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REFRAMING DISABILITY IN THE ONLINE WRITING CENTRE

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**Approval of Dissertation**

The undersigned certify that they have read the dissertation entitled

**REFRAMING DISABILITY IN THE ONLINE WRITING CENTRE**

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Education in Distance Education**

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## Dedication

I could not have completed this project with the quality and care it deserves without the tremendous support from key individuals throughout my doctoral journey. First and foremost, I am so grateful to the support of my partner, Dylan. He listened to my worries and concerns, read over drafts, organized childcare, cheered me on, and brought me midnight gyoza during the writing phase. I want to thank my parents for raising me with the value of education, and particularly to my mother who encouraged me to keep going when I was reconsidering the program during the pandemic. To my sisters for their support, and a very special thank you to my children, Theo and Mary, for navigating all the AI tech with me—these kids just make me smarter!

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### Abstract

A higher representation of students with disabilities choose to learn online because of accessibility, flexibility, the privacy to disclose disability or not, and the affordance to schedule around interruptions in health or challenges exacerbated by disability. However, inequities remain particularly for students with disabilities seeking writing support in the writing centre. This study addressed ableist attitudes in writing center instruction towards students with disabilities. One such attitude assumes that students eventually become independent writers, which may be unrealistic for students with lifelong disabilities or chronic illnesses and stigmatizes the need for ongoing support. Since disability is underrepresented in writing centre literature, it is time to hear from students with disabilities themselves. To address this issue, my research question asked in what ways can the participants' use of restorying through generating images and photovoice help the parasupport model reframe pedagogical and practical approaches to disability in the writing centre? First, I created the parasupport framework as an inclusive alternative to dependence-based pedagogies. To substantiate this shift in pedagogy, I used two methodological approaches: the critical visual methodology of photovoice and the notion of restorying from the narrative inquiry methodology. Photovoice offered participants the opportunity to explore their experience visually to create meaning while restorying helped participants shift the narrative of their experience with disability in an academic context. These methodologies paired well with critical disability theory because of the shared focus on social justice for oppressed populations. Four post-secondary participants with disabilities joined the study to generate images that explored open-ended prompts on ableism, their self-perception as writers, the issue of dependency, and

what they needed from a writing centre. These prompts allowed the participants to visually explore their experiences in response to socially constructed notions of disability in a writing centre context. Since academic contexts may also be sites of trauma, I used a trauma-informed approach to ensure a safe setting for participants. The implications of my research highlight the importance of integrating these perceptions of experience in writing centre pedagogy to ensure better—and more inclusive—practice.

*Keywords:* disability, critical disability theory, photovoice, restorying, generative AI, visual methodology, parasupport, ableism, writing centre

## Table of Contents

Approval Page .....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement .....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Background.....	5
Statement of Problem .....	8
Purpose .....	9
Limitations and Delimitations .....	18
Limitations.....	18
Delimitations.....	19
Research Questions.....	20
Definition of Terms .....	20
Conceptual Framework.....	34
Summary.....	38
Chapter 2. Review of the Literature .....	40
Locating Sources .....	40
Writing Centre Orthodoxies .....	43
Ableism in the Writing Centre.....	47
Models of Disability .....	48
Dependence-Based Pedagogies .....	49
Changing Mindsets: Parasupport and Photovoice .....	53
Parasupport .....	54
Photovoice .....	57
Inclusive Accommodations .....	60
Rapid Onset of Generative AI .....	61
Disrupting the Writing Process.....	63
Multimodal Forms of Academic Expression .....	65
Summary.....	65
Chapter 3. Methodology .....	66
Qualitative Paradigm .....	66
Critical Framework.....	67
Philosophical Assumptions.....	67
Visual Methodology .....	69
Photovoice .....	70
Restorying.....	72

Visual Metaphors.....	72
Positionality .....	74
Participants .....	77
Sampling.....	77
Selecting Participants.....	78
Final Participants .....	80
Compensation .....	80
Ethical Considerations .....	81
Data Collection: An Overview .....	85
Data Analysis Overview .....	88
Crystallization.....	90
Reliability and Generalizability .....	91
Data Collection: Revision and Refinement .....	93
From Critical Visual Methodology to Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology .....	94
Additional Methods .....	100
Summary.....	104
Chapter 4. Findings.....	105
Data Collection: Participant Contributions.....	105
Overview.....	105
Presentation of Participant Findings.....	106
Participant A .....	107
Context.....	107
Image 1 .....	107
Image 2 .....	110
Image 3 .....	113
Image 4 .....	115
Images in Sequence .....	118
Participant B .....	120
Context.....	120
Image 1 .....	120
Image 2 .....	123
Images in Sequence .....	126
Participant C .....	128
Context.....	128
Image 1 .....	129
Image 2 .....	131
Images in Sequence .....	134
Participant D.....	137
Context.....	137
Image 1 .....	137
Image 2 .....	140
Image 3 .....	143
Image 4 .....	145
Image 5 .....	148
Images in Sequence .....	151
Thematic Analysis .....	153

Theme 1: The Power of Visual Communication .....	154
Theme 2: The Power of Advocacy .....	157
Theme 3: The Power of GenAI as an Assistive Technology.....	159
Theme 4: The Power of Parasupport .....	167
Summary.....	172
Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion .....	174
Study in Review.....	174
Foundations.....	174
Research Design .....	175
Summary of Findings .....	177
Discussing Research Questions .....	178
Research Question 1 .....	178
Sub-Research Question One .....	186
Sub-Research Question Two .....	187
Sub-Research Question Three .....	188
Reflections of an Emerging Researcher .....	191
What Worked.....	191
...On Second Thought .....	193
Limitations.....	195
Methodological Limitations.....	195
Language Limitation.....	196
Midjourney Representation Bias .....	196
Recommendations for Future Research.....	197
For Visual Researchers .....	197
For Writing Centre Scholars.....	198
For Disability Scholars (and all the above) .....	199
Conclusion .....	200
References.....	202
Appendix A: Interviews.....	254
Appendix B: Research Study User Guide .....	255
Appendix C: Resources for Using GenAI Tools .....	265
Appendix D: Research Journal .....	266
Appendix E: Research Study Eligibility Checklist.....	268
Appendix F: Data Analysis Approach .....	269
Appendix G: Codebook .....	272
Appendix H: Visuals PowerPoint.....	279
Appendix I: Certification of Ethical Approval .....	280

**List of Tables**

Table 1 ..... 97  
Table 2 *Participant Overview*..... 106

### List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>An AI-generated Image of a University Student</i> .....	1
Figure 2 <i>How Do You Feel During Your Luteal Phase?</i> .....	3
Figure 3 <i>What Impacts Wellbeing for Menopausal Women?</i> .....	4
Figure 4 <i>The Parasupport Framework</i> .....	11
Figure 5 <i>Multidimensional Recursive AI-assisted Writing Process</i> .....	13
Figure 6 <i>The Writing Process</i> .....	14
Figure 7 <i>The Parasupport Idea Web</i> .....	16
Figure 8 <i>Supporting Student Wellness</i> .....	17
Figure 9 <i>Contrasting the Medical and Social Models of Disability</i> .....	26
Figure 10 <i>VOICES: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Write Site</i> .....	29
Figure 11 <i>Inclusive Writing Centre Pedagogy Conceptual Framework</i> .....	34
Figure 12 <i>Art Nouveau Black Cat Licking a Cupcake</i> .....	85
Figure 13 <i>Photovoice Process Chart</i> .....	87
Figure 14 <i>Critical Reflexivity Model</i> .....	88
Figure 15 <i>Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology</i> .....	98
Figure 16 <i>Heuristics and Data Analysis Flow</i> .....	103
Figure 17 <i>Participant A, Image 1: Process Example</i> .....	107
Figure 18 <i>Participant A, Image 1: Non-constructive Criticism</i> .....	109
Figure 19 <i>Participant A, Image 2: Process Example</i> .....	110
Figure 20 <i>Participant A, Image 2: Receives an assignment that requires a new written skill set</i> .....	111
Figure 21 <i>Participant A, Image 3: Process Example</i> .....	113

Figure 22 <i>Participant A, Image 3: Using the Writing Centre</i> .....	114
Figure 23 <i>Participant A, Image 4: Process Example</i> .....	115
Figure 24 <i>Participant A, Image 4: Working</i> .....	116
Figure 25 <i>Participant A: Four Generated Images in Sequence</i> .....	118
Figure 26 <i>Participant B, Image 1: Process Example</i> .....	120
Figure 27 <i>Participant B, Image 1: The Passage of Time is Scaring Me</i> .....	121
Figure 28 <i>Participant B, Image 2: Process</i> .....	123
Figure 29 <i>Participant B, Image 2: Tutor Helped Relieve My Anxiety</i> .....	124
Figure 30 <i>Participant B: Two Generated Images in Sequence</i> .....	126
Figure 31 <i>Participant C, Image 1: Process Example</i> .....	129
Figure 32 <i>Participant C, Image 1: My Writing Experience</i> .....	129
Figure 33 <i>Participant C, Image 2: Process Example</i> .....	131
Figure 34 <i>Participant C, Image 2: You Know Me</i> .....	132
Figure 35 <i>Participant C: Two Images in Sequence</i> .....	134
Figure 36 <i>Participant D, Image 1: Process Example</i> .....	137
Figure 37 <i>Participant D, Image 1: Misconstrued</i> .....	138
Figure 38 <i>Participant D, Image 2: Process Example</i> .....	140
Figure 39 <i>Participant D, Image 2: Respite</i> .....	141
Figure 40 <i>Participant D, Image 3: Process Example</i> .....	143
Figure 41 <i>Participant D, Image 3: Aspiration</i> .....	144
Figure 42 <i>Participant D, Image 4: Process Example</i> .....	145
Figure 43 <i>Participant D, Image 4: Exposure Therapy</i> .....	146
Figure 44 <i>Participant D, Image 5: Process Example</i> .....	148

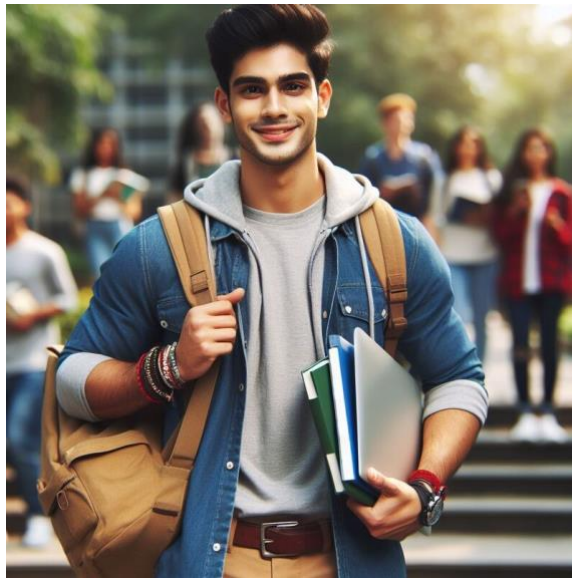
Figure 45 <i>Participant D, Image 5: Serenity</i> .....	149
Figure 46 <i>Participant D: Five Images in Sequence</i> .....	151
Figure 47 <i>Executive Functioning Skills</i> .....	159
Figure 48 <i>Parasupport Refined</i> .....	167
Figure 49 <i>All Participant Images</i> .....	176
Figure 50 <i>Participants B and C</i> .....	179
Figure 51 <i>Participants A and D</i> .....	181
Figure 52 <i>University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Writing Resource Center</i> .....	182
Figure 53 <i>Participant C</i> .....	184
Figure 54 <i>Participants A, B, and D</i> .....	185

## Chapter 1. Introduction

What images come to mind when you think about the ideal university student? Perhaps your initial impressions are influenced by TV shows or films set in higher education. Tropes like ivy lined buildings, tweed jackets, leather briefcases, and students gathering on a quad are reinforced repeatedly in film, even when outdated, informing collective ideas of how to visualize a university student.

### Figure 1

*An AI-generated Image of a University Student*



*Note:* Image generated August 2024 using Microsoft Image Creator from the prompt “ideal university student”.

The image above represents underlying social assumptions of the ideal university student: young, male, white, able-bodied, affluent, and presumably cisgendered. While this may be reductive, the image conceptualizes the framework of power that privileges a specific makeup of a person. For example, the University of New Brunswick is the oldest English-language university in Canada, founded in 1785 (University Affairs, 2017);

however, accommodations for students with disabilities were not mandated until 1986 (NEADS, 2018). This date was influenced by the UN declaring that 1981 as the UN International Year for Disabled Persons (UN, n.d.) which put disability and equity on the international stage. Decades later, “30% of Canadian post-secondary institutions” still do not have policies on accommodation (NEADS, 2018, p. 40). And while progressive on many fronts (technological, interpersonal, creative), generative AI (GenAI), as exemplified in the image above, reveals how this culture of privilege permeates its algorithms (Shin, 2024), reinforcing power inequities.

