultures. However, with these differences seen across the geographical regions, this study examines two collectivistic cultures. One may think there may not be any differences in the level of self-esteem or humor since they belong to the similar backgrounds. Therefore, to see if this is true or not, this present study would like to test whether there are differences in these two areas.

1.1.10  Studies of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a relevant construct in collectivism (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999). Cultures like India have shown high self-esteem is related to low depression and less difficult relations with parents (Hojat, Borenstein, & Shapurian, 1990; Kamath & Kanekar, 1993). In the Indian culture, parental rejection is related to low self-esteem (Hojat et al., 1990). It is said that self-esteem should predict group attitudes however; results conclude that the relationship is different for majority and minority group children (Corenblum & Annis, 1993). Additionally, in terms of personality, Kwan, Bond and Singelis (1997) found a corelation between self-esteem and Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness across cultures.

Studies show that females have substantially lower self-esteem than males (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999). Hampes (2006) discovered a link between shyness and self-defeating humor as a result a large part was due to low self-esteem of the shy people. In other words, the chances for shy people to use self-defeating humor are higher than the other three styles. Moreover, adaptive styles of humor contribute to elevated mood, high self-esteem, optimism, relationship satisfaction and social support (Martin, 2007).

1.1.11  Relationship between Humor, Gelotophobia and Self-Esteem

Thorson (2006) stated language and cultural elements influence ways by which national groups construe humor, for instance, different elements of humor might be characteristic of a particular culture group. Maslow (1954) and Vaillant (1977) viewed affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles as indicative of mental health, meaning psychological health encompasses subjective well-being, wellness and a sense of humor alike (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007). As mentioned earlier, there was a correlation between shy peoples use of self-defeating humor indicating their low self-esteem level (Hampes, 2006). Moreover,

gelotophobes have shown to be introverts (Ruch & Proyer, 2009) and indirectly indicating their possible low self-esteem. However, this needs to be further verified.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Chinese students consider humor as an important element in daily interactions (Yue, 2009). A question whether there are any similarities within the collectivistic cultures being measured arises. Chen and Martin (2005) revealed that students of collectivistic cultures used more affiliative and self-enhancing humor than the aggressive and self-defeating humor. This is proven in the Chinese culture; hence, one objective of this current study is to examine and highlight if this is true to the Indian culture as well. Moreover, Martin (2007) reported that Chinese students with low self-esteem tend to used more aggressive and self-defeating humor. People with low self-esteem also tend to show slight expressions of gelotophobia (Martin, 2007; Ruch & Proyer, 2009). This study aims to investigate whether self-esteem, culture or gelotophobia are factors that are dependent on any of the four humor styles (Independent variable). It also intends to measure gelotophobia as the independent variable, and self-esteem, culture and the four humor styles as the dependent variables.

Based on the above reviewed literatures and current background of the two cultures, India and Hong Kong, the following research questions would like to be addressed in this present study: Firstly, "How the Chinese differ from the Indians in terms of their humor styles?" Secondly, "Chinese people have shown to use more affililative and self-enhancing humor and less aggressive and self-defeating humor; do Indians exhibit similar behaviors seeing that both are collectivistic cultures?" Thirdly, "Are there any differences in the level of Self-Esteem in the two cultures?" If so, "is there a relation between students with lower self-esteem and their uses of maladaptive humor styles?" Fourthly, "Is there a relation between the students with lower self-esteem level and signs of gelotophobia?" Lastly, "Is

there any distinctive differences between the students who show at least slight expressions of Gelotophobia and their use of Humor Styles?"

Based on the above research questions, the following five hypotheses were formulated:

*Hypothesis one:* Chinese students rate highly on the importance of humor but consider themselves as having low humor.

*Hypothesis two:* Chinese and Indian students use more affiliative and self-enhancing humor and use less aggressive and self-defeating humor.

*Hypothesis three:* Chinese and Indian students with lower self-esteem more likely use aggressive and self-defeating humor and less likely use affiliative and self-enhancing humor.

*Hypothesis four:* Chinese and Indian students with lower self-esteem more likely show expressions of gelotophobia.

*Hypothesis five:* Chinese and Indian students using more aggressive and self-defeating humor styles are more likely show expressions of gelotophobia.

**2. METHODOLOGY**

*2.1* Participants

The participants of the present study were sampled from universities in Hong Kong and India at a random basis, consisting of a total of 203 undergraduate students (57.6 % females, 42.4 % males) with a mean age of 20.82 years old. The Chinese undergraduate students were sampled from the University of Hong Kong, the City University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, consisting of 101 students ( 24.8% males, 75.2% females) with a mean age of 20.57 years old (SD= 1.53). The Indian undergraduates were sampled from the University of Mumbai, the Amity University (Noida), the University of Chennai and the University of Calcutta, consisting of 102 students (59.8% males, 40.2% females) with a mean age of 21.06% years old (SD= 1.69). The participants in both cultures were selected randomly from different faculties and different years to avoid a possible subject bias. The participants were invited to complete a questionnaire on a voluntary basis.

*2.2* Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the present study consisted of three different standardized questionnaires. In part A, participants were required to rate (1) the importance of humor according to them, and (2) their self-humor, on a 10-point Likert scale (1=lowest; 10=highest). They also were required to nominate up to three most humorous people in their own culture and give up to three reasons for their nomination, plus, up to three reasons of why they would dislike humor.

Part B included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (RSE), which consists of 10-item general statements about the self in which participants had to self-rate the items on a 4-

point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree such that the scores ranged from 10 to 40. This scale has been widely used and has shown good reliability and validity (Greenberger, Chen, Dmitrieva, & Farruggia, 2003; Rosenberg, 1965). Furthermore, an acceptable reliability rate of Cronbach's Alpha was recorded ($\alpha$ = .74) to account for the reliability in both the culture groups of the present study.

Part C consisted of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ-32) which examines the four humor styles: self-enhancing humor, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor and aggressive humor. It comprised of four 8-item scales and participants had to rate on a 7-point Likert scale sub-ranging from totally disagree to totally agree. The HSQ-32 has proven to be highly consistent with internal consistencies (Cronbach $\alpha$) of .80 for affiliative, .81 for self-enhancing, .77 for aggressive and .80 for self-defeating humor respectively and test re-test reliability coefficients as .81 to .85 (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007; Chen & Martin, 2007; Kazarian, 2006; Martin et al. 2003). According to this current study's sample, the overall recorded Cronbach's Alpha was acceptable ($\alpha$ = .74) suggesting that this scale was reliable to use as an instrument.

Part D included the Gelotophobia scale (GELOP-15) which measures the subjective experience of the fear of being laughed at. This scale consists of 15 statements describing the world of gelotophobes. Participants were required to rate the 15 statements on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) and 4 (Strongly agree). An individual scoring on average 1 to 2 shows no signs of Gelotophobia and 2 to 2.50 portray borderline fear. Similarly, if one's average score exceeds 2.50, 3 or 3.50, they indicate slight, pronounced, and extreme expression of gelotophobia respectively (Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). The scale shows high internal consistency of .95 for normals and .90 for gelotophobes (Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha was according to this study's sample was very good ($\alpha$ = .84) confirming that this scale is reliable.

Finally, Part E required participants to fill in several demographic variables about themselves such as age, gender, height, weight, nationality, university they study at, the year of study and course of study.

