

# The influence of Forced Answering on response behavior in Online Surveys: A reactance effect?

## 1. The Forced Answering Option (FA)

The FA (or forced response) option forces the respondent to answer or enter a response to each single item.

- Items cannot be skipped without answering
- Rationale: No missing data

## 3. Psychological Explanation?

### Reactance effect

- Reactance appears when an individual's freedom is threatened and cannot be directly restored (Brehm, 1966).
- In case this personal freedom is restricted, individuals feel pressured.
- Reactance defines the motivation to restore this loss of freedom.

## 5. Study Design

### Sample overview

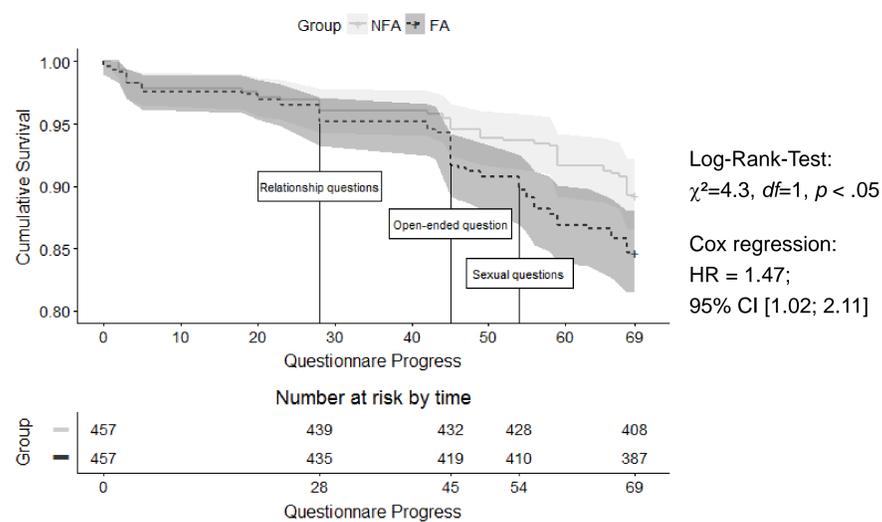
- Students at two German universities (contacted via e-mail)
- N = 914; 54.7% females; Age: M = 26.1 years, SD = 6.6;

### Survey design

- Cover story / survey topic: partnership and sexuality; No incentives
- Median response time = 9.4 minutes
- Implementation of a Dropout-Button
- Randomization across two experimental conditions:

- FA: „You have to answer each question to reach the next page.“
- NFA: „If you do not want to answer a question, you can skip it, without giving an answer.“

## 8. Results (I): Survival Curves



## 8. Results (III): Open Ended Questions

- Open-ended answers were coded in two categories
  - semantically meaningful vs. semantically non-meaningful answers; two coders, Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .97$  (Hayes, & Krippendorff, 2007)
- More non-meaningful answers in FA condition
  - NFA: 0.8%; FA: 3.6%;  $r = .09, p = .027, OR = 4.62, 95\% CI [1.29; 29.49]$
- Respondents in the FA condition gave shorter answers
  - number of signs that had been filled in;
  - NFA: M = 74.3, SD = 67.5; FA: M = 54.2, SD = 56.6
  - $t(456.82) = 3.91; d = 0.31, 95\% CI [0.16; 0.47]$

## 2. State of the Art

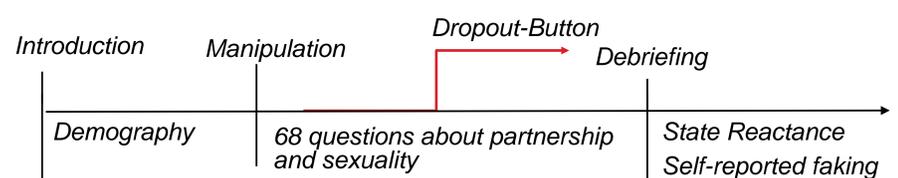
### Effects of FA on different quality parameters

- Less item-nonresponse (Albaum et al., 2010, 2011; Roster et al., 2014)
- Inconclusive results for FA on dropouts
  - No effects on dropouts (Albaum et al., 2010, 2011; Roster et al., 2014)
  - Higher dropouts (Décieux et al., 2015a, O'Neil, Penrod & Bornstein 2003; Stieger et al. 2007)
  - Earlier dropouts (Décieux et al., 2015b; Mergener et al., 2015)
- Decrease of validity of answers (Décieux et al., 2015a)

## 4. FA and Reactance: Hypotheses

- H1:** FA leads in decreasing answer quality
- Increasing dropouts
  - Increasing faking behavior
  - Increasing satisficing behavior
- H2:** Reactance is a reason for decreasing answer quality.

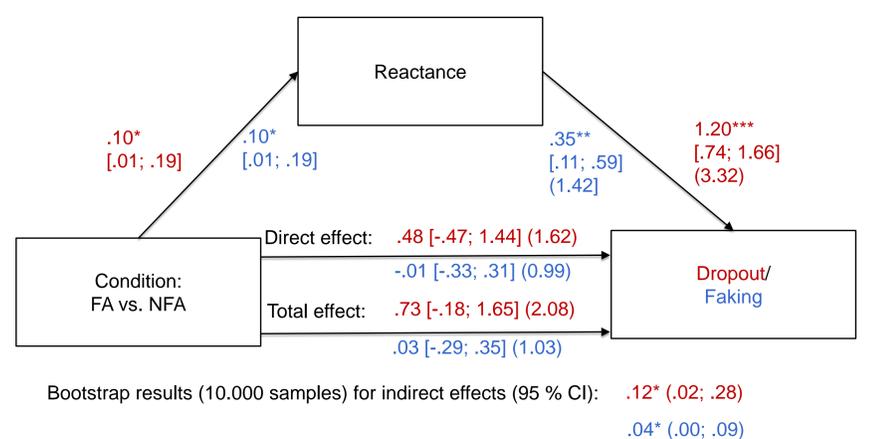
## 6. Questionnaire Structure



## 7. Measures

- State reactance:** „The questionnaire made me angry“ (from 1 to 5)
  - 4 item scale ( $\alpha = .70$ )
- Faking:** „How many questions did you not answer honestly?“
- Dropout:** Did the respondents quit the survey between Manipulation and Debriefing (Dropout = 1) or not (Dropout = 0)

## 8. Results (II): Mediation Analysis



Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; Mediation models. Coefficients of the dropout model are presented above the lines, below the line coefficients for the faking model (square parentheses: 95% confidence interval, round parentheses: OR).

## 9. Limitations

- Reactance was measured after dropout
- Correlational test of mediation
- Convenience sample (student population)

## 10. Summary and Conclusion

- Point-biserial correlations are low, but odds ratios are high
- First support for postulated mediation model: reactance as underlying psychological mechanism
- FA leads to satisfying behavior