

# **The NICHD Protocol: A best practice to conduct investigative interviews with children**

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# Presentation overview

- The NICHD Protocol
- The Protocol's effectiveness with and without feedback
- Practical implications for investigative interviews with children



# Practice of investigative interviews

- Wide discrepancy between investigative interview models and recommendations and how interviewers actually conduct interviews
- Open-ended questions: 6% to 10.5%



# Interview training

- Increases knowledge
- No impact on reducing inappropriate behaviours, such as use of specific questions, or increasing use of open-ended questions
- Back to “natural style”
- Similar findings obtained after various types of training



# The NICHD Protocol

- Purpose of NICHD Protocol is to translate research recommendations into operational guidelines in order to increase likelihood of obtaining complete and accurate information



# The NICHD Protocol

- Detailed, concrete and user-friendly
- Integrates recent knowledge of child memory functioning and suggestibility
- Suitable for sexual and physical abuse
- Same skills can be used also when interviewing witnesses



# The NICHD Protocol Phases

- **Pre-substantive phase**  
Serves to prepare child to be an efficient information provider
- **Substantive phase**
  - Structured and flexible phase
  - Serves to elicit information from recall memory through open-ended questions
- **Closing phase**





# Pre-substantive phase

- Introduction of interviewer and his/her role
- Clarification of ground rules for communication
  - Tell truth
  - Say: “I don’t know/I don’t understand”
  - Correct interviewer
- Build rapport
  - Open-ended questions on things child enjoys
- Interviewer asks child to provide detailed account of recent event not related to SA



# Pre-substantive phase

- Practice calling upon episodic memory is intended to:
  - encourage description of events from free recall
  - help child realize how much detail he/she is expected to give
  - help child become familiar with open-ended questions
  - help child understand what is expected of him/her



# Substantive phase

- Starts with an open-ended question (invitation)
- Structures sequence in which child will report SA-related events
- Interview conducted with open-ended questions
- Specific or more focussed questions may be used at end of interview (if deemed necessary)



# Closing phase

- Discuss disclosure
- Make sure child has said everything he/she wanted to say
- Interview finishes with an invitation to discuss anything else child would like to talk about



# Protocol training

- Begins with one-week's intensive training
  - Current knowledge of child skills
  - Detailed review of protocol
  - Video
  - Role-play is videotaped, reviewed and analyzed
- Following this intensive training:
  - Written and verbal feedback



# Results with NICHD protocol

- 4- to 6-year-olds provide more details in response to free-recall prompts - Lamb et al., 2003
- Higher scores on the Criterion-Based Content Analysis (CBCA) - Hershkowitz et al., 1997
- Plausible versus implausible allegations easier to detect - Hershkowitz et al., 2007
- Higher disclosure rate: 71% vs 61% - Hershkowitz et al., 2005
- 1.52x more charges filed - Pipe et al., 2008



# Study 1:

- Check effectiveness of NICHD Protocol
  - Increase number of open-ended questions by interviewer
  - Increase quantity of details given by child via open-ended questions
  - 8 police officers
  - 90 matched interviews
- Funded by SSHRC



# Results – with FDBK

- Helps interviewer
  - ↑ invitations from 7% to 33%
  - ↓ specific questions by half
- Helps child
  - more than 50% of details with open-ended questions
  - regardless of age





# Results – with FDBK

- 32.8% decrease in number of questions asked per interview
- 30.6% increase in number of central details
- 13-minute increase in interview time on average
- Similar results in 3 other countries