The post-secondary writing centre is not immune to this disparity, as ableist pedagogical practices persist in catering to and assuming the privilege of the able-bodied university student. This dissertation will consider those practices while offering a new direction (*parasupport*) for writing centre pedagogy. To explore this pathway, hearing directly from the students themselves is critical to countering assumptions of privilege. As students with disabilities often experience invisibility and marginalization in the academic sphere (Visser, 2022), inviting students to share their stories can profoundly impact pedagogy and practice, especially in the writing centre.

In determining the approach to best yield evocative glimpses into a student with disability’s experience in the writing centre, I was inspired by the project “AI Art InnerWorlds” by Reuser (2021) of Leeds Beckett University. Her interests in photorealism and digital illustrations led to exploring the debilitating condition of pre-menstrual dysphoria disorder through the GenAI program Midjourney. Her project used the critical visual methodological principles of photovoice, initially designed for photography, in a GenAI context. Despite the biases in algorithms, Reuser (2024)

stressed the therapeutic power of GenAI: “I found solace in the striking images that AI art generated for me—I felt seen and understood, as the images accurately represented the unspoken aspects of my experience” (“Therapeutic”, 2024, para. 5). For example, see her creations in Figures 2 and 3:

**Figure 2**

*How Do You Feel During Your Luteal Phase?*



*Note:* Image generated by with Imagine.Art Ai Art Generator for Reuser’s (n.d.) Ai Art InnerWorlds project. <https://photovoiceai.art/> Image generated with the prompts: lonely, female in pain, disconnected, misunderstood, vast emptiness, static electricity, darkness.

**Figure 3**

*What Impacts Wellbeing for Menopausal Women?*



*Note:* Image generated by with Imagine.Art AI Art Generator for Reuser's (n.d.) Ai Art InnerWorlds project. <https://photovoiceai.art/> Image generated with the prompts: brain fog, nerve shock, barely lit, impressionism, expressive brush strokes.

Reuser's (n.d) use of GenAI as a therapeutic tool and a mode of photovoice, inspired me to invite students with disabilities to capture their experience through a similar visual modality. This mode speaks to the online learning environment that can lack the visuals of human interaction (Ong et al., 2020) by representing one's humanity visually. These images can capture powerful narratives that reframe disability in the writing centre while underscoring the need for a new pedagogical direction: parasupport. Parasupport, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter, differs from ableist pedagogical approaches because it does not "rest on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed'" (Smith, 2024). A prevailing pedagogical approach in writing centres is moving students from "dependence" to "independence", as though the writing centre has "fixed" the "problem" (Dembsey, 2020). This assumption is one of the stigmatizing practices and perspectives of ableism that can be seen in the systemic

preferential treatment of able-bodied people in all areas of society like policy, language, labour relations, and access. In this dissertation, the use of visual qualitative research examines how GenAI and photovoice welcomes students with disabilities to visualize their experiences to help redirect ableist pedagogical approaches toward a more promising and inclusive practice like parasupport.

Thus, my doctoral research is a qualitative study grounded in critical disability theory (CDT) and social justice (Dolmage, 2017; Iannacci, 2005; Lang, 2017) and uses a critical visual methodology through GenAI and photovoice (Breny & McMorrow, 2021; Latz, 2017) for participants to depict their experiences (Atkinson, 2004) navigating disability in the writing centre through generated images. These images underscore the urgent need for a more inclusive pedagogy in the writing centre (Dembsey, 2020). Finally, as part of my epistemological orientation, my full positionality statement appears in Chapter 3.

### **Background**

Writing centres are traditionally situated in the libraries, learning commons, or student services of post-secondary institutions providing consultative support for student queries about academic writing. Writing centres became prominent in the United States in the 1930s, going by the names of “writing clinics” as a place to correct grammar, and to prepare freshmen for World War II (METU, 2022). In Canada, writing centres are younger with the first appearing in Ontario in the 1960s (Procter, 2011), in Alberta (University of Calgary) in 1978 (Kraglund-Gauthier, 2006), and at Athabasca University, the first fully online writing centre in Canada, in 2007.

Initially, some writing centres were locations of remedial learning for international students (METU, 2022), and developed negative stigmas such as helping students who do not belong in university (Ciscell et al., 2016), promoting plagiarism through collusion (Bell, 2020), and that they maintain second class status within the university (Clark & Healy, 1996). Bell (2020) itemized the shifts that writing centres are enacting to counter these narratives from: “clinic” to “centre”, “teacher-directed” to “student-directed”, “service units” to “academic units”, and in regular contributions of scholarly literature (para. 13). In our current time, more shifts are needed to address the needs of students with disabilities in the writing centre context.

With the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid writing support services emerged with synchronous virtual appointments for students (Mayo et al., 2021; Wisniewski et al., 2020). Since onsite writing centres are the norm, this shift to virtual support has started to address the limited research on online writing centres (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009) that results from assumptions that writing centres are always physical locations (Worm, 2020). Addressing this gap highlights the fact that online education promotes equitable access to those facing barriers (Bates, 2022; Harper, 2018) which makes it an attractive modality for marginalized students due to its flexibility and accessibility (Reyes et al., 2022). As a result, there is a higher representation of students with disabilities choosing to learn online (Kent et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2011). Some of the reasons for this preference include flexibility, the ability to not disclose disability, and the affordance to schedule around interruptions in health or challenges exacerbated by disability (Reyes & Meneses, 2021).

Before going further, a word about the language of disability. In Canada, “there is no universally accepted definition or framework regarding the definition of disability and how this label should be applied to an individual’s identity” (NEADS, 2018, p. 48).

Likewise, describing a person with disabilities is highly individualized with some preferring person-first language, others prioritizing the word “disabled”, and yet others identifying by community, like those referring to themselves as Deaf. Disability can also be lifelong, late onset, and/or intermittent. As well, disability is not only physical and visible to society at large; invisible or hidden disabilities not readily apparent to others could include those with mental health challenges, learning disabilities, or neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis. With these variations in mind, I refer to the World Health Organization’s (WHO, 2024) definition:

Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, with personal and environmental attitudes including negative attitudes...and limited social support. A person’s environment has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. (paras. 1-3)

Most importantly, WHO (2024) stated that “disability is part of being human. Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently experience disability at some point in their life” (para.1). Disability does not discriminate, which makes the rush to reframe disability in the writing centre that more urgent and resonant.

Another recent shift in writing centre practice is the publishing of anti-racist statements in response to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Conference on College Composition and Communication Statement on White Language Supremacy (CCCC, 2021; Young et al., 2021). As well, several Canadian writing centres like those

at Thompson Rivers University, Douglas College, The University of Windsor, Simon Fraser University, and Royal Roads University (RRU) promote the Four Feathers Writing Guide to support Indigenous student writers in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (NCTR, 2023). Recent writing centre literature has also addressed 2SLGBTQIA+ rights (DeBoni, 2021; Denny, 2010; Dixon, 2017) and sexual harassment in the #MeToo era (Kovalick et al., 2021; Nadler, 2019; Sicari, 2018). Considering this progress with critical pedagogy (an educational philosophy driven by social justice) in writing centre research (Coenen et al., 2019; Garcia, 2017), similar attention to disability is long overdue (UNESCO, 2021). For example, Babcock and Daniels (2017) shared that "almost none of the most prominent literature in disability in writing centers features 'research involving students with disabilities'" (p. 337). This significant gap in the literature (Babcock, 2015; Babcock & Daniels, 2017; Dolmage, 2017; Hitt, 2017; Pine & Moroski-Rigney, 2020) creates an urgency for new research that explores a new pedagogical direction for students with disabilities in the writing centre.

### **Statement of Problem**

The lack of research on inclusive writing centre pedagogies and practices for students with disabilities sustains ableism in the writing centre. CDT explores the disjuncture between perceptions and realities of those living with disability (Hoskins, 2008), and writing centres perpetuate this disconnect with ableist barriers like assumptions of ability and inadequate access to writing support (Lang, 2017). Long-held writing centre "orthodoxies" (Salem, 2016, p. 162) designed for able-bodied students continue to inform writing centre pedagogical approaches. My research responded to the

orthodoxy of independence, a foundational attitude in writing centres assuming that students eventually become independent writers (Pemberton, 1994). Independence as a goal is commonplace in writing centre mission statements across North America. Independence, however, is not realistic for some students with lifelong disabilities or chronic illnesses. Recent literature suggests “interdependence” (Mingus, 2017, Access Intimacy section) as an alternative, yet the continued use of the root word “dependence” reaffirms stigmas of people with disabilities being burdens (Dembsey, 2020) and resource drains (Rinaldi, 2015). As well, students with invisible disabilities (e.g., anxiety), can appear like they do not have access challenges (Anglesey & McBride, 2019) and therefore may not be offered appropriate support.

### **Purpose**

This study addresses ableism in writing centre practice through parasupport (defined in this section), generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), and photovoice (discussed more fully in Chapter 3). Together, these tools suggest an inclusive approach framework for assisting students with disabilities in the writing centre. When confronting practices that oppress marginalized communities, like underrepresentation of disability in writing centre literature (Pine & Moroski-Rigney, 2020), it is significant that the voices of those in the community are heard. In this way, photovoice is a social justice practice (Breny & McMorrow, 2021) as it encourages representation of historically oppressed voices through imagery. This echoes the motto of the Disabled Peoples Organization (UN, 2004, para. 1)—*not about us without us*—and has become the de facto purpose of this study; students with disabilities need to be involved in the research and their stories,

insights, experiences, and recommendations inform the restructuring of writing centre pedagogy.

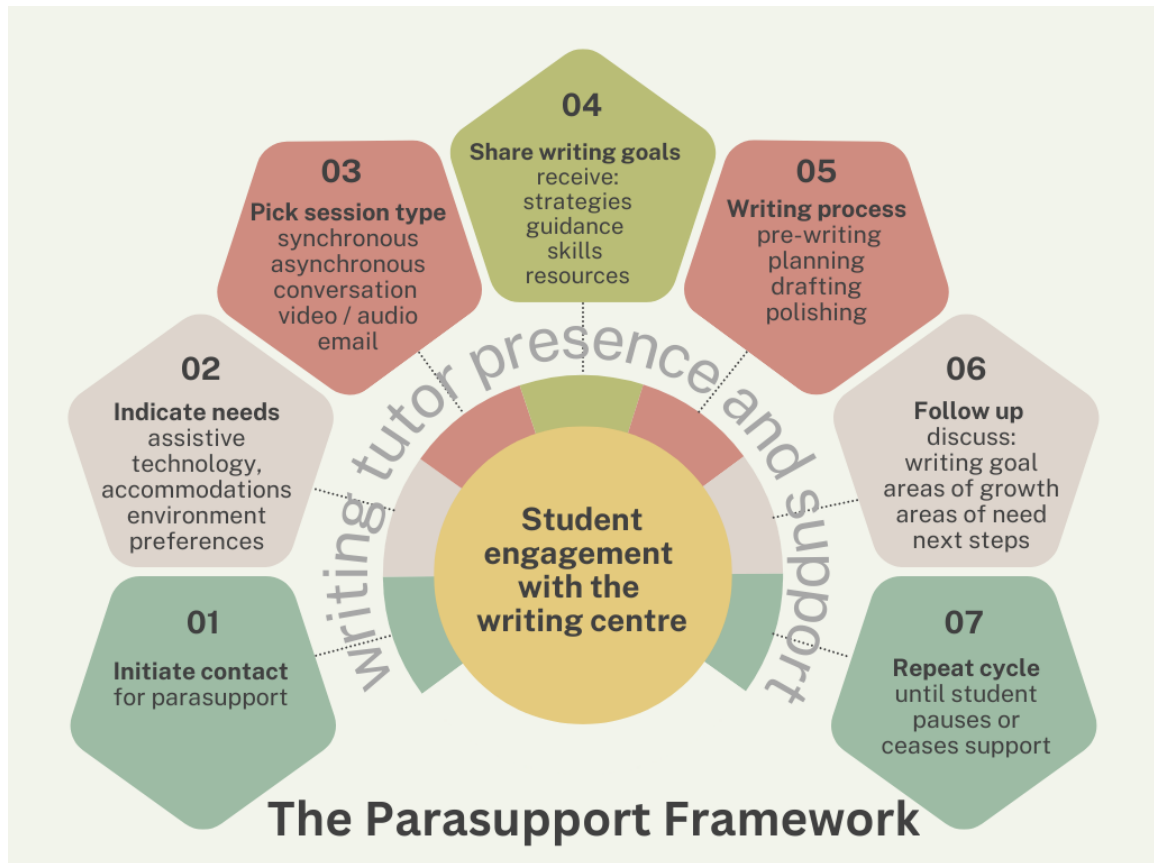
Moving beyond the dependence/interdependence/independence pedagogical spectrum that dominates writing centre practice, I look to Paralympians—athletes with disabilities who participate in sport and ascend the podium on their own. Parasport’s tenet, “coach the athlete, not the disability” (Townsend et al., 2016, p. 8), reveals a *person-first* approach that differs from *disability-first* pedagogies in the writing centre. In critical disability theory (CDT), disability is “polymorphous” where no two presentations are equal, and “ubiquitous” in that most people will encounter disability at some point in their lives (Fenton, 2016, p. 203). Since disability does not discriminate (Fenton, 2016, p. 203), writing centres should teach the writer, not the disability.

