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## Reluctant Disclosers of Child Sexual Abuse

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Most researchers agree that the manner in which children are questioned has profound implications for what is “remembered” (Ceci & Bruck, 1995; Brainard & Ornstein, 1991; Dent & Stephenson, 1989; Jones, 1989; Lamb, Sternberg, & Esplin, 1998; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Quinn, White, & Santilli, 1989). Because victims are frequently the only available sources of information, it is especially important that forensic investigators use interviewing strategies that are most likely to elicit accurate and complete accounts. There is a broad consensus that the amount and quality of information obtained from young children is affected by the types of prompts used by interviewers, with free-recall prompts eliciting more detailed and more accurate information than recognition memory prompts in both laboratory and forensic contexts (e.g., Dale, Loftholm, & Rathbun, 1978; Dent, 1986; Dent & Stephenson, 1979; Goodman & Bottoms, 1990; Goodman, Bottoms, Schwartz-Kenney & Rudy, 1991; Hutchenlocher, Baxter, Telfer, & Warden, 1995; Lamb & Fauchier, 2001; Oates & Trapp, 1991; Orbach & Lamb, 2001; Ornstein, Gordon, & Larus, 1992). Whereas most open-ended prompts are formulated as invitations (to “tell me everything that happened”) or as directive “wh-” questions, which focus on eliciting undisclosed information and request additional elaboration, recognition prompts are typically formulated as option-posing (yes/no or forced choice) or suggestion prompts (implying the expected responses), which introduce undisclosed information and request confirmation, rejection, or selection among investigator-given options. Young children, particularly preschoolers, are especially vulnerable to such suggestion and implicit coercion. As a result, many experts

and professional groups have recommended interview practices that emphasize open-ended strategies for eliciting rich and accurate accounts from alleged victims (e.g., American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children [APSAC], 1990, 1997; Bull, 1992, 1995; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Jones, 1992; Lamb, Sternberg, & Esplin, 1998; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz, & Esplin, 1999; Memorandum of Good Practice, 1992; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Saywitz & Goodman, 1996; Walker & Warren, 1995; Yuille, Hunter, Joffe, & Zaparniuk, 1993). These recommendations have been incorporated into the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Interview Protocol (Orbach, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Sternberg, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2000; Orbach & Lamb, 2001).

The NICHD protocol emphasizes reliance on free-recall probes and retrieval cues, and instructs interviewers to give children practice responding to such prompts when describing neutral events in the presubstantive phase of forensic interviews, before their attention is turned to the alleged abuse. Interviewers are guided to elicit disclosures and allegations using free- and cued-recall prompts as much as possible, and to introduce focused prompts (i.e., yes/no questions), providing carefully graduated "hints" about possible abuse, to prompt those who failed to disclose in response to the recall prompts. To minimize contamination, the NICHD interview protocol further recommends that interviewers delay recognition prompts until open-ended prompts have been exhausted, and pair them with open-ended prompts. Using the protocol, interviewers elicit much more information, even from very young children, in response to open-ended prompts than do interviewers using "standard" interviewing practices (Aldridge, Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, & Bowler, 2004; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, Stewart, & Mitchell, 2003; Lamb, Orbach, Sternberg, Esplin, & Hershkowitz, 2002; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg, Lamb, Orbach, Esplin, & Mitchell, 2001).

To disclose sexual abuse, children need an adequate memory of the investigated event and the communicative skills necessary to report it (Bussey & Grimbeek, 1995). These necessary conditions do not guarantee disclosure, however. Although alleged victims of sexual abuse can provide substantial amounts of information about their experiences, many children either fail to disclose abuse or are reluctant to do so (Hershkowitz, Horowitz, & Lamb, chapter 4, this volume; Kuehnle, 1996; Poole & Lamb, 1998) for a variety of cognitive, emotional, or motivational reasons (Bandura, 1965; Sauzier, 1989; Sjöberg & Lindblad, 2002). Children may be reluctant to talk with an unfamiliar interviewer about sensitive or embarrassing issues, such as socially proscribed forms of intimate touching (Ceci, Leichtman, & Nightingale, 1993) or to acknowledge "coercive, repeated abuse that can instill high levels of fear, shame, and mistrust" (Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas, & Moan, 1991, p. 691). Victims may be motivated to withhold information or deny that they were abused because they wish to protect familiar perpetrators, especially family members (Paine & Hansen, 2002; Yuille, Tymofievich, & Marxsen, 1995),

