RAPPORT

The Magazine for NLP Professionals

Richie Manu

A Curious Journey

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Touching the World

Visionary educator *Gary Siva*, founder of the Zumos Pupil Wellbeing Project talks to *Caitlin Collins* for *Rapport*.

By Caitlin Collins

> **Zumos promotes resilience and confidence**

Gary Siva is a man with a vast vision and a precise aim: to measurably improve world happiness.

Gary is the founder of a ground-breaking educational program: the Zumos Pupil Wellbeing Project for schools.

The Zumos Pupil Wellbeing Project is an online support system of audio recordings backed by videos, web links, helplines and suggested reading. Provided by schools for their students, it promotes resilience and confidence, encourages values-building, and offers practical tools for daily use as well as targeted help for specific problems.

Resilience and perseverance

Gary combines a background of experience in health and well-being with an entrepreneurial flair and personal qualities of resilience and perseverance. His interest in emotional and mental well-being began in his teens. 'I started a TM meditation practice when I was 17,' he explains. 'I practised consistently – and the effects were powerful. My daily meditation practice continues to sustain me throughout all the ups and downs.'

At the age of 20 Gary trained in therapeutic massage, and his entrepreneurial aptitude emerged as he developed an innovative business model of a mobile massage service. After a few years of that, he was ready to open his own centre. 'When I opened the Siva Relaxation Centre in Portsmouth,' he recalls, 'I couldn't get any support from the bank – I had to raise the money myself.'

Long before crowdfunding became popular, Gary came up with the idea of an 'investor cycle'. 'I invited people to invest £1,000 in the project. They would receive 10 per cent interest, plus gold membership of the centre, which entitled them to discounted massages. I raised the money I needed to buy and renovate a building, and I learned some lessons about finance. There were pros and cons – it was a lot of work to manage the investor cycle.'

Bigger vision

With the success of the Siva Relaxation Centre, Gary's vision expanded. 'Towards the end of the 1990s, I was beginning to dream of setting up relaxation centres all over the UK, as some kind of chain or franchise.

'One day on a car journey from Portsmouth to London, it occurred to me to ask myself – perhaps you could call it my

Gary Siva
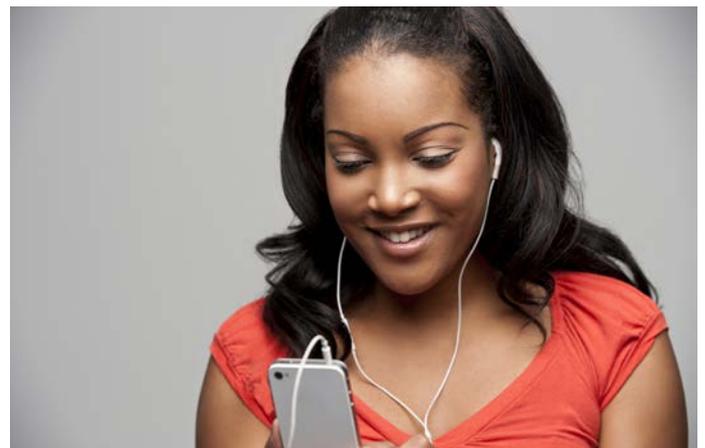
> **What could I do to touch the world in a positive way?**

higher self or deeper wisdom or something – what I could do to touch the world in a positive way. By the time I reached London, the concept was formed in my mind. I had a plan for reaching people, however isolated they might be, in a way that would allow them to remain anonymous. I wanted to give them the information that could empower and enable them to take responsibility for their own well-being, and take that next step forward.

'It would be via their phones. There were no smartphones then, so the challenge would be to manage the technology. I got home that night so excited! I remember I stayed up with a friend, a graphic designer – who is still the designer for our current projects – until 4am, working on the concept of what was to become My Mobile Guru. I began putting together a team to start working on it the very next day.'

The concept of My Mobile Guru has evolved to become today's Zumos self-empowering support program, that can be accessed anonymously, offering information and self-help tools and signposting to further resources.

Reaching young people

'I realised how important it is to start with the schools, to reach young people,' says Gary. 'Studies show that 75 per cent of mental health problems begin before the age of 18.'