*2.3* Procedure

Participants were invited to participate at purely a voluntary and anonymous basis. This designed questionnaire including of 5 parts took approximately 15 minutes to complete. It was in English language; however, some difficult words were translated into simplified Chinese characters for the Chinese subjects. They were free to ask questions regarding the questionnaire for clarifications. Prior to filling out the questionnaire, they were informed of the purpose of the research study and were assured the information they will provide will be considered as strictly confidential and destroyed after the research. Also, after filling out the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed about the aim of the study. Furthermore, the collected data were inputted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 17.0 (SPSS) to analyze the data. The data were then analyzed using SPSS, Independent t-tests, Repeated measures ANOVA, Univariate analysis of variance, Pearson correlation and Regression.

**3. RESULTS**

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Variables of the Present Study

Table 1 *Demographic Information of the Participants (N=202)*

|  |  | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 86 | 42.4 |
|  | Female | 117 | 57.6 |
| Age | Below 20 | 95 | 46.8 |
|  | 21 and above | 108 | 53.2 |
| Nationality | Chinese | 101 | 49.8 |
|  | Indian | 102 | 50.2 |
| Education Level | Year 1 | 74 | 36.5 |
|  | Year 2 | 48 | 23.6 |
|  | Year 3 | 31 | 15.3 |
|  | Year 4 | 26 | 12.8 |
|  | Year 5 | 16 | 7.9 |

Table 1 displays the demographic data of the present study, including the participants' gender, age, nationality and educational level. More females (57.6%) were sampled than males (42.4%). The participants ranged from 18 to 26 years old. 46.8% of them aged from 18 to 20 years (N = 95); 53.2% aged 21 and above (N = 108). Majority of them were in Year 1 (N = 74; 36.5%) and the least were in Year 4 or 5 (N = 42; 20.7%). Lastly, the two main target groups of this study are Chinese (N = 101) and Indians (N = 102), hence, 49.8% and 50.2% respectively.

3.2 Ratings and Perception of Humor

3.2.1 Ratings of Importance of Humor and Self-Humor

Table 2 *Means and Standard Deviations for Rating of Importance of Humor and of Self-Humor in Chinese and Indians*

|  | Chinese (n = 101) | | Indians (n = 102) | | |
|  | M | SD | M | SD | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Importance of Humor | 7.36 | 1.46 | 7.95 | 2.24 | -2.19* |
| Self-Humor | 5.58 | 1.64 | 7.08 | 1.67 | -6.39*** |

*Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Table 3 *Means and Standard Deviations for Rating of Importance of Humor and of Self-Humor in Males and Females*

|  | Males (n = 86) | | Females (n = 117) | | |
|  | M | SD | M | SD | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Importance of Humor | 7.60 | 2.32 | 7.70 | 1.52 | .74 |
| Self-Humor | 6.94 | 1.94 | 5.88 | 1.59 | 4.11*** |

*Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*



*Figure 1.* Ratings of importance of humor and self-humor.

Tables 2, 3 and Figure 1 summarize the ratings of the importance of humor and self-humor among the university students. To compare the above ratings Independent t-tests were run. In both samples, respondents rated quite high on the importance of humor ($M$ = 7.36 for the Chinese sample and $M$ = 7.95 for the Indian sample). But the ratings for the

Indian samples are significantly higher than the Chinese on the rating of importance of humor ($t$ = -2.19, $p < .05$). No significant gender difference is found. Similarly, the ratings of self-humor for the Indian sample are significantly higher than for Chinese sample ($t$ = -6.39, $p < .001$). In addition, males rated their self-humor significantly higher than females ($t$ = 4.11, $p < .001$). These findings offer good support to Hypothesis one, suggesting that Indian students rated the importance of humor significantly higher than the Chinese and considered themselves more humorous than the Chinese. They also suggest that male students in both samples considered themselves more humorous than females, which has been reported in previous studies (Yue, 2009).

3.3 Nomination of Best Humorists

3.3.1. Nomination of Best Humorists by Chinese and Indian Students

Table 4 *Nomination of Humorists by Chinese and Indian Undergraduates*

| Chinese | | | Indian | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humorists Nominated | Ranking | Percentage | Humorists Nominated | Ranking | Percentage |
| Comedians | 1 | 68.8 | Actors | 1 | 27.7 |
| Artists | 2 | 6.7 | Comedians | 2 | 21.0 |
| Actors | 3 | 3.2 | Politicians | 3 | 4.5 |
| Teachers | 4 | 2.4 | TV hosts/DJ | 4 | 1.3 |
| TV hosts/DJ | 5 | 0.4 | | | |
| Others | 6 | 18.6 | Others | 5 | 45.5 |

*Note: Others include unknown family members, friends and unidentifiable people*

Table 4 presents the categories and percentages of the most frequently nominated humorists in the two samples. The Chinese students mostly selected comedians (68.8%)

followed by artists (6.7%), actors (3.2%), teachers (2.4%), TV hosts or DJs (.4%). The Indian students selected actors the most (27.7%), followed by comedians (21%), politicians (4.5%), TV hosts or DJs (1.3%). These categories show that the undergraduates in both cultures nominate comedians, actors and artists the most when it comes to the selection of humorists.

Table 5(a) *Ranking of the Top Ten Humorists Nominated by Hong Kong Chinese Undergraduates*

| Humorists Nominated | Occupation | Ranking | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stephen Chow | Actor/Comedian | 1 | 27.6 |
| Wong Chi Wah (Dayo) | Actor/Comedian | 2 | 24.4 |
| Jim | Actor/Comedian | 3 | 5.5 |
| Jan Lam | Actor/Comedian | 4 | 5.1 |
| Eric Tsang | Comedian | 5 | 3.5 |
| Sum Mei | Artist | 5 | 3.5 |
| Sammi Cheng | Artist | 6 | 2.8 |
| Dennis Ip | Teacher | 7 | 2.4 |
| Ronald Cheng | Comedian | 8 | 1.6 |
| Wong Jo Nam | Actor | 8 | 1.6 |
| | | Total | 78 |

Table 5(b) *Ranking of the Top Ten Humorists Nominated by Indian Undergraduates*

| Humorists Nominated | Occupation | Ranking | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Johnny Lever | Actor/Comedian | 1 | 8.0 |
| Raju Srivastav | Comedian | 1 | 8.0 |
| Paresh Rawal | Actor/Comedian | 2 | 5.4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Russel Peters | Comedian | 3 | 4.9 |
| Rajpal Yadav | Actor/Comedian | 4 | 4.5 |
| Laloo Prasad Yadav | Ex-Railway Minister | 5 | 4.0 |
| Akshay Kumar | Actor | 6 | 2.2 |
| Javed Jafri | Actor/Comedian | 7 | 1.8 |
| Mir | Comedian | 7 | 1.8 |
| Shah Rukh Khan | Actor | 7 | 1.8 |
| | | Total | 42.4 |

Tables 5(a) and 5(b) show the ten most frequently nominated humorists by the Chinese and Indian undergraduates respectively. The nominated Chinese humorists are mostly comedians, actors, artists and a teacher which consists of 78% of the total nominations; whereas, the nominated Indian humorists are mostly actors, comedians and a high-marking politician in India, comprising of 42.4% of the total nominations. The percentage of the nomination of the top ten humorists for the Chinese sample is much higher than that for the Indian sample. Moreover, the nominated humorists in both cultures are mostly locals in their own respective countries, except for Russel Peters in the Indian sample, who is a Canadian-Indian. Such that, Stephen Chow, Wong Chi Wah (Dayo), Jim, Jan Lam and Eric Tsang were reported among the top five voted humorists similar to past studies (Yue, 2009). In addition, Johnny Lever, Raju Srivastav, Paresh Rawal, Russel Peters and Rajpal Yadav are among the top five voted humorists by the Indian undergraduates. Johnny Lever, Paresh Rawal and Rajpal Yadav are Bollywood's comedian actors and have acted in a comic role in numerous films, whereas, Raju Srivastav and Russel Peters are famous standup comedians. Raju Srivastav is mostly seen on Indian

television where he delivers his standup comedies and Russel Peters is a Canadian-Indian

standup stage comedian.

