The Relationships between Emotional Attributes and Aspects of Dispositional Trust

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It has been claimed that peoples' dispositional trust correlates with their other dispositions. This paper investigates the relationship between dispositional trust and individuals who are predisposed to different affects. The groups studied are gelotophobes and emotionally intelligent people. The results showed that gelotophobia was negatively related to dispositional trust, whereas emotional intelligence was positively related to it. However, the relationship held only when dispositional trust was conceptualized as a personality trait (agreeableness) or a psychological state (psychological safety), but not when it was conceptualized as a cognitive evaluation (trustworthiness of people in general). Moreover, emotional intelligence was found to have indirect effects on the relationships between gelotophobia and dispositional trust. This may suggest that emotional abilities play a role in dispositional trust. Some practical implications in terms of organizational behavior, as well as some theoretical implications are discussed.

It has long been recognized that individuals vary in the extent to which they trust others in general. This phenomenon is described as dispositional trust (Gurtman, 1992; Sorrentino, Holmes, Hanna, & Sharp, 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Such a form of trust is likely to have a significant effect on a person's trusting beliefs and trusting intention in new relationships (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998; Gill, Boies, Finegan, & McNally, 2005). Nonetheless, on a general basis, organizational theorists have not evinced much interest in such individual differences even though they acknowledge their existence (Kramer, 1999). Therefore, the knowledge about the origins of such dispositional trust is rather limited except for the reasons proposed by Rotter (1971), which include childhood trust experience and parents' trusting attitudes .

This paper explores the factors other than those proposed by Rotter that may associate with one's dispositional trust. One suggestion is that this form of trust will correlate with other dispositional orientations (Kramer, 1999). We argue that some of these orientations are related to affect for two reasons. First, the affect-as-information principle suggests that people use their affect[1] as heuristic cues for informing themselves (Clore & Gasper, 2001). In other words, people adopt their current feelings as a basis of judgment, even though sometimes such feelings may be irrelevant to the evaluation of a target person (Schwarz, 2002). This agrees with what some have claimed--that "people often decide if they can initially trust someone by examining the feelings that have toward that person" (Jones & George, 1998, p. 534). Second, the affect-priming appoach states that individuals are more

[1] There is little agreement about how best to define terms such as affect, feeling, emotion, and mood (Forgas, 1995). Affect here is used as an overarching category that includes both moods and emotions (Forgas, 1995; Gross & Thompson, 2007; Andrade & Ariely, 2009), as well as feelings.

likely to recall positive material from memory when they are in a happy rather than sad mood, or vice versa (Forgas, 1995; Schwarz, 2002). This means that one's affective state may bias one's recall of previous interpersonal experiences. For these reasons, we propose that people who are predisposed to certain affects may exhibit different levels of dispositional trust. In this paper, two types of people will be investigated, specifically, gelotophobes and emotionally intelligent people. Before describing the dispositional trust of these people, we will first outline the different aspects of dispositional trust.

Different Aspects of Dispositional Trust

It has been agreed among researchers that dispositional trust refers to the fact that individuals vary in the extent to which they trust others in general (Rotter, 1967; McKnight et al., 1998; Kramer, 1999; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). However, there exist different opinions about the nature of dispositional trust. Some proposed that it is a stable disposition or a personality trait (Rotter, 1967, 1971), while others have argued that it is not a trait but rather a personal tendency that applies across various situations (McKnight et al., 1998). Some other researchers further suggested that dispositional trust is an impression that relates to the trustworthiness of people in general (Mayer & Davis, 1999). Because of the disagreements, we selected three attributes that represented the core different dimensions: agreeableness (a personality trait), psychological safety (a psychological state), and propensity to trust (a cognitive evaluation).

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is one of the personality traits in the five-factor personality model (Benet-Martinez and John, 1998; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1985). The other four personality traits in include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism. It is a broad and comprehensive personality model, which subsumes most known personality traits. An agreeable person has the disposition of being altruistic, trusting, tender-minded, warm, modest (John and Gross, 2007) and cooperative with others (Benet-Martinez and John, 1998). Agreeableness has been found to be positively associated with work performance that requires interpersonal interactions (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001). Mooradian et al. (2006) have treated dispositional trust as a component of agreeableness in their model and have demonstrated that both agreeableness and dispositional trust are significantly related to interpersonal trust in peers and management.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to whether an individual is "feeling able to show or employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). It is a psychological condition or state that focuses on the momentary rather than on the static circumstances of people's experiences (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety has been found to be positively related to individuals' learning behavior (Edmondson, 1999), willingness to implement new technology (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001),

and performance with regard to the company's own goal as well as in comparison with its direct competitors (Baer and Frese, 2003).

