

## **Revealing Community Values and Character in Verbal Humor: A Study from Sundanese Culture**

Ronny Yudhi Septa Priana<sup>1</sup>, Siti Karlinah<sup>2</sup>, Dadang Rahmat Hidayat<sup>3</sup>, Dian Wardiana Sjucho<sup>4</sup>

### **Abstract**

*The study of humor in the lives of social groups is of interest to researchers in the fields of culture, language and identity. This research aims to reveal and identify the cultural values of society, especially Sundanese society, contained in humorous speech. The humorous conversation analyzed in this research is Sundanese verbal humor in the show "Cangehgar". The results of the research reveal that in humorous conversations, the cultural values and character of society are indirectly through the words and behavior of the characters in accordance with the humorous setting. The cultural values of the Sundanese people in conversation include Silih Asah (helping each other), Silih Asih (taking care of each other), and Silih Asuh (taking care of each other). The character of the Sundanese people is presented through the behavior of the characters in the form of individuals who are polite, kind, caring, friendly, helpful and full of affection.*

**Keywords:** *Humor, Representation, identity, community character, cultural values.*

### **Introduction**

Humor is an inseparable need in human life. Humor is present as a non-material need in entertainment which produces a sense of pleasure in every humor lover through the purpose of the humor conveyed. Humor is often used as a form of entertainment that causes laughter and joy among the audience (Gonot-Schoupinsky et al., 2020). Attardo & Raskin (2017) define humor as a series of phenomena related to the creation, perception, and enjoyment of something funny or ridiculous or an idea, situation, or event that is incongruent and inconsistent with everyday events. Each individual in a community group has a different way of conveying and receiving humor according to the purpose of the humor and the ongoing communication situation. The response in the form of laughter that occurs when humor occurs is an emotional reaction that arises from the verbal and nonverbal actions of individuals or groups that are considered funny (Agra, 2022).

The existence of humor in the interaction process involves the use of language, both verbal and nonverbal, such as body movements and sign language. Humor can also be in verbal, written and graphic form according to the method of creating humor whose main aim is to invite laughter. However, not all humor produces laughter and is entertaining; This can also cause the audience to feel insulted, offended, or even hurt if the humor is excessive. Even humorous speech can be considered insulting or hateful speech if the audience or community group does not accept the humor that is presented or conveyed.

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Communication Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia, ronny18001@mail.unpad.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Communication Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia, siti.karlinah@unpad.ac.id

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Communication Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia, dadang.rahmat@unpad.ac.id

<sup>4</sup> Faculty of Communication Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Indonesia, d.wardiana@unpad.ac.id

Society's cultural norms and background influence the reception of humor. Each individual and community group has a different way of conveying humor according to the purpose of the humor and adapts to the ongoing communication situation. When communication and interaction occurs, humor is needed to change the communication atmosphere to be more attractive, active, creative, communicative, innovative and recreational. Apart from that, humor is also used as a communication tool to convey messages in the form of criticism, expressing feelings of happiness, sympathy, annoyance, and even anger indirectly so that humor lovers are not offended. Sensitivity to norms, values and culture in society makes humorous content acceptable to a group of people. Humor will be perceived and accepted by a group of people if it is still relevant to the cultural values and character as well as the rules that apply to the society that is used as the object of enjoying humor (Nissenbaum & Freud, 2021). Acceptance of humor in society is possible if humorous speech can be understood both in terms of language use and cultural background and is considered to represent the identity of the community itself (Cao et al., 2021; Sugiyanta, 2020). A group's acceptance of humor can be seen through the presence of humor in everyday life, both when interacting and in the entertainment media used. A society's values, culture, and character influence the way a group of people perceive humor. However, individuals and communities have different ways of conveying humor. These differences depend on the values, culture, character and rules that apply to the culture of the community itself (Gonot-Schoupinsky et al., 2020).