A key element of the Zumos program is the way that schools can collect data on the topics for which students are seeking help. 'With Zumos, the school is in control,' Gary explains. 'While each pupil can access the system anonymously, the school can see what pupils are accessing without compromising that anonymity. This means the school can see where to focus resources. They have clear evidence showing the issues for which children are seeking help, such as suicide, self-harm, eating disorders, or bullying. And our tagline of "measurably increasing world happiness" is borne out by Zumos offering validated, evidence-based assessments of well-being so schools can identify need and evaluate progress in their pupils.'

There's a wider significance to this measurability, as Gary points out. 'Zumos gathers statistics which are significant for government nationally and locally and have a bearing on allocating government resources.'

There's been positive feedback for Zumos at a high level. Gary was invited to present the program to Norman Lamb, MP. 'He's a great campaigner on mental health issues,' Gary explains. 'He founded Future in Mind, a major government-backed project promoting the mental well-being of children and young people in the UK. He really liked Zumos, and contacted the Minister of State for Education, Justine Greening, to suggest that Zumos be made available in every school.'

While this suggestion has yet to be picked up by the government, Zumos has already been approved for lottery funding, meaning that schools can apply for lottery funds to purchase the program.

The support materials provided by Zumos are subject to meticulous quality control. 'We've developed the program in collaboration with CAMHS – the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services,' says Gary. 'Everything is written by experts, then peer reviewed. It all goes through due diligence procedures. We were delighted with a recent Ofsted comment calling Zumos "the most advanced information, advice and guidance system on the market". Its great strength is that it gathers reliable information that can be reached through one portal, providing a safe environment for children to find what they need. It's much better than having them searching the internet.'

A passport for life

Let's return to that ambitious aim: 'to measurably improve world happiness'.

While Zumos is currently for school children, Gary envisions developing it to offer what he calls 'a passport for life'. 'I can see Zumos users starting as children and continuing as adults, selecting content from the program according to what's happening in their lives. While it's currently available via schools, individuals will be able to buy their own licences to continue using the program.'

He also sees other collective applications, such as in primary and secondary health care, in the work place, and in the prison system to assist rehabilitation and combat re-offending.

It's been a long process, the journey from that flash of insight while driving to London to the reality of Zumos today. What's the secret to Gary's perseverance?

'Vision. It's been tough. There have been financial difficulties. I'm good at popping my head up and keeping sight of the big picture so I can see where I'm going. And I use a lot of visualisation. Every morning I visualise everybody listening to Zumos recordings. I also visualise boundless wealth. Being free of financial restrictions enables you to do so much. Success, to me, means millions of people using Zumos.

'But it's not just about measuring it in terms of numbers.

'A Year 10 boy said it stopped him committing suicide. How can you measure that?' ●

Caitlin Collins is an NLP Trainer based in Somerset. She writes both non-fiction and fiction, coaches students with learning difficulties, teaches meditation, trains horses and riders, and offers horse-facilitated coaching.

A Digital Detox

By James Sweetman

Conjoined, obsessed, tethered, addicted, attached? What word best describes your relationship with your smartphone?

Does it accompany you to the bathroom? Is it beside you on the table when you are eating? Is your phone recharging on your bedside locker, whilst you 'recharge' with your head on the pillow?

In the last few years with the evolution of smartphones and iPads, work is no longer confined to the office. Apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn mean our friends, followers and connections accompany us wherever we go.

By having our phones constantly within reach, our work and our

> **Smartphones are mobile offices, social networks and worry beads**

network are constantly within reach. We literally carry our work around with us. Smartphones are mobile offices, social networks and worry beads all wrapped up in one sleek tactile package.

I read recently that the average smartphone user checks their device every six and a half minutes. That's roughly 180 times a day. It is so routine, we don't realise we are doing it. Have you found yourself (as I have) with twitchy hands when stretched out on the sofa in the evening? I know I reach for my phone solely out of habit.

Once the phone is in my hand, I could be in trouble, because let's not forget that all the major technology companies and app designers employ people whose sole responsibility is to get you to click in and to stay in that app for as long

as possible. Here are some more scary statistics.

