Ensuring Participants the Ability to De-select Answers: Online Surveys and Qualtrics

INTRODUCTION
Many universities mandate that participants engaging in online data collection be given the opportunity to de-select answers if they have been chosen. This requirement stems from the Institutional Review Board’s rule regarding participants’ rights to choose not to answer any question.

Several researchers have expressed frustration with Qualtrics because the program does not make the ability to de-select answers easy to do. However, a few simple changes to the format of the questions will allow researchers to fulfill their university requirement regarding participants’ right to select and then de-select an answer. These changes are outlined below:

PROBLEM
The problem in Qualtrics stems from researchers selecting “Single Answer” as the format for participants’ responses. When using a likert-type question, these items look similar to what you see below.

Unfortunately, when participants select a response, they cannot de-select them (though they may change their responses within the response options).
SOLUTION
To fix this problem, researcher can simply change the response type to “Multiple Answer.”

Though, the problem with multiple answers is, of course, that participants may choose several responses for the same question. To ensure that this does not occur, researchers can select (within the options for multiple answers) to restrict the range of responses required. Thus, researchers may tell Qualtrics to restrict participants to one response for each question.
The same type of conversion may be done on a semantic differential. To do this, simply change the matrix type from “Bipolar” to “Profile.” Just be sure to tell Qualtrics to restrict participants to one response for each question.

More below…
IMPORTANT NOTE:
Your data will not be in the correct format if you request it with multiple responses activated. Therefore, when your data collection is finished, you will have to go back into the survey and change the response options back to “Single Answers.” Once you do this, your request for data will provide you with the correct output.

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