yield to requests for secrecy (DeYoung, 1988; Goodman-Brown, 1995), assume responsibility or blame (Lyon, 2002; Sjöberg & Lindblad, 2002), feel ashamed or embarrassed (Lyon, 1995; Saywitz, et al., 1991), or fear negative outcomes (Berliner & Conte, 1995; DeYoung, 1988; Paine & Hansen, 2002; Palmer, Brown, Rae-Grant, & Loughlin, 1999).

Age may also affect disclosure by child witnesses. Younger children, who are not aware of the norms regarding sexual activity, may unwittingly disclose abuse by casually mentioning the incident (Finkelhor, Williams, & Burns, 1988) or by enacting sexual behavior they learned (Friedrich, 1993; Friedrich, Fisher, Dittner, Acton, Berliner, Butler, et al., 2001). Young victims may not understand that they have been abused and may fail to encode experiences that did not appear salient to them (Cederborg, Lamb, & Laurell, chapter 9, this volume, 2004; DeVoe and Faller, 1999), leaving them unable to retrieve related memories when later interviewed. Older children, by contrast, are more likely to disclose verbally and intentionally, regulating their disclosure by choosing to whom they disclose and the amount of information they are willing to provide. Because they have been socialized more extensively and know more about sexual behavior, however, older children seem to recognize that their experiences were inappropriate and are more aware of the potential consequences of disclosure, and thus have the cognitive capacity to purposefully inhibit disclosure (Campis, Hebden-Curtis, & DeMaso, 1993). In addition, young children provide less information about their experiences in both field/forensic and laboratory settings, perhaps because they have less developed retrieval strategies and poorer communicative abilities (Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein, Larus, & Clubb, 1993; Dietze & Thompson, 1993; Goodman & Reed, 1986; Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg, Horowitz, & Hovav, 1998; Lamb, Hershkowitz, Sternberg, Boat, & Everson 1996; Lamb, Hershkowitz, Sternberg, Esplin, et al., 1996; Lamb et al., 2003; Ornstein et al., 1992; Peterson & Bell, 1996; Saywitz, Snyder, & Lamphear, 1996; Sternberg, Lamb, Hershkowitz, Esplin, Redlich, & Sunshine, 1996). As a result, many professionals have suggested that younger children need more focused prompting than older children do (Clarke-Stewart, Thompson, & Lepore, 1989; DeVoe & Faller, 1999; Gries, Goh, & Cavanaugh, 1996; Keary & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Saywitz, et al., 1991; Terry, 1990; Wood, Orsak, Murphy, & Cross, 1996).

Most of the published research on forensic interviewing has focused on interviews with cooperative alleged victims who were ready to disclose, had often made specific allegations of abuse prior to the formal investigation, and were especially responsive to open-ended prompts. A diverse array of factors, including veiled disclosure to nonprofessionals (e.g., family members and teachers) or to professionals (e.g., medical doctors, CPS workers or police officers), as well as suspicions that the child was abused, may trigger formal investigative interviews with children who are unwilling to disclose. Unlike cooperative informants, children who are reluctant to disclose may be less re-

sponsive to open-ended prompts and may require more guidance and more focused prompts before making allegations of abuse. As a result, those interviewing them face an inevitable tension between the desire to initiate the disclosure of information about what actually happened and the need to avoid contaminating the memories by suggestively implanting information (even prompting false allegations) by using leading and suggestive prompts. The goal is to minimize the amount of information provided by the interviewer, rather than the child, especially during the crucial early stages of the interview.