- 70 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds say they prefer texting to talking.
- 1 in 4 people spend more time online than they do asleep.
- 73 per cent say they'd struggle to go a day without checking their phone or computer.

'Multi-tasking' the once well-lauded phrase of time management workshops, has been replaced by 'continuous partial attention'. We find it increasingly difficult to focus on one task at a time.

I've begun to use the phrase 'single-tasking' in some of my workshops because all the research shows that we are far more productive when we focus on one task at a time and see it

through to completion. Of course this is not always feasible, but it is a worthy intention.

However, the impact technology has had on our productivity is secondary. What's more concerning is how technology (the combination of digital devices and social media in particular) is changing our daily behaviour. Walk down any busy street and you no longer have to sidestep children, meandering tourists, or dogs on leads, now you have to sidestep people whose eyes are glued to a screen, rather than where they are going. Has this become a metaphor for modern life?

For many people, constant connectivity provides an artificial sense of belonging, a poor substitute for true connection. Twitter followers, Facebook friends, LinkedIn connections are the key performance indicators for perceived popularity. We also experience heightened levels of anxiousness. For example, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is a new phenomenon that is fuelled by social media as we glimpse the 'glamorous and exciting' (and usually staged!) lives of our online connections.

Our perspective on how we experience life is also changing; we are no longer living it solely through our own eyes. We modify what we are doing because others are watching (our personalised 1984!). We adjust our behaviour to get positive comments from those who are observing us online. As a result we are often not fully present in our lives.

Have you been more interested in photographing and posting the sunset on holiday, rather than simply marvelling at it? Recording the birthday celebration, rather than being immersed in it? Posting the dessert at your romantic meal, rather than looking into the eyes of the person across from you? We've all been guilty of this, not fully experiencing or relishing precious moments because we're too busy recording and sharing them.

Now I'm not the Taliban of digital devices wallowing in the nostalgia of the good old days. You cannot un-invent anything. I'm a big fan of social media, the pros outweigh the cons. As ever, when it comes to technology, we have to ensure we are the masters not the slaves. We achieve this by paying attention and setting our intention.

> **Walk down any busy street and sidestep people whose eyes are glued to a screen**

THREE PRACTICAL TIPS
1 Get mindful
What are your technology habits? When we bring what we usually do unconsciously into awareness, we can adjust our behaviour. We can also get clear about our intention when reaching for our smartphone.

For what purpose am I checking emails at night? What am I trying to achieve when posting to Facebook, Instagram or Twitter?

In other words, bring a healthy dose of mindfulness to our actions.

2 A summer detox
For me, one of the luxuries of summer holidays is a digital detox – no TV, no news and vastly reduced, if not eliminated, social media.

It is no coincidence that I feel freer, less stressed, relaxed and I'm thinking more clearly.

Could you partake in a digital detox for a few weeks this summer?

3 Boundaries
Going cold-turkey might be too extreme, but we could all have more defined boundaries when it comes to 'checking-in'. No devices at the dinner table, a defined boundary for time spent online, no screens in the bedroom.

Did you know that the average teenager sends over 3,000 electronic messages per month from their beds?

A practical tip you can immediately apply is turning off the notification function for the main apps on your phone.

This is easily done in settings and will mean that a number won't appear beside the app on your screen, thus reducing the likelihood of you being reactively sucked into that app.

Here's another novel idea.

Recently, there's been a lot in the media about the 5:2 diet (eat whatever you want for 5 days, then 2 days a week reduce your calorie intake to 25 per cent of the recommended normal quota). Perhaps a similar approach would work with a digital diet. After all isn't that what the weekend is for?

Ironically, there are now many apps that record how you use technology, including one called Digital Detox which you can use to shut your phone down for a period of time ranging from 30 minutes to a few weeks (and you cannot override it!).

So technology has found a way to stop us using technology.

I think I prefer a simpler solution – power off and put it in a drawer. ●

Exploring the Concept of Bias in Research

By Suzanne Henwood

When you read a research article, I suspect, like me, you are making all sorts of judgements about it. Two key things come to my mind:

1 Is the study credible, are the results accurate / trustworthy: can I trust the study and its' findings? In research speak, does the study have high *internal validity*, that is, does it measure what it claims to measure?