With diverse ethnicities, cultures and languages, Indonesian people are a group of people who are open to humor. The presence of humor as a complement in every interaction, the presence of humor in various forms of media such as newspapers, radio, television, digital media, and traditional humor in folk arts entertainment performances strengthens the openness of a community group (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Vásquez & Aslan, 2021). Good humorous content in the media cannot just appear, but must comply with applicable regulations, both cultural norms and based on written rules. Likewise, humor in the media in Indonesia must be able to adapt to applicable cultural and legal norms, including broadcasting laws, press laws, and Information and Electronic Transactions laws. Carefulness in conveying humor then produces humor that is acceptable and entertaining to the public according to the target audience of media users and people who enjoy humor (Gonot-Schoupinsky et al., 2020; Triyanto, 2020).

The presence of humor in human life, especially media, apart from functioning as entertainment, is also used as a medium for conveying messages, including moral messages, social criticism, as well as the transformation of cultural values and character of a community group (Attardo & Raskin, 2017; Chłopicki & Brzozowska, 2021; Godioli & Little, 2022; Kianbakht, 2020; Lyra et al., 2020). The focus of this research is to describe the cultural values and character of society which are presented and displayed in the form of humor. The humor that is the subject of the research is Sundanese verbal humor "Cangehgar", namely humor in the form of sketches published on digital media and audio media. The use of Sundanese shows that Sundanese people are the main target of the humor conveyed. This research aims to explore and provide an overview of the cultural values and character of the Sundanese people contained in every humorous verbal utterance.

## **Literature Review**

### **Humor**

Humor cannot be separated from human life to fulfill non-material needs in the form of entertainment and produce feelings of joy. Provincial (2000) suggests that humor is closely related to the response to laughter. Apart from fulfilling entertainment needs, people use humor to convey messages and information and express feelings (happy, angry, annoyed and sad). As a communication tool, speakers convey humor in a manner

and in line with the purpose and function of conveying humor. Humor makes people laugh, or a smile is used as a tool to attract attention (Al-Sawaer et al., 2022; Mamat et al., 2019; Mantle, 2008; Prendergast et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021; Roome, 1999; Ross et al., 1999; Ylagan, 2019).

Lippman, LG, & Dunn (2020) state that humor is anything that can increase arousal and create feelings of joy and comfort. Hartanti (2008) believes that the art of humor aims to make it easier for people to live their lives. Attardo (2020) defines humor as cognitive, affective, and aesthetic aspects of a person, a stimulus, or event that can evoke feelings of pleasure and responses such as laughing or smiling. Humor is a communication activity (Milner Davis, 2020; Sierra, 2019). The response in the form of laughter that arises when humor occurs is an emotional reaction that arises from actions or verbal expressions of individuals or groups that are funny, whether intentional or unintentional. Humor is an intentional or unconscious message that is interpreted to cause laughter (Lynch, 2002).

The purpose of conveying humor in human life is as entertainment, information messages, and even education to improve the quality of human life. The use of language and cultural elements in humor programs can also reveal the identity of the sender of the humor message and the community group receiving the comedy. Lynch (2002) said that humor and jokes can show who we are, how we think about things, and how we interact with other people using humor or jokes. Humor shows the user's identity through language and behavior in comedy. The power of verbal humor lies in the use of language and speech of the humorous characters. Wijana (2018) stated that the language used to express humor is a cultural result agreed upon by society. This manuscript tries to provide an overview of spoken verbal humor that uses regional languages, namely Sundanese, as an introduction to the characters' speech in humorous sketches.

### Identity

Identity is an abstract, complex, dynamic concept in human life (Galante, 2020; Gonzales & Wiseman, nd; Newton et al., 2022). As stated by communication experts, identity has many characteristics because identity is not easy to define (Coleman, 2021). Identity is the definition of a person as a separate and distinct individual in terms of behavior, beliefs, and attitudes. Ting-Toomey (1999) argues that identity is an image or self-concept that is reflected by an individual. Kent (2020) has a more concise definition of identity: our self-concept, what we perceive as a person. This definition of identity has a broad meaning. Therefore, some communication experts have specific goals regarding cultural identity. Lustig et al. (2006) views cultural identity as a person's sense of belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group.

Fong (2004) defines cultural identity as the identification of a shared system of verbal and nonverbal symbolic behavior that is meaningful for members of a group who have a sense of belonging and share similar traditions, heritage, and norms regarding appropriate action. Cultural identity is a social construction that shows the uniqueness of a person or group of people based on the views of their social environment (Breakwell, 2020; Kianbakht, 2020; Priana, 2018; Sierra, 2019). The cultural identity of a community group can be through the values and character of each individual in a community group, which then becomes the identity of a community group.