The first field study to explore the dynamics of forensic interviews with reluctant victims (Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg, Pipe, & Horowitz, chapter 6, this volume) compared reluctant disclosers who did not disclose abuse in the course of forensic interviews, despite strong evidence that abuse occurred, with children who disclosed abuse. Hershkowitz and her colleagues showed that forensic interviews that yielded allegations of abuse were characterized by quite different dynamics than interviews with children who seemed equally likely to have been abused but did not make allegations during the interview. Nondisclosers were somewhat uncooperative, offered less information, and gave more uninformative responses, even in the presubstantive rapport-building phase of the interview, before the interviewers focused on substantive issues and before the interviewers themselves began to behave differently. Moreover, the children's informativeness or uninformativeness in the presubstantive phase of the interview was indicative of the likelihood that they would disclose. Hershkowitz and colleagues also demonstrated that interviewers addressed nondisclosers and disclosers differently, offering fewer free-recall prompts to nondisclosers than to disclosers.

The present study was designed to explore differences in the dynamics of interviews with reluctant and nonreluctant disclosers, all of whom disclosed sexual abuse during protocol-guided forensic interviews. Half of the children in the present study (nonreluctant disclosers) made allegations of abuse in response to the interviewers' open-ended free-recall prompts. The other half (reluctant disclosers) failed to disclose abuse in response to free-recall prompts and made allegations only when prompted in a more focused—sometimes even suggestive—fashion, using recognition memory prompts.

The present study was the first designed to explore variations in the children's apparent willingness to disclose and to describe experiences of abuse when questioned systematically by investigative interviewers in the course of forensic interviews. We examined the relationship between the children's initial reluctance to make allegations and the total amount of information they provided about the investigated incident in the substantive phase following disclosure, as well as in the rapport-building phase, when discussing neutral topics, prior to the substantive questioning. We also examined whether interviewers addressed nonreluctant and reluctant disclosers differently.

We expected that children who disclosed in response to focused recognition prompts would remain reluctant to provide information about the alleged

abuse even after making allegations. We thus expected that nonreluctant disclosers would provide more abuse-related information overall, more central (i.e., allegation crucial) information, more information in response to free-recall prompts, and more information in response to each invitational prompt than reluctant disclosers would.

We also expected to find continuity in levels of cooperativeness in the pre-substantive and the substantive phases, which would be reflected in significant correlations between the amount of information provided by children when discussing neutral topics in the pre-substantive rapport building phase and the amount of abuse-related information provided in the substantive phase. We thus expected that reluctant disclosers would provide less information than nonreluctant disclosers even before abuse-related issues were introduced.

As in interviews with young suspects (Hershkowitz, Horowitz, Lamb, Orbach, & Sternberg, 2004), we expected that interviewers might use more recognition prompts, fewer free-recall prompts, and more prompts overall to elicit substantive information from reluctant than from nonreluctant disclosers.

### PARTICIPANTS

The 70 interviews included in the study were drawn from a pool of 365 investigative interviews conducted, using the NICHD protocol, by professional investigators in the United Kingdom and the United States. The children (48 girls and 22 boys) were 4- to 12-years old at the time of interview ( $M = 6.89$  years,  $SD = 2.26$ ; 22 boys and 48 girls). For the purpose of analysis, we distinguished between 35 interviews in which children made their allegations in response to one of the open-ended "getting the allegation" prompts (i.e., nonreluctant disclosers) and 35 interviews in which children did not make allegations in response to the initial open-ended prompts and only disclosed when asked more focused (option-posing and suggestive) prompts (i.e., the reluctant group; see appendix for a complete list of "getting the allegation" prompts). Interviews in the two disclosure groups were individually matched by age and abuse type. All interviews were also divided into two age groups by median split; children in the younger age group ( $n = 35$ ) were 4 to 6.40 years old, whereas children in the older age group ( $n = 35$ ) were 6.41 years and older.