Propensity to trust

According to Rotter (1971), people extrapolate from their early trust-related experiences to build up general beliefs about other people. A number of factors, such as religion, parents' trusting attitude and third party information, could affect such a propensity (Rotter, 1971). In this connection, some researchers regard the propensity to trust as the trustworthiness of humans in general, which is related neither to specific others nor to specific contexts (Mooradian et al., 2006). As a result, the propensity to trust is sometimes measured by the dependability and trustworthiness of people in general (Mayer and Davis, 1999; Gill, Boies, Finegan, & McNally, 2005).

Gelotophobia and Dispositional Trust

Gelotophobia (*gelos*= Greek for laughter) is a construct that has orginated from the clinical realm (Ruch & Proyer, 2008b). Nonetheless, the phenomenon it describes exists, to varying degrees, in a normal population (Ruch & Proyer, 2008a). Titze (2009) defined it as the pathological fear of being an object of laughter. It is chosen for this study because it has been found that gelotophobes are predisposed to certain affects (Platt & Ruch, 2009; Titze, 2009; Rawlings, Tham, & Davis, 2010). Platt and Ruch (2009) have reported that during a typical week, gelotophobes experience shame and fear with a high intensity and long duration. On the other hand, their experience of happiness is less intense and of a shorter duration. Also, gelotophobes are more likely to recognize the negative moods of other people (Papousek, Ruch, Freudenthaler, Kogler, Lang, & Schulter, 2009). Such a predisposition to negative affect may influence gelotophobes' dispositional trust because of the affect-as-information or the affect-priming principles. The affect-as-information means that current feelings, rather than deliberate evaluations, form the basis of the judgment. This process frequently occurs in unfamilar or novel situations where no prior evaluation is available (Forgas, 1995). Affect-priming, on the other hand, influences the recall of memory. Both processes will result in affect-congruent judgment, that is, negative affects produce negative judgment. As gelotophobes are more predisposed to negative than positive affects, they are therefore more likely to have negative judgment of others. Combined with the fact that gelotophobes are in general weak in the perception of their own emotions (Papousek et al., 2009), it is probable that these two processes may unconsicously influence a gelotophobe in the formation a judgment.

Another reason for studying the relationship between gelotophobia and dispositional trust is that the former is a relatively new construct (Ruch & Proyer, 2008a) and its relationship with trust has not been extensively investigated (Rawlings et al., 2010). However, the characteristics of gelotophobes suggest that such a relationship may exist. These people are highly sensitive to the laughter of others and feel unease when hearing laughter from others (Ruch and Proyer, 2009). They tend to relate others' laughter to themselves and believe that there is something that resides within them that attracts the laughter (Ruch and Proyer, 2008b). As a result, they try to control themselves in a way that does not

attract negative attention. Gelotophobes display a paranoid tendency, a marked sensitivity to offense and social withdrawal (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a). Once they have been laughed at, they will avoid that place for a long time (Proyer et al., 2009). Gelotophobes also have low self-esteem (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a). The development of gelotophobia is believed to be the result of repeated traumatic experiences of not being taken seriously during childhood and adolescence, or of being ridiculed during adulthood (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a).

Due to the above characteristics of gelotophobes, we predict that they may have a lower level of dispositional trust in other people for a number of reasons. First, they tend to avoid situations that will give rise to embarrassing experiences, possibly because their self-esteem is fragile (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a). Having a low dispositional trust can be a commendable way to circumvent further damage to the already low self-esteem. Williams (2007) has argued that one of the main reasons that some people have low levels of trust is that they want to avoid identity damage. Moreover, people who are highly sensitive to the loss of dignity are also found to be less cooperative in general (White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004).

