

apparently random selection and training of dogs by inexperienced trainers, that resulted in a 100% success rate, is inconceivable.

For us as researchers, academic and applied, it is essential to evaluate research studies carefully before publicizing their results. For service dog training programs to approach insurance companies and for rehabilitation agencies to sponsor team training bearing results of a flawed study can only diminish public trust in the entire assistance dog movement.

We conclude that the economics of partnering service dogs with people with disabilities is a topic still sorely in need of carefully constructed and documented study.

REFERENCES

Allen, Karen and Blascovich, Jim, "The Value of Service Dogs for People with Severe Ambulatory Disabilities: A Randomized Control Trial," *JAMA*, 275:13, April 3, 1996, 1001-1006.

Partners' Forum, 3:1, Spring 1996, 15-16.

Response to Eames & Eames

Karen Allen, Ph.D.

Preliminary Ruminations

To begin, I would like to clarify that the "pre-publication" paper to which Eames & Eames refer was actually a draft of a manuscript that I shared with a staff member at CCI after having several cordial conversations with him. On that draft was the standard message scholars use when exchanging such preliminary information: DO NOT QUOTE OR DUPLICATE WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM AUTHOR. I am sure that Dr. Ed Eames, as a researcher and scholar, knows this and I assume that he did not have any part in copying and widely disseminating the draft version of the paper. Regarding my naive status about who trains and places service dogs, I must point out that I have never studied service dogs. I have studied the psychological and social effects of such dogs on people. I never have had any contact with people who trained the dogs in the study I conducted with Dr. Blascovich and I have no knowledge about methods of training. In fact,

had I not received photographs from enthusiastic participants I would not even know what any of the dogs looked like. Even if any participants had lived near my home (none did), it would have highly inappropriate for me to visit participants in a survey study.

Methodological Questions

A report of research appearing in a journal such as JAMA must be extremely concise and address only the points of interests to the journal's main audience. Consequently, many details about methodology etc. were not included. In order to have two groups matched on important characteristics we had to get the word out that we were looking for participants. We did this through grass roots methods and connections within professional associations related to disability research. We did not have a "subject pool" and it would have been unethical to obtain a list of people and call them. We had to wait for people to contact us. They did and in great numbers. In order to come up with our 24 matched pairs we had to turn away at least 500 interested individuals with a wide range of disabilities. Regarding participants' abilities to respond to questionnaires, only two individuals had impairments that made writing difficult and they were assisted by their relatives. No participants had visual impairments. The people with traumatic brain injury had the most severe cognitive difficulties, but they did not encounter problems answering the very straightforward questions in our survey. In fact, the Community Integration Questionnaire was developed in Buffalo especially for individuals with traumatic brain injury.

Although some of the people in the study had degenerative diseases, over the time this study took place, no one became too ill to complete the study. This may be due to the fact that all participants were quite young. It is true that in calculating projected savings we did not take into account disease progression, but in the small sample we studied I would not have any idea of how to approach such an analysis. Regarding the number of hours of personal assistance provided, actual numbers were reported by participants and their family members and we accepted these reports as honest assessments.

Sources of Dogs and Funding

As I have stated repeatedly, my part of the study began when people acquired their assistance dogs. I had no part in selecting, training, or appropriately matching dogs with study participants. Although people with expertise in dog training apparently find this a difficult position to understand,

I had very little interest in this aspect of the study and was happy to leave all details to the sponsor. As psychologists, Dr. Blascovich and I were interested only in what happened to people after they acquired dogs. We had very limited time to devote to this study and I have already reported all I know about who trained the dogs.

I do not have records of the breeds of dogs used, but since many participants sent photographs it was clear that although most were Labrador Retrievers and Golden Retrievers, there were also smaller mixed breeds included. All of the questions Eames & Eames ask about raising and training dogs would be interesting to address in another study, but they simply were not a focus in this study.

The sponsor of this research was an influential philanthropist with a severe physical disability who approached me with an idea of how an interesting, innovative study could be conducted. Anonymity was requested and I agreed. To this day I am keeping my word to a courageous person dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities. Dr. Eames and I simply disagree about the necessity of revealing the name of the sponsor. In cases when a sponsor has a financial interest in the outcome of a study (e.g., a drug company or a dog training organization) I agree that disclosure is appropriate. In this study, no such financial interest existed. If it had, and the sponsor had some magic formula for dog training, is it not likely we would have heard about it by now? Finally, Dr. Eames is quite mistaken in his assumption about expenditure and allocation of funds. Absolutely no funding came to me or to Dr. Blascovich. All of our time and effort was donated to the project and no grant existed. When I initially presented the results of the study at a Delta Society conference I did so at entirely my own expense.

Peer-Review Process

This study was reviewed by my peers for a publication in my field. I believe that American Medical Association should be encouraged and congratulated, not criticized, for giving attention and space to the importance of service dogs in people's lives. No research can ever fulfill all the expectation and wishes of all readers, but Dr. Blascovich and I stand by the methodology and analysis of our study. The field for research about service dogs is wide open and we look forward to reading studies by the Eames's and their colleagues in their peer reviewed journals. To date we have not seen any.

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Book Reviews

Altheide, David L. Qualitative Media Analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996, 87 pages, \$9.50 softcover.

The premise of this review is that much more research needs to be done about representations of disability in mass media. Because of the barriers in society, too many Americans still base their understanding of the disability experience on media examples. More work is needed to analyze and categorize these media representations so that we can understand how to change these images for the better. Altheide's book can help immensely in this regard.

Though small (87 pages), the book provides a clearly thought-out, step-by-step explanation of how to do qualitative media analysis (a process the author also calls "ethnographic content analysis"). His premise is that documents (especially media documents) need to be studied to understand culture. Media documents are symbolic representations of culture and they enable researchers "to (a) place symbolic meaning in context, (b) track the process of its creation and influence on social definitions, (c) let our understanding emerge through detailed investigation, and (d) if we desire, use our understanding from the study of documents to change some social activities, including the production of certain documents" (page 12).

Altheide illustrates his analytical process well including news magazine and newspaper stories and transcripts of TV news programs that he dissects in detailed steps. For example, he uses a transcript of a 1992 ABC news story to illustrate how he can track the discourse of fear, crime, and violence in the story. It would be extremely easy to apply his method to newspaper articles about ADAPT actions or TV stories about the Special Olympics, for example. The book is accessible to researchers and students who may not be familiar with communication research because he even includes a section on how to find the media materials and how to use newer computer technology. For example, a researcher could do a search of a disability topic using LEXIS/NEXIS and then download all the files of