

Thinking Like A Child: The Role of Surface Similarities in Stimulating Creativity

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Abstract

An oft-touted mantra for creativity is: think like a child. We focus on one particular aspect of child-like thinking here, namely surface similarities. Developmental psychology has convincingly demonstrated, time and again, that younger children use surface similarities for categorization and related tasks; only as they grow older they start to consider functional and structural similarities. We consider examples of puzzles, research on creative problem solving, and two of our recent empirical studies to demonstrate how surface similarities can stimulate creative thinking. We examine the implications of this approach for designing creativity-support systems.

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