2 Are the results useful and relevant to me and what I do? Can I use the results outside the group on which the results were generated (in research speak – is there high *external validity*)?

As I read the article or paper, I will be making all sorts of assumptions, based on my experiences and knowledge. My Map of the World – or in this case, my Map of Research and NLP. And of course, the author will be writing it from their Map.

It is wise to learn the skills of reading critically, bringing to the surface underlying criteria

It is wise to learn the skills of reading critically, making conscious choices about what you trust (and why) and bringing to the surface the underlying criteria which affect our judgements. Let's apply this to research directly.

One of the issues with judging whether to trust research is bias. Grimes and Schulz in the *Lancet* state that 'bias in research denotes deviation from the truth'.(*1)

The presupposition here is that there is a Truth to uncover, which reflects a more quantitative stance, not surprising within a medical field. But bias is a potential issue within both paradigms of research and may or may not be deliberate and overt, but it hugely affects the results and is something we must search for in research.

To further complicate this, for people new to research, bias is not one issue.

Indeed Sackett, in a seminal paper on bias claimed there were 35 different forms of potential bias,(*2) though other papers categorise those into three or four key areas. For example, Šimundić (*3) uses 4 categories: data collection, analysis, interpretation and publication, and Pannucci and Wilkins (*4) offer a 3-part model (see Figure 1) to show areas of potential bias in clinical trials.

Not all studies show all areas of bias and some categories are more likely in some methodologies, what is important is to both design and read research critically, being open to any potential bias – and then assessing its potential impact on the results.

This article then will explore some of the common forms of bias to introduce the reader to the concept of bias in research and hopefully inspire readers to begin a wider exploration as either researchers or consumers of research, in the study of bias in practice.

Selection bias

Selection or sampling is how you choose a smaller group from a total 'population' to conduct research on. But any sample of the population (i.e. a representative subset chosen for inclusion in a study) has potentially multiple factors in play – not just the issue you are researching.

Unless you are totally controlling all conditions (or as many as are controllable) in a laboratory setting, it is unlikely you can reduce all the possible variables – indeed as the researcher, you may not even be aware of all the possible variables.

In NLP much of the research undertaken is field research, real life, as it occurs. This makes it very difficult to 'control' and the best we can hope for is an open discussion around the possible

Major Sources of Bias in Clinical Research

Flawed study design
Selection bias
Channelling bias

Pre-trial bias

Interviewer bias
Chronology bias
Recall bias
Transfer bias
Misclassification of exposure or outcome
Performance bias

Bias during trial

Citation bias
Confounding

Bias after trial

Trial planning   **Trial implementation**   **Data analysis/Publication**

Trial Progression
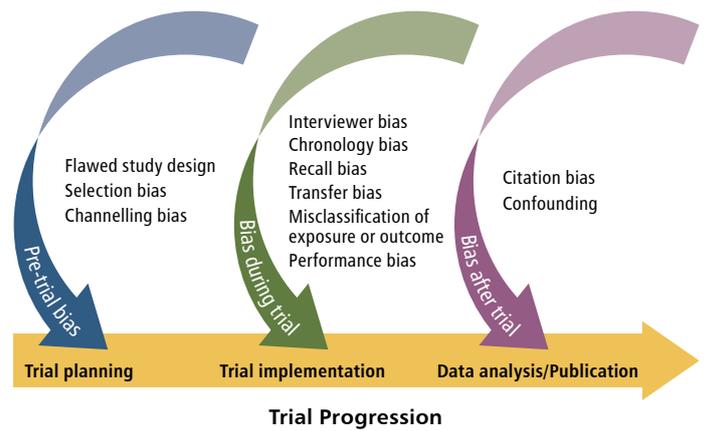
Figure 1

influences and how they might impact on the data.

Let's look at this in a possible real life scenario. Let's take an example of a stress at work study.

As an NLP Practitioner, you believe you can help to reduce negative stress and you want to empirically test that to gather evidence to persuade people to employ you in their organisation. Who would we consider including in the study, who do we think we could help?