This stance on disability (WHO, 2024) calls for a critical pedagogy that fully integrates CDT (Freire, 2018) to resist pedagogical frameworks that marginalize students with disabilities (Bolt, 2015). CDT views disability as both a “lived reality” and a construct based on “social power relations” (Reaume, 2014, p. 1248) and challenges how these power dynamics penalize disability and normalize ability in pursuit of equity, inclusion, and “accommodation” (Reaume, 2014, p. 1248). To shift the perspective of disabilities from the pathologizing medical model to the inclusive social model of disability (Haegele & Hodge, 2016), I created the parasupport framework for writing centres. A teaching and learning framework like parasupport (see Figure 4) is a “research-informed tool that aligns [educational] goals...to support effective, inclusive, and motivating learning environments” (PCTL, 2026). I view this framework in a linear

orientation because students are asking for help with an assignment that has a submission deadline. Some students only come to the writing centre for help with one paper

**Figure 4**

*The Parasupport Framework*



*Note:* The parasupport framework. Own work.

Parasupport is a person-first, student-led approach that promotes student autonomy. It allows students to determine what to disclose, what help is needed, when, and how much. In this context, independence refers to the writing specialist's determination of student success whereas autonomy, particularly in the para-athlete context, emphasizes self-determination (Townsend et al., 2016). Here, the para-athlete calls on the supports necessary for their athletic development, but whose fate is not controlled by those

supports. In the writing centre, the specialist could emulate this by responding to the student's direction of inquiry, not determining it for them. The framework

I designed this framework based on two decades of practice teaching students with disabilities (see Chapter 3 for my positionality statement) in secondary and post-secondary environments. Some of these environments were designed for the disability community which involved collaborations with professionals specializing in disability advocacy and accommodations, external stakeholders, and medical teams to best service the students. This framework is also literature-informed (see Chapter 2) by identifying the gap in writing centre literature in which students with disabilities remain invisible. Responding to this inequity, parasupport begins with the student's initiative to engage with the writing centre and their determination of what they need. Since "para" means "alongside", the arc that reads "writing tutor presence and support" (see Figure 4) depicts how the writing specialist presence is parallel to the student's engagement with the writing centre. In a way, it is like teaching someone to ride a bike. The guide stays alongside the rider to support when needed but does not determine where the rider should go, when they should stop, when they should resume, and importantly, when the ride is over. Along the outer edge of the framework are the basic steps of writing centre coaching from initiation of contact, through the process of providing strategies and resources, until the point the student determines next steps—either ceasing contact or reinitiating for a new assignment.

For this study, parasupport is explored through the participants' experiences with the writing centre. Some participants felt empowerment after a parasupportive writing centre session that resulted in sustainable participation in their academic programs. Participants

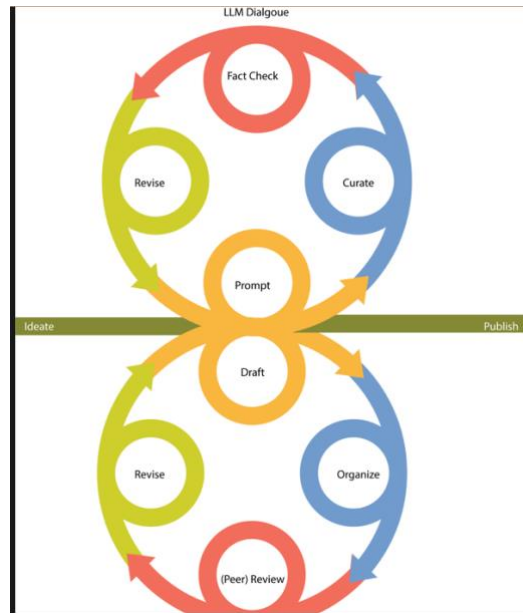
also shared stories of enduring ableist practices in the writing centre and the detrimental impacts on their self-esteem, productivity, and creativity. In Chapters 4 and 5, the participants' discussions of how parasupportive and ableist writing centre practices impacted their learning also underscore how these interactions can influence a person with disability's sense of identity.

One way to enact a parasupportive framework is to explore the possibilities of GenAI. While AI has been around for decades, the new iteration of GenAI offers promising options for students with disabilities (Henneborn, 2023), especially considering that more than 2.5 billion people will need assistive technologies by 2030 (WHO, 2023, Key Facts section) due to population growth and a rise in the elderly population. GenAI is indeed creating a “sea change” (Donnellan, 2023, para. 2) that opens doors for customized technology for people with disabilities. Therefore, the rise of GenAI illuminates the ableist cracks in writing centre pedagogy and practice (Dembsey, 2020) that parasupport can fill.

For example, Figure 5 shows a writing process model for LLM engagement which encourages students to develop their GenAI literacy while creating their paper. This could be a potential tool to support students using GenAI as an assistive technology.

**Figure 5**

*Multidimensional Recursive AI-assisted Writing Process*



*Note:* Graham, S. S. (2023). Post-process but not post-writing: Large Language Models and a future for composition pedagogy. *Composition Studies*, 51(1) Used with permission.

Graham's (2023) model reinforced the cyclical and recursive nature of the writing process while teaching core elements of GenAI literacy like curating responses and factchecking. Alternative writing processes like Graham's (2023) highlights another assumption in the writing centre in that the writing process is the singular strategy to producing academic work and the foundational instructional approach in the writing centre (Wood, 2014, p. 134). However, a rigid, linear strategy can become frustrating when disability interrupts this process (See Figure 6 for a traditional writing process model).

### **Figure 6**

*The Writing Process*



*Note:* The Write Site. (2024). The writing process. Athabasca University.

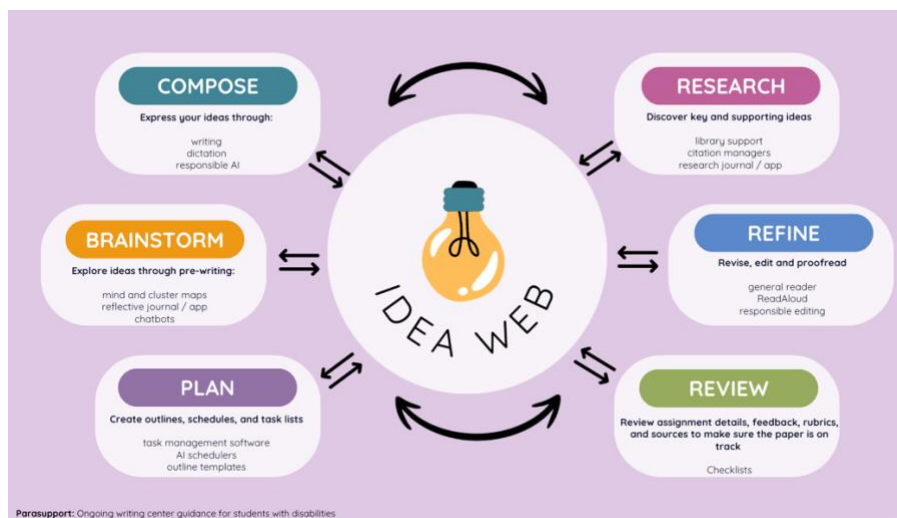
For example, a student with ADHD may struggle with tasks requiring executive functioning skills like organization, time management, and task prioritization (Rodden, 2021). This can create a significant barrier to the first phase of the writing process, making it difficult for students with executive dysfunction to even get started. Another example of how disability disrupts the writing process appears at the drafting stage for those with writing processing disabilities like dysgraphia (Chung et al., 2020). Here, the goal to produce written work creates a barrier to task completion. It also calls into question the emphasis on writing as the primary mode of academic expression at the post-secondary level (Archer, 2018) and how it can be an exclusionary practice for students with disabilities.

Southworth (2023) wrote that “reorienting writing pedagogy to the process of writing rather than the final product improves student learning--after all, that’s where the thinking happens” (para. 8). As a parasupportive tool, I replaced the writing process with

a customizable idea web (see Figure 7) that emphasizes cultivating ideas in a non-linear way. It integrates GenAI so that students with disabilities can take control of their own writing process through non-linearity, choice, creativity, and autonomy. For example, AI supports like time managers or pre-writing generative tools (Sweetland, 2024) can offer students with disabilities opportunities for efficiency and success with the writing process. As well, acknowledging the recursive nature of writing allows for flexibility and creativity (Abbruscato, 2022; Warne, 2008).

**Figure 7**

*The Parasupport Idea Web*



*Note:* The parasupport idea web: A nonlinear writing process. Own work.

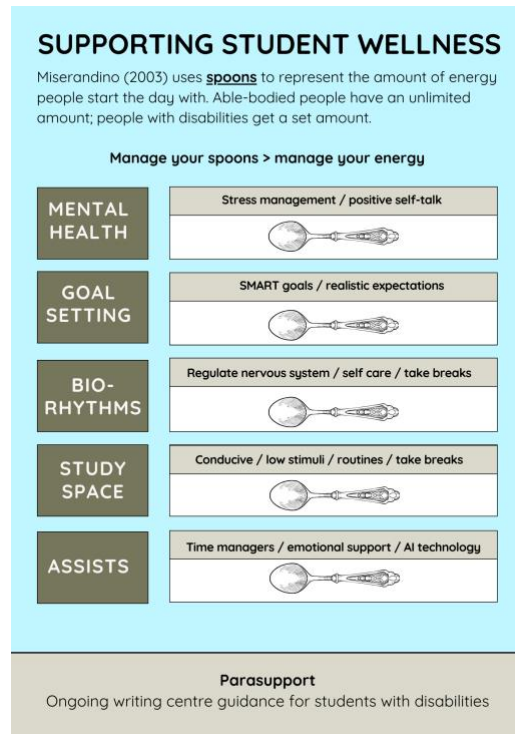
The parasupport idea web is a nonlinear writing process that shows how GenAI disrupts the privileging of writing as the ideal mode of academic expression by revolutionizing multimodal accommodations that support diverse forms of communication (Bell, 2022; Schweitzer, 2017). For instance, each element of the process includes a responsible interaction with GenAI as a learning tool. Additionally, prominent scholars in assistive technology (Fichten et al., 2022; Martiniello, 2020)

suggest moving toward destigmatizing technology. For example, GenAI advancements can remove barriers for neurodivergent learners by helping students with autism socially interact (Koh, 2023), and students with ADHD manage their time (O’Flaherty, 2023). It can also enable students who are nonverbal or have sensory impairments, like low vision, to communicate more easily, effectively, and authentically (Wang et al., 2023). Of course, GenAI comes with its own discriminatory algorithms (Manyika et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2022) as mentioned earlier, which need to be addressed when utilizing the technology. Engaging students in critical conversations while adopting a parasupportive pedagogy will help move the writing centre towards more inclusive practices for students with disabilities.

Finally, parasupport is a holistic framework that acknowledges the energy limitations that many students with disabilities face. The emotional toll of marginalization (Namkung & Carr, 2020) in addition to the physical and mental demands of managing disability can disadvantage the student with disabilities in terms of meeting deadlines, keeping appointments, needing extensions, and requiring breaks or deferrals. Miserandino (2003) developed the Spoon Theory to illustrate the deficit of energy that people with disabilities face versus those who are able-bodied (see Figure 8).

### **Figure 8**

*Supporting Student Wellness*



*Note:* A parasupportive tool based on Miserandino’s (2003) Spoon Theory.

Like T. S. Eliot’s (1963) Alfred J. Prufrock who “measures out [his] life with coffee spoons” (line 50), people with disabilities receive a set number of spoons per day to measure and manage their energy (see Figure 8). Able-bodied people, however, receive an ample supply (Miserandino, 2003). The spoon deficit challenges ableist assumptions of productivity and independence and affords students with disabilities the flexibility of self-determination according to their energy supply.

### Limitations and Delimitations

#### Limitations

My positionality (see Chapter 3) as an able-bodied researcher may create a scenario of observer’s paradox where the awareness of my presence could influence what the participant discloses or to what degree (Kim, 2015). Discussing triggering scenarios with an able-bodied researcher can exacerbate feelings of invisibility and hypervisibility

(Jackson, 2022) whereby marginalization overshadows their personhood, or they feel like a spokesperson for a whole community. As well, my positionality may deter participants of color, of a lower socioeconomic status, or possibly of gender fluidity.

