Real-world instances of false sexual abuse allegations have spurred research exploring processes that can lead to these events. The main focus of this research has been suggestibility—specifically, giving responses that may be interpreted as evidence of abuse when no abuse actually occurred. Researchers have identified characteristics of interviews that make suggestibility more likely (e.g., leading questions) and identified characteristics of individuals who may be more susceptible to this type of influence (e.g., young children). Suggestible responses (e.g., “He hit me”) have been studied on the assumption that they could lead to an abuse investigation if the statements were made in a real-world context. Most researchers have not actually measured how likely individuals who make such suggestible remarks are to take the next step and make a formal (false) accusation. The current research incorporates both aspects of the abuse investigation context: suggestibility (making false statements) and conformity (signing a formal complaint against an innocent suspect). Findings include the rates at which participants subjected to a high-pressure misleading interview produced suggestible responses and conformed to sign a complaint and descriptions of personal characteristics that placed some participants at greater risk of succumbing to suggestibility and conformity. For example, rates of conformity (agreeing to sign the complaint) were higher than rates of suggestibility in both studies. The most
significant risk factor for both suggestibility and conformity was age. Suggestibility was compared across three developmental levels and results indicated that young children were more likely than adolescents or adults to make suggestible statements. Conformity was compared between the two older age groups; adolescents were more likely than adults to conform and sign the compliant.