With regard to each of the three aspects of dispositional trust, we postulate that gelotophobes are less agreeable because they believe that there is something that resides within them that attracts the laughter (Ruch and Proyer, 2008b). They may therefore strive to hide such inner weaknesses. Additionally, given the low self-esteem of gelotophobes, it may be more comfortable for them to adopt an avoidance strategy towards other people (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a). We also propose that gelotophobes will exhibit a low level of psychological safety in such a situation because of their paranoid tendencies (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a). Similarly, we argue that there may be a negative relationship between gelotophobia and the propensity to trust. The reason is that both attributes are believed to be developed during childhood. Gelotophobia is developed because one has been repeatedly ridiculed during this period (Ruch and Proyer, 2008a), whereas propensity to trust is developed through others' favorable information about humanity (Rotter, 1971). If one is repeatedly ridiculed by others, it will be difficult to imagine that this person will be able to foster a favorable attitude towards humanity at the same time. Therefore, the following hypotheses are stated:

H1a: A person's gelotophobic tendency is negatively related to his or her agreeableness attribute.

H1b: A person's gelotophobic tendency is negatively related to his or her level of psychological safety.

H1c: A person's gelotophobic tendency is negatively related to his or her propensity to trust.

Emotional Intelligence and Dispositional Trust

As defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI involves four abilities: (1) the ability to accurately perceive and express the emotions of self and others, (2) the ability to generate feelings to assist thinking, (3) the ability to understand emotions and their progression, and (4) the ability to regulate and manage emotions. It has been argued that emotionally intelligent individuals are capable of reasoning accurately about their own affects (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). This is possible because affective information passes not only through the limbic system but also through the cortex area of the brain (Pellitteri, 2002; Mayer et al., 2008). The limbic system is believed to be a more automatic and primitive area of the brain whereas the cortex area is believed to be more consciously controlled. This argument was supported by a study that has found that the prefrontal cortex serves the purpose of inhibiting emotional responses and providing behavioral flexibility (Quirk, 2007).

We therefore argue that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to have higher dispositional trust for three reasons. First, emotionally intelligent individuals' assessment of vulnerability is less influenced by their affective states. In other words, emotionally intelligent individuals may be less likely to be influenced by the affect-as-information process. This is because when individuals recognize that they may misattribute their feelings to the judgment, they will make corrections (Schwarz, 2002). Schwarz and Clore (1983) found that once participants realized that they may feel bad because of the rainy weather, they did not draw on their feelings in evaluating their life satisfaction. Since emotionally intelligent people are better at perceiving and understanding emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), it has been claimed that they can remain undisturbed under emotionally charged thoughts (Ciarrochi and Blackledge, 2006). Empirical studies have found that emotional intelligence is inversely related to irrationality (Spörrle & Welpe, 2006). Put differently, emotionally intelligent individuals may still be capable of forming a rational judgment even when they are in the presence of emotion-laden memory.

Second, emotionally intelligent individuals may be more likely to recover from an unfavorable experience such as betrayal. It has been argued that a person's dispositional trust is likely to be influenced by their past experiences with people (Rotter, 1967; 1971). This is because the negative emotions associated with the experiences are likely to be embedded in the memory (Parrot and Spackman, 2000). Empirical evidence has shown that people could vividly recall the emotional details of an unfavorable interpersonal experience even up to thirty years after the incident had occurred (Robinson, Dirks, & Ozcelik, 2004; Piper and Monin, 2006). Nonetheless, some have argued that the ability to regulate emotions can help an individual recover because the emotional impact can be changed when an event is thought of or redefined in non-emotional terms (Boss and Sims, 2008). Mayer and Salovey (1997) have asserted that an emotionally intelligent individual can moderate the negative emotions without exaggerating or minimizing the unfavorable experiences themselves. In addition, emotional intelligence has been found to be positively related to life satisfaction and negatively related to anxious thoughts (Bastian, Burns, & Nettelbeck, 2005). Therefore, it is likely that emotionally intelligent individuals are better than others in maintaining positive affects (Law, Wong, Huang, & Li, 2008).

Third, emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to focus on the potential gain of a trusting relationship. Law, Wong, and Song (2004) have argued that emotionally intelligent people tend to use their emotions to improve their performance and direct their own emotions toward constructive activities. A study has found that the use of emotion is positively related to the commitments made between employees and organizations (Nikolaou and Tsaousis, 2002). Given these attributes, we contend that emotionally intelligent individuals may focus more on the potential gain of trust and therefore have a higher dispositional trust.