The alleged crimes included anal or genital penetrations ( $n = 14$ ), genital touching ( $n = 33$ ), genital fondling from outside the clothes ( $n = 17$ ), sexual exposure ( $n = 2$ ) and physical abuse ( $n = 4$ ). Thirty-three of the children reported single events, and 37 reported multiple events. All the perpetrators were familiar to the victims prior to the alleged abusive events. Twenty-eight of the perpetrators were members of the victims' immediate families (i.e., biological mothers, fathers, or siblings, stepparents and including mothers' boyfriends and fathers' girlfriends), 12 were other family members (e.g., grandfathers, uncles, cousins) who lived with the family, or biological parents or

siblings not living with the family, and 30 were familiar, unrelated acquaintances of the child (e.g., friends, teachers, nonresident boyfriend or girlfriend of a parent).

### PROCEDURE

As explained earlier, the NICHD structured investigative protocol is designed to maximize the use of open-ended probes and retrieval cues (Orbach et al., 2000). Alleged child victims are encouraged to provide as much information as possible from free-recall and to report event-specific rather than generic information. The initial presubstantive phase serves introductory, preparatory, and rapport-building goals. Interviewers explain the importance of telling the truth, and clarify communication rules (e.g., encourage children to correct the interviewers when they are incorrect and instruct children to seek clarification when necessary). In the rapport-building phase, investigators pose open-ended questions about the children and their families before asking the children to describe recent events in detail ("Tell me about it from the beginning to the end as best you can remember"). In addition, children are prompted using follow-up invitations (i.e., "And then what happened?" or "Tell me more about that"), cued invitations ("You said something about X. Tell me about that"), and temporal cues ("What happened after he came in?"), based on disclosed information, as part of an effort to familiarize children with open-ended interview strategies and with the expected level of detail. Following the presubstantive phase, the interviewers shift focus to substantive issues, using a sequence of prompts designed to facilitate disclosure nonsuggestively. The interviewers follow this sequence until the children make references to abuse. The first prompts in this sequence are open-ended, introducing no information. If the children do not make allegations in response to open-ended prompts, interviewers use increasingly focused prompts that hint at the possibility of abuse. The interviewers only used focused prompts (first option-posing and then, if necessary, suggestive) after exhausting the open-ended prompts. The appendix lists the probes in sequence.

When children make allegations of abuse, investigators offer an open-ended invitation ("Tell me everything that happened to you from the beginning to the end, as best you can remember"), which is followed by follow-up open-ended prompts ("Tell me more about it," or "And then what happened?") and cued invitations ("Tell me more about [something mentioned by the child]") as needed. The open-ended prompts are designed to elicit free recall accounts of the alleged incidents. If some crucial information was missing after exhaustive open-ended questioning, the interviewers were instructed to use more focused, nonsuggestive questions. If the children mentioned multiple incidents, the interviewers asked them to give separate accounts of each incident. Further details about the protocol are provided by Orbach et al. (2000) and Sternberg et al. (2002).

For the purposes of the present study, children who made allegations in response to NICHD "getting the allegation" prompts numbered 1, 2, or 3 were classified as having responded to open-ended free-recall prompts. Those who made allegations in response to prompts 4, 5, or 6 were classified as having responded to focused recognition prompts. None of the children made allegations in response to prompts 7, 8, or 9.

### CODING INTERVIEWER STRATEGIES

Interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Two trained raters independently reviewed each of the transcripts, categorizing each utterance made by the interviewers in both the presubstantive and substantive phases of the interview. Four categories introduced by Lamb and his colleagues (Lamb, Hershkowitz, Sternberg, Boat, et al., 1996; Lamb, Hershkowitz, Sternberg, Esplin, et al., 1996) were used to characterize the interviewer utterances (defined as "turns" in the discourse or conversation) as invitations, directives, option posing prompts, or suggestive prompts.