Samovar et al. (2010) stated that identity emerges through interaction. We will discover who we are, how we feel comfortable with it, and where we can find security and comfort. Identity develops when we meet other people in the process of interacting. The cultural identity studied in this article comes from the speech of characters in Sundanese verbal humor sketches. The characters' speech in verbal humor presents a cultural identity that emerges from the cultural values and character of Sundanese society.

### Character and Identity of Sundanese People

Ekajati (2014) states that someone can become Sundanese if they recognize themselves as Sundanese or if other people recognize themselves as Sundanese. Identity as Sundanese can also be obtained based on lineage; If a person is of the same blood as his parents who are from the Sundanese tribe, then he can become part of the Sundanese community. Sundanese people understand that the relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and God must all be in harmony. Sundanese people have various customs passed down from generation to generation which are part of the life of the Sundanese people themselves (Mustapa, 2010).

One of the characteristics that characterizes Sundanese society is "someah" which contains the values of humility, politeness and kindness. conveyed the characteristics that later became the identity of the Sundanese people, namely in every social interaction they had, including being Soméah (friendly), polite and having a high sense of humor. These values represent the personality of the Sunda brand (Hidayat & Hafiar, 2019). Kania (2020) said that the Sundanese character traits of cageur (healthy), bageur (good), benner (true), wish (brave), clever (intelligent), and singeur (introspective) are very important cultural values. held in high esteem by the Sundanese people. humans in order to achieve life priorities. These cultural values then become the values and character of community groups which are analyzed to get an idea of how humor shows the values and character of society (Setyo & Utami, 2021).

The cultural values of the Sundanese people include Silih Asih (mutual love), Silih Asah (reminding each other), and Silih Asuh (taking care of each other). Silih Asih (mutual love) means that Sundanese people must love and care for each other. Silih Asah (reminding each other) means that Sundanese people must remind each other and improve themselves. Meanwhile, Silih Asuh (mutual care) means that Sundanese people must protect each other and have the right to protection. This is found in every interaction, behavior and social relationship of Sundanese people. Through this proverb, Sundanese people everywhere look after each other, love each other, and remind each other (Belasunda, 2018; Kasmana, 2020). Based on the literature review above, the researcher tries to describe the cultural values and character of the Sundanese people in every humorous verbal utterance in every communication interaction between characters in humorous sketches.

### **Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative research design. Creswell (2022) states that qualitative research explores and understands the meaning ascribed to social problems by several individuals or groups. Humorous text analysis is used by researchers as a research scalpel to answer research objectives. The main focus of the research is to explore the cultural values and character of society contained in humorous speech. The data used in this research are fragments of Sundanese verbal humor utterances "Cangehgar." taken from three conversation settings, namely family conversations, peer conversations, and conversations in public places in the humorous conversation program "Canghegar" on several YouTube channels.

The data collection technique that the researcher used was the tapping and recording technique with research steps and stages starting from the transcription process, selecting relevant data, grouping data, and data analysis to describe the cultural values of the Sundanese people contained in each conversation as well as describing the personal character of the Sundanese people. according to the character of the character in a humorous conversation setting. The final step that the researcher took was to draw conclusions from the analysis results to answer the research questions and objectives.

## Fundin Details

### Community Cultural Values in Verbal Humor

Colquitt et al. (2009) state that cultural values are shared beliefs regarding the desired end state or behavior of a particular culture. These values greatly influence people's lives (Septiana et al., 2016). According to Yunus (2014), culture consists of values that continue to be inherited, changed and implemented along with social changes and continue to experience development. Duranti (1997) states three concepts of cultural value: performance, indexicality, and participation. The values of the Sundanese people are present in Sundanese culture to live more harmoniously, love each other, look after each other, and remind each other.