With regard to each of the three aspects of dispositional trust, we first postulate that emotionally intelligent individuals will be high in agreeableness because they are more likely to recover from previous unfavorable experiences of trust. Moreover, previous studies have found that agreeableness is positively related to emotion regulation ability (Lopes, Salovey, Cote, & Beers, 2005). Second, we argue that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to exhibit a higher level of psychological safety due to their motivation to use emotions for constructive and productive purposes (Law et al., 2004). Third, emotional intelligence and propensity to trust may also be positively related. In general, people tend to underestimate the trustworthiness of other people (Fetchenhauer and Dunning, 2008) and exaggerate the vulnerability involved. Emotionally intelligent individuals may be more likely to adjust the estimation upward since they exhibit better rationality (Spörrle & Welpe, 2006). Therefore, we present the following hypotheses:

H2a: A person's emotional intelligence is positively related to his or her agreeableness attribute.

H2b: A person's emotional intelligence is positively related to his or her level of psychological safety.

H2c: A person's emotional intelligence is positively related to his or her propensity to trust.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred students from a university and a vocational training school in Hong Kong participated in the study. Both full-time and part-time students were included. The sample consisted of 77 students from the university and 23 students from the vocational training school. Since the results of the 77 students were not significantly different from the results of all 100 students, all the results reported here referred to all the 100 students. Of the 100 participants, their mean age was 26.24 (SD = 6.64), ranging from 19 to 55. Concerning their level of education, 44 of the participants were diploma students, 47 bachelor students, and 4 master students. The remaining 5 participants did not answer this question. With regard to their employment status, 51 participants were employed at the time of

participation. Regarding gender, 80 of the participants were female, 19 were male and 1 did not answer.

Procedure

First, we sent emails to invite the students at a university and a vocational training school to participate in the study. The email contained a hyperlink that redirected the participants to an online questionnaire, which was powered by the sgizmo.com. On the introductory page, participants were advised that their participation in this study was voluntary: they would remain anonymous throughout the study. If they did not want to continue with the questionnaire for any reason, they were allowed to end their participation at any time.

At the end of the questionnaire, information about the age, gender, and education of the participants was collected. In addition, participants were also asked about their current state of employment.

Materials

Agreeableness

We used the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) to measure the agreeableness of participants (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). Nine items were rated using a 5-point scale. The coefficient alpha for our sample was found to be .70.

Psychological Safety

Before completing this measure, the participants were first presented with the following scenario:

"*Suppose you are required to participate in a team project. The group consists of 10 people. All the team members, including you, have not known one another before this project. Please answer the following questions about what you think or believe with regard to this team.*"

We applied the measure of team psychological safety used by Edmondson (1999). The wordings of the scale were changed to suit our scenario and the scale included the following six out of the seven items in the original scale due to the low coefficient alpha (.59): "*If I make a mistake in the team, I think it will be held against me", " I believe members will be able to bring up problems and tough issues in the team", "I feel it will be safe to take a risk in the team", "I think it will be difficult to ask other members in the team for help", "I believe no one in the team will deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts", "I think my unique skills and talents will be valued and utilized in the team".* A 7-point Likert-scale was used. The final coefficient alpha for our sample was found to be .64, which still was lower than .82 reported in Edmondson (1999). We speculate that the difference was because in Edmondson (1999) the scale was applied to a team in which members knew one another very well. Nonetheless, since this study was exploratory in nature, it was argued

that coefficient alpha as low as .60 is acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006)

Propensity to Trust

We used the scale developed by Mayer and Davis (1999) to measure the belief that people in general are trustworthy. The original scale contained eight items but one item was excluded due to a very low coefficient alpha of .52. The item excluded from this scale was *"Most experts tell the truth about the limit of their knowledge".* The coefficient alpha for the revised scale for our sample was .61. Though the alpha was not high, the value was consistent with the range of previous studies where all eight items were used (Mayer and Davis, 1999; Gill, Boies, Finegan, & McNally, 2005). A 5-point Likert-scale was used.

Gelotophobia

We used the 15-item gelotophobia scale developed by Ruch and Proyer (2008b). This scale has been found to be a reliable measure across 73 countries (Proyer et al., 2009). A previous study has demonstrated the scale is a unidimensional measure (Ruch and Proyer, 2008b). In our sample, the coefficient alpha was .85. The same 4-point Likert-scale was used.

Emotional Intelligence

We used the 16-item Wong and Law EI scale (WLEIS) of emotional intelligence (Law et al., 2004). This EI scale shares the four elements of EI proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The coefficient alpha of emotional intelligence for our sample was found to be .87 and the coefficient alphas for our sample for each of the subscales were as follows: awareness of others' emotions, .90; emotion regulation, .89; awareness of own emotions, .88; and use of emotion, .82. A 5-point Likert-scale was used.