3.3.2. Reasons of Nomination for Best Humorists

Table 6 *Top 10 Reasons for Selecting Best Humorists*

| Reasons | Ranking | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Funny | 1 | 25.1 |
| Actions, Body language, Facial Expression | 2 | 13.2 |
| Creative | 2 | 13.2 |
| Talking style and Dialogues | 3 | 8.2 |
| All humor styles | 4 | 7.4 |
| Ability to entertain and make others laugh | 5 | 6.6 |
| Comedians | 6 | 5.8 |
| Standup comedy | 6 | 5.8 |
| Lame jokes | 7 | 4.5 |
| Imitation and mocking | 8 | 3.3 |

Furthermore, this present study evaluates the reasons of selecting the best humorists

in both cultures as reported in Table 6. The most commonly reported reason of nominating

the best humorists is funny (25.1%). 26.4% of the students mentioned the characteristics

include the actions, body language, facial expression and creativity that makes one

humorous. 8.2% recalled the talking styles, tones and dialogues when choosing their best

humorists. Lastly, 7.4% of the total sample enjoys the humor styles their humorists acquire which enabled them to select their humorists.

3.4 Reasons for Disliking Humor

Table 7 *Top 10 Reasons for Being Afraid or Dislike Humor*

| Reasons | Ranking | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Hurtful | 1 | 23.6 |
| Lame jokes | 2 | 21.6 |
| Embarrassing | 3 | 11.2 |
| Offending | 4 | 10.8 |
| Inappropriate situation | 5 | 8.8 |
| Crosses the line | 6 | 6.8 |
| Misunderstandings | 7 | 4.4 |
| Racism | 8 | 3.2 |
| Inappropriate timing | 9 | 2.0 |
| Sex-related jokes | 10 | 1.6 |

Table 7 explores the reasons for being afraid or disliking humor. A total of 23.6% of the samples are afraid or dislike humor because it can be hurtful to others or themselves. 21.6% are afraid or dislike humor when people make lame jokes or when jokes aren't funny. 22% of the total sample are afraid or dislike humor when jokes are embarrassing and offending. Other reasons includes, joking in an inappropriate situation, when one crosses the line, when misunderstanding results, racism jokes, inappropriate timing and sex-related jokes. This finding aids one to comprehend why one would be afraid or dislike humor.

3.5 Self-Esteem

3.5.1 Level of Self-Esteem among Chinese and Indian University Students

Table 8(a) *Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem Level by Nationality and Gender*

| | Male (n = 25) | | Female (n = 76) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Chinese (N = 101) | 22.68 | 4.74 | 21.00 | 3.64 | 1.62 |

| | Male (n = 61) | | Female (n = 41) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Indians (N = 103) | 20.77 | 4.59 | 20.05 | 4.86 | -.289 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 8(b) *Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem Level by Nationality and Age*

| | Age (18-20) | | Age (21-26) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Chinese (N = 101) | 22.27 | 3.80 | 20.51 | 4.00 | 2.26* |
| Indians (N = 103) | 20.65 | 4.28 | 21.05 | 4.99 | -.434 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Tables 8(a) and 8(b) includes the mean scores and standard deviation of the level of self-esteem by nationality, gender and age. Despite, the mean scores of the level of self-esteem in the Chinese sample was higher than the Indian sample in terms of gender differences, no significant results were recorded. Additionally, to examine the age differences in the self-esteem scale, two groups were formed using the median of the age in the two samples, i.e. below 20 and above 21. The data were analyzed by Independent t-tests on the self-esteem scale. As a result, Indian students older than 21 years show slightly higher self-esteem than students younger than 20 years, but no significant results were found. Evidently, Chinese students aging from 18 to 20 years show significantly higher level of self-esteem than in students aging from 21 to 26 years ($t = 2.26$, $p < .05$). This

finding suggests that younger students display higher levels of self-esteem than older students in the Chinese sample according to this present study. In addition, a Univariate analysis of variance was performed to explore further. The main effect of gender, nationality and age were not significant ($p > .05$), but all the interaction effects were significant, ($F$ (1, 195) = 4.35, $p < .05$).

3.6 Humor Styles

3.6.1 Humor styles in Chinese and Indian society

Table 9(a) *Comparison in the Use of Humor Styles among the Chinese and Indian University Students*

|  | Chinese (n = 101) | | Indians (n = 102) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Affiliative Humor | 36.91 | 6.75 | 39.75 | 8.92 | -2.55* |
| Self-enhancing Humor | 32.89 | 6.79 | 36.54 | 7.99 | -3.51*** |
| Aggressive Humor | 29.74 | 4.93 | 28.91 | 6.83 | .99 |
| Self-defeating Humor | 32.08 | 5.48 | 30.52 | 7.43 | 1.70 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 9(b) *Comparison in the Use of Humor Styles among the Chinese and Indian University Students*

|  | Affiliative Humor | | Self-enhancing Humor | | Aggressive Humor | | Self-defeating Humor | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *F-value* |
| Total (N=203) | 38.34 | 8.02 | 34.72 | 7.63 | 29.33 | 5.96 | 31.30 | 6.57 | 75.42*** |
| Chinese (N=101) | 36.91 | 6.75 | 32.89 | 6.80 | 29.74 | 4.93 | 32.08 | 5.49 | 32.03*** |
| Indian (N=102) | 39.75 | 8.92 | 36.54 | 7.99 | 28.91 | 6.83 | 30.52 | 7.43 | 49.33*** |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
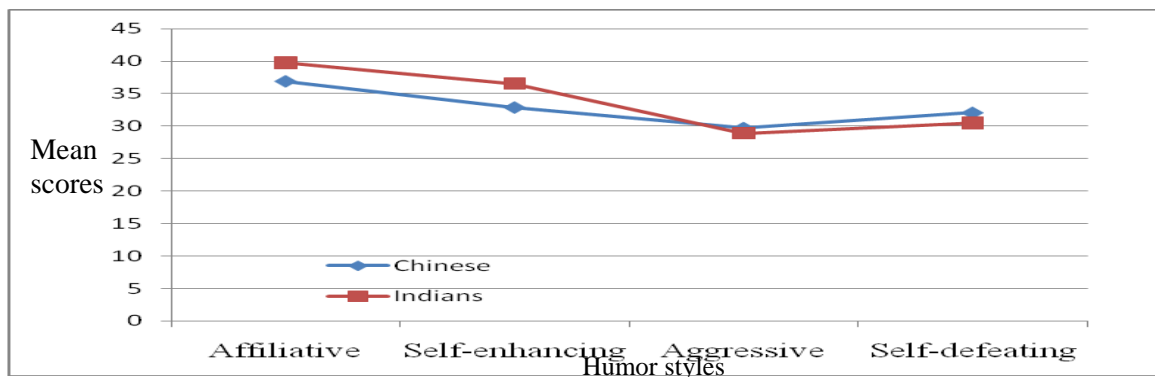
*Figure 2.* Means of humor styles across culture.