An open-ended, unstructured interview style of prompts could produce tangential or irrelevant information. Asynchronous prompts also run the risk of creating misunderstandings if they are vague, academic, inaccessible, or long-winded. The meet-and-greet acts as an opportunity to assess the participant's need for boundaries, whether for more structure or more flexibility, and to determine a feasible and achievable task schedule.

While qualitative studies are not often transferable, the unique data may be more of the start of a conversation, prompting writing specialists to consider their own positionalities and approaches to supporting students with disabilities. Further research will help close the gap in the literature, continue the conversation about disability in the writing centre, and to create sustained visibility about this demographic.

### **Delimitations**

Creating structured, specific, and concise boundaries may help control feelings of overwhelm and support expediency with the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I wanted to avoid a labour-intensive project for the participants, and so suggesting prompts and a shorter time limit for image creation will help keep the photovoice inquiry on track. As well, keeping the sample size to a smaller number (four participants) allowed me to devote quality time to their image creation process, and to develop a rapport with participants. Choosing participants from AU helped to control the participant pool while also establishing familiarity between researcher and participant.

### **Research Questions**

My central research question asks: *How can the restorying AI-generated images through photovoice reframe disability support in writing centres?* This leads to three corollary research questions:

1. In what ways can a participant with disabilities use GenAI to capture their engagement with the writing centre?
2. How can generating visual images using photovoice influence the participant to restory their relationship with the online writing centre?
3. How do these generated images help confront ableism in writing centre pedagogy and practice by giving voice to students with disabilities?

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Ableism**

Discrimination against people with disabilities driven by the false conclusion that able-bodiedness and able-mindedness are superior states of being. Ableism's central value is that a person with a disability needs fixing (Smith, 2026).

#### **Access Fatigue**

Exhaustion from repeatedly needing to request support for disabilities (Konrad, 2021).

#### **Accessibility**

Designing spaces, concepts, and services for anyone regardless of ability (CWRU, 2025).

#### **Anti-ableism**

Advocacy that dismantles biases that disadvantage people with disabilities (SSU, 2025).

### **Center / Centre**

As a Canadian writer, I use “centre” but use “center” when citing American nouns.

### **Coaching / Specialist / Tutoring**

In this paper, I use “writing specialist” for the role and “coaching” for the practice since these are common terms in the writing centre field. These are professionals (including volunteers, graduate students, and faculty) working in a writing centre often with backgrounds in education, English, writing studies, or a similar discipline.

### **Cognitive Load**

How much mental effort the brain uses at a given moment (APA, 2018).

### **Context Engineering**

An approach for working with GenAI to give it the right information about an issue, but not so much that it forgets the question (Masood, 2025).

### **Critical Disability Theory (CDT)**

A branch of critical theory that looks to “analyze disability as a cultural, historical, relative, social, and political phenomenon” (SEP, 2023, para. 1). CDT does not adhere to the medical model of disability which pathologizes disability but questions social norms that construct disability (Hendren, 2021).

**Critical Disability Pedagogy**

A pedagogy extending beyond Freire (1997)'s call for a critical pedagogy to address learners oppressed for their abilities. This pedagogy provides students with a language in which to interact in educational systems of power (Carter, 2015; Nocella, 2008)

**Critical Pedagogy**

An approach to learning where teaching impels learners to scrutinize systems of inequality in the educational landscape (Smyth, 2011).

**Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology (CSVM)**

An approach to studying generated images that looks at how prompts and images create meaning and how these images are shared and audience in a social exchange.

**Critical Visual Methodology (CVM)**

An approach to studying images that looks at how/why they were made, and how audiences would interpret it (Rose, 2025).

**Dependence**

In a writing centre context when a student has yet to demonstrate an understanding of the elements of academic writing (Dembsey, 2020) and therefore needs continued support.

This could be due to returning to school after several years away, managing disabilities and learning barriers, and/or learning English as an additional language.

**Diffusion Model**

An AI model that generates visuals by clearing up random data until an image appears (Erdem, 2023).

**Disability**

A condition that may limit a person's physical, psychological, developmental, or behavioural ability to interact with the world. A member of a disability community may use this to describe their identity while others may find it stigmatizing (WHO, 2024).

**Distance Education / Online Learning**

Distance education refers to a virtual learning environment that can be both synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (not existing at the same time). For this study, the online writing centre is one in which students can be supported synchronously through video chat or asynchronously through written feedback. Online learning boasts several advantages of which flexibility, convenience, and mobility are just a few. However, this is not the case for every student. Learning online first demands proficient executive function skills (Meijs et al. (2021) like self-regulation, time management, and organization. This can prove difficult for some learners who also find the social sphere of learning helpful for retention. Students who struggle with executive functioning skills may benefit from synchronous coaching sessions as forming a social connection (Slagter van Tryon & Bishop, 2009). Yet, despite a struggle like this, students with disabilities often veer toward online learning, and Reyes et al. (2023) identified six themes

influencing this choice: flexibility, accessibility, curricular design, online interaction, online collaboration, and psycho-emotional wellbeing (p. 370). With this, a higher proportion of students with disability seek online learning (Kotera et al., 2019), making this call for anti-ableism in the writing centre a critical concern.

### **Executive Functions**

Neurobiological skills that organize thoughts, actions, and emotions (CPA, 2025).

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)**

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to a broad field of human simulation by machines for specific outcomes. These outcomes are the result of human ideas developed into “algorithms, heuristics, procedures or systems that are the backbone of computation” (Lucci et al., 2022, p. i). While AI is realized in a variety of forms, this study will specifically refer to GenAI, a type of artificial intelligence that generates unique content. GenAI exploded into the cultural milieu in late November 2022 with ChatGPT, a large language (LLM) that creates sophisticated text and images ranging from software to report card comments to tables and charts. One attribute to LLMs is the “speed” (Mollick, 2022, para. 10) with which they produce content; however, with technological advancements come criticisms regarding academic integrity (Chami, 2023). This study looks at GenAI in the context of assistive communications to accommodate disability needs, and the challenges and benefits that emerge with this revolutionary technology.

### **Hidden Disability / Invisible Disability**

When a person's disability is not visually obvious to the public (IDA, 2025).

### **Identity**

Identity is individual; some people may refer to themselves as “disabled” or “living with a disability”, and others may identify with the capital “D” for Disabled or Deaf. As well, some people with disabilities may prefer descriptions outside the problematic binary of ability/disability like the non-hierarchical “diverse abilities”; however, others see this as generalizing and problematic (Belanger, 2019). For example, someone who has a visual disability may identify as a “person with low vision”, “partially sighted”, “blind”, “Blind”, a “person with blindness”, or “visually impaired”. Ultimately, it is up to the person if they prefer person-first (a person with autism), identity-first language (Autistic), nuanced / personalized (Tistic), or no mention of ability at all. It can be agreed upon that pathologizing verbs should be avoided (i.e., “suffers from”) as should offensive and outdated labelling like “challenged” (NCDJ, 2021, Basic Guidelines section). For this study, I will primarily use person-first language (person with disabilities) unless the participant indicates an affirmed alternative.

### **Independence**

In a writing centre context when a student has successfully demonstrated an understanding of the elements of academic writing (Heki, 2021).

### **Interdependence**

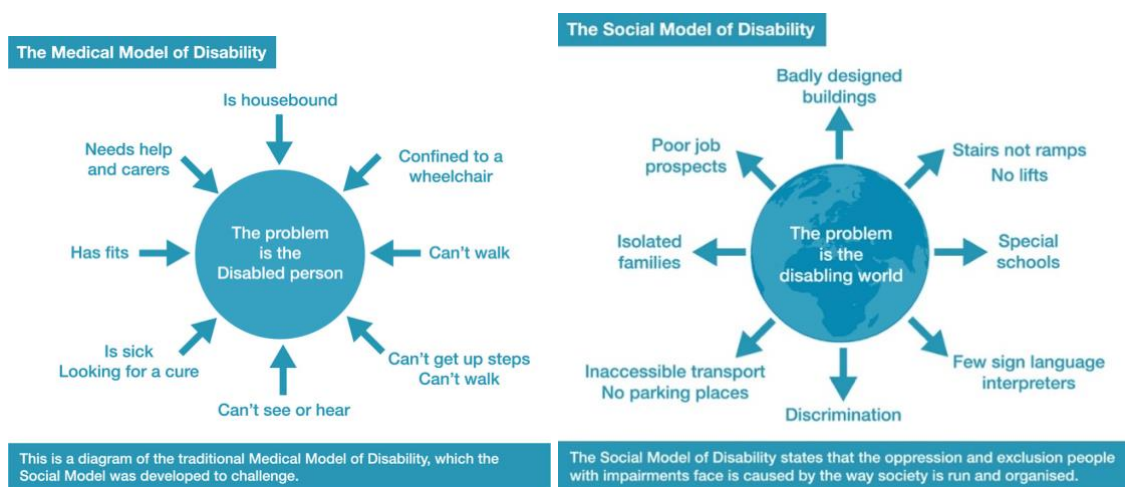
Dembsey (2020) argued that instead of the independence-dependence binary, interdependence allows for a mutual collaboration between specialist and student. While I appreciate the many relationships with students I share in our writing centre, I do not depend on students. I also value sessions with students where we brainstorm ideas together, but again, this is solely for the benefit of the student.

### Models of Disability

This study references the “social model of disability” in contrast to the “medical model of disability” (Hogan, 2019, para.1). These models (see Figure 9) are ways of perceiving disability and what causes the experience of disabling (Olkin, 2022). In the medical model, it is the diagnosis of a condition that creates disability. In the social model, the realities of an able-bodied world disable people in a variety of ways such as poor access, discrimination, and stigma.

### Figure 9

#### *Contrasting the Medical and Social Models of Disability*



*Note:* Inclusion London. (2023). *The social and medical models of disability*.

[www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/](http://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/). Permission granted.

The medical model of disability uses clinical language to describe disability which often results in pathologizing and problematizing disability as an abnormal experience. The goal to return this person to normalcy by curing them of their disability (Olkin, 2022).

Conversely, the social model of disability sees the person first, with disability being one aspect to their humanity, and one that was brought about by the socially created barriers (Olkin, 2022). An example here would be to feel badly for the person in a wheelchair at the bottom of a flight of stairs they cannot ascend (medical model) versus questioning why the builders did not put a ramp in place (social model).

### **Neurodivergent / Neurotypical**

Descriptions of how brain neurology differs from the social norm (neurotypical) (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).

### **Parasupport**

I created parasupport in response to ableist pedagogies in the writing centre. The prefix “para” references the experiences of Paralympians who inspired this framework, and the prefix’s definition as “alongside” (Merriam Webster, n.d.) helps to define the writing specialist’s role. This steps away from a *teacher-directed* framework (determining if a student is independent) toward a *student-led* interaction. Furthermore, replacing “dependent” as a root word with “support” provides the student with agency and clarifies

that the coaching relationship is not built on dependency (Dembsey, 2020, Entitlement and Independence section).

### **Photovoice**

Photovoice is a visual methodology that asks participants to capture their experience visually through photography and then share their stories at an exhibition (Wang, 1997). The topics are social justice-driven with the participants often belonging to marginalizing groups. Photovoice offers participants an opportunity for their voices to be heard through a visual medium. For this study, participants used AI image generators instead of photography to capture their feelings on ableism in the writing centre. As a result, I amended Rose's (2023) critical visual methodology to be a critical synthetic visual methodology specifically tailored to generated visuals.

### **Realism**

An art movement that focuses on real-to-life representations. (In this study, I use the subgenres of **photorealism** (emulating photography), **romantic realism** (use of tint or styling to add mood), **magical realism** (fantastical creatures rendered in a realistic way), and **pastoral realism** (emphasis on nature)) (AFA, n.d.).

### **Recursive Writing**

The notion that writing is non-linear and iterative to incorporate new knowledge through multiple revisions (Moore, 2025).

**Resonance**

For something to have special meaning and/or personal significance (Collins, 2026).

**Restorying**

Restorying, a narrative inquiry analytical tool, reframes a dominant narrative from the point of view of a marginalized voice. Restorying “asserts the importance of one’s existence in a world that tries to silence subaltern voices” (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016, p. 314) through reclaiming their story. While photovoice has a built-in narrative analysis to accompany the photos, restorying adds a level of refinement to that analysis by offering participants a chance to resist these dominant narratives and define their own identity through story and reflection.

**Social Justice**

Social justice addresses the pursuit of equity and inclusion for marginalized populations. At the Write Site, I developed an equity, diversity, and inclusion statement that underpins my use of the term “social justice” (see Figure 10)

**Figure 10**

*VOICES: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Write Site*

## Equity, Diversity & Inclusion at the Write Site



*Note:* Write Site. (2022). Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. *Athabasca University*.