RESULTS

Table 1 exhibits the correlations among agreeableness, psychological safety, propensity to trust, gelotophobia, and emotional intelligence and its subscales. The positive yet nonsignificant correlations among agreeableness, psychological safety, and propensity to trust suggested that the three constructs measured different dimensions of trust. The collinearity statistics also indicated that multi-collinearity among agreeableness, psychological safety, propensity to trust, gelotophobia, and emotional intelligence did not exist (VIF ranges from 1.13 to 1.46). This means that all these constructs should be treated as different from one another.

Table 1

Correlation among Different Constructs

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Agreeableness	3.45	.48	*.70*								
2. Psychological Safety	4.72	.75	.15	*.64*							
3. Propensity to Trust	2.68	.46	.09	.02	*.61*						
4. Gelotophobia	2.48	.45	-.21[a]	-.31**	-.04	*.85*					
5. Emotional Intelligence	3.68	.51	.40**	.43**	.05	-.30**	*.87*				
6. Aware of Others' Emotions	3.86	.70	.14	.34**	-.11	-.15	.67**	*.90*			
7. Emotion Regulation	3.35	.82	.49**	.24*	.17	-.19	.72**	.32**	*.89*		
8. Aware of Self-emotions	3.88	.69	.22*	.27*	.06	-.21*	.68**	.24*	.37**	*.88*	
9. Use of emotion	3.65	.76	.22*	.33*	.01	-.28*	.67**	.31**	.21*	.29**	*.82*

Note. The diagonal contains the Cronbach's alpha for each construct. All significance tests were two-tailed.
[a] p =.05. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

From this table, we see that agreeableness was negatively related to gelotophobia but the relationship was only marginally significant (r = -.21, p = .05). For psychological safety, the relationship with gelotophobia was negative and significant (r = -.31, p <.001). On the other hand, emotional intelligence was positively and significantly related to both agreeableness (r = .40, p < .001) and psychological safety (r = .43, p < .001). Since the standard coefficient of a simple regression between two variables was equivalent to the correlation coefficient, a number of hypotheses were therefore supported. First, gelotophobia was marginally associated with agreeableness and significantly associated with psychological safety. Second, emotional intelligence was significantly associated with both agreeableness and psychological safety. On the other hand, the hypotheses that concerned propensity to trust were not supported. No significant correlations were found between the propensity to trust and gelotophobia (r = -.04, p =.74), or between the propensity to trust and emotional intelligence (r = .05, p = .64).

Additional Analyses

We continued to explore whether there were any interactions among gelotophobia, emotional intelligence, agreeableness, and psychological safety. Here, agreeableness or psychological safety were treated as dependent variables, whereas gelotophobia and emotional intelligence as independent variables. There were two reasons for such treatments. First, some researchers argued that emotional intelligence is a construct that locates at the lower levels of personality hierachies (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). In other words, the former is the root cause of the latter. Second, a number of experimental studies, which were based on the affect-as-information or affect-priming principles,

showed that affect influences judgment and attitudes towards trust (e.g. Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Forgas & East, 2008; Gino & Schweitzer, 2008). Since gelotophobes and emotionally intelligent people are predisposed to certain affects, we argued that these personal attributes may be the cause of difference in agreeableness and psychological safety

First, we observed that there were significant correlations between agreeableness and EI, as well as between EI and gelotophobia. When both EI and gelotophobia were treated as independent variables and agreeableness as the dependent variable, the regression analysis showed that only EI remained significant (EI: *beta* = .37, $p < .001$; gelotophobia: *beta* = -.09, $p = .37$). This result provided preliminary support for that EI had an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and agreeableness. Additionally, the bootstrapped ratio (1,000 bootstraps) for an indirect effect coming from EI was estimated to lie between -0.2903 and -0.0084 with a 99% confidence interval. Because zero was not located within this confidence interval, we concluded that the indirect effect was significantly different from zero at $p < .01$. Therefore, EI was found to have an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and agreeableness. The analysis can be found in Table 2.