Tables 9(a), 9(b) and Figure 2 illustrate the four different humor styles in both samples, Chinese and Indians. The data were analyzed by Independent t-test and ANOVA (repeated measures) test to determine the significant differences among the four humor styles. Firstly, the outcome notes with satisfaction that both the cultures use healthy styles of humor significantly more than unhealthy styles of humor. Therefore, clearly emphasizing that both the collectivistic cultures, Chinese and Indian, use the affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles more than the aggressive and self-defeating styles of humor ($F$ (3, 606) = 75.42, $p < .001$) as also proven in previous studies (Yue, Hao, Lan & Yan, 2006; Yue, Hao & Goldman, 2002: Paper presented). This finding affirms and strongly supports Hypothesis three, indicating that Indians use adaptive styles of humor more than maladaptive styles. Secondly, the Indian undergraduate students used affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles significantly more than the Chinese ($t = -2.55$, $p < .05$; $t = -3.51$, $p = .001$). To elaborate more, the Indians used the healthy humor styles significantly more when comparing with the Chinese ($F$ (3, 303) = 49.33, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the Chinese used the unhealthy humor styles significantly more than the Indians ($F$ (3, 300) = 32.03, $p < .001$). This finding confirms Hypothesis four, proving that the Chinese students use the maladaptive humor styles more than the Indians. In conjunction, a Univariate analysis of variance was performed for all the humor styles. The results indicated the main effect of nationality with self-enhancing humor was significant, ($F$ (1, 195) = 11.7, $p = .001$). And, in

terms of aggressive humor, the main effect of gender was significant, ($F$ (1, 195) = 3.97, $p$

< .05). All the interaction effect was not significant.

3.6.2 Humor Styles by Gender and Age Differences

Table 10 *Comparison in the Use of Humor Styles among Male and Female University Students*

|  | Male (n = 86) | | Female (n = 117) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Affiliative Humor | 38.81 | 8.55 | 37.89 | 7.63 | .72 |
| Self-enhancing Humor | 35.56 | 8.03 | 34.11 | 7.29 | 1.32 |
| Aggressive Humor | 30.10 | 5.99 | 28.75 | 5.89 | 1.59 |
| Self-defeating Humor | 31.45 | 7.17 | 31.18 | 6.11 | .286 |

*Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Table 11 *Comparison in the Use of Humor Styles by Age*

| | Total (N = 203) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Age 18-20 (*N = 95*) | | Age 21-26 (*N = 108*) | | |
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Affiliative Humor | 38.43 | 7.82 | 38.25 | 8..24 | .16 |
| Self-Enhancing Humor | 34.56 | 7.69 | 34.87 | 7.59 | -.29 |
| Aggressive Humor | 29.07 | 5.49 | 29.55 | 6.37 | -.57 |
| Self-defeating Humor | 31.51 | 6.84 | 31.11 | 6.34 | .42 |

| | Chinese (N = 101) | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Age 18-20 (*N* = 52) | | Age 21-26 (*N* = 49) | | |
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Affiliative Humor | 36.59 | 6.84 | 37.24 | 6.71 | -.48 |
| Self-Enhancing Humor | 33.21 | 6.69 | 32.55 | 6.96 | .49 |
| Aggressive Humor | 29.90 | 3.74 | 29.57 | 5.98 | .33 |
| Self-defeating Humor | 33.13 | 5.13 | 30.95 | 5.69 | .30* |

| | Indian (N = 102) | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Age 18-20 (*N* = 43) | | Age 21-26 (*N* = 59) | | |
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Affiliative Humor | 40.65 | 8.41 | 39.08 | 9.29 | .88 |
| Self-Enhancing Humor | 36.19 | 8.56 | 36.79 | 7.62 | -.37 |
| Aggressive Humor | 28.06 | 6.97 | 28.06 | 6.97 | -1.06 |
| Self-defeating Humor | 29.53 | 8.09 | 31.24 | 6.88 | -1.12 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Tables 10 and 11 present the means and standard deviations of each of the four styles. They include results for the whole sample as well as each culture, gender and the two age groups separately. From the total sample and individual samples, males used all the four styles more than females. No significant gender difference was found. Likewise, non-significant results were recorded in both samples in terms of age except for the Chinese

Self-defeating humor style. Chinese participants below the age of 20 showed higher means of using the self-defeating style than participants above the age of 21 ($t = .30$, $p < .05$). Thus, younger Chinese participants proclaim a higher tendency to utilize self-disparaging humor as assessed by the self-defeating humor scale.

3.6.3 Correlations with Humor Styles

Table 12 *Correlation Analysis between Humor Styles and Nationality, Gender, Height and Weight*

|  | Affiliative Humor | Self-Enhancing Humor | Aggressive Humor | Self-Defeating Humor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | -.051 | -.094 | -.112 | -.021 |
| Nationality | .177[*] | .240[**] | -.070 | -.119 |
| Height | .084 | .177[*] | .103 | .074 |
| Weight | .075 | .142 | .180[*] | .073 |
| Age | -.011 | .020 | .040 | -.030 |

*Note: Correlation is significant if *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Table 12 highlights the Pearson correlation analysis between the four humor styles and five demographic variables namely, gender, nationality, height, weight and age of the participants. Through these results, affiliative and self-enhancing humor was significantly correlated with nationality ($p < .05$; $p < .01$). The self-enhancing humor was also correlated with height ($p = .05$). Additionally, aggressive humor was significantly correlated with weight ($p = .05$). Taken together, these results point out that collectivistic culture, indeed, use affiliative and self-enhancing humor more than the maladaptive styles just like previous studies (Chen & Martin, 2005) and this is also found in the Indian sample.

3.7 Gelotophobia

3.7.1 Gelotophobia by Culture, Gender and Age

Table 13(a)  *Gelotophobia by Culture*

|  | Chinese (n = 101) | | Indians (n = 102) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Gelotophobia | 35.87 | 6.14 | 32.98 | 8.13 | 2.86** |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 13(b)  *Gelotophobia by Gender*

|  | Chinese | | | | | Indians | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Males | | Females | | | Males | | Females | | |
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Gelotophobia | 36.08 | 7.40 | 35.80 | 5.71 | .17 | 32.83 | 7.78 | 33.19 | 8.73 | -.21 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 13(c) *Gelotophobia by Age*

|  | Age 18 - 20 | | Age 21-26 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t-value* |
| Gelotophobia | 35.66 | 7.57 | 33.32 | 6.98 | 2.8* |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
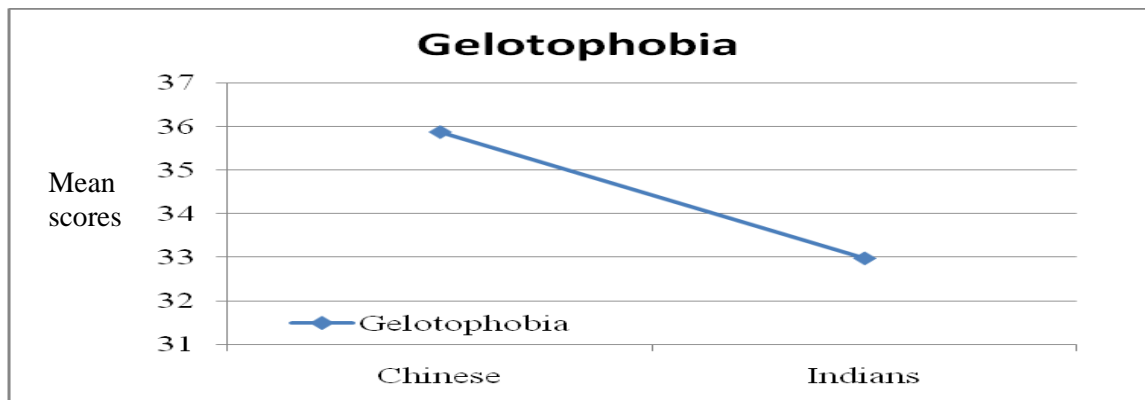


