

inspiration and knowledge regarding the current and further research and program development in the field of creativity.

***The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach* by Rod A. Martin, Elsevier Academic Press, 2007, 464 pp. ISBN 012372564X. \$74.95**

***Reviewed by Aaron Kozbelt, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and Scott Barry Kaufman, Yale University DOI:10.1037/1931-3896.2.3.184***

While a veritable flood of general books on creativity have been released in the past few years (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Richards, 2007; Piirto, 2003; Runco, 2006; Sawyer, 2006; Weisberg, 2006), it's rare that a text is released that focuses in depth on one particular manifestation of creativity. *The Psychology of Humor* by Rod A. Martin is such a book, focusing (obviously) on humor. Although not a particularly funny read—though it has its moments—it is a very well-written, well-organized, comprehensive reference guide to the psychology of humor.

The Introductory chapter provides a nice overview of the rest of the book. Here Martin defines what is meant by the broad term *humor*, discusses the many forms and functions of humor, and provides a concise, informative history of thinking about humor. Martin then includes two chapters that address five theoretical approaches: psychoanalytic, superiority/disparagement, arousal, incongruity, and reversal theory. The second part of the book is organized into different psychological subtopics, which makes it very easy to navigate. This part includes sections on the cognitive, social, psychobiological, personality, and developmental approaches to the study of humor. The book concludes with chapters on the link between humor and both mental and physical health, and presents research on the application of humor in psychotherapy, education, and the workplace.

As the chapter headings suggest, this book is comprehensive in scope. The reference list alone is a gold mine, eclipsing the previous record holder, Roedelstein (2002). Each section of the book has a good mix of sources, including empirical studies, theoretical perspectives, and historical analyses. Furthermore, Martin does a good job of describing the methodologies of many studies, including their limitations, as well as identifying specific areas of research that have yielded inconsistent results or that would benefit from further research. The summary sections of the chapters are informative and give a good sense of the big (or at least medium-sized) picture. Also, the inclusion of many illustrative verbal jokes within the text was a nice touch. We each found ourselves laughing a good bit, albeit probably inappropriately.

Martin must also be commended for his remarkably evenhanded and nonpartisan treatment of many research areas. Probably not coincidentally, his own research seems to cover a broader cross-section of humor topics than anyone else's, but this is not a liability. If anything, it further validates the authoritativeness of the text—Martin is a highly prolific humor researcher and is clearly the right person to have written such a book.

Even with so many strengths, the book also has some limitations. Most notably, the subtitle of the book, *An Integrative Ap-*

*proach*, seems like a misnomer, because the book as a whole is highly compartmentalized. This subtitle is actually curious, considering Martin does not explicitly mention integration as major goal of the book in the Introduction or later on. We wonder if this subtitle was added post hoc by the publishers.

That each of the chapters is relatively self-contained and allows the reader to delve into each subtopic without distraction is very handy. However, we feel that the book would have benefited from a final (short) chapter that attempted a real integration of the broad range of material the book covers. Although this might be difficult given the variety of subtopics that are covered, and also bearing in mind the issue of whether a general theory of humor is even desirable, something along the lines of what we have or have not learned overall, or what Martin sees as the most promising future areas of research (not just within subdomains, but synergistically between them) would have been really nice. Martin clearly has such a thorough command of the details of these areas that he is almost in a unique position to perform such an integration. It was disappointing to be denied this.

In addition, even though the content in the Introduction was excellent and appropriate, perhaps it was unnecessary to include two independent chapters in the beginning of the book on “theories and early research,” because many of the theories were closely related to other chapters in the book (e.g., incongruity relates to the cognitive chapter, superiority/disparagement with social, etc.). We wonder if it would have been better had Martin infused the general theories into their respective chapters and then included a final integrative chapter assessing the viability of each of the main theories in light of the research presented as a whole. This would certainly have added to the integration of the material.

The book's utility as a classroom text also seems limited. For instance, despite the highly “textbook” packaging and its overtly stated purpose to be used as such, many useful standard features of textbooks are absent. Simple additions like sets of chapter-ending bullet points reviewing key ideas, questions for comprehension or reflection or suggested activities (along the lines of Sawyer, 2006), and perhaps a general glossary at the end would have gone a long way toward making the book more viable for classroom use. A related observation on user friendliness is that the book is extremely text intensive. We counted only eight figures or photos in the entire volume! It seems like much more could be done that would not only sex up the look of the book, but add substantively to making its content more comprehensible—for instance, in illustrating cartoons or other humor stimuli, graphing empirical results, or visually representing theoretical relations between areas of humor research to facilitate greater understanding of the material. We actually found this a bit ironic because Martin discusses the beneficial effect of the use of humor in textbooks in chapter 11. Finally, although research methodologies are often succinctly and well-described, the book seems to assume that the reader is already very sophisticated in terms of methodologies (which naturally range very widely in the study of such a complex phenomenon as humor). Without any further context, this assumption could be an impediment to understanding, especially in an undergraduate class. Indeed, adopting the textbook for undergraduate use would likely require supplementing it with outside readings and methodological digressions. In sum, we find the book more useful as a research resource than a prospective classroom text.