Similarly, we carried out the same procedures for psychological safety. As shown, there were significant correlations between psychological safety and EI, as well as between EI and gelotophobia. However, when both EI and gelotophobia were treated as independent variables and psychological safety the dependent variable, the regression analysis showed that one remained significant and the other became marginally significant (EI: *beta* = .37, $p < .001$; gelotophobia: *beta* = -.20, $p = .05$). Nonetheless, the bootstrapped ratio (1,000 bootstraps) for an indirect effect coming from EI was estimated to lie between -0.3989 and -0.0324 within a 95% confidence interval. Because zero was not located within this interval, we concluded that the indirect effect was significantly different from zero at $p < .05$. Therefore, EI also had an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and psychological safety. The analysis can also be found in Table 2.

The results can thus be summarized as follows: agreeableness was negatively related to gelotophobia but positively related to emotional intelligence. Likewise, psychological safety was negatively related to gelotophobia but positively related to emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence had an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and agreeableness, as well as on the relationship between gelotophobia and psychological safety. Nonetheless, there were no significant relationships between the propensity to trust and gelotophobia or emotional intelligence.

Table 2
Analyses for Interactions between Gelotophobia, Emotional Intelligence, Agreeableness, and Psychological Safety

Independent Variables	Agreeableness	Psychological Safety
Dependent Variables		
Gelotophobia	-.09	-.20[a]
Emotional Intelligence	.37**	.37**
F value	8.58**	12.03**
R^2	.17	.22
Adjusted R^2	.15	.20
Test of Indirect Effect (1000 bootstraps)	**99% C.I.**	**95% C.I.**
Emotional Intelligence	-.2903 – -.0084	-.3989 – -.0324

Note. All significance tests were two-tailed. $N = 88$ due to missing data.
[a] $p = .05$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

Agreeablensess

The hypothesis that gelotophobia was negatively related to agreeableness was marginally supported, whereas the hypothesis that EI was positively related to agreeableness was supported. The former relationship was in line with what Rawlings et al. (2010) have reported. The latter relationship has also been found by a number of previous studies (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Van Rooy and Viswesvaran, 2004; Van Rooy, Viswesvaran, & Pluta, 2005; Cote and Miners, 2006). In addition, the relationship between gelotophobia and emotional intelligence was also similar to what has been found previously (Papousek et al., 2009). The significant but negative relation between gelotophobia and the use of emotion subscale may indicate that gelotophobes generally have little motivation to direct their emotions in positive and productive directions (Law et al., 2004).

The results also showed that emotional intelligence had an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and agreeableness. In our study, we classified gelotophobia as a pathological fear (Titze, 2009), EI as a self-perceived ability, (Law et al., 2004) and agreeableness as a personality construct (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1985). The fact that EI indirectly affected the relationship between gelotophobia and

agreeableness may imply that self-perceived emotional ability plays a role in why gelotophobes tend to be disagreeable.

Psychological Safety

On the other hand, our hypotheses concerning gelotophobia, EI, and psychological safety were all supported. Gelotophobia was negatively related to psychological safety, whereas EI was positively related to it. EI also had an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and psychological safety. In other words, a pathological fear (gelotophobia) leads a person to feel unsafe (psychological safety) at the moment he or she faces a newly formed team. This may in turn be partly due to the deficiency in self-perceived emotional ability (EI).

Propensity to Trust

Contrary to our predictions, gelotophobia, emotional intelligence, and its subscales were not significantly related to the propensity to trust. These non-significant relationships seem to suggest that the cognitive evaluations of the trustworthiness of people in general (i.e. the propensity to trust) may not have been influenced by a person's predisposition to certain affects (i.e. gelotophobia) or his or her emotional ability (i.e. EI). The reason for this may be that the propensity to trust measure used in this study contains verifiable facts. In other words, these cognitive evaluations may be more likely to be shaped by the prevalence of fraudulence or misbehavior in society than by one's affective attributes.

Overall Implications

Overall, this study adds some empirical support to the claim that one's dispositional trust is associated with other dispositional orientations (Kramer, 1999). However, this association seems applicable only when the dispositional trust is conceptualized as a personality construct or a psychological state, but not when it is conceptualized as a cognitive evaluation of the trustworthiness of others in general. In addition, the emotional ability also seems to have a role in this association.

On the other hand, the results showed that the relationships between the three constructs (i.e. agreeableness, psychological safety, and propensity to trust) of dispositional trust were positive but not significant. This leads us to question whether it is advisable to include all of the three elements – personality, tendency, and cognitive evaluation – in one single definition of dispositional trust. The inclusion of the three elements can be traced back to Rotter (1967, 1971) who argued that the tendency to trust others in childhood will become part of a person's personality later in life. He also argued that a person will generalize the evaluation of others from his or her related experience with parent, teachers, peers, etc. (Rotter, 1967).