1. **Invitations.** Utterances, including questions, statements, or imperatives, prompting free recall responses from the child (for example, "Tell me everything that happened"). Some invitations used details disclosed by the child as cues (for example, "You mentioned that he kissed you. Tell me everything about the kiss").
2. **Directive utterances.** These refocus the child's attention on details or aspects of the alleged incident that the child has already mentioned, providing a category for requesting additional information using "wh-" questions (cued recall), (for example, "Where did he touch you?" when the child mentioned "he touched me").
3. **Option-posing utterances.** These utterances draw the child's attention to details or aspects of the alleged incident that the child has not mentioned, asking the child to affirm, negate, or select investigator-given options (tapping recognition memory processes) but do not imply that a particular response is expected (e.g., "Did he say anything to you?").
4. **Suggestive utterances.** These utterances are stated in such a way that the interviewer strongly communicates what response is expected (e.g., "He touched you under your clothes, didn't he?"), or they assume details that have not been revealed by the child (e.g., "Where did he touch you?" when the child has not mentioned being touched).

Nonsuggestive encouragements to continue with ongoing responses (i.e., "facilitators") were not considered as independent utterances. The details provided following facilitators were attributed to the previous utterance.

### CODING CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

The amount of information provided by the children was quantified by two raters using the informative detail as the smallest unit of information. By definition, a detail involved mentioning, identifying, or describing individuals, objects, events, locations, times, actions, emotions, or thoughts and sensations, that are part of an alleged incident, as well as any of their features (e.g., appearances, temporal attributes, sound, smell and texture). All details pertaining to the alleged sexual/physical allegation were identified and counted. Allegation-crucial details were coded as "central details." Details were counted in specific statements that express recollection of personal episodic memories of alleged incidents (occurring at a specific time and specific location), as well as in generic statements that referred in general to something that happened during a single incident or summarize more than one incident with the same suspect.

Raters were trained on an independent set of transcripts until they reached 95% inter-rater agreement before coding the transcripts included in the study. During the course of the coding, 20% of the transcripts were coded by both raters to ensure that they remained reliable. In these assessments, raters agreed regarding the classification of at least 98% of the interviewer prompts and 95% of the children's response types and informative details.

### THE FINDINGS

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were used to explore the effect of disclosure group and age on the amount of information provided by children in response to prompts of different types. Subsequent univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were computed where appropriate to specify the variables on which the groups differed.

A 2 (disclosure status: non-reluctant, reluctant) X 2 (Age: older, younger) MANOVA with the number of details provided during the presubstantive and the substantive phases of the interview in response to prompts of the four main types (invitation, directive, option-posing, suggestive) as dependent variables revealed significant multivariate effects for both disclosure status and age ( $F_{7,60} = 4.37$ ;  $p < .001$  and  $F_{7,60} = 3.86$ ,  $p = .002$  for disclosure status and age, respectively), as well as in the number of details reported per prompts of each type ( $F_{7,60} = 2.44$ ,  $p = .029$  and  $F_{7,60} = 3.81$ ,  $p = .002$  for disclosure status and age, respectively).

Subsequent ANOVAs revealed that nonreluctant disclosers provided more details in total in both the presubstantive and the substantive phases of the interview (see table 7.1). No significant differences were evident, however, in the number and proportion of details provided in responses to prompts of each type and in the number provided per prompt of each type in the



presubstantive phase, although nonreluctant disclosers tended to provide more information in response to pre-substantive invitations than reluctant disclosers did. In the substantive phase, however, in addition to providing more substantive information overall, nonreluctant disclosers provided more central details and more details in response to invitations, directive, and option-posing prompts than reluctant disclosers did. They also provided more details per invitation, directive, and option-posing prompts and tended to provide more details in response to suggestive prompts than reluctant disclosers did (see table 7.1).