Apart from that, Sundanese people, to achieve perfection in life, are required to have the philosophy of cageur (healthy), bageur (good), bener (true), wanteur (brave), pinteur (intelligent) and singeur (self-aware) (Hidayat & Hafiar, 2019; Kania, 2020; Lubis, 2013; Mustapa, 2010; Rustandi & Angradinata, 2019). Sundanese people are a cultural group of people who have cultural values which become a philosophy of life which is conveyed to the wider community through the expressions Silih Asih (loving each other), Silih Asah (reminding/telling each other), and Silih Asuh (protecting each other) (Belasunda, 2018; Ekajati, 2014; Kasmana, 2020; Lubis, 2013). The following are the results of the researchers' findings and analysis of verbal humor utterances.

#### The Cultural Value of Silih Asah (reminding/telling each other)

Silih Asah is one of the Sundanese concepts of life, which means that every human being must remind each other, educate each other, and give each other experiences to improve their self-quality. A conversation situation that describes the interaction of two people sharing experiences, solving problems, and giving opinions illustrates the value of affection for each character involved in the conversation.

(+) : “ A, mugia masihan abdi nasehat tombak abdi milari jodo ”

" Sir, I hope you can give me advice in looking for a girlfriend/wife."

(-) : “ Ya jang somad , sembunyi teh kudu ngalaksanakeun tilu ind , ind nu kahiji dan kudu ngusahakeun diri milari pipamajikaneun . Itu dia nyaeta ngadoa . Kapksa ya persembunyian kedah ngalaksanakeun eng nu katilu . Hide kudu ngaca eta meren nu jadi sumabab persembunyian ini neangan jodo teh ”.

“ Somad, you have to do three things, first try to find a future wife. Both pray. Moreover, next you have to look carefully in the mirror because maybe that's what makes it difficult to find a wife.” (indirectly the speaker conveys that the face of the other person is ugly).

In the conversation above, the character (+) asks for the opinion of the character (-) who has more experience and knowledge to find a solution to the problem of the character (+) who is having difficulty finding a future wife. This can happen because of trust in someone who can provide input on a problem. Likewise, in this conversation, the researcher saw the (+) character openly convey his problem, namely the difficulty of finding a life partner/wife, then the (-) character provided several solutions.

The researcher found that the humor in the conversation was present and built through the element of indirect insult conveyed by the character (-) towards the character (+) through the words "You have to look carefully in the mirror" which indirectly conveyed that the (+) character's appearance The ugly thing makes it difficult to find a wife. However, the attitude of the character (-) who is willing to help provide solutions to the problems experienced by the character (+) reflects the cultural value of Silih Asah. Everyone in social and community interactions must help each other, provide information and provide solutions.

Researchers see that conversations in verbal humor indirectly convey the cultural values of the Sundanese people, namely helping each other, sharing knowledge and trusting each other openly. In this case, the cultural values presented in verbal humor show the character of the Sundanese people who always do good or good (good) and the character who always has the desire to improve themselves in order to do good or beneur (truth) (Kania, 2020; Setyo & Utami, 2021). With good individual character in social relations and the cultural value of helping each other, sharing experiences, and being open to situations to increase competence and experience, the verbal humor "cangehgar" can represent the identity of the Sundanese people.

As stated above, it can represent the identity of the Sundanese people whose conversations take the form of verbal humor. Sundanese people have dynamic personalities in learning, are open to accepting opinions, and always try to help and provide knowledge to fellow humans.

Cultural Values of *Silih Asih* (love each other, pay attention, care for each other)

*Silih Asih* (loving each other, caring for each other) is one of the Sundanese cultural values which is a principle of life in Sundanese society which can be interpreted as meaning that in life we must love each other, look after each other and help each other, a real manifestation of the cultural value of reparation in Sundanese society that exists in the daily life of Sundanese people by showing a friendly attitude (someah) and caring for others (Hidayat & Hafiar, 2019; Kasmana, 2020). The Sundanese cultural value of *Silih Asih* (loving each other) is part of the *Bageur* (good) philosophy, which requires Sundanese people to be kind, polite and help each other.

The researcher found a reflection of the cultural value of affection in conversation in the Sundanese verbal humor sketch "Cangehgar," as contained in the following conversation fragment of the researcher's conversation data.

(+) : “ enggal geulis, bageur, kanyaahna mamah, sok ateuh geura leeut obatna meh gancang cageur!, moal pait da obatna rasa jeruk” .