*Figure 3.* Means of gelotophobia across culture.
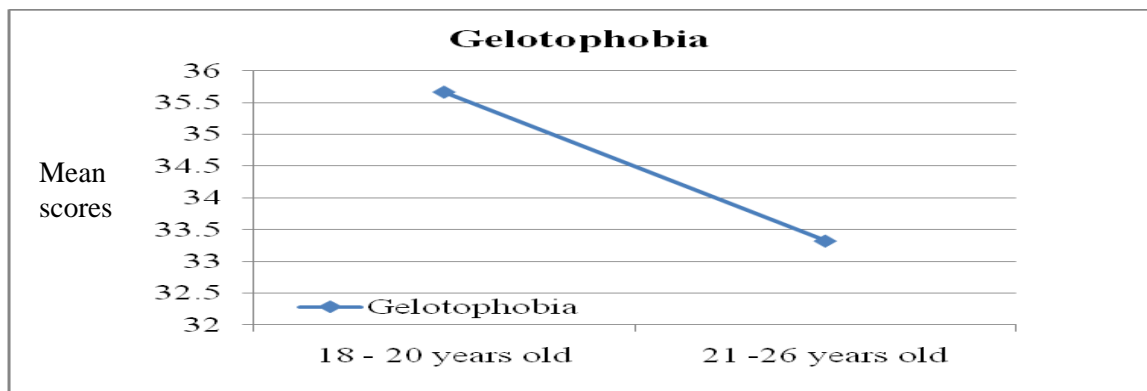
*Figure 4.* Means of gelotophobia across age.

Tables 13(a), 13(b), 13(c), Figure 3 and Figure 4 reveal the result of gelotophobia of this current study in terms of culture, gender and age. On the whole, the Chinese students had slightly higher significant mean scores than the Indians on the scale ($t = 2.86$, $p < .01$). Similarly, significant results were found in terms of age differences. Participants younger than 20 years old scored higher than participants older than 21 ($t = 2.8$, $p < .05$). In contrast, no significant gender differences were adopted just like other studies (Platt, Proyer & Ruch, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). Moreover, more Chinese participants showed slight and pronounced expressions of gelotophobia (29.8%, 8%) than for the Indian participants (24.4%, 5%) and 1% of the Indian sample reflected an extreme expression of gelotophobia by exceeding the cut-off scores. This indicates that the Chinese demonstrate signs of the fear of laughter more than Indians. Ultimately, a univariate analysis of variance was also run to explain the effects of Gelotophobia further. The results suggest a main effect of age was significant, ($F (1, 195) = 5.76$, $p = .017$). The main effect of nationality was also significant, ($F (1, 195) = 7.53$, $p = .007$). However, all the interactions were not significant.

3.7.2 Correlations with Gelotophobia

Table 14 *Correlation Analysis between Gelotophobia and Nationality, Gender, Height and Weight*

|  | Gelotophobia |
|---|---|
| Gender | .075 |
| Nationality | -.197[**] |
| Height | -.117 |
| Weight | -.093 |
| Age | -.159[*] |

*Note: Correlation is significant if* $*p<.05$; $**p<.01$; $***p<.001$

Table 14 expresses the Pearson correlation analysis of gelotophobia with the demographic variables such as nationality, gender, height, weight and age. The findings recognize a significant correlation with nationality and age ($p < .01$; $p < .05$). Thus, as reported by other studies, gender has no impact on gelotophobia in this study as well (Platt, Proyer & Ruch, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2008b).

3.8 Correlations between Self-Esteem, Humor Styles and Gelotophobia

Table 15 *Correlation Analysis between Self-Esteem, Humor Styles and Gelotophobia*

| | Self-Esteem | Affiliative Humor | Self-Enhancing Humor | Aggressive Humor | Self-Defeating Humor | Gelotophobia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Esteem | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Affiliative Humor | -.293** | - | - | - | - | - |
| Self-Enhancing Humor | -.312** | .398** | - | - | - | - |
| Aggressive Humor | .075 | .039 | .059 | - | - | - |
| Self-Defeating Humor | .244** | -.050 | .229** | .264** | - | - |
| Gelotophobia | .333** | -.354** | -.109 | .108 | .304** | - |

*Note: Correlation is significant if *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Table 15 describes that self-esteem was negatively and significantly correlated with the affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor ($p < .05$) and was also positively and significantly related with self-defeating humor and the gelotophobia ($p < .05$). As, self-esteem is only significantly related to self-defeating humor and not the aggressive humor, this finding partially supports Hypothesis two, implying that students will lower self-esteem would use more unhealthy styles of humor than healthier styles of humor. As such, Hypothesis five was strongly supported, suggesting that students with lower self-esteem would show expressions of gelotophobia.

Likewise, the affiliative humor was significantly related to self-enhancing humor and gelotophobia ($p < .05$). The self-enhancing humor also had a positive relationship with self-defeating humor just like the aggressive humor ($p < .05$). Finally, self-defeating humor is significantly and positively correlated with gelotophobia ($p < .05$). This also gives partial

support to Hypothesis six, such that students using more self-defeating humor would show expressions of gelotophobia and use significantly less adaptive styles of humor.

All in all, from this study, there is a significant relationship between high self-esteem and the two healthy styles of humor (affiliative and self-enhancing humor). Low self-esteem is also related with self-defeating humor and gelotophobia. In other words, gelotophobia is related to low self-esteem, low affiliative humor, low self-enhancing humor and high self-defeating humor.

3.9 Regression Analysis of Four Humor Styles, Self-Esteem and Gelotophobia

Table 16 *Regression Analysis of the Scales*

| | Self-Esteem | Affiliative Humor | Self-enhancing Humor | Aggressive Humor | Self-defeating Humor | Gelotophobia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | -.92 | .08 | .01 | -.20 | .09 | .01 |
| Nationality | .70 | .05 | .22* | -.12 | -.10 | -.11 |
| Year | -.05 | .08 | -.04 | -.09 | -.06 | .08 |
| Height | .92 | .05 | .12 | -.11 | .07 | -.08 |
| Weight | -.06 | -.01 | -.02 | .16 | .06 | -.01 |
| Age | -.00 | -.15 | -.01 | .15 | .07 | -.18* |
| Self-Esteem | - | -.06 | -.31*** | -.02 | .29*** | .28*** |
| Affiliative Humor | -.06 | - | .27*** | .15 | -.02 | .32*** |
| Self-enhancing | -.32*** | 2.9*** | - | -.002 | .36*** | .05 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humor | | | | | | |
| Aggressive Humor | -.02 | .12 | -.002 | - | .20** | .09 |
| Self-defeating Humor | .28*** | -.02 | .34*** | .24** | - | .18* |
| Gelotophobia | .29*** | -.35*** | .05 | .12 | .19* | - |
| $R^2$ | .32*** | .30 | .35 | .16 | .31 | .36 |

*Note:* *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 16 displays the regression analysis of the scale along with the demographic variable. Firstly, the combination of the self-esteem scale is significantly associated with the self-enhancing humor, self-defeating humor and gelotophobia, ($R^2$ = .32, F (11, 151) = 6.57, $p < .001$). The self-esteem is significantly associated with self-enhancing humor ($\beta$ = -.32, $t$ = - 4.14, $p < .001$), self-defeating humor ($\beta$ = .28, $t$ = 3.67, $p < .001$) and gelotophobia ($\beta$ = .29, $t$ = 3.61, $p < .001$). This is to say that self-enhancing humor, self-defeating humor and gelotophobia are significant predictors of Self-esteem.