The Write Site EDI model uses the acronym VOICES to illustrate our foundational values:

- **Voices:** We welcome a diversity of voices, backgrounds, and knowledges at the Write Site, and we encourage each student to develop their unique writerly voice.
- **Openness:** We support open access, open educational resources, accessibility, and open doors to those who face barriers.
- **Intersectionality:** We recognize the intersectionalities at the convergence of oppressive systems of power and that this creates barriers and impacts identities.
- **Culturally responsive pedagogy:** We aim for professional and bias-free coaching feedback that supports the achievements of all students.
- **Empowerment:** Our coaching practices encourage students to strive for self-empowerment as emerging academic writers.

- **Solidarity:** We invest in socially just coaching practices that support students from equity-deserving groups (Write Site, 2022).

### **Surrealism**

An early-20th-century artistic and literary movement that rejected realist representations for combining unexpected objects or dreamlike scenes to provoke new ways of seeing. (In this study, I use the subgenres of **neo-futurist surrealism** (Sci-fi, technology inspired imagery), **Baroque surrealism** (ornate, extravagant forms inspired by the Baroque movement), and **grattage surrealism** (scratchboard aesthetic)) (Tate, n.d.).

### **Synthetic imagery**

Visuals generated by algorithms rather than from the physical world (Rai, 2024).

### **TVTA (Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis)**

A qualitative analytic framework that analyzes words and images together (Trombeta & Cox, 2022).

### **Trauma-Informed Research**

Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing event or series of events that generates long-lasting effects on a person's well-being (TICIRC, 2024). While common sources of trauma include abuse and neglect, the academic context can also be a significant source of stress. As a writing specialist, I have witnessed countless times students' conveyance of academic anxiety around writing, often stemming from past instances of negatively

perceived feedback or stigmatization of writing-related disabilities. Casimir and Baker (2023) wrote that “classism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia, to name a few, are connected to psychological trauma (p. 4). Note that “ableism” falls under Casimir and Baker’s (2023) umbrella group of “to name a few”, and it is this kind of absent representation that exacerbates the invisibility of this trauma. Trauma can cause emotional dysregulation, maladaptive perfectionism, and academic anxiety (Dobos et al., 2021, p. 446), and when these stressors add to the barriers of an oppressed group, it results in a problematic, intersectional, and traumatic academic context. As my study explores notions of ability and disability in an academic space which can be “trauma producing” (Petroni & Stanton, 2021, p. 537), while understanding the complex traumas that accompany these experiences, a trauma-informed approach supports participants through their research journey.

The language around this approach differs from scholar to scholar. Van Marter Souers (2019) identified a spectrum of *trauma-savvy* engagement practices beginning at *trauma-inducing* to *trauma-invested* (pp. 24-25). Ziegler et al. (2022) used the *trauma-sensitive* while Casimir and Baker (2023) used *trauma-responsive*. Alessi and Kahn (2022) suggested five guidelines for trauma-informed qualitative research: learn about the community, establish safety in the research environment, extend safe interactions with participants, changing course to avoid re-traumatization, and supporting participants through self-reflection and selfcare. Ultimately, a trauma-informed research process should “do no harm” (Ziegler et al., 2022) and potentially contribute toward healing through speaking about the trauma and using it help others (Herman, 1992). Isobel (2021) urged that trauma-informed approaches are “increasingly relevant to both people

undertaking research and those participating in it” therefore, having a sensitivity to the possibility of trauma without requiring the details of the trauma itself becomes a “responsible” way to conduct human research (pp. 1456-1457). Finally, power forms the root of trauma, and so trauma-informed research should dismantle power systems and dynamics for a more equitable research experience for the participants.

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

An educational approach that offers flexibility in learning activities and settings to accommodate a student’s unique needs (CAST, 2024)

### **Writing and Communication**

Writing centres traditionally focus on academic writing skills like grammar, paragraph structure, thesis development, and the writing process. However, the act of writing can be a communication barrier to students with, for example, learning disabilities, sensory disorders, traumatic brain injuries, para- and quadriplegia, ADHD, cerebral palsy, or neuroprocessing impairments (Santangelo, 2014; Young-Suk, 2022). Emphasizing writing as the ideal form of academic communication reflects how the institution of the university continues to privilege able-bodied students as ideal scholars (Wong & Chiu, 2019) and the privileged position of the written academic word. Expanding the understanding of academic expression beyond writing is slowly emerging with some writing centres renaming themselves like UBC’s Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication, Rochester Institute of Technology’s Writing and Expressive Communication Center, and the University of Waterloo’s Writing and Communication

Centre. This is a more inclusive direction for writing centres as it acknowledges the multimodality of academic communication.

### **Writing Centre Pedagogy**

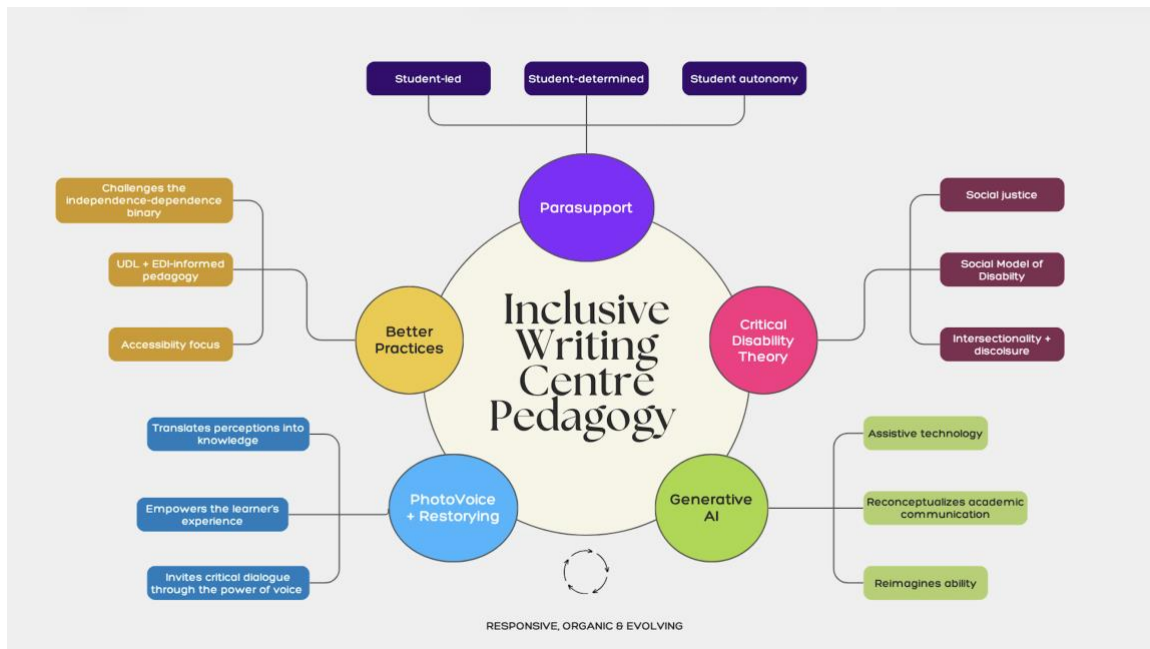
Since writing specialists do not evaluate papers, they instruct students in a unique way which calls for a nuanced pedagogy that encourages students to develop their skills over time. Some pedagogical practices, however, can be marginalizing to oppressed groups, like the emphasis on students becoming independent writers (Buskerus, 2018).

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is the lens through which I view my research and the possibilities it offers. I have provided the background context so far in this chapter, and a conceptual framework is an opportunity to visually depict how these ideas, perceptions, and approaches interconnect. Figure 11 conceptualizes the thrust of this research and its potential impact on writing centre pedagogy and practice.

### **Figure 11**

*Inclusive Writing Centre Pedagogy Conceptual Framework*



*Note:* The conceptual map for promoting inclusive writing centre pedagogy through parasupport, critical disability theory, GenAI, photovoice and restorying, and better practice. Own work.

Inclusive writing centre pedagogy comprises the heart of this conceptual framework. Ultimately, this research aims to broaden understandings of writing centre pedagogy and the role it plays in sustaining ableist instruction. There are five key elements to inclusive writing centre pedagogy: parasupport, critical disability theory, GenAI, photovoice and restorying, and better practice.

I introduced the concept of parasupport earlier in this chapter to enhance engagement with students with disabilities in the writing centre. This conceptual framework highlights three key areas of parasupport: student-led, student-determined, and student autonomy. Coaching through the independence-dependence model creates a teacher-led pedagogy that places the power with the writing specialist as they direct the relationship, regulate the frequency of visits, and over time, weigh in on how the

student's performance affects their access to writing support. Parasupport flips the script by putting the student in charge. Here, the student leads the sessions to cater to their own needs, determines how many sessions they need and for how long, and escapes the independence-dependence trap by seeking out support as autonomous learners, regardless of disability.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the dire reality of resource constraints and job precarity in writing centres (Bell, 2023). Writing centres need to operate within the confines of their budgetary and specialist allowances. The suggestion that students define their own engagement refers more to the student determining their need for support, and not for the writing specialist to conclude when a student has had enough coaching. Again, some disabilities are lifelong endeavours which require ongoing support, oftentimes in a repetitive or reinforcing manner, and students should not be penalized (i.e., a reduction in writing support) because of this need.

Having an awareness of critical disability theory (CDT) creates the foundation for inclusive writing centre pedagogy. Understanding the difference between medical and social models of disability, for example, further substantiates the need for students to determine their relationship with the writing centre, as the adjudication of skill based on independence-dependence supports the more pathologizing medical model. As we move forward as an industry in this time of equity, diversity, and inclusion-informed education, considering disability through a social justice lens becomes a critical piece to inclusive writing centre pedagogy. As well, CDT reminds us about the intersectionality of folks with disabilities, which encourages writing specialists to view disability as one part of a complex individual identity, and not the person's defining feature. It also asks us to be

cognizant about the choice of disclosure, which once again reaffirms the tenet of parasport coaching, to coach the athlete, not the disability.

Inclusive writing centre pedagogy must embrace the existence of and develop literacy in GenAI, particularly in relation to students with disability. When used responsibly, GenAI can be a powerful tool to help with student autonomy. If seen as an assistive technology, GenAI can help reconceptualize academic communication which reimagines what we perceive as ability. For example, efficiency is one significant way it does this (Henneborn, 2023). There are so many GenAI tools emerging to help people with disabilities achieve academic success while maintaining academic integrity. Task management software, for instance, can help manage executive functioning skills, GenAI can assist students who are non-verbal with communication skills, and the advances in dictation and speech to text create a more real and natural experience for students writing auditorily. Training writing specialists on responsible GenAI as assistive technology, can not only help students with academic autonomy, but also with efficiency, helping to redefine what “ability” truly means.

Photovoice and restorying are qualitative methods designed to highlight historically oppressed voices by translating perceptions into knowledge. For this research, students will use photovoice to visualize their experiences as learners in the writing centre, and how that impacted their understanding of disability. One of the more critical concerns with GenAI is that it replaces the student’s voice. In writing centre literature, there is an absence in the research of the student with disability’s voice. Photovoice and restorying are two methods designed to bring that voice forward to empower and reimagine the learner experience, and to invite critical dialogue through the

power of voice. As mentioned earlier, the motto of “not about us without us” stresses the need to hear from the students themselves when redesigning pedagogy and better practice. This research will bring these voices forward to address this gap.

An essential application of inclusive writing centre pedagogy is through better practice. Building on parasupport, CDT, GenAI as assistive technology, and the methodologies of photovoice and restorying, better practice guides the future of writing centre support. Within the lens of inclusive writing centre pedagogy, better practice challenges the independence-dependence binary that disserves students with disabilities. It puts a focus on accessibility through GenAI literacy and engaging with students to learn how to customize feedback according to their needs. As well, inclusive writing centre better practice is grounded in UDL and EDI principles.

Finally, at the bottom of the conceptual framework is a circle of arrows symbolizing the recursive, organic, and evolving nature of pedagogy. In this current rapidly changing educational landscape, it is important to not view frameworks like these as prescriptive, but rather an approach strengthened through practice (recursive), flexible (organic), and responsive to changing culture (evolving).

### **Summary**

The uprising and re-energizing of social justice conversations since 2015 (e.g., the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, 2SLGBTQIA+ rights) shows social progress, yet the lack of disability representation in writing centre scholarship reinforces the ableism in policies and pedagogies that administer these environments. Countering this, the parasupport model affords students the opportunities to determine their academic futures. This shift in power

reframes disability in the writing centre. GenAI offers another tool for students with disabilities to communicate in new, effective, and validating ways. In this age of GenAI, my research comes at a critical time to address the underrepresentation of students with disabilities in the literature and negotiate an inclusive pedagogy for students with disabilities in the writing centre context.