- Everyone who works? This might seem a reasonable starting point – but what do we mean by everyone who works?
  - Is that only paid employment or also voluntary?
  - Is that full time or above a certain proportion of time?   ▶

Look for whether or not the researcher has declared any potential bias

> ## We know that the way interviews are conducted can change the results drastically

▶ ○ What other key variables would have to be considered that might impact on stress levels?

- Having determined who is included under the broad heading of *everyone who works*, you will realise this is a massive global potential population – so you will want to narrow that down.
  - ○ Is this in one country? Or a range of countries for comparison?
  - ○ Would the choice of country change the results?
  - ○ How would you select which country to focus on:
    - – Are there regulations in place regarding stress at work?
    - – Are there cited figures for stress at work to show the scale of the problem?
- Within one country – is it all workers or only those from some industries? Or some geographic regions?
- What sort of work place is included:
  - ○ Public sector?
  - ○ Private sector?
  - ○ Not for profit?
- Within companies chosen, is it:
  - ○ All workers?
  - ○ Only workers who self-report they are experiencing stress?
  - ○ Only workers who have not already tried to intervene and reduce their stress?

Each decision that you make within *sampling* introduces a potential bias.

What is important to be aware of is who you include can drastically affect the results – there is almost no study without bias.

A skilled researcher will think this through in the design to minimise any potential bias and be open and transparent about choices made to enable readers to make critical judgement on any potential effect. The issue is not that there is bias – but when bias is ignored or not considered fully in relation to the study that becomes problematic.

How many times have you read a study that merely says X number of people were recruited? Without additional information, you as the reader are left having to mind read the detail that is essential to determine if the study is valid and credible, without sufficient detail to really make those distinctions.

There are some mechanisms that can be used to aim to reduce selection bias. These include sampling methods such as Inclusion of the whole population (if possible / practical).

For example, you may have worked with one organisation, offered stress reduction workshops and want to research whether or not that had any lasting impact.

In this case, the population is the organisation you worked with and therefore all your clients receiving stress intervention might be your defined population. But – can you now identify some potential biases?

- Is participation in the workshop voluntary?
- Who recruits the participants into the research study?
- Did the workshop have any impact on people who did not attend? Is any measure included to try to assess this?
- What sort of person might choose not to attend?

Each of these considerations will determine who you invite and how they are invited (research design), whilst also impacting on the scope of your study as a result of that inclusion / exclusion criteria, which then affects the results and generalisability of the results.

An alternative approach would be to randomly sample from the total list of employees.

What considerations can you now think of?

- What about those who choose not to participate in the study (non-responder bias)?
  - • Will the randomisation process ensure a sufficient number of people who attended the workshops get included. Small sample sizes can introduce bias too and means that the results would not represent the whole group.

In non-random studies Channeling bias is also a consideration, where some clients are more likely to be recruited to one intervention over another against which it is being compared. For example, the severity of the stress they present with may require a different intervention, or their state may determine what you feel is appropriate to prescribe in terms of tasking. In a way then there is no perfect design, but there is an expectation that options and choices are fully considered and that validity and reliability are maximised (in a quantitative study) and trustworthiness optimised (in a qualitative study).

I hope you can begin to see, in just this one example of a potential bias linked to sampling, that careful consideration is required as a researcher. And that as a critical reader of research you will now be asking appropriate questions about sampling as you read articles.

Look for whether or not the researcher has declared any potential bias and whether they have been honest about the possible limitations of their findings as a result. It is a paradox that where weaknesses and limitations are discussed, this is seen as a sign of strength of the study.