Secondly, affiliative humor is associated with the self-enhancing humor and gelotophobia significantly (IV), ($R^2$ = .30, F (11, 151) = 5.92, $p < .001$). This states that self-enhancing humor ($\beta$ = .29, $t$ = 3.58, $p < .001$) and gelotophobia ($\beta$ = -.35, $t$ = - 4.38, $p < .001$) are significant predictors of affiliative humor.

Thirdly, self-enhancing humor is significantly associated with the nationality, affiliative humor, self-defeating humor and self-esteem (IV), ($R^2$ = .35, F (11, 151) = 7.22, $p < .001$). The self-enhancing humor was much related to nationality ($\beta$ = .22, $t$ = 2.48, $p <$

.05), affiliative humor ($\beta = .27$, $t = 3.58$, $p < .001$), self-defeating humor ($\beta = .34$, $t = 4.61$, $p < .001$) and self-esteem ($\beta = -.31$, $t = -4.14$, $p < .001$). Hence, the significant predictors of self-enhancing humor are affiliative humor, self-defeating humor and self-esteem.

Fourthly, aggressive humor is significantly associated only with self-defeating humor (IV), ($R^2 = .16$, F (11, 151) = 2.68, $p < .001$) ; ($\beta = .24$, $t = 2.70$, $p < .01$). Therefore, one can say that the self-defeating humor is a fair predictor of the aggressive humor.

Fifthly, there was a significant association of self-defeating with self-esteem, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor and gelotophobia, ($R^2 = .31$, F (11, 151) = 6.21, $p < .001$). The self-defeating humor is significantly associated with self-esteem ($\beta = .29$, $t = 3.67$, $p < .001$), self-enhancing humor ($\beta = .36$, $t = 4.61$, $p < .001$) and aggressive humor ($\beta = .20$, $t = 2.70$, $p < .01$). It is fairly significantly associated with Gelotophobia ($\beta = .19$, $t = 2.29$, $p < .05$). Thus, Self-esteem, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor and Gelotophobia are predictors of Self-defeating humor.

Lastly, gelotophobia is significantly associated with age, self-esteem, affiliative humor and self-defeating humor (IV), ($R^2 = .36$, F (11, 151) = 7.55, $p < .001$). Gelotophobia is significantly associated with self-esteem ($\beta = .28$, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$) and affiliative humor ($\beta = -.32$, $t = -4.38$, $p < .001$). It is also fairly significantly associated with age ($\beta = -.18$, $t = -2.01$, $p < .05$) and self-defeating humor ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.29$, $p < .05$). Hence, the predictors of gelotophobia are age, self-esteem, affiliative humor and self-defeating humor.

**4. DISCUSSION**

4.1 Major Findings and Significance of the Present Study

This is the premiere comparative study examining the styles of humor and gelotophobia focusing on Chinese and Indian University Students.

4.1.1 Students' Perception on the Importance of Humor and Self Humor

The present study reveals that both Chinese and Indian university students deem humor as being highly important. Nonetheless, Indian students regard humor significantly more important than Chinese students. With regards to self-humor, Indian students also consider themselves as being more humorous than the counterparts in China. Chinese students judged themselves as moderately humorous. These findings support Hypothesis one, confirming though Chinese students scored high on the importance of humor; they tend to consider themselves as being less humorous. This echoes the results of previous studies (Chen & Martin, 2007; Yue, 2009). Additionally, this study highlights a new finding that Indian students not only rate humor as highly imperative but also consider them very humorous at the same time. This will need to be confirmed in later studies. However, it asserts that humor is important for everyone despite their culture or race (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003).

This study also reports the frequently nominated humorists in both groups. It found that the most frequently nominated Chinese humorists are mostly comprised of comedians, actors and artists. To name a few, Stephen Chow, Wong Chi Wah (Dayo), Jim, Jan Lam and Eric Tsang are among the most popular humorists nominated by the students. These results are supportive to a study by Yue (in press). As far as the Indian students are

concerned, popular humorists mostly comprised of actors and comedians. The most prevalent names included the likes of Johnny Lever, Raju Srivastav, Paresh Rawal, Russel Peters and Rajpal Yadav. The fact that Indian students have also selected politicians stipulates us that they idolize specific religious and political leaders (Krishnamurti, 2008). The results imply that Indians have a more diverse selection than Chinese. This advocates that the Chinese students have a relatively narrow view when selecting the best humorists. Therefore, this highlights the fact that Indian students develop a healthier style of humor than Chinese students.

The students' reasoning of their nomination commonly included being funny in general, body language, facial expressions, creativity, talking styles and humor styles. This basically tells us that the Chinese and the Indians determine the humorists based on what they can observe. Moreover, when asked about situations they would 'despise' or 'be afraid of humor', the most frequent responses included that the humorists were not being funny enough, embarrassing, offensive, or the jokes being inappropriately timed. These results indicate that both cultures dislike humor due to similar underlying reasons. As mentioned earlier, 21.6% of the students dislike lame humor, thus, these students cognitively express the importance of paying attention to the meaning of the joke as indicated by the Incongruity theory (Martin, 2007). A possible explanation of why the Chinese and Indians have similar reasoning is due to the nature of collectivistic cultures. They tend to be more dependent on others and follow social norms. Therefore, if an individual is insulted in a group setting, the implied humor behind the insult may be disliked. This is because of the nature of the society the students are brought up in. This is to say that the Chinese and Indian cultures have similar perspectives when they despise laughter (Liao, 2001).

4.1.2 Impact of Self-Esteem on Humor

There are various factors that affect self-esteem and these differ across different cultures (Kling et al., 1999; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Even though, this study accounted non-significant results for self-esteem in the two cultural groups, it is crucial to note whether there are differences between the two groups because self-esteem is an important construct for collectivistic cultures (Hojat et al., 1990; Rudy & Grusec, 2006). A limitation that has contributed to the non-significant results might be the small sample size.

In addition, the results successfully recorded that self-esteem is related to each of the following: affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, self-defeating humor and gelotophobia. In other words, students with higher self-esteem tend to use the healthier styles of humor while students with lower self-esteem were more likely to use self-defeating humor and showed expressions of gelotophobia. The fact that students with higher self-esteem use healthier styles of humor has been confirmed in a past study (Veron et al., 2009). Hence, the results only provide partial support to Hypothesis Three, implying that Chinese and Indian students with lower self-esteem are more likely to use self-defeating humor and less affiliative and self-enhancing humor. Moreover, the outcome provides full support to Hypothesis Four, affirming that Chinese and Indian Students with lower self-esteem would show slight expressions of gelotophobia. Therefore, the results discloses a relationship between beneficial forms of humor and to a certain extent one's psychological wellbeing i.e. self-esteem. Since aggressive humor wasn't related to self-esteem significantly, one cannot conclude that self-disparaging forms of humor could be harmful towards the psychological wellbeing. This is consistent with the conclusion of Martin et al. (2003) and Kazarian and Martin (2006).