## **Chapter 2. Review of the Literature**

I am a writing specialist in Athabasca University's (AU) online writing centre, the Write Site. AU is Canada's Open University, a public institution that promotes equitable access to online education (Bates, 2022; Kentnor, 2015). Flexibility and openness (Ives & Pringle, 2013) attract students to online learning, especially those facing barriers at traditional institutions (Xarles-Jubany, 2019). However, inequities remain (Ikebuchi, 2023), and as a writing specialist, I primarily see those inequities with coaching practices for students with disabilities who use our services as a learning accommodation. This confrontation with ableism in both writing centre pedagogy and practice (Dembsey, 2020) inspired the direction of my doctoral work.

Considering the progress with antiracism pedagogy in writing centre research (Coenen et al., 2019; Garcia, 2017), similar attention to disability is long overdue. My research comes at a critical time in the post-COVID-19 temporal space where students with disabilities, having experienced increased inequities during the pandemic (UNESCO, 2021) are now facing the return to "normal" (Saia et al., 2022, para. 6). Interest in online learning is rapidly growing (Diaz-Infante et al., 2022); therefore, now is the time for a new pedagogical direction for students with disabilities. As well, the advancements of GenAI can radically influence how students with disabilities communicate online.

### **Locating Sources**

For this literature review, I reviewed print and online sources. For the print sources, I vetted the ones to include by their relevancy and quality of contribution. I separated them into a few categories: texts about qualitative methodology and

photovoice; texts on critical pedagogy, critical disability pedagogy, and critical theory; and both single author and anthologized collections of writing centre scholarship. These are books that I bought over the years to support my work as a writing specialist, and that I purchased for my doctoral courses. It was frustrating to take notes from print text and keep them with the online articles that I categorized in Zotero, so I decided to input them into Atlas.ti, a data analysis software for qualitative research, and tag them. I also put my Zotero annotated resources in Atlas.ti, so at least now all my sources were together.

For the online sources, I went directly to the major journals on writing centre research like *Praxis* and searched their archives. I saved every article into Zotero and annotated, uploaded, tagged, and organized them by theme (literature review, methodology, background, etc.). I also accessed blogs that I frequently consult for my writing specialist work such as the Canadian Writing Centres Association (CWCA) blog. As well, I attended both the CWCA and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) conferences where I was exposed to new resources that I processed through Zotero and Atlas.ti.

I used both Google Scholar and the Athabasca University library databases to locate additional articles. Sometimes I found Google Scholar easier to navigate, and if I found something of interest, I would track it down in the AU library. During these searches I found I had to play a matching game with different vocabulary to yield results. For instance, in Canada, we write “centre” with the “re” at the end unlike American writing centers. I would swap these back and forth to get what I was looking for. I also experienced this when trying to describe “online learning”. Here I used descriptors like “remote”, “distributed”, “open”, “distance”, and “virtual” and pair them with educational

nouns and verbs like “learning”, “environment”, and “education”. Researching the term “Photovoice” was straight forward, but “critical disability theory” was sometimes identified as “DisCrit”, just “critical disability” or just “critical pedagogy”. Searching for the level of education also required testing options out like “higher education”, “higher ed”, “post-secondary education” (and then without the hyphen), “university”, “undergraduate”, “academic” and “academic study”. I remember having a book as a child where the pages were cut in thirds and you could mix and match the heads, bodies, and legs to create different creatures, and this process was very much that.

I also found myself accessing grey literature, especially when GenAI was relatively new and was only being discussed on tech blogs, LinkedIn, and business blogs. Since disability is a personal experience, I also found relevant testimonies on personal blogs of writing centre patrons and practitioners that proved very insightful to this research. For instance, the scholar that inspired me, Marielle Reuser, oddly enough has a small digital imprint—her faculty page at Leeds, a discussion of her project on a bare bones webpage, her LinkedIn account, her X account, and a blog entry on an .ai blog. I found this interesting how research extends beyond the traditional journal archives and into these various digital containers. To keep track of all these search words and webpages, I kept a Google Sheet to track all these findings for quick review.

Finally, I went to the most proficient expert in my proximity—my 12-year-old daughter who likes to generate pictures of cats eating ramen soup. Watching her whiz through entries with descriptors and stylings gave me a good primer into what is possible with GenAI, and from there, I experimented with numerous versions, both free and paid,

to see how the quality of the image changes and how the algorithms influence the construction of those images.

### **Writing Centre Orthodoxies**

North's (1984) seminal text, "The Idea of a Writing Center", is the root of writing centre literature. While writing centres existed before (North, 1984, p. 436)—see Chapter 1—North's (1984) text brought writing centres into visibility and introduced what Salem (2016) calls "orthodoxies" (p. 162) that still exist in writing centres today. For instance, Shamoan and Burns (1995) suggested that these orthodoxies are considered a "bible" (p. 135) while Boquet (2002) referred to North's (1984) text as "canon" (p. 29). In his text, North (1984) asserted that writing centres are not "fix it shops" (p. 433) for remedial learning, but instructional environments that value "higher order" concerns over grammar and mechanics, and this attitude continues to this day (Giaimo et al., 2018, p. 234). North (1984) also shared his mandate that writing centres "produce better writers, not better writing" (p. 438) indicating that students undergo a transformation thanks to the writing centre. This can still be seen in countless writing centre mission statements like: "Writers transform writers!" (NCAT, 2023, para. 1), "We want to make better writers" (Skidmore College, 2023, para. 1), and "[we are] dedicated to helping students become better writers" (UND, 2024, Dedicated Tutors section).

North (1984) also discussed how "busy" (p. 442) writing centres are and how 30–50-minute individual sessions are ideal. Athabasca University along with the writing centres at University of Toronto, Ball State University, Thompson Rivers University, University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Alberta to name a few use this guideline. Finally, North (1984) asserted that the ultimate purpose of writing sessions is

to be individualized, student-led and for writing specialists to “talk to writers” (p. 446). Decades later, Sanford and Steiner (2021) wrote that these one-to-one sessions hold a “time-honored” place in writing centres (p. 28).

In 1994, North revisited his article to update his perception of the writing centre, and while he wishes it could employ the “loaves and fishes” parable of the New Testament by reaching all the students who seek support, resource constraints create a first come, first served reality (p. 17). This attitude remains; the UBC Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication (2023) provides the rationale that due to a high student volume, sessions are limited to 30 minutes for “accessibility and pedagogical reasons” which includes “equal opportunity to book a consultation” (Writing Consultations section). The inability to serve all students is also exacerbated by the threat of 24/7 outsourced writing support models like Studiosity<sup>1</sup> (Hotson & Bell, 2022). However, Cirillo-McCarthy et al. (2023) argued that pedagogy, expertise, and visible labour will help keep writing centres relevant, current, and closer to North’s (1984) ideal.

Another “dualism” exists between the student-led paradigm and the institutional authority of a university (Healy, 1993, p. 16). While Healy (1993) referred to the intellectual hierarchy of writing specialist and student, privilege and power structures are now being explored in terms of marginalization. Garcia’s (2017) “Unmaking Gringo Centers” has become a widely cited article that confronted white supremacy in the writing centre. Camarillo (2019) followed up with an assessment of marginalizing practices that keep the binary of student-led and teacher-directed approaches fraught.

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<sup>1</sup> Studiosity is an Australian company offering a 24/7 online service where students can submit papers for feedback or ask writing-related questions. It is currently partnered with numerous universities. See the Canadian Writing Centres Association’s Hotson and Bell’s (2022) criticism of it here: <https://cwcaaccr.com/2022/09/01/friends-dont-let-friends-studiosity/>

From here, antiracism in writing centres is becoming a popular topic not only in the research (Condon & Faison, 2022; Greenfield & Rowan, 2011) but also in policy (Camarillo, 2022; Martini & Webster, 2021; Ozias & Godbee, 2011), institutional statements (Fields, 2021; University of Idaho, 2023), and conference themes (IWCA, 2023).

However, there are assumptions and oversights with these longstanding orthodoxies. First, the limited research on online writing centres creates a significant gap (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009). Of course, North's (1984) understanding of writing centres was very different than life today, yet despite the temporary move online during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wisniewski et al., 2020), writing centre research still prioritizes bricks-and-mortar centres (Worm, 2020). There is emerging research on developing online writing labs (Paiz, 2018) as extensions of the writing centre. The Writing Lab at Purdue University is one example of this trend of having a resource repository to augment face-to-face services. In North America, a fully online writing centre, like Athabasca University's Write Site, is not very common, and therefore not reflected in the research; however, the sudden move to online learning due to COVID-19 created "pandemic pedagogy" (Sheppard, 2021, p. 61), a need for an online pedagogical foundation when coaching remotely. This continues to be a need because despite more writing centres incorporating online asynchronous services (Denton, 2017), the attitude that online learning lacks engagement, carries an increased workload, and creates social disconnection persists (Sheppard, 2021).

Another assumption from North (1984) that extends to today (Sanford & Stiner, 2021) presumed that the writing centre employs specialists who can be peer students,

fellow undergraduates, or graduate students working on a volunteer, contract, or casual basis. This creates a gap in the pedagogical literature for writing centres like AU's which does not have peer or graduate students, but four full time writing specialists. This can also limit professional development opportunities and research when it is primarily geared at more precarious staff. Fitzgerald and Ianetta (2016) argued that three similarities overshadow the differences in writing specialist makeup, and these shared values echo North's (1984) view of the coaching role: conduct friendly conversations, teach writing as a process, and let the student take the lead (pp. 17-18). This view of the writing specialist role limits those with dedicated careers in writing centres to broad orthodoxies, when enhancing research and scholarship with more nuanced and critical thought could advance and deepen the field.

The European Writing Center Association's (EWCA) 2024 conference, "The Future of Writing Centers" acknowledged the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of North's article (EWCA, 2024), while inviting conversations about its influence as a "writing center grand narrative" (McKinney, 2013, p. 82). In their call for papers, the EWCA asked potential contributors to "examine these 'ideas' of a writing centre and what practices they exclude" to the extent that writing centers do not serve all students "equally" (EWCA, 2024, para. 2). A critical example of this is in the lack of scholarship on writing centre students with disabilities as a key demographic which exposes a significant gap that puts orthodoxies into a problematic light (Babcock et al., 2017; Bishard, 2023; Cecil-Lemkin & Johnson, 2021; Dembsey, 2020; Hitt, 2012; Kleinfield, 2018; Lang, 2017; Rinaldi, 2015). For example, Babcock (2017) reported that "between 2006 and 2016, the Online Computer Library Center's Education database showed 656 publications on disability

[with only] 15 on disability and writing centres, and only eight of which discussed writing centre tutoring students with disabilities” (p. 331). Considering the trending research to defend equity, diversity, and inclusion in both writing centre literature and more broadly across academics, this limitation is more than an oversight, but evidence of systemic neglect.

### **Ableism in the Writing Centre**

The long-held pedagogical orthodoxies of writing centres inform coaching practices and are ultimately designed for able-bodied students (Lockett, 2008; Rinaldi, 2015). This decades-long assumption results in limited scholarship on students with disabilities and reveals pervasive ableism in the writing centre. To address writing centre orthodoxies through the lens of disability, North’s (1984) argument against the writing centre as a place for remedial learning creates shame for students who struggle with the technical aspects of writing such as someone with dysgraphia (Chung et al., 2020). As Rinaldi (2015) stated, this is an unrealistic example of “idealized orthodoxy of writing center practices” (p. 9). Second, the goal of transforming a student positions the student as broken, impaired, or flawed needing to be changed (Swift, 2018). Dolmage (2017) argued that this becomes problematized when that person has a disability which reinforces “disabilities as abject, invisible, disposable, less than human” (as cited in Swift, 2018). Third, the “first come, first served” approach to coaching sessions does not allow for students with disabilities to receive the support they need which may involve multiple sessions, working with a specific specialist, or requiring more time than the 30-50 minutes window (Brizee et al., 2012). Fourth, talking about writing to students with disabilities needs a more informed approach that provides writing specialists with

learning and equity, diversity, and inclusion training to help remove barriers of marginalization (Daniels et al., 2020). Finally, recognizing the attraction of online learning for people with disabilities (e.g., safety, flexibility, accessibility) validates the need for more research on negotiating disability in online writing centres (Ries, 2015).

### **Models of Disability**

Before looking at the literature behind the dependence-based pedagogies that reinforce writing centre orthodoxy, it is important to recognize how models of disability inform perceptions of the ability / disability binary both directly and implicitly. Charlton (2017), a writing specialist with a severe visual impairment, wrote that “persons who do not sufficiently understand disability have historically been in charge of making decisions for disabled people” (p. 8). This reinforces the medical model of disability that pathologizes a person with barriers as someone who needs fixing (Olkin, 2022). The World Health Organization presented this classification of disability in 1980 (Hogan, 2019) which implied the abnormal entity needs an intervention to return to normalcy (Olkin, 2022), and the responsibility is on society to fix the issue (Charlton, 2017). This underpins the stigmatizing association between disability and dependency that people with disabilities are broken and a burden on society (Smith, 2009).