In most cases above, any bias is not likely to have been introduced deliberately. Any implication that cases have been specifically chosen (maybe in this case, for example, because they got transformational results) would seriously impact on the validity if the results if that were not openly discussed. Yet, you can almost understand the enthusiasm of a researcher / practitioner wanting to show great results. Where practitioners are researching their own client base, extra effort to show how
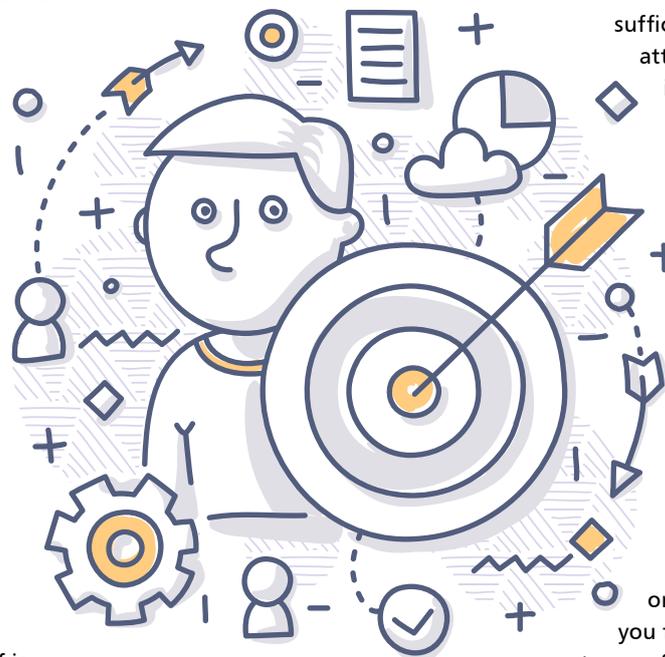
sampling has been handled is good practice. Let's look at a different sort of bias.

Social desirability response bias

In sampling bias, we are looking at design choices of the researcher, but another group of people who sometimes want to show great results are the clients themselves. Social Desirability Responding (SDR) represents how clients want to portray themselves in a good light in self-report studies. Again, this can be a particular issue when it is the coach or trainer researching results of their own work. Clients may want to show them the work was of good quality and perceived to be valuable.

This can create false relationships between variables (*5) and 'it can lead to the reporting of spurious or misleading research results'.(*6)

Again, this may not be with deliberate intent to deceive, clients may believe what they say in answer to research questions, even though it does not reflect what others might see in practice. It can be difficult to assess if it is their perception of the truth, or if they are in any way aware that they have not got the results that they are suggesting they have. Of course, it is possible that they might deliberately and knowingly 'fake' their reporting to show themselves in a favourable way, but it is unlikely they declare this within the study.

This raises interesting questions for us as NLP researchers/practitioners, as we might argue the client's map of the world is their reality; that there is no 'truth' and so whatever story they tell is valid. While this is a common problem in qualitative interviewing, for example, in the use of questionnaires, there is a desire to ensure *valid* responses.

There are validated scales to detect SDR, but at least one study (*5) found that statistical checking for SDR is used infrequently, leaving this a possible source of bias, particularly in questionnaire based studies, which readers should be aware of when considering the results shared. Fisher (*6) claims that the use of indirect questioning (i.e. answering from another perspective) is one way to reduce the risk of this bias, but again be cautious where this is not discussed by the researcher in terms of potential impact on the results.

Other forms of bias are related to the researcher themselves.

Data collection: interviewer bias

Particularly in qualitative studies, we know that the way interviews are conducted can change the results drastically and the more unstructured the interview approach, and the higher the number of interviewers, the greater the risk of any bias materialising. Whether through personal experiences, rapport or enthusiasm, there are many reasons why one researcher may ask different questions, in different ways.

Open consideration of how this is minimised would be reflected on in a good quality study and where possible action taken to minimise its impact through study design.

> ## Results can be convincing to the novice when presented as figures and significant values

Performance bias

Similarly when an intervention is being researched, the proficiency of the practitioners is a significant variable to be considered. NLP is not a standardised tool and it is well accepted that practices may vary between practitioners.

Let's assume that in our stress study we are looking at the effectiveness of working with submodalities to reduce the effects of stress. If we get a result, is it the submodality shift which has produced a result, or the way the submodality change process was facilitated? Is it about the relationship with the practitioner, or the intervention, or both? How is the study designed to try to distinguish between these two variables and has this been discussed?

Rater bias

Another potential difference that arises from different people conducting the research is rater bias.