4.1.3 Impact of Age on Self-Esteem

Interestingly, the present study found that Chinese students from 18 to 20 years of age portray higher self-esteem than older students i.e. ages from 21 to 26 years. This finding has been evoked in a prior literature proposing the variation in self-esteem in terms of age (Kling et al., 1999). Kling et al. (1999) suggested that self-esteem usually peaks during adolescence when an individual is most concerned of their physical appearance and outlook. This implies that younger students in this sample can be referred to the adolescents, as they are new to college lifestyle, hence, they must be more concerned about their appearance than their academics.

4.1.4 Impact of Culture on Humor Styles

As predicted, the results of the study show that both cultures satisfactorily use healthy styles of humor such as affiliative and self-enhancing humor significantly more than self-defeating and aggressive humor which are unhealthy. This underlines previous researches in both the collectivist cultures, Hong Kong and India; the people tend to use the healthy humor styles more than the unhealthy humor styles (Chen & Martin, 2005; Yue, Hao & Goldman, 2002; Yue, Hao, Lan, & Yan, 2006). It also strongly supports Hypothesis Two, confiding that the Chinese and Indians use adaptive humor styles more than maladaptive humor styles.

As important as it is to address the issue of the four styles of humor used by both the collectivist samples of this study, it is also vital to differentiate between the two samples. Unexpectedly, this study is the first to point out that Indian undergraduate students used affiliative and self-enhancing styles considerably more than Chinese students and vice versa. It insinuates that Indians used more adaptive than maladaptive humor styles

compared to the Chinese whereas, Chinese people used more maladaptive and less adaptive humor styles in contrast with the Indian people. An implication of this is that the Chinese have better sarcastic and disparaging humor. The results indicate a relationship between affiliative and self-enhancing styles with nationality, and therefore imply a cultural difference in the value or humor expressions in the two countries (Chen & Martin, 2007).

In terms of the overall correlations among the four styles, the outcome concludes affiliative humor was related to self-esteem, self-enhancing humor and gelotophobia, whereas self-enhancing humor had a correlation with height, self-esteem and self-defeating humor. Previous literature states that self-enhancing humor was related to self-defeating humor (Kazarian & Martin, 2006). It was initially proven that self-esteem was related with the healthy humor styles (Bilge & Saltuk, 2007; Martin et al., 2002). Lastly, aggressive humor was related with weight. One possible explanation for this could be that weight has always been such a factor that make individuals conscious of their body image (Hoffmeister, Teige-Mocigemba, Blechert, Klauer, & Tuschen-Caffier, 2010). Hence, in a group setting, one may feel threatened by jokes targeted at their body image, i.e. weight. Besides, it is necessary to note that the causality cannot be derived from these results and is necessary to be verified by later studies.

4.1.5 Impact of Gender and Age on Humor

Like previous studies by Chen & Martin (2007), the present study also shows no difference between males and females. However, a significant age difference was seen in the Chinese sample concerning the self-defeating humor style. Chinese students younger than 20 years tend to use the self-disparaging humor more than those over 21 years. This result contradicted a past study that stated that younger Chinese participants used more

aggressive and affiliative humor (Chen & Martin, 2007). The contradiction may be due to the sample size or one's social interaction experiences in the school settings.

### 4.1.6 Impact of Culture on Gelotophobia

This was the first study conducted on gelotophobia among the Indian university students. The result indicates a significant relation of gelotophobia with nationality. It was observed that the Chinese students had slightly higher significant mean scores than the Indians on the GELOPH-15 scale. Interestingly, Chinese participants showed 'slight' and 'pronounced' expressions of gelotophobia (29.8%, 8%) more than Indian participants (24.4%, 5%) by exceeding the cut-off scores. This indicates that Chinese people demonstrate signs of fear of laughter more than Indian people. Although Gelotophobia has been previously found even in healthy individuals, Ruch (2009) mentioned it is more prevalent in psychiatric patients. Therefore, despite participants in this study showing signs of the fear of laughter, one cannot conclude that they necessarily have gelotophobia.

### 4.1.7 Impact of Gender and Age on Gelotophobia

In line with other studies, gelotophobia is unrelated to gender in this study as well (Platt, Proyer, & Ruch, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). There were non-significant gender differences adopted in both the samples. This shows that both females and males have equal chance of acquiring fear of laughter (Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). However, this study concludes a relation of gelotophobia and age. In terms of age differences, this sample illustrated participants aged under 20 years old higher than participants older than 21 (Ruch & Proyer, 2009). One reason for the difference could be due to the less life experience the younger students have than older ones. Hence, older participants are more immune to and can tackle different kinds of humor or withhold different emotions.

4.1.8 Predictive Power of Humor Styles on Self-Esteem and Gelotophobia

Correspondingly, regression analysis effectively highlighted that self-enhancing humor, self-defeating humor and gelotophobia could predict self-esteem in this sample and vice versa. A possible justification for the relation between self-defeating humor and gelotophobia with self-esteem could perhaps be that people with low self-esteem can identify emotional expressions as negative and feel threatened and therefore as a result respond with hostility or avoidance. However, this is yet to be further examined and verified in later studies.

Further, the results of regression reports that self-enhancing humor and gelotophobia are predictors of affiliative humor and self-defeating humor while self-esteem can predict self-enhancing humor. Self-defeating humor is a fair predictor of the aggressive humor. Self-esteem, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor and gelotophobia are predictors of self-defeating humor. Klein and Kuiper (2006) formerly proclaimed that peer acceptance, group identity and cohesiveness during middle childhood is important for developing the affiliative and self-enhancing humor. The reverse is true for self-defeating and aggressive humor illustrating that peer rejection and bullying can play a role in unhealthy humor development, thus, developing a fear towards humor.

All in all, gelotophobia is shown to be related to low self-esteem, low affiliative humor and high self-defeating humor. Furthermore, the associations of gelotophobia according to the regression analysis are age, self-esteem, affiliative humor and self-defeating humor. This once again, supports Hypothesis four, stating that Chinese and Indian students with lower self-esteem will show expressions of gelotophobia. Papousek et al. (2009) evidently discussed that people with gelotophobia are weak at regulating emotions. Thus, the unconfident and weak emotional attitude may lead to low self-esteem affecting an individual's wellbeing resulting with the fear of being laughed at. The result of this study

partially supports Hypothesis five too, such that Chinese and Indian students who use more self-defeating styles of humor and not aggressive humor would show expressions of gelotophobia. This implication infers that students with slight expressions of gelotophobia fail to evaluate the quality of playful healthy teasing which is the result of the healthy affiliative humor (Platt, 2008). They instead might misinterpret the healthy humor style for the unhealthy self-defeating humor style. Platt, Proyer and Ruch (2009) realized that people with the fear of laughter generalize and believe all laughter is bad. Thus, they feel threatened and react negatively. For instance, bullying or ragging on campus enhances the fear towards laughter (Ruch & Proyer, 2008a). A number of literatures proposed that the signs of gelotophobia can be traced back into one's childhood and adolescence wherein one might have suffered from repeated traumatic incidents affecting their personality development (Platt, Proyer & Ruch, 2009; Ruch, 2009; Ruch & Proyer, 2009; Titze, 2009).