To counter this disability-first thinking, Oliver (1983) responded to this description with the social model of disability where “disability is not seen as fixed or inherent to an individual” but a social construct that disables a person (Phuong, 2017, p. 49). This model was likely inspired by the person-first language movement in 1974 (Crocker & Smith, 2019, para. 4) with its perspective that disability originates from attitudes and social structures instead of it being the result of a medical malady (Buder &

Perry, 2023). Both models spawned offshoots like the rehabilitation model of disability built on the medical model, and the minority social model that allow for intersectionality (Evans et al., 2017). The evolving social model comprises one of the essential elements of CDT (Hoskins, 2008).

North's (1984) article did not reflect the person-first movement happening around the same time. He did, however, reflect attitudes of the time by sharing that faculty members saw students in three ways: "the talented, the average, and the 'others'...with 'special problems'" (p. 435). North (1984) then said that the perception of the writing centre's purpose to deal with these "others" is "so frustrating" (p. 435) that he decided to set the record straight: "if this were just a local misunderstanding, maybe I wouldn't need to write this essay for a public forum" (North, 1984, p. 435). Glimpses of the medical model are apparent here as North (1984), in his own way and time, problematized the faculty perception of writing centres as places for remedial learning in his inferences of the "others" as burdensome and undesirable students. Thus, North's (1984) "Idea of a Writing Center" is a foundational text in writing centre pedagogy that advocated for the academic relevancy of its purpose but failed to address the regularity of students with disabilities who rely on its services.

### **Dependence-Based Pedagogies**

The language of the medical model of disability worked its way into writing centre pedagogy, and it was how students with disabilities were understood by educational systems and professionals, government, funding agencies, to name a few. Currently, dependence-based pedagogies common approaches to writing instruction in writing centres. This model instructed how students with disabilities means that the

pedagogical language uses the word “dependence” which can be used to diagnose writing competency, to determine a student’s growth, and to create an end goal of independence as evidence that the student now has the academic skills to fully operate without support. This pedagogical approach does not benefit nor is realistic for students with disabilities.

### *Dependence-Independence Model*

The dependence-independence model is a foundational pedagogy in writing centres where students should eventually become independent writers (North, 1984; Pemberton, 1994). Independence as a goal is now commonplace in the mission statements of numerous writing centres across North America such as: “the Writing Center’s mission is to promote independence as writers (Fullerton College, 2023, Our Mission section); “We’ll support you to become an independent writer” (University of Calgary, 2023, One-on-One Appointments section); and “Our focus is to help you be a strong and independent writer” (York University Writing Centre, 2023, para. 3). This ignores the reality that independence is unattainable for students with lifelong disabilities or chronic illnesses (Babcock, 2012).

It also reinforces the stigma that servicing students who cannot achieve independence will exhaust resources, like with what Pemberton (1994), who argued for “independency” (p. 64), calls “pathological visitation” (p. 63) of the writing centre. Seventeen years later, Heki (2021) reinforced this understanding and argued that independence “will lead to less reliance on the writing centre as well as more self-sufficiency for the writer” (p. 2). This refutes the idea of a student-led approach if the writing specialists are determining where students land on the dependence-independence continuum. Writing specialists are then tasked with assessing students for signposts of

being a burden—too many visits, too many repeat questions, remedial learning, and no evidence of “graduating” from the writing centre as an independent writer.

Dembsey’s (2020) article “Naming Ableism in the Writing Center” is a significant contribution to writing centre literature because it directly confronts the ableist attitudes and practices in writing centre pedagogy on the issue of independence and dependence. Dembsey (2020) suggested that “the goal of independence likely evolved from the mantra of ‘better writers, not better writing’” (p. 1) from North’s (1984) article. The independence-dependence paradigm also endorses the notion of the “ideal university student” who can achieve independence because “the tendency persists to treat white, cisgendered, nondisabled, middle-class students as the default audience for instruction” (Sanford & Steiner, 2021 p. 5). Mingus (2017) called this the “myth of independence that reflects privilege” (para. 1).

As an example, one might consider a student diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). While this student may excel in terms of understanding content and critical thinking, a signature challenge of ADHD are executive functioning skills which are so critical to online learning (Davis, 2021). These skills include time management, organization, and an inability to filter ideas toward a narrow scope. This student will return to the writing centre because while strategies may help, this is a life-long neuro-processing disorder that will need ongoing support and reinforcement. For examples like this, Dembsey (2020) acknowledged that some writing centre scholars agree with the unattainability of independence, however, continue to stand by the exhaustion of dependence (Healy, 1993; Nolt, 2011; Walker, 1995).

Dembsey (2020) discussed other instances of ableism from access fatigue, inaccessible spaces, and how literature on this topic is often written through a non-disabled lens.

### *Interdependence Model*

In CDT, the term “interdependence” aims to destigmatize the burden of dependence by highlighting the universality of interdependence, as everyone needs social connections (Mladenov, 2016, Disability and Cultural Recognition section). Dembsey (2020), among other scholars (Camarillo, 2019; Heki, 2021; Mingus, 2017), suggested interdependence as an alternative orthodoxy. Dembsey (2020) argued that interdependence subverts the independence / dependence binary by leveling the playing field to recognize the need that “we all depend on others and others depend on us” (p. 3). But is this true in a writing centre context? Students do rely on their writing specialists for tips, guidance, strategies, and resources, but how does that reciprocate for the specialist, especially if they are able-bodied?

Lee (2009) provided a good example of interdependence in action: the Laser Eagles Art Guild is a collaborative, non-profit organization for people with disabilities interested in art. Here there is equity—people of similar interests collaborating on group projects while supporting each other as individual artists (Lee, 2009). The social-relational connections the participants make create an interdependent community. However, the writing centre is not the same. Even the most democratic and well-intentioned writing centre will have power imbalances because there are differences in education, expertise, and academic achievement between specialist and student, and this is magnified if the specialist is able-bodied. Writing specialists simply do not rely on students at the same level to justify the mutuality of interdependence. As Perring (2005)

wrote, “the manner in which non-disabled people approach the task of facilitating work by [people] with disabilities has a crucial bearing on the extent that [disabled] experience is articulated” (p. 187). Interdependence then implies an equitable partnership that does not appropriately capture the specialist-student relationship.

One might also consider these different takes on interdependence. Mingus (2017) described interdependency as not just about dependency, but about solidarity. Konrad (2018) defined interdependence as an inclusive structure of relationality (p. 116). Petherbridge (2016) connected interdependence with vulnerability. Nastachowski et al. (2021) equated interdependence with collaboration. I would connect interdependence with empathy—a way of relating that validates the other person’s experience. McBride et al. (2018) discussed using empathy as a listening and responding strategy in the writing centre, like an ethics of care (Gaeta, 2018). However, connecting to students through solidarity, relationality, vulnerability, collaboration, empathy, or care does not comprise a substantive writing centre pedagogy for students with disabilities, but rather an interpersonal guideline for meeting students where they are. These interdependent factors also do not erase the fact there is a power imbalance between specialist and student.

### **Changing Mindsets: Parasupport and Photovoice**

Writing centre pedagogy needs to move away from the word “dependence” entirely, as it reaffirms stigmas that people with disabilities are burdens (Dembsey, 2020) and resource drains (Rinaldi, 2015). Dependence-based pedagogies can make a student feel hypervisible (Rinaldi, 2015), vulnerable (Chinn, 2016), and open to stigma (Jackson, 2022). It can also force disclosure which can put the student at risk (Rinaldi, 2015). Students with disabilities (and this includes diagnosed/undiagnosed, visible/invisible,

disclosed/undisclosed, complex, multiple, additional comorbidities) may also be managing other intersectional forms of oppression like being a person of color or a person who identifies as LGBTQ2S+ that dependency narratives will also harm.

Like antiracism, anti-ableism is an emerging perspective (Penketh, 2020; Podlucká, 2020). Recognizing that students with disabilities seek support from writing centres, anti-ableist practices like active listening (Anglesey & McBride, 2019) can help encourage what Brugman (2019) called a “brave and safe space” for the online writing centre (para. 4). Next, create transparency around values. Antiracist; commitment to reconciliation; and equity, diversity, and inclusion statements are common on writing centre websites. A few writing centres are now starting to publish accessibility statements, like in the case of the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Writing Centre website which includes an accessibility statement, rationales for their accessibility-related terminology, a list of current accessibility services, accommodation requests, and an institutional history of ableism (UWM, 2023).

### **Parasupport**

Considering anti-ableism in pedagogy, I look to Paralympians, athletes with disabilities who compete at the elite level with assistive supports but ascend the podium on their own. One paracoaching tenet—coach the athlete, not the disability—shows this emphasis on athlete autonomy (Townsend et al., 2016). While disability is under-researched in sport scholarship (Townsend et al., 2016), as it is in writing centre literature, much can be learned from how parasport negotiates disability.

I created the parasupport framework in resistance to the dependence-based frameworks that marginalize students with disabilities (Bolt, 2015; Murdick et al., 2004).

Parasupport positions writing specialists alongside their students' academic journeys in a supportive role. There are no assessment practices to determine the student's suitability in terms of being dependent or independent. Instead, parasupport allows the students to determine what to disclose, what help is needed, when, and how much. This also shifts the perspective of disabilities from the pathologizing medical model to the inclusive social model of disability (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). Here, the student creates a student support plan that identifies their needs and the type of support that is helpful to them. They determine when they return to the writing centre for support. Like the tenet mentioned earlier, parasupport coaches the writer, not the disability. This clarifies the writing specialist-student relationship beyond a dependency model to a consultation framework where the student advocates for their own learning and accesses services according to their self-determined needs.

The Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP, 2023) named six evidence-based strategies for building quality participation in parasport: autonomy, belongingness, challenge, engagement, mastery, and meaning (p. 2). When athletic coaches were "knowledgeable to the athlete's specific needs", athletes reported feeling safe in that training environment (CDPP, 2023, p. 5). If athletes felt safe, then they saw themselves as autonomous agents in their sport who belonged in the coaching community, and this contributed to engagement, taking risks to challenge themselves, and celebrating mastery in their skills. Together, this created meaning for their athletic experience. The parasupport model builds on these viewpoints to value autonomy, belongingness in the academic community, engagement in learning activities, advocates of their learning needs, and resiliency in a world with barriers (Masland, 2021; Straun, 2021).

Parasupport is also informed by the Write Site's inclusion values (see Figure 10). This underpins parasupport in terms of welcoming a diversity of voices, backgrounds, and knowledges (Haney, 2020); offering open access, accessibility, and open doors to students who face barriers (Bukowski & Brueggemann, 2020); recognizing that intersectionalities marginalize those at the convergence of oppressive systems of power (Conden, et al., 2020; Denny & Towle, 2017); using culturally responsive pedagogy as a coaching practice (Lawrence, 2020); teaching self-empowerment, especially for those from equity-deserving groups (Smith et al., 2017); and standing in solidarity to acknowledge and resist histories of bias and privilege with empathy to transform learning (UNESCO, 2021).

Finally, parasupport is a connectivist framework. Connectivism is a "learning theory for the digital age" (Dziubaniuk et al., 2023), making it a good fit for online learning and assistive technologies. Connectivism intertwines technology and learning so that the student operates in a network of seeking out various knowledge sources to enhance understanding (Siemens, 2004). This approach moves away from a single source of learning and toward multiple sources that the learner fuses together to build understanding. In connectivism, learners are "autonomous" and "self-directed" (Pandya et al., 2024) in that they determine which sources to seek out their connections whether it be online collaborations or digital resources.

Student autonomy is a critical aspect of parasupport as the student takes charge of their learning with the writing centre, seeing it as one of many sources of knowledge that they connect with. The writing specialist does not control the access to knowledge like in the dependence-based pedagogies, but one source in the student's connectivist network.

Writing specialists can also diversify and augment their feedback with a variety of multimodal resources that help build the student's network of knowledge. Therefore, the parasupport framework is not about dependency and "sage on the stage" (Stanton, 2019), but connectivism, student autonomy, and contributing to the student's network of knowledge.

### **Photovoice**

Photovoice is a participatory visual methodology (PVM) designed for social change (Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 23). Other PVMs include drawing, participatory video (or videovoice) (Catalani et al., 2012), and digital storytelling (Mitchell et al., 2017; Warren et al, 2014). The creators of photovoice, Wang and Burris (1997) identified three aims with this methodology: to empower marginalized voices, to invite critical dialogue, and to use this knowledge to attract policy makers. What makes these PVMs so exciting in our current context is that they respond to changes in culture and offer alternatives to traditional expression of ideas through multimodal communication. Visual modalities present knowledge in a compelling way to incite social change. For example, Call-Cummings and Hauber-Ozer's (2021) photovoice project elicited portraits of African American youth responding to racial injustice in images. One image has a student at her desk against a backdrop of portraits featuring individuals who died because of police violence like Breonna Taylor and George Floyd (Call-Cummings & Hauber-Ozer, 2021). Another student covers his face expect for his eyes with a paper that reads: "Let my silence speak volumes" (Call-Cummings & Hauber-Ozer, 2021). In this case, the image of the young teenager expressing their feelings on such violence creates a moving artefact rich with meaning and knowledge.