If non-exact scale measures are being used (i.e. any scale which involves some subjective interpretation in allocating a rating, rather than a discrete measure, like blood pressure or cortisol level in saliva), two raters could score participants differently using the same measurement instrument, either because of a different way of using / interpreting the scales, or because of their unique perspective and bias affecting what they are measuring. (*7)

Either way, the individual differences introduce a potential bias which affects the validity of the results being reported.

The results themselves may not tell the whole story, yet can be convincing to the novice reader when presented as figures and significant values.

Another key area of potential bias comes from handling of the data.

Data analysis and reporting bias

Ideally statistical tests should be determined in the research design, both in the choice of appropriate tests to be performed and the breadth of the testing on the data set. Šimundić (*3) warns of some researchers 'performing multiple testing (fishing for P) by pair-wise comparisons, testing multiple endpoints and performing secondary or subgroup analyses, which were not part of the original plan in order "to find" statistically significant difference regardless to hypothesis'.

In other words, if you keep testing and 'playing' with the data you will eventually find some significance, but it may not be valid (if the wrong tests was undertaken) or reliable (i.e. generalisable to a wider population). It is best practice to determine in the study design exactly what will be done and to ▶

Ethical and unbiased interpretation of results is essential

▶ stick to that plan, even when no significant results are shown.

Another real bias risk can occur when reporting results, or not. It is well known that studies are more likely to be submitted for publication if they show interesting or significant results and that those that did not produce significant results do not always get published (this is called Publication bias).

Another publication issue is where *close to* significant results are discussed in a paper, because they support the hypothesis (or the views of the author), even though the statistical testing did not show significance, or similarly when an author includes a discussion around significant results which have no clinical importance.

Other reporting biases include the decision on what to publish from any one study, whether it be statistical testing or qualitative analysis, decisions can be made to not cover some of the data in the final articles.

This is also a source of bias, which is rarely acknowledged by authors of papers (they are unlikely to report what has not been included), so readers have little or no idea of what has been deleted and work may have to be done to look at data collection tools and results to see if there is any evidence of areas of the study being overlooked.

Choosing not to report on findings which do not support the hypothesis is another potential source of bias, which is unlikely to be reported or discussed, but introduces a clear bias in reporting.

It goes without saying that ethical and unbiased interpretation of results is essential within the reporting process if studies are to be trusted and implemented into practice. It is your job as a consumer of research to decide whether or not results can be trusted.
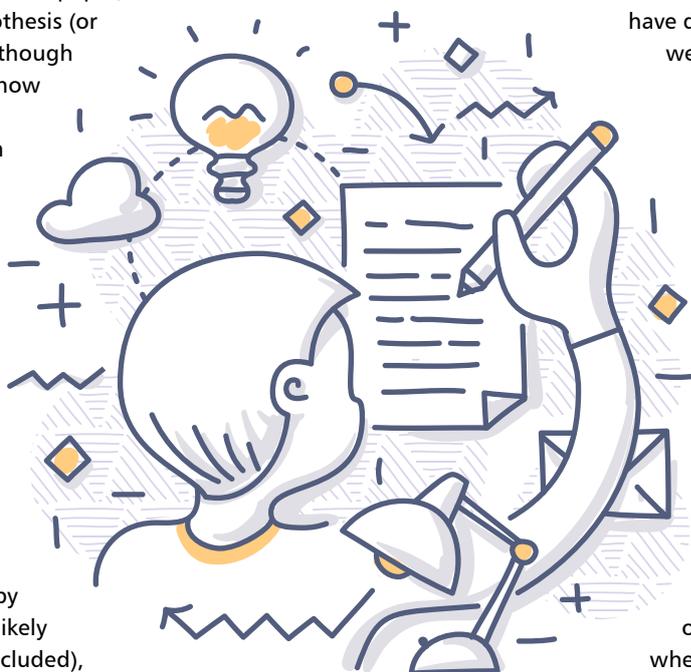
Conclusion

It is clear, even in this introductory article, that there are many forms of possible bias in research, only a few of which have been considered here.

What I hope the article has done is shown the importance of considering bias when designing and conducting research and when critically reviewing and reading others' work.