With respect to age, subsequent ANOVAs revealed that in both the presubstantive and the substantive phases, older children provided more details and significantly more forensically relevant information in total than younger children did. There was a significant interaction, however, between age and disclosure group in the total number of details reported in the presubstantive phase ( $F_{1,66} = 4.25, p = .043$ ), with more details reported by older than by younger children in the nonreluctant group and more details reported by younger than by older children in the reluctant group ( $M_{younger} = 116.13, M_{older} = 207.95$  and  $M_{younger} = 113.68, M_{older} = 106.69$  for nonreluctant and reluctant children, respectively).

There were significant correlations between the total number of details provided by children, the number of details elicited in response to invitation, directive, and option-posing prompts in the presubstantive and substantive phases, and the average number of details elicited per invitation, directive, and option-posing prompt in the presubstantive and the substantive phases (see table 7.2).

A 2 (disclosure status: non-reluctant, reluctant) X 2 (Age: older, younger) MANOVA with the number of interviewer prompts of each of the four main types (invitations, directive, option-posing, suggestive) as dependent variables revealed no significant differences for disclosure status or age on the total number of prompts posed by interviewers in the presubstantive and the substantive phases of the interview, although there were significant effects for disclosure status in the number of prompts of each type ( $F_{7,60} = 2.59; p = .021$ ) posed to children in the two disclosure groups.

Subsequent ANOVAs revealed no significant differences in the total number of prompts and the number of prompts of each type posed by interviewers to children in the two disclosure groups in the presubstantive and substantive phases. In the substantive phase of the interview, however, interviewers posed absolutely and proportionally more directive ( $F_{1,68} = 9.45, p = .003$ , for proportions) and fewer suggestive ( $F_{1,68} = 13.33, p = .001$ , for proportions) prompts to nonreluctant than to reluctant disclosers. No differences were evident in the numbers or proportions of invitation and option-posing prompts posed to children in the two disclosure groups (see table 7.3).

TABLE 7.1  
 Mean Number of Details Provided by Nonreluctant and Reluctant Disclosers in Response to Prompts of Each Type

Eliciting prompt	Number of details				Average number of details per each prompt type				p		
	Nonreluctant (n = 35)		Reluctant (n = 35)		Nonreluctant (n = 35)		Reluctant (n = 35)				
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)			
<b>Pre-substantive phase</b>											
Total # of details	165.97	(130.32)	110.49	(67.32)	4.69b					.034*	
Invitation	122.34	(91.24)	87.31	(61.83)	3.54	19.14	(16.10)	13.38	(16.49)	2.18	.144
Directive	34.06	(69.85)	18.37	(33.75)	1.43	13.58	(49.39)	3.49	(4.66)	1.45	.233
Option-Posing	5.20	(16.07)	2.34	(7.61)	.90	1.74	(4.44)	.67	(1.33)	1.83	.180
Suggestive	4.11	(10.20)	2.31	(4.80)	.893	2.59	(5.55)	1.44	(2.61)	1.23	.271
<b>Substantive phase</b>											
Total # of details	179.89	(172.06)	77.34	(69.02)	10.34b						.002*
# central details	105.63	(72.74)	50.46	(45.96)	14.24b						.000*
Invitation	101.09	(113.54)	33.91	(40.22)	10.89	7.44	(6.93)	2.26	(2.70)	16.97	.000*
Directive	46.54	(69.95)	19.54	(20.25)	4.81	2.37	(1.93)	1.52	(1.17)	4.99	.029*
Option-Posing	24.89	(23.15)	12.14	(8.14)	9.44	2.10	(1.29)	1.12	(.64)	16.48	.000*
Suggestive	5.37	(6.76)	9.94	(13.43)	3.24	2.38	(3.98)	2.24	(4.85)	.018	.893

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

\*Indicates a significant difference.

a df = 1,68

b df = 1,66

TABLE 7.2  
 Correlations Between the Number of Details Provided by Children in the Presubstantive and Substantive  
 Phases in Response to Prompts of Each Type

