

APPLICABILITY OF POLICE SCIENCE INTERVIEW / INQUIRY TECHNIQUES IN RESEARCH OF NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

My name is Raymond Reynolds and I am retired from a career in law enforcement encompassing service as a Military Police Officer, State Police Officer and Federal Criminal Investigator. The latter extended from field investigative work to executive level management. Also, after retirement I participated in Criminal Justice Training as a Training Coordinator / Instructor for approximately 10 years.

I have had the pleasure of being acquainted with P.M.H. Atwater and her research work for a number of years, having first met her at an event where she was a presenter regarding her research and findings on near death experiences. I recall after hearing her presentation that I approached her and asked if she had training and experience in the police science of observation and interviewing as her methodology sounded very familiar. She shared with me that her father had been a law enforcement officer and that she had practically grown up in and around the Police Station and had received substantial training in that activity through observation and discussions with her father. I have read most of her publications and have had discussions with her as to the research protocol she uses, those being primarily Clinical, Narrative Collection and Observational (police science and neurolinguistic). The following comments relate primarily to the technique of interviewing willing participants (Observational).

It is my opinion after learning of P.M.H. Atwater's techniques through discussions and her disclosures in her publications that she does indeed use well established and successful law enforcement methodology in the Observational protocol of interviewing subjects in her research. This refers essentially to the interview process relating to seeking information from a willing subject. This is not to be confused with interrogation which relates to an unwilling participant, even though some of the same techniques are used in attempting to move them to a willing position.

Following are a few observations that relate to my perception of the interview techniques utilized by P.M.H. Atwater that are consistent with law enforcement methodology.

Generally, to obtain information from individuals in the interview mode, even willing ones, it is essential to establish rapport with them, which can be construed as "getting on their level." Rapport as used here relates to recognizing the sensory mode of the individual and interacting at that level, if that seems feasible for success, or moving the person to a more productive mode if necessary. The sensory modes referred to here are usually sight, hearing and touch (feeling), with the latter usually being more productive. This is particularly true when the person has experienced something of an exciting, frightening, sad or overwhelming nature.

While observation of body language, eye movement and identification of sensory modes and development of specific interview techniques are long established, taught and successfully used

law enforcement procedures, that is by far not the only successful usage. Moving to join a mode and establish rapport is something that most of us are familiar with outside of formal interviewing and inquiry. For instance, we observe a person who has had a sad experience and needs to talk and we note a sensory mode with low and soft voice tone, references to feelings and particular body language. That is often stooped posture, limbs pulled inward and eyes cast downward. It is generally natural for us to reflect this person's actions and in the process become more connected (rapport). This is true, be it a friend or an unknown interviewee. While referring here to a sad event, it is also applicable to other type events such as an exciting and positive one.

As conversation continues, especially if we encourage the person with an informal atmosphere and through relevant open ended questions, acknowledging comments and encouraging them to continue with such comments as "oh, please do continue," "really," "oh" and "uh-huh," etc., information continues to flow.

It is my opinion after being taught these highly refined techniques and many years of utilizing them successfully, teaching them and seeing positive results in law enforcement work, that they do indeed have multiple value outside of that venue. Further, that there is indeed a consistency with these techniques and those described and used effectively by P.M.H. Atwater.

(signed) Raymond Reynolds

Raymond A. Reynolds
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My permission is hereby granted on this date for P.M.H. Atwater to quote any and all of the above comments by me. R.A.R.