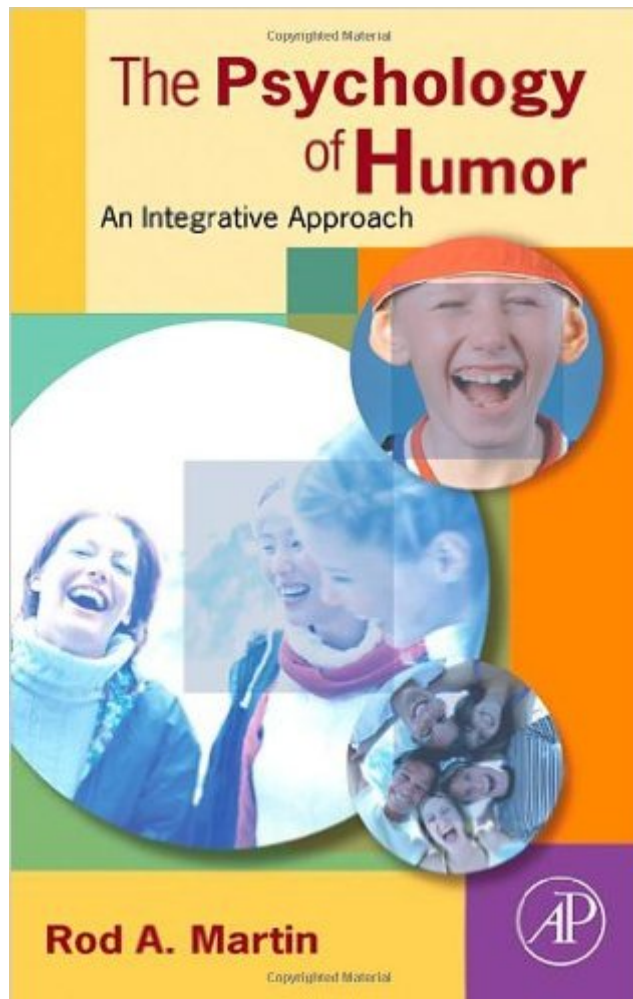


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# The Psychology Of Humor: An Integrative Approach



## Synopsis

Research on humor is carried out in a number of areas in psychology, including the cognitive (What makes something funny?), developmental (when do we develop a sense of humor?), and social (how is humor used in social interactions?) Although there is enough interest in the area to have spawned several societies, the literature is dispersed in a number of primary journals, with little in the way of integration of the material into a book. Dr. Martin is one of the best known researchers in the area, and his research goes across subdisciplines in psychology to be of wide appeal. This is a singly authored monograph that provides in one source, a summary of information researchers might wish to know about research into the psychology of humor. The material is scholarly, but the presentation of the material is suitable for people unfamiliar with the subject-making the book suitable for use for advanced undergraduate and graduate level courses on the psychology of humor-which have not had a textbook source.2007 AATH Book Award for Humor/Laughter Research category! \*Up-to-date coverage of research on humor and laughter in every area of psychology\*Research findings are integrated into a coherent conceptual framework\*Includes recent brain imaging studies, evolutionary models, and animal research\*Draws on contributions from sociology, linguistics, neuroscience, and anthropology\*Provides an overview of theories of humor and early research\*Explores applications of humor in psychotherapy, education, and the workplace\*Points out interesting topics for further research and promising research methodologies\*Written in a scholarly yet easily accessible style\*2007 AATH Book Award for Humor/Laughter Research category

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## Customer Reviews

Although there are probably several reasons for the shortage of psychological research concerning humor, one such reason no doubt involves the fact the past research tended to consider humor to be a one-dimensional characteristic. On the other hand, Martin argues that there are four distinct types of humor to consider: Affiliative (positive, facilitates relationships); Self-enhancing (positive, using humor to cope); Aggressive (criticize or manipulate others); and Self-defeating (self-disparaging). The distinction seems to me a distinct and significant step forward in humor research, and studies using Martin's resultant Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) are already bearing this out. I can honestly say that his book made me think about how I use humor, and as a result influenced both my teaching and my social interactions. In addition, among a variety of related topics Martin covers the history of humor research, major theories, the development of humor, and correlates of the use of humor (physical and mental health, use in education, etc.). I was very impressed with this book (and I've obsessively read roughly one hundred books in the past year related to positive psychology), and have been recommending Martin to anyone who is interested in humor and who will listen.

A splendid, thorough text by an author who has contributed stellar work to this literature. The writing is clear and accessible. I would have loved a few more diagrams and illustrations. For example, explanations of humor's impact on various biological processes would have benefited from a picture or two. The organization is intuitively appealing. The author is candid about the shortcomings of theories and research on the topic. He does not gloss over the warts in the science. By explaining some of the problems, he ends up educating readers so they can become better consumers of research. Readers will find that the topic is much richer and more complex than they may have thought. They'll also discover that much of the common knowledge that 'everyone knows' on the topic is dead wrong. I hope to teach a semester-long course with it soon. A true achievement.

Many books on humor are available. These books range from those containing "canned jokes" to the biographies of the leading comedians. The Psychology of Humor is an assessment, evaluation, and analysis of humor. What is humor? What causes humor? In which circumstances do we laugh? Why do we laugh? Does humor augments or degrades interpersonal relationships? The book investigates these questions, which are answered using scientific inquiry. The book is divided into

11 chapters, each of which discusses the subject of humor from a distinct point of view. Some of the research results surprised me, but the other findings were self-evident. As a behavioral health specialist, I like the presentation of the theories of humor and various types of humor; humor's potential application in the workplace, psychotherapy, and other activities. The psychobiology of humor and social psychology of humor also deserves mention. Nonetheless, the whole book should be read to acquire perspective of it, which I enthusiastically recommend to obtain an insight into the highly desired but still weakly understood human characteristic of humor.

This book, written in readable English, clearly depicts what we would like to know about humor and laughter, and the state of the art of what the current researches can tell us about them. Even though it was published in 2007, the content is still brand-new. The highlight of this 446-page book is that it has made clear that laughter has little, if at all, effect toward physical health by closely examining the previous studies and experiments done so far. It is also amusing and shocking to know that using humor for education does not give us the results we believe we are supposed to have. This is only what I think, but I have come to have a feeling that, if you read this book, you've seen them all!

I did my doc paper on the use of humor in therapy (I'm a psychologist), and this was an indispensable resource. If you are interested in this topic and looking for peer-reviewed academic research on humor, this is the best starting point I have found.

I discovered this book when I read about Rod Martin's work in *Nerve: Poise Under Pressure, Serenity Under Stress, and the Brave New Science of Fear and Cool*, by Taylor Clark. I've read about the psychology of humor before, and there are many views of it. In discussing how humor helps us cope with distress, Clark quotes Martin, "Humor is about playing with ideas and concepts... So whenever we see something as funny, we're looking at it from a different perspective. When people are trapped in a stressful situation and feeling overwhelmed, they're stuck in one way of thinking: 'This is terrible. I've got to get out of here.' But if you can take a humorous perspective, then by definition you're looking at it differently -- you're breaking out of that rigid mind-set." By the way, I highly recommend *Nerve*, as well. Humor serves many purposes and Martin's book covers a broad range. Quite insightful.

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