Eliciting prompt	Number of details			Average number of details per each prompt type				
	Pre-substantive phase	Substantive phase	$r$	$p$	Pre-substantive phase	Substantive phase	$r$	$p$
	Total # of details	138.23 (106.69)	128.61 (140.01)	.61	.000*	—	—	—
Invitation	104.83 (79.35)	67.50 (91.07)	.43	.000*	16.26 (16.44)	4.85 (5.95)	.47	.000*
Directive	33.04 (52.89)	26.21 (55.03)	.55	.000*	8.54 (35.19)	1.95 (1.64)	.25	.039*
Option-Posing	3.77 (12.57)	18.51 (18.38)	.53	.000*	1.21 (3.30)	1.61 (1.12)	.54	.000*
Suggestive	3.21 (7.96)	7.66 (10.80)	-.08	.516	2.01 (4.34)	2.31 (4.40)	-.06	.601

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

\*Indicates a significant difference.

TABLE 7.3  
Mean Number of Prompts Posed by Interviewers to Nonreluctant and Reluctant

<i>Eliciting prompt</i>	<i>Nonreluctant</i> ( <i>n</i> = 35)	<i>Reluctant</i> ( <i>n</i> = 35)	<i>F</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>p</i>
<b>Presubstantive phase</b>				
Total number of prompts	11.60 (6.39)	12.94 (9.14)	.27 <sup>b</sup>	.608
Invitations	7.46 (3.58)	8.17 (5.71)	.39	.533
Directive	2.89 (3.55)	3.31 (5.03)	.17	.682
Option-Posing	.89 (1.37)	.91 (1.62)	.006	.937
Suggestive	.37 (.69)	.54 (1.12)	.594	.443
Total recall	10.34 (5.63)	11.49 (7.68)	.50	.480
Total recognition	1.26 (1.72)	1.46 (2.28)	.17	.680
<b>Substantive phase</b>				
Total number of prompts	46.06 (21.08)	44.57 (15.56)	.14 <sup>b</sup>	.706
Invitations	14.94 (7.55)	16.60 (8.70)	.72	.398
Directive	17.69 (13.27)	11.86 (6.47)	5.46	.022*
Option-Posing	11.46 (6.15)	11.37 (4.98)	.004	.949
Suggestive	1.97 (1.72)	4.74 (4.47)	11.69	.001*
Total recall	32.63 (16.42)	28.46 (11.96)	1.48	.229
Total recognition	13.43 (7.18)	16.11 (6.45)	2.73	.103

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

\*Indicates a significant difference.

<sup>a</sup> *df* = 1,68

<sup>b</sup> *df* = 1,66

## DISCUSSION

The results reported here reveal compelling differences in the dynamics of interviews with nonreluctant and reluctant disclosers with respect to both the children's and interviewers' behavior. There were significant relationships between the children's initial willingness to make allegations and the total amount of information they provided about the investigated incidents in the substantive phase following disclosure. As expected, reluctant disclosers who failed to provide information in response to open-ended free-recall prompts and disclosed only when given additional focused recognition memory prompts reported fewer abuse-related details in the substantive interview following disclosure than nonreluctant disclosers did. Moreover, reluctant disclosers were already somewhat uncooperative when discussing neutral topics in the presubstantive phase of the interview.

Differences in children's willingness to disclose information about abuse when questioned systematically by investigative interviewers in the course of forensic interviews were measured in the present study using the number and types of interviewers' prompts that were necessary to elicit allegations. The