At each stage, from design, data collection, data analysis and dissemination, bias is a potential issue, virtually no study would not have some bias, at some level. It would be unwise then to merely take results at face value, without considering how bias might have had an impact.

Ideally the authors of any papers would have discussed any and all potential biases and will have discussed any remaining potential weaknesses and limitations which need to be considered. It is a sign of strength of research to be open about its weaknesses. Bias is not a black and white issue. It is not about identifying whether or not bias exists. Rather it is an art form to determine the degree to which bias is, or may be present. 'As some degree of bias is nearly always present in a published study readers must also consider how bias might influence a study's conclusions.'(*8).

This can be hugely helped by open and transparent reporting, but where it is not offered by the authors, it is the readers' role to read between the lines and determine for themselves what impact bias may have had.

Šimundić (*3) has stated that 'bias in research can cause distorted results and wrong conclusions. Such studies can lead to unnecessary costs, wrong clinical practice and they can eventually cause some kind of harm to the patient'.

As we encourage good quality research in NLP to provide an evidence base to support the work we do, we certainly do not want to cause any more harm.

As such, it is essential we make ourselves aware of bias and how to identify it, so we can make good judgements on research in practice. ●

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I know you're busy … but …

By Karen Moxom

If anyone else say that to me before 30th April, I may not be responsible for my actions!

'I know you're busy, but …' Has anyone ever said that to you? I wonder how you respond?

I confess I have probably made a rod for my own back in the past, by absorbing their request because I can – I reschedule my to do list, rearrange my commitments, forfeit something 'less important' to make sure I can serve the needs of others, especially 'clients / delegates / members / customers' (where is 'family' in this list?)!

The challenge for me right now is that with less than a week to go before we host our first ever NLP International Conference and Awards gala charity dinner, I do not have *any* time to forfeit, no diary space to reschedule and no other commitments I can rearrange!

Even though I always do my best to schedule in some buffer time to cover all eventualities, it has all been used up.

So what do I do when yet another seemingly 'small' request lands on my plate? I am very quickly learning to say 'no' if it's not related to the conference, even if it breaks my heart to do so.

And what if it is related to the conference? Yet another last minute change / request to be managed …

My strategies right now are not working too effectively because at the end of the day, our reputation is at stake – we have to put on a smooth-running, professional, well organised event and do the best we can because that is what is expected and our reputation depends on it.

And that is the key – our *intention* is to put on a 'smooth running, professional, well organised event' *and* we are doing the *best we can*.

So yes, my blog is better late than never for the second week running and I will continue to remind myself I am doing the best I can … just as we all do.

Let's be mindful of that this week. ●

Tolerance

Whilst I was doing my daily practice earlier, I was musing about what to write today. Certain phrases that I have experienced recently kept popping into my head and I rejected them quickly, deciding they were too negative or controversial or emotive … or all three!

They kept creeping in and the more my logical head tried to eject them from my mind, the more my heart gently pushed them back into the foreground. In the end I wrote down the phrases, so I could move on with my practice …

'What you are saying doesn't apply to me.'

'My needs are more important than yours.'

'You are wrong and the moral thing to do would be to admit you are wrong.'

These relate to life situations being experienced right now … and funnily enough are things I have heard before. So, what is the message here? What is the repeating pattern? What is it that grates with me and pushes red buttons?!

I am far from perfect … and I do my best to respect the values and opinions held by others, even if they do not tally with my own. I do my best to listen to others and understand that we all have slightly different perceptions of reality, because we all see things from our own perspective.

Where compromise and compassion are required, I give both willingly and I hope I treat others as I wish to be treated myself. I hope I understand that every form of communication, whether written or spoken, is a communication between two people, who are equally responsible for how that communication pans out (to clarify, I am referring to communication between two adults here!).

And yet I notice, especially recently, that in certain situations, the repeating pattern seems to be a perception that they are 'right' (therefore I am wrong?) and I must shift my values, opinions or views to meet their expectations.

What happened to tolerance in our society and to respecting others even if their views don't match our own. We all have a voice and we all have a valid opinion and surely, our intended outcome for every communication is a win:win … that is what I wish for in our society and I believe there are still many of us that feel the same. ●

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