# Study 2

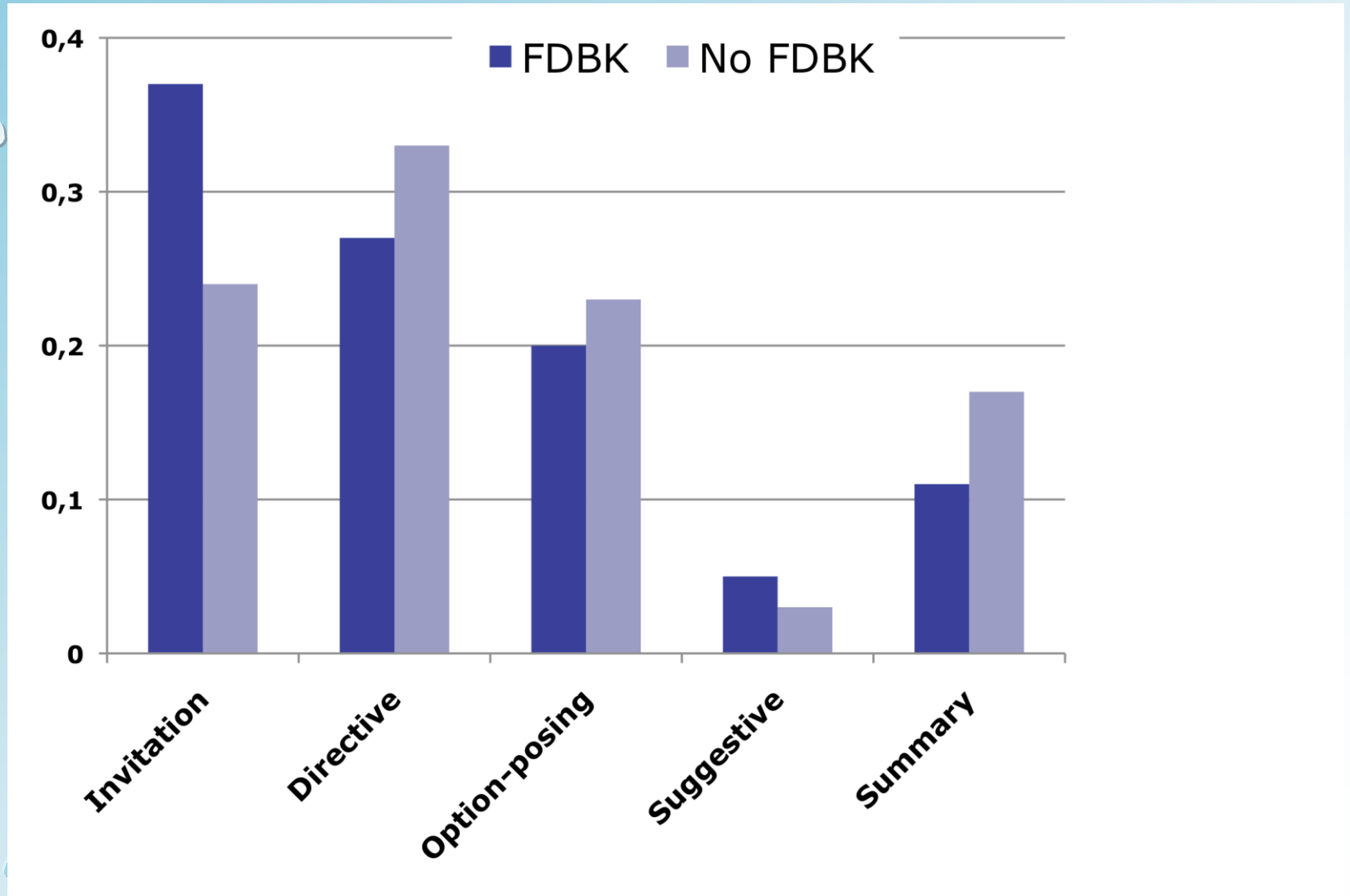
- Check whether feedback is necessary to maintain skills
- 11 police officers
- 39 protocol and 34 non-protocol interviews
- Funded by CEMV



