**Multiple-Choice Tests Exonerated, at Least of Some Charges: Fostering Test-Induced Learning and Avoiding Test-Induced Forgetting**

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**Abstract**

“Among the criticisms of multiple-choice tests is that—by exposing the correct answer as one of the alternatives—such tests engage recognition processes rather than the productive retrieval processes known to enhance later recall. We tested whether multiple-choice tests could trigger productive retrieval processes—provided the alternatives were made plausible enough to enable test takers to retrieve both why the correct alternatives were correct and why the incorrect alternatives were incorrect. In two experiments, we found not only that properly constructed multiple-choice tests can indeed trigger productive retrieval processes, but also that they had one potentially important advantage over cued-recall tests. Both testing formats fostered retention of previously tested information, but multiple-choice tests also facilitated recall of information pertaining to incorrect alternatives, whereas cued-recall tests did not. Thus, multiple-choice tests can be constructed so that they exercise the very retrieval processes they have been accused of bypassing.”

**Notable quote from Conclusion**

“Achieving “proper construction” of such tests— which requires that incorrect alternatives be plausible, but not so plausible that they are unfair—is, however, a challenge. As any teacher who has used multiple-choice tests can testify, writing good multiple-choice items is very hard work, whereas writing poor ones is relatively easy. Thus, when people accuse multiple-choice tests of being bad tests, that accusation, statistically, has some truth to it. We argue, however, that the statistical accuracy of such accusations has more to do with human nature than with the multiple-choice format per se.”