"Hurry up... beautiful, kind, mother's favorite, come on, quickly take the medicine so you get better quickly! It's not bitter, the medicine tastes of sweet orange."

(-) : “ Saur mamah, Cenah rasa jeruk obat teh. Nah, pait? ”

"Mama said the medicine tastes of orange. Why does it taste bitter?"

(+) : “ Muhun bager rasa jeruk ngan cangkangna ”.

"Yes darling, it tastes of orange. But it's orange peel."

The humorous verbal conversation above shows a mother's concern and affection for her sick child. The situations built in conversation show the value of love or affection in the family. Even though at the end of the conversation there was humor in the form of lies, researchers saw that the conversation conveyed a message in the form of the value of love towards others.

Apart from the conversation above, researchers also found the value of affection and attention in social interaction in conversations using the verbal humor "cangehgar", such as the following conversation fragment:

(+) : “ Naha kunaon teh, siga nu ambek kitu ?”

"Why are you so angry?"

(-) : “ Kumaha teu ambek asa ka hina ku penumpang di hareup parjarkeun anak teteuh goreng patut kulit hideung, ceuli lawing, asa kahina pisan ka abdi”.

"How can I not be angry? The passenger in front insulted my child. He said my child had black skin and big ears. That was very insulting."

(+) : “ Samperkeun we teh, keun we yaitu anak monyet mah dijagi ku abdi ”

"Just face it, I will look after this monkey child." (the speaker conveys indirectly that the other person's child is like a monkey)

The conversation above shows someone's concern when seeing a woman in a state of anger and sadness. Then another expression of attention is also shown through the third sentence.

The humor in the conversation comes in the form of insulting expressions conveyed in the third sentence by the character (+). However, the researcher saw that the entire conversation contained the value of *Silih Asih* (loving each other) through the character (+), who expressed his concern for the character (-). The presence of the value of affection in the humorous verbal sketch conversation above reveals that Sundanese people have a caring and considerate attitude towards other people.

A caring attitude towards others is one of the characteristics of Sundanese people in everyday life, namely always greeting each other and caring about the whereabouts and conditions of other people. Someah's attitude (polite/polite) in Sundanese people's daily lives is through the habit of greeting each other, both to people they know and those they don't (Hidayat & Hafiar, 2019). Based on the statement above, the presence of the value of affection in the conversation in the humorous verbal sketch "Cangehgar" can represent the identity of the Sundanese people as a society that cares about others.

The Cultural Value of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection)

In simple terms, *Salih Asuh* (mutual protection) can be interpreted as looking after and protecting each other (Belasunda, 2018; Kasmana, 2020). In other words, through mutual cooperation, Sundanese people must protect, guard and remind each other. The cultural value of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection) is a cultural value that supports the cultural values of *Silih Asah* (reminding each other) and *Silih Asih* (loving each other). The cultural value of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection) is a cultural value that maintains the values of *Silih Asah* (reminding each other) and *Silih Asih* (loving each other). This happens because by presenting the cultural values of *Silih Asuh*, a person still has the characteristics of *Silih Asah* (mutual sharing) and *Silih Asih* (mutual love and care) (Kasmana, 2020).

Giving advice and counsel is a form of the cultural value of *Silih Asuh*, which is present when there is an attitude of giving knowledge to each other (*Silih Asah*) to make one or both parties better human beings than before. It is commensurate with the philosophy (Bageur, Bener, Pinter, and Singeur). So if someone tries to give advice and remind, educate, change and protect other people from doing something that is considered wrong and acting according to God's rules and the rules that apply in society, then this is a natural form of the cultural value of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection).

Researchers found that there were efforts to show the value of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection) in the form of reminding each other in several conversations in verbal humor sketches such as through the following words.

- Matak Oge (interesting too)
- Ulah (not supposed to)
- Sok Ateuh (please)
- Enggal (fast)
- hideup teh kudu (you must)

The researcher believes that the principle of *Silih Asuh* (mutual protection) is a cultural value of the Sundanese people which functions to protect and remind each other so as to create awareness of the rights and obligations of fellow humans. Researchers also think

that the cultural value of mutual cooperation can be used as a fortress to maintain the noble cultural norms and values of the Sundanese people so that they continue to be maintained and passed on to the next generation.