4.2. Limitations and Future Studies

Despite the study concluding significant and new findings, there are some limitations. Firstly, since the standardized instruments completed by the participants to examine the Self-esteem, Humor styles and Gelotophobia, were in English. The two target cultural groups were Chinese and Indian University students; thus, their native languages are Cantonese and Hindi respectively. In an attempt to keep the questionnaires uniform for both cultures, there may be a language bias due to the English-constructed questionnaires. For this reason, future studies can consider using the instruments in the respective languages for more perhaps effective results. Secondly, the results were greatly dependent on the self-report measures of the instruments which have limited the quality of the responses. Future studies can collect data via other sources like ratings and evaluations

from peers, interviews and behavioral observations to ensure more accurate results. Moreover, qualitative data should also be collected to ensure more nonrestrictive answers. Thirdly, most of the Chinese students sampled were Psychology majors; this might cause a subject bias towards the results. Lastly, the small sample might have contributed to the results that were non-significant. Also, for a study of a country with a large population, India, a larger sample size is needed to be able to generalize it. To be a good indicator, later studies must increase the sample size. Furthermore, future researches can collect data from different regions of the country or people from different backgrounds.

4.3. Conclusion

Humor is present in all social interactions and it has shown to influence an individual's well-being (Martin, 2007). In contrast, humor may result with harmful effects such as fear towards it (Ruch, 2009). Aimed at university students, this empirical study attempted to investigate the Self-esteem, Humor styles and Gelotophobia across two collectivist cultures, namely Chinese and Indians. Minimal studies on humor styles and gelotophobia collectively have been conducted in the Indian society, therefore, this titles to be one the first studies in this area. This study, further elaborates the issue that collectivist societies such as Hong Kong and India, tend to use healthier humor styles rather than unhealthy humor styles. However, results between the two cultures, reported that Indian students tend to use more healthy humor styles and less unhealthy humor styles whereas, Chinese students tend to use more unhealthy than healthy styles of humor. It also highlights the presence of at least slight expressions of gelotophobia in the students by exceeding the cut-off scores. With support to all the five hypotheses, this study concludes there is an association between self-esteem, self-defeating humor style and gelotophobia. This resolves

the issue that an individual with low self-esteem has higher chances of using self-defeating humor style and showing expressions of the fear of being laughed at, gelotophobia. Likewise, one can deduce that if an individual has expressions of gelotophobia, they may have low self-esteem and tend to use the self-defeating style more than the other humor styles. Future studies need to investigate the relations more thoroughly. Later studies may use other forms of data collection and collect data from people of different age groups and backgrounds to be more accurate. Lastly, there should be more effort in the promotion of humor in both cultures to enhance individual's healthy well-being as well as healthy use of humor.

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Appendix A: <u>Questionnaire</u>

This study would like to measure your feelings toward self. Your participation is highly appreciated. All information you provide will be treated strictly CONFIDENTIAL. For queries, please contact at <u>Neelam Hiranandani</u> at .

## PART A
The following questions require you to answer according to what applies to you. Please circle the number, on the scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very unimportant and 10 being very important:

1.) How important is humor to you?

Very Unimportant                                                   Very Important

  1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2.) Please rate your own level of humor.

Very Low                                                      Very High

  1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

3.) Please nominate 3 Chinese whom you think are most humorous (If you are an Indian, please nominate 3 Indians whom you think are most humorous) and state the reasons for nomination.

         <u>Names</u>                          <u>Reasons</u>

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

4.) Please give three reasons that you are afraid of or dislike humor

          1.                              2.                            3.

_____

## PART B
Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please circle which applies to you most: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree:

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. | At times, I think I am no good at all. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. | I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. | I am able to do things as well as most other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. | I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. | I certainly feel useless at times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. | I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

plane with others.

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. | I wish I could have more respect for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. | All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. | I take a positive attitude toward myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## PART C

People experience and express humor in many different ways. Below is a list of statements describing different ways in which humor might be experienced. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it. Please respond as honestly and objectively as you can. Use the following scale:

| Totally Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Slightly Agree | Moderately Agree | Totally Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I usually don't laugh or joke around much with other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. | If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up （愉悦自己）with humor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. | If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease （取笑）them about it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. | I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. | I don't have to work very hard at making other people laugh -- I seem to be a naturally humorous person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. | Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life (生活中的怪事). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. | People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. | I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it makes my family or friends laugh. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. | I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. | If I am feeling upset or unhappy I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. | When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. | I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. | I laugh and joke a lot with my friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. | My humorous outlook on life keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. | I do not like it when people use humor as a way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

of criticizing or putting someone down.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. | I don't often say funny things to put myself down. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 17. | I usually don't like to tell jokes or amuse people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 18. | If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something funny to cheer myself up. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 19. | Sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can't stop myself from saying it, even if it is not appropriate for the situation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 20. | I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 21. | I enjoy making people laugh. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 22. | If I am feeling sad or upset, I usually lose my sense of humor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 23. | I never participate in laughing at others even if all my friends are doing it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 24. | When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 25. | I don't often joke around with my friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 26. | It is my experience that thinking about some amusing aspect of a situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 27. | If I don't like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 28. | If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 29. | I usually can't think of witty things to say when I'm with other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 30. | I don't need to be with other people to feel amused -- I can usually find things to laugh about even when I'm by myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 31. | Even if something is really funny to me, I will not laugh or joke about it if someone will be offended. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 32. | Letting others laugh at me is my way of keeping my friends and family in good spirits. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |

## PART D

The following statements refer to your feelings, actions, and perceptions **in general**. Please try as much as possible to describe your **habitual** behaviour patterns and attitudes by marking an X through one of the four alternatives. Please use the following scale:

(1) strongly disagree   (2) moderately disagree   (3) moderately agree   (4) strongly agree

**For example**

I am a cheerful person................................................................................(1) (2) (3) (4)

If you strongly agree with this statement, that is, if you are **in general** a cheerful person, **mark an X through (4)**. If you strongly disagree, that is, if you are **habitually** *not* cheerful *at all*, **mark an X through (1)**. If you have difficulty answering a question, pick the response that **most** applies. Please answer *every* question, do not omit any. Please check to see that you have answered **every** statement.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | When others laugh in my presence I get suspicious（懷疑）. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. | I avoid showing myself in public because I fear that people could become aware of my insecurity and could make fun of me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. | When strangers laugh in my presence I often relate it to me personally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. | It is difficult for me to hold eye contact because I fear being assessed in a disparaging （輕蔑的）way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. | When others make joking remarks about me I feel being paralyzed（癱瘓了）. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. | I control myself strongly in order not to attract negative attention so I do not make a ridiculous impression. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. | I believe that I make involuntarily a funny impression on others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. | Although I frequently feel lonely, I have the tendency not to share social activities in order to protect myself from derision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. | When I have made an embarrassing impression somewhere, I avoid the place thereafter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. | If I did not fear making a fool of myself I would speak much more in public. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. | If someone has teased me in the past I cannot deal freely with him forever. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. | It takes me very long to recover from having been laughed at. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. | While dancing I feel uneasy because I am convinced that those watching me assess me as being ridiculous. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. | Especially when I feel relatively unconcerned, the risk is high for me to attract negative attention and appear peculiar to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. | When I have made a fool of myself in front of others I grow completely stiff （僵硬）and lose my ability to behave adequately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## PART E: Please fill in your Personal Particulars:

Gender:                                        Subject/major

Age:                                           Height:                cm

Nationality: HK Chinese    Mainland Chinese Indian  Others:_____            Weight:              kg

University:                            Year: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4

**Thank you very much!**