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Development and Validation of Videotaped Scenarios:  
A Method for Targeting Specific Participant Groups

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## Abstract

Researchers using written, taped or videotaped scenarios to study sensitive issues often neglect to validate the perceived content and the salience of the embedded cues specifically with the intended study participants, even though the meaning of the cues is integral to the study. As an example, studies of sexual aggression often depend on the use of scenarios, but, because sex and aggression cues are heavily influenced by culture, it is unclear without validation if the cues that participants perceive are the same as the cues researchers intend. We present our method of dealing with this problem by describing a series of four studies we used to produce two videos for testing an alcohol myopia hypothesis of sexual aggression. Our study design required that both videos be identical except for the presence (in one video) of a few important “anti-force” cues that were extremely salient to the participants, specifically, sober, regular drinking heterosexual men, ages 21 – 30. Using focus groups and questionnaires, we obtained feedback from men in this target population to validate that in our scenarios they perceived: 1) the woman in both videos as showing sexual interest; 2) the sexual cues as salient in both videos; 3) the “anti-force” cues as salient in the anti-aggression video; and 4) the “anti-force” cues as truly inhibitory to acceptance of forced sex. The results of this process show the value of carefully selecting and validating content to assess socially volatile variables. The importance of this paper is that it provides a useful template for developing culturally valid videotape- or computer-administered scenarios as research vehicles for testing socially volatile hypotheses with a specific population.