Living Research

LIVING RESEARCH is the QUARTERLY's bargain counter, devoted to the short and meaty item. Professional opinion analysts, academic practitioners, students of public opinion, and those who are concerned with the media of communication are urged to send in brief results which have suggestive theoretical implications; succinct case histories; and hypotheses and insights which the originators do not have time to develop, but which may be useful to other students.

Asking the Embarrassing Question

By Allen H. Barton

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The pollster's greatest ingenuity has been devoted to finding ways to ask embarrassing questions in non-embarrassing ways. We give here examples of a number of these techniques, as applied to the question, "Did you kill your wife?"

1. The Casual Approach:
   "Do you happen to have murdered your wife?"

2. The Numbered Card:
   Would you please read off the number on this card which corresponds to what became of your wife?" (HAND CARD TO RESPONDENT)
   1. Natural death
   2. I killed her
   3. Other (What?)
   (GET CARD BACK FROM RESPONDENT BEFORE PROCEEDING!)

3. The Everybody Approach:
   "As you know, many people have been killing their wives these days. Do you happened to have killed yours?"

4. The "Other people" Approach:
   (a) "Do you know any people who have murdered their wives?"
   (b) "How about yourself?"

5. The Sealed Ballot Technique:
   In this version you explain that the survey respects people's right to anonymity in respect to their marital relations, and that they themselves are to fill out the answer to the question, seal it in an envelope, and drop it in a box conspicuously labelled "Sealed Ballot Box" carried by the interviewer.
6. The Projective Technique:
“What thoughts come to mind as you look at the following pictures?”

(Note: The relevant responses will be evinced by picture D.)

7. The Kinsey Technique:
Stare firmly into respondent’s eyes and ask in simple, cleargut language such as that to which the respondent is accustomed, and with an air of assuming that everyone has done everything,
“Did you ever kill your wife?”

8. Putting the question at the end of the interview.

Attitude Toward Authority and Party Preference in Puerto Rico

By Peter Bachrach

Bryn Maur

Puerto Rico is a thriving democracy. The freedoms guaranteed by its modern constitution are exercised in fact by the minority parties, by the press, and by the people generally. The democratic ideology is accepted by all seg-