Nonetheless, some have argued that dispositional trust should be further broken down into two elements: faith in humanity and trusting stance. Faith in humanity is similar to the propensity to trust as operationalized in this study, whereas trusting stance means that one

will trust new people, regardless of whether they are reliable or not (McKnight et al., 1998). People who have a high trusting stance do not act on the basis of belief. Rather, their trust is a tendency without elaborate thinking. Trusting stances are therefore more akin to agreeableness or psychological safety. It seems that trusting stance may be associated with a person's other dispositional orientation, whereas faith in humanity may be more influenced by verifiable facts. We agree that the subdivision is sensible since the understanding of the origins of dispositional trust may be beneficial in some situations, especially in terms of organizational behavior.

First, it is not uncommon nowadays that in developed countries the back-office functions (e.g. in banks) are moving offshore (The Economics Times, 2008) due to cost saving and increased use of technology. Staff members who used to work in the back-office are sometimes reassigned to front-office (Patrick, 2011). One of the challenges for these staff is to work in a new environment where they need to interact with many new people, including new customers. Those with a low level of dispositional trust may find it difficult to adapt. It would therefore be easier for management to formulate a strategy to help these staff if the origins of their dispositional trust can be traced.

Second, the negative relationships found in this study between gelotophobia and agreeableness or psychological safety imply that gelotophobes tend to have a lower trusting stance than others. In other words, they tend to have a lower level of trust towards new people, regardless of whether the latter group is trustworthy or not. With regard to teamwork, this means that team members should be more careful in their behaviors when gelotophobes are involved in a team. Since gelotophobes are particularly sensitive to the laughter of others, it follows that mocking or ridicule should be discouraged in such a team, even though some people may regard such behaviors as innocuous or enjoyable. On the other hand, the positive relationships found between emotional intelligence and agreeableness or psychological safety imply that it may be beneficial to include some emotional intelligent people in the formation of a team as they are more likely to initiate trust with others.

The results also give rise to some theoretical implications. The further refinement of the measure of dispositional trust is also beneficial to avoid confusion. The claim that dispositional trust is conducive to trusting in others may sometimes be misleading. For example, the dispositional trust construct used in the study of Mooradian et al. (2006) was agreeableness, whereas in Mayer and Davis (1999) it was propensity to trust. Nonetheless, our results indicated that these two measures of dispositional trust may represent two different constructs. Furthermore, both agreeableness and propensity to trust may not be perfect measures of dispositional trust. First, agreeableness scales measure not just a trusting tendency, but also altrusim, tender-mindedness, friendliness, and modesty (John & Gross, 2007). Second, propensity to trust has suffered from relatively low reliability across different studies (Gill et al., 2005). It seems that further refinement of both the conceptualization and the measure will contribute to clarification for future studies.

Limitations and Future Research

It is noteworthy that the present study is just exploratory in nature and it has some limitations. First, the results did not imply any causal relationships. Rather they only indicated that these relationships existed. In order to establish causal relationships, an experimental approach may thus be needed. Such an approach may involve instructing individuals with different dispositional orientations to form a new group and having their interactions observed and rated. Second, gender and ethnicity may also impair the generalizability of the results since the sample to some extent were skewed with regard to these factors. Future studies must take this issue into account. Third, this study may suffer from the problem of common-rater effects (Podsakoff, MacKenize, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To strengthen the relationships among these variables in future, we propose the use of peer-rated scales, for example, for the measurement of emotional intelligence or gelotophobia. Fourth, our results showed that emotional intelligence had a direct effect on trusting stance and an indirect effect on the relationship between gelotophobia and trusting stance. Since some studies have found that it is possible to improve one's emotional intelligence through training (Groves, McEnrue, & Shen, 2008; Nelis, Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, & Hansenne, 2009), it will be interesting and worthwhile to investigate whether such training can also have an impact on one's trusting stance or gelotophobia tendency.

Summary

Overall, the present study has provided some empirical evidence supporting the claim that dispositional trust correlates with other dispositional orientations (Kramer, 1999). Nonetheless, these associations applied only when dispositional trust was conceptualized as a personality construct or a psychological state, but not when it was treated as a cognitive evaluation of the trustworthiness of others in general. Notwithstanding some limitations, this study serves as a starting point from which future research can contribute to the understanding between dispositional orientation and trust.

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