#### Community Character in Verbal Humor

Behavior, actions and words in everyday life can reveal the character of a social group (Isnendes & Firmansyah, 2013; Kulsum, 2020; Sahril, 2017; Setyo & Utami, 2021). The character of a cultural community group is the result of the application of values and norms that guide the behavior of each individual in interacting both within the group and with other individuals from other community groups. Character then becomes a characteristic of a person's behavior and attitudes, which can become the identity of a social group (Alayan & Shehadeh, 2021; Bolzendahl & Coffé, 2020; Rahman et al., 2021).

Based on the results of research data analysis, researchers found several Sundanese cultural figures who were present in the conversation in the verbal humor sketch "Cangehgar" including:

- Care
- Mutual sharing
- Taking care of each other
- Loving each other
- Politeness

A caring attitude is the nature of wanting to pay attention to the needs of other people and wanting to help people who need help. Likewise with the attitude of sharing in conversations where there is a desire for characters to convey their knowledge and experiences openly to help find solutions for other characters who are experiencing problems or need help with their opinions. Loving each other shows care and concern for other humans. Respectful greetings show a person's polite character in social interactions.

### **Discussion**

Humor indirectly presents the cultural values of society and the character of a community group. Cultural values are presented through the speech of the characters, while the character of the Community Group is represented in the actions of the characters towards their interlocutors which are found in humor. The use of language in humor shows who the target audience for the humor is. In the research data, the language used by the speakers in the verbal humor conversation "Cangehgar" is Sundanese. This shows that both the perpetrators of humor and the targets of humor are Sundanese people. So indirectly the values and character of the community displayed in humor are the values and character of Sundanese society. Based on these findings, researchers can say that a humorous speech can represent the identity of a social group and community culture. Without realizing it, humor can transform cultural values to the next generation of humor lovers as well as introduce the cultural values and character of that group of people through humor to audiences outside the target audience.

Previous humor studies tended to focus on linguistic elements through linguistic studies. This is demonstrated by several previous studies that examined humor based on linguistic analysis. This was expressed by several language researchers who also research humor, stating that the use of language in humor is an attraction for language researchers to study humor through a language approach and cultural approach as a basis for humor research (Dulebova & Krajchovichova, 2021; Godioli & Little, 2022; Gonot-Schoupinsky et al., 2020; Kim & Plester, 2019; Newton et al., 2022; Ortega, 2021; Prendergast et al., 2020;



Vásquez & Aslan, 2021). This then creates a free space to explore cultural values and depictions of people's characters contained in humorous content. The researcher tries to fill the space in the research by expressing the cultural values and character of a community group in the form of humor, especially verbal humor.

This research is limited to revealing the cultural values and character of a community group that are present in humorous speech. There are still many types of humor that have not been touched by researchers, either in the use of media or various types of humor in society related to local wisdom, which have the opportunity to become the next study. Apart from that, future researchers can also reveal the characters of humor in cultural community groups through historical and social cultural studies of society, as well as media studies.

## Conclusion

Apart from being entertaining, humor can also be a representation of the identity of a group of people with elements of cultural values contained in the humor. This can be revealed through research results which show that the cultural values of a community group are presented through the speakers' speech in humor. Then the character of a social group is represented through the behavior of the main characters in humor. Apart from that, the main element of humor is the use of language which shows which group of people the humor is being conveyed to.

The results of the research reveal that Cangehgar's Sundanese verbal humor program is humor aimed at Sundanese people. This is known through the use of Sundanese language used by the speakers. The cultural values and character of the Sundanese people are indirectly present both through the characters' speech and the characters' behavior in humorous speech. The cultural values and characteristics of the Sundanese people that researchers discovered include the values of *Silih Asih* (loving each other), *Silih Asah* (nurturing each other) and *Silih Asuh* (taking care of each other). The characters of the Sundanese people who are presented in humor include caring, politeness, looking after each other and sharing.

Humor can come in any form, but it must still take into account the norms and culture of a social group. The presentation of humor must also adapt to changes in societal culture. Good humor maintains cultural norms and values, so there will be caution in conveying humor, especially in cultural groups who are sensitive to humor.

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