However these are fairly minor criticisms. The positive aspects of the book far outweigh any limitations. Martin deserves a gold star for taking the time to assemble the latest findings on humor and to put it all together into one comprehensive resource guide. In the Introduction, Martin states that

mainstream psychology has paid surprisingly little attention to the subject of humor until now. The overall aim of this book is therefore to introduce students and academics in psychology, as well as scholars and professional practitioners from other fields, to the existing literature, and to point out interesting avenues for further study in this fascinating topic area. (pp. 2)

As far as these goals go, Martin has succeeded. The text certainly highlights the relevance of humor for all the subdisciplines of psychology and raises issues that call for more research. Indeed, for any psychologist who has entertained an interest in conducting research on humor, now is clearly the opportune time to begin, because one can get literally all of the necessary, up-to-date bearings on any psychological aspect of humor in Martin's book. We hope it will encourage researchers to consider examining humor in their studies and inspire the next generation of humor researchers. *The Psychology of Humor* surely sets a precedent, and it will undoubtedly be a major authoritative source for humor researchers for years to come.

### References

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***Write to the Top! How to Become a Prolific Academic* by W. Brad Johnson and Carol A. Mullen, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 200 pp. ISBN 1-4039-7743-7. \$14.95**

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"Just put them in there—it's a requirement," advised the professor overseeing my promotion-and-tenure materials. "You can take them out afterward." I had been grumbling about numbering each publication in my CV, a practice that bothers me. Gunslingers notch their holsters, human epicenters of STD outbreaks notch their bedposts, and academics count their publications: CV tabulation is the closest most of us get to itchy trigger fingers and crusty sheets. But I caved, of course; as required by the Provost Office's forms, I counted my publications and numbered each one.

The dialectic of *quantity versus quality* is one of psychology's oldest: it ranks among venerable dialectics such as *experimental versus correlational designs*, *basic versus applied research*, and *coffee drinkers versus deviants who mock us with their water and their tea*. As researchers, we aspire to publish significant work—work that is cited, debated, and remembered, or at least read. But as pragmatists, we sense that the culture of modern universities prefers quantity, especially when grant dollars are the units being quantified. And as realists, we notice that the standards for hiring and promotion are higher than they used to be. More researchers are submitting more papers per year; as a result, rejection rates rise, and new journals emerge to handle the overflow. Publishing one or two great papers no longer establishes an assistant professor as a rising star; two dozen good publications, however, may do the trick.

It's a shame that the new, high standards require writing—a hard and painful activity—instead of behaviors that come naturally to academics. If deans and provosts expected us to complain more bitterly about parking or to dress more casually, most professors would easily adapt. But when expected to publish more, professors will need help. Sensing a market, publishers have released many new books about academic writing. Robert Boice's (1990) *Professors as Writers* is the revered ancestor of the group; newcomers include books by Kitchin and Fuller (2005), Kendall-Tackett (2007), and me (Silvia, 2007), which show professors how to write more often, how to publish work more effectively, and how to write less badly.

Johnson and Mullen's *Write to the Top!* is a worthy addition to the family of books about academic writing. If you liked the books mentioned earlier, you would like this book, too. Like the other books, *Write to the Top!* offers practical and informal advice learned the hard way. Johnson and Mullen's book stands out, however, in its purpose. The first two sentences of the Preface say it all:

This brief guide to writing is designed to help any academic become not only productive, but truly prolific. By prolific we mean writing and publishing a great deal and generally beyond even the most rigorous university norms for productive scholarship. (p. xiii)

Such candor is refreshing; you know where the authors stand. And the text of *Write to the Top!* makes good on the Preface's promise: this book truly is about how to publish like a madman, madwoman, or precocious madchild.

Books on productive writing fall on a spectrum. Boice (1990), on one end, introduced an "easy does it" approach to writing. He described how to get unstuck (e.g., free writing, contingency management) and how to write a little each day. My book (Silvia, 2007), in the middle of the spectrum, offered advice for people who struggle with writing during the frenzied workweek, in which service and teaching absorb our time. I recommended writing only during the normal workweek; evenings and weekends deserve activities less boring than writing, such as catching up on TV, collecting replica ninja weapons, and updating our holster notches.

Johnson and Mullen, in contrast, describe how to publish a monstrous amount; their book falls on the "high quantity" end of the spectrum. The authors' goal is not to motivate the reader to adopt a slow but steady approach; they want to teach the reader how to have a prolific, decades-long career. *Write to the Top!* is rooted in psychology and education, so the readers of this journal will find it easy to relate to the stories and struggles described by the authors. Sixty-five essays, grouped loosely