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The subjective value of creative outputs: appropriate or original?

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Abstract

Creativity is defined as the ability to produce an object/idea that is both original and appropriate to the context. How originality and appropriateness of production are integrated in creative cognitive processes is not understood. We propose that creativity involves an evaluative component based on individual preferences for appropriateness and originality of candidate ideas stemming from a generative component. Through behavioral experiments inspired by neuroeconomics and using computational modeling, we aimed to characterize this evaluative component. Participants had to generate creative word associations and then rate how much each of their responses was appropriate, original and how much they liked it. We found that the way individuals balanced appropriateness and originality to build a subjective value of their ideas was correlated with creative abilities. These findings provide new insights into how individual preferences can impact creativity.