reluctant disclosers in the presubstantive phase, interviewers adhered less closely to the NICHD protocol with respect to memory elicitation strategies when interviewing reluctant disclosers about substantive issues. They addressed reluctant disclosers with fewer free-recall and more recognition prompts, particularly more suggestive prompts, than they did nonreluctant disclosers. To a great extent, this was because the interviewers used more prompts including recognition memory prompts in the "getting the allegation" sequence when interviewing reluctant disclosers. When interviewing nonreluctant disclosers, by contrast, interviewers did not have to proceed to the recognition prompts because allegations were made earlier in response to open-ended prompts. Contrary to our expectations, based on research including forensic interviews with young suspects (Hershkowitz et al., 2004) and nondisclosers (Hershkowitz et al., chapter 6, this volume), the interviewers did not use more focused recognition prompts to counter the children's resistance. The higher number of directive prompts addressed to nonreluctant disclosers, by contrast, may be explained by the larger amount of free-recall information provided by children in this group that could be used as cues for directive refocusing.

In summary, these data suggest that reluctant witnesses were less communicative than nonreluctant witnesses even in the nonsubstantive portions of the interview, before the introduction of abuse-related issues, and remained reluctant to provide information about the alleged abuse even after making their initial allegations. They provided less information overall, fewer central details, fewer details in response to invitations, and more uninformative and omission responses than nonreluctant disclosers did. Unlike nonreluctant disclosers, reluctant disclosers provided more information in response to recognition than to recall prompts. Interviewers modified their strategies only in the substantive phase, apparently reacting when the reluctant disclosers failed to respond informatively to recall prompts.

Further research is needed to explore alternative ways for motivating reluctant victims of abuse to disclose their abusive experiences in the course of forensic interviews. As suggested by their research on nondisclosers (Hershkowitz et al., chapter 6, this volume), increasing supportive techniques and avoiding confrontation may enhance rapport building and facilitate the creation of retrieval conditions that better help suspected victims of abuse to describe their abuse experiences during investigative interviews, even when they are reluctant to do so.

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## APPENDIX

## "Getting the allegation" prompts in the NICHD investigative interview protocol used in this study

The series of open-ended prompts in the NICHD investigative protocol begins with general invitations:

1. "Now that I know you a little better, I want to talk to you about why are you here today. Tell me why you came to talk to me." [This is an open-ended question designed to motivate the child, who understands why he or she is being interviewed, to disclose].
2. "It is important for me to understand why you came to talk to me today." [This is similar to the previous prompt but trying to emphasize the importance of understanding as a way to help the child to focus on the alleged abuse].

If children do not make allegations of abuse, the interviewers continue with increasingly more focused prompts:

3. "I heard you saw a policeman [social worker, doctor, etc.] last week [yesterday]. Tell me what you talked about." [This prompt tries to remind the child of a recent conversation he or she had with a professional. It is designed to motivate the child by indicating that the interviewer knows that he or she previously talked about the alleged event and to provide an input-free cue to children who are not sure why they are being interviewed].
4. "As I told you, my job is to talk to kids about things that might have happened to them. It's very important that I understand why you are here. Tell me why you think your mom [your dad, etc.] brought you here today."
5. "Is your mom [dad, etc.] worried that something may have happened to you? [Wait for a response; if it is affirmative say: Tell me what they are worried about"].
6. "I heard that someone has been bothering you. Tell me everything about the bothering."
7. "I heard that someone may have done something to you that wasn't right. Tell me everything about that, everything you can remember." [This prompt implies that something might have happened, without mentioning the alleged perpetrator, actions, or location. By posing the prompt as formulated in the protocol, the interviewer avoids interjecting assumption or biases about what might have happened].

If children fail to disclose abuse in response to the previous open-ended prompts, the interviewers introduce incident-related external input:

8. "I heard that something may have happened to you at [location of the alleged incident.] Tell . . ." [This prompt is designed for children who either do not know why they are being interviewed or are unwilling to disclose information about the abuse. Focusing on the location might cue children by reinstating the context of the alleged event].

If the first suggestive prompt fails, interviewers may choose to introduce even more specific prompts, which involve a summary of the allegation without mentioning the name of the perpetrator:

9. "I heard that someone may have [brief summary of the allegation]. Tell . . ." (Sternberg et al., 2001).