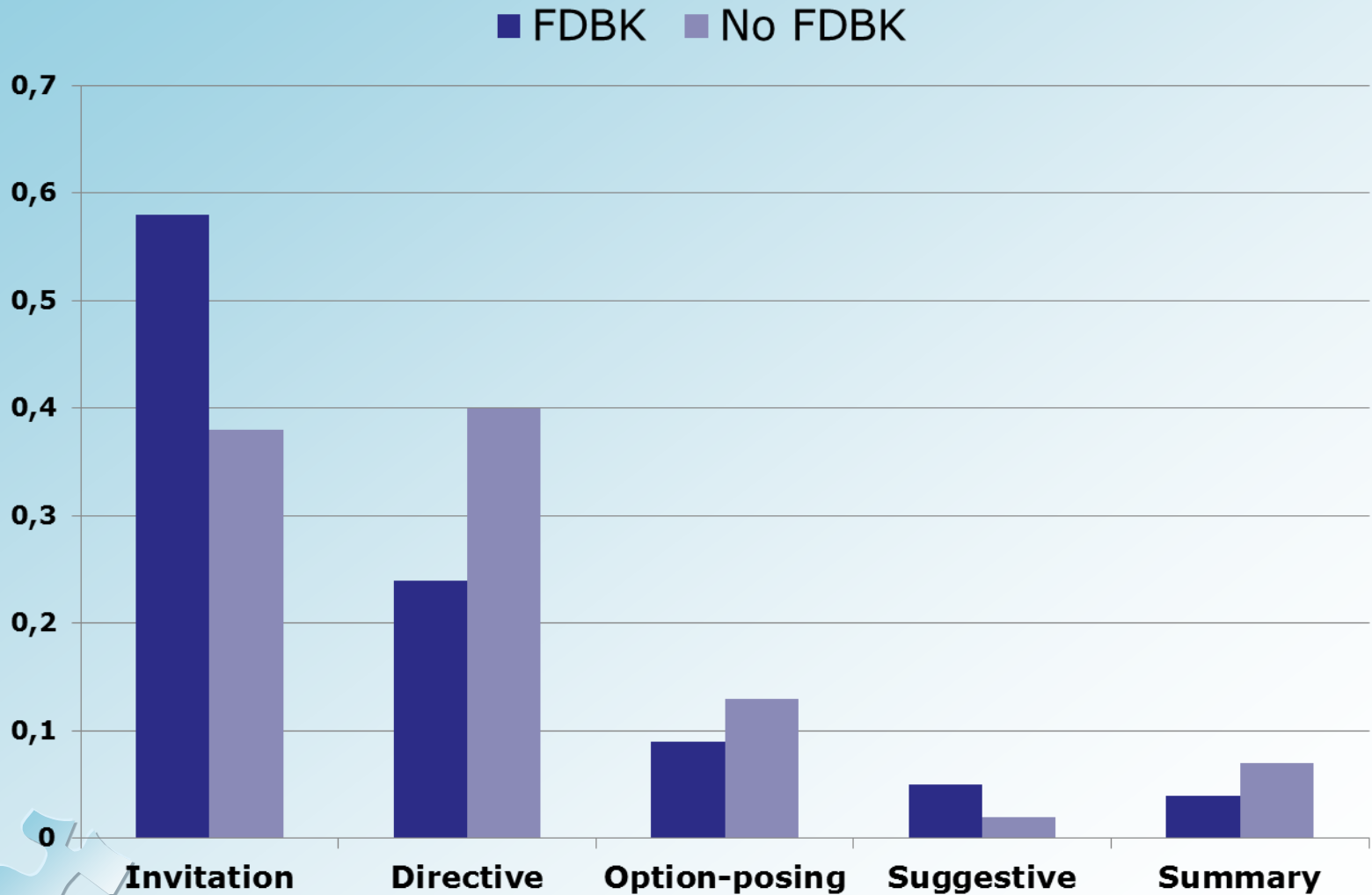
# Results – without FDBK

- Helps interviewer
  - Nearly 7 times more invitations, proportionally speaking (3% vs. 21%)
  - Significantly fewer directive and option-posing questions
  - No significant difference in summary and suggestive questions
- Helps child
  - 37% of details elicited through open-ended questions

# Utterance type



# Central details





# Discussion

- Use of NICHD Protocol:
  - Helps interviewers modify their interrogation technique with children sexually victimized
  - Allows greater number of open-ended questions to be asked
  - Increases number of details obtained through open-ended questions
  - With or without feedback



Thank you!

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