Call-Cummings and Hauber-Ozer's (2021) project exemplified how participants in PVMs engage in a "visual economy" (Rose, 2023, p. 31) wherein they create visual artefacts to disseminate knowledge that generates meaning. Rose (2023) described this economy as the "four sites" of critical visual methodology: the technology used to produce the image, the image itself, the circulation of the image, and how the image interacts with viewers, or "audiencing" (pp. 46-47). Like Call-Cummings and Hauber-Ozer's (2021) work, I see photovoice as an opportunity to explore experiences with disability in the writing centre from production through to audiencing in a way that can address a body of literature that overlooks learners with disability.

Mitchell et al. (2017) called this message-making as "speaking back" (p. 48) in that the image is a site of resistance. They mentioned other derivations of this approach: bell hooks' (1989) *Talking Back* on antiracism, Ashcroft et al.'s (1989) *The Empire Writes Back* on colonialism, and Hubbard's (1994) notion of "shooting back" through photography about representation (as cited in Mitchell et al., 2017, pp. 49-50). Mitchell et al. (2017) outlined a system for this method in which they introduced the participant to "speaking back", engaging in conversation, inviting them to challenge the script, and then creating a new script (p. 52).

In my research, I used the metaphor of visibility / invisibility (discussed in Chapter 3) to follow a similar path. Like moving from silence to speaking (Mitchell et al., 2017), the photovoice images in this research provoked a move from invisibility to visibility. It used the power of creating a visual image as way to be seen, though of course being cognizant of the individualized and complex "desire" to be seen (Holtby et al., 2015, p. 2). Holtby et al. (2015) referred to this as "visibility politics" such that a

marginalized group may want political visibility, yet the risks of disclosure and exposure can be exploitative (pp. 2-3). Here, representation can be problematic in that one is expected to speak for the collective to make their marginalized experience “palatable” (Holtby et al., 2015, p. 3). However, in Holtby et al.’s (2015) photovoice project for queer youth, providing the participants with “control” over their image-making created a semblance of “positive visibility” (p. 10).

This allowance for control is like Mitchell et al.’s (2017) challenging and changing of the script, and my use of the narrative inquiry concept of “restorying” to reconceptualize one’s experience with disability. To help with this, social media can be a scaffolding tool. As Breny and McMorrow (2021) suggested, social media did not exist in the early days of photovoice (p. 86), but now it is a frequently used technology in people’s lives. Sometimes our posts connect with only those on a personal level; however, it can also be a site for social change, giving voice to in the margins (Ortiz et al., 2019). Yet, in a rudimentary way, creating stories in Instagram, Tik Tok, or Facebook, provides the necessary skills to interact with photovoice by choosing, curating, and publishing images. As well, participants were aware of the cautions that come with social media, making it easier for them to grasp those in photovoice: misrepresentation, lack of consent, and a risk for bias and harm (Breny & McMorrow, 2021). Thus, social media engagement cultivates visual literacy, the “set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media” (ACRL, 2022, para. 2). This leads to possible fluency, transferable technical skills, and ethical considerations when image-making with GenAI.

The revolutionary strength of photovoice can “yield opportunities for difficult and generative conversations among differently positioned individuals” (Farralles et al., 2021, pp. 430-431) through photovoice’s strengths of advocacy and outreach (Ritchie et al., 2023). However, there are challenges to this methodology. After reviewing thirty years of photovoice literature reviews, Seitz and Orisini (2022) identified four areas of inconsistency when implementing photovoice: the method, the outcomes, the populations, and ethics. For example, photovoice research is largely from developed nations indicating a socioeconomic and digital divide (Noor et al., 2022) possibly creating inconsistencies with generalizability. Strack et al. (2022) acknowledged these inconsistencies and offered a reframing of photovoice at the individual level (photovention), as community assessment, community capacity building, and advocacy for change (p. 225). Therefore, in this research, photovoice humanized rather than stigmatized students with disabilities in a writing centre context (photovention), gathered images representing the experience of the community (community assessment), raised the voices of the participants (community capacity building), and ultimately aimed for change at the pedagogical and practice levels (advocacy).

### **Inclusive Accommodations**

Most post-secondary accessibility centres offer accommodations to support learning to students with diagnosable disabilities. Accommodations can help students during an exam (e.g., white noise), in-class learning (e.g., a scribe), or with their own studying through assistive technology (AS, 2023). While these tools and strategies can make a difference, they also come with challenges like technological illiteracy, funding access, unavailable tools or accommodations that did not effectively address the need

(Black & Brodwin, 2015; Toutain, 2019). According to Charlton (2017), accommodations can be a “daily reminder of being different” (p. 4), and when receiving writing support as an accommodation, that feeling can be exacerbated. Additionally, students who do not qualify for accommodations for various reasons or find the cost of the psych-educational assessment prohibitive may not receive the support they need.

### **Rapid Onset of Generative AI**

GenAI offers promising options for students with disabilities (Henneborn, 2023). For students with ADHD who struggle with executive functioning skills, GenAI can help with time, task, and productivity management (O’Flaherty, 2023). It can enable students who are nonverbal or have sensory impairments to communicate more easily, effectively, and authentically (Koh, 2023; Vangelatos, 2023). For visual impairments, GenAI can provide more sophisticated visual aids (Wang et al., 2023). GenAI can also broaden the reading and writing experience through more natural voices in read aloud tools, and by revolutionizing multimodal accommodations that support a diversity of student communication (Bell, 2022; Levitt, 2023; Schweitzer, 2017). Of course, research is just emerging, and so some of these tools are still in their infancy. However, some GenAI tools contribute to what prominent scholars in assistive technology (Fichten et al., 2022; Martiniello, 2020) described as destigmatizing technology for students with disabilities. For example, “built in accessibility” (Fichten et al., 2022, p. 72) means adding accessible features to a device designed for the general public.

GenAI, however, is far from perfect, and the assumption of perfection and accuracy creates nefarious opportunities for misinformation, biases, inaccuracies, and conduits for toxicity. Gama (2024) indicated that biases exist in design, data, and metrics that

discriminated people with disabilities by “limit[ing] opportunities, influenc[ing] their virtual environment, and contribut[ing] to their degree of disability” (p. 3). One such way this happens is assuming that the language of disability is not complex (Venkit et al., 2023). GenAI contributes to ableism through a reliance on stereotypes and derogatory tropes when referencing disability, or to render disability completely invisible in examples, descriptions, or prompts.

In 2024, I participated in the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Taskforce on GenAI listening sessions where members of IWCA discussed how they approach GenAI in their writing centre. Approaches varied from institution to institution with some having formal policies and guidelines and others requiring transparency statements (Concordia University, 2024). As the current chair of the Alberta Writing Centres Association (AWCA) I brought this conversation to our general meeting and representatives of our member institutions shared similar approaches, like some having policies while others having no directives. One commonality is the acknowledgement of GenAI’s inaccuracies and ethical concerns (Al-Imam et al., 2023).

Currently, two directions seem to diverge as writing centres address this technology. First, some writing centres accept its omnipresence and formulating processes to support students learning with this technology. These suggestions are reiterated in the MLA-CCCC’s (2024) Joint Task Force on Writing and AI’s Student Guide to AI Literacy statement designed to help students develop fluency with the emerging problems surfacing with this technology. Second, some writing centre scholars similarly accept the existence and challenges of GenAI; however, refuse engagement. Sano-Franchini et al. (2024) stated that “instead of centering a technology that is misaligned with so many of

our disciplinary values, we can choose to opt out of active use of GenAI technologies until these products are better aligned with our values” (Premise 10). While Sano-Franchini et al.’s (2024) ten premises reflected the key areas of GenAI literacy like labor issues and environmental cost, framing disengagement as a “refusal” further stigmatizes students with disabilities whose interaction with GenAI initiated communication breakthroughs. Sano-Franchini et al. (2024) asserted that “accessibility discourse” can be implemented to “justify” GenAI usage by “co-opt[ing] terms like ‘access’ to reframe it as an inherent good despite its documented, material harms” (Premise 2). This marginalizing language does not support students with disabilities’ reliance on GenAI as an assistive technology nor does it acknowledge the broad GenAI technologies that can effectively support a diversity of abilities.

GenAI literacy, therefore, means a cognizant and critical approach to working with these technologies through actions like factchecking and making informed decisions about and questioning the accuracy of generated content. Further to this, Gama (2024) suggested to involve people with disabilities in technological design, prioritize informed research, curate data with precision and criticality, reduce bias to reduce harm, and argue for accountability (p. 6).

### **Disrupting the Writing Process**

One way in which GenAI can assist students with disabilities is throughout the writing process. The writing process is a nebulous approach to writing instruction that changes from institution to institution; however, it plays a foundational role in guiding students in their academic work. Generally, the writing process follows a linear path from initial ideas to final revisions. For instance, Purdue University’s (2024) reputable

online writing lab (i.e., OWL) listed the following steps in their writing process: pre-writing, developing research questions and outlines, composing thesis statements, and proofreading (para. 1). Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Comparative Media Studies (2024) identified four recursive steps of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. The University of Kansas' Center for Learning and Writing Support (2024) identified a multi-step approach to writing by adding in organization, proofreading, and publishing to their process. Athabasca University's Write Site has a similar three-phase writing process (see Figure 2) that carries the student from planning and pre-writing to the polishing steps of revision, editing, and proofreading.

Two common attitudes regarding the writing process: writing centres coach all aspects of the writing process, and that this instructional strategy develops academic writing skills (Devet, 2011; Ginting & Barella, 2022). However, the writing process can be inaccessible to students with disabilities (Hughes et al., 2019; Lang, 2017) and cause frustration for non-linear, neurodivergent thinkers (Zhang et al., 2020). The act of writing can be chaotic with no defined pathway to follow or destination to arrive at (Applebee et al., 2019), with writers finding some tasks easier than others (Graham et al., 2016) and not necessarily by following the prescribed steps of the writing process. Graham (2019) considered the writing process a series of "social norms of what might be expected" in the academic context (para. 40), therefore, customizing the writing process for student with disabilities while pairing writing process elements with GenAI solutions creates a more efficient and relevant learning experience. Reframing the writing process to allow for choice, creativity, and individualization can specifically address a student's composition and learning needs.

### **Multimodal Forms of Academic Expression**

With writing regaled as the primary form of academic expression in higher education (Monaghan, 2019), students with writing-related disabilities suffer the consequences. Struggling with writing creates academic anxiety and frustration, ultimately affecting planning, text production, and revising (Santangelo, 2014). The use of photovoice in this research highlights the accessibility of multimodality for students with writing-related disabilities.

### **Summary**

Online writing centres provide a great starting place to experiment with parasupportive pedagogies and GenAI to help foster communication for people with disabilities. More students with disabilities are choosing online learning because of flexibility, accessibility, and emotional wellbeing (Reyes et al., 2022). The online writing centre also strives for equitable access (Harper, 2018) which means “fixing what’s really broken—writing centre pedagogy” (Dembsey, 2020, para. 13). Therefore, connecting a parasupport model with GenAI assistive technologies helps address these urgent needs. In Chapter 3, I will explore the methodology of my research, my positionality, and the research design of this study.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This chapter introduces the qualitative research methodology for reframing disability in the writing centre through parasupport and GenAI. Social justice and CDT work well with qualitative methodology as the power of a learner's experience through photovoice and restorying can directly address the gap in writing centre literature which, for the most part, overlooks disability (Sunderland et al., 2014). Photovoice, a qualitative methodology, offers participants the opportunity to share their personal stories in their own voice. Adding multimodality to the research process supports this population as writing could be a communication barrier (Ashby, 2011). Bukowski and Brueggemann (2020) argued for writing centre research to move beyond writing through a “consciously richer exploration of multiple means of engagement, representation, expression—all modes of complex communication” (p. 76). With photovoice, participants can choose their prompts to generate images that best represent their experiences.

#### **Qualitative Paradigm**

I chose a qualitative methodology because an underrepresented community should have their voices heard (Lopez-Deflory, 2022). Qualitative study can help address the motto of the Disabled Peoples Organization—“Nothing about us without us” (UN, 2004, para. 1)—by including the experiences of students with disabilities in the research process. Qualitative research practices address the gap in writing centre literature because it “makes the world visible” (Denizen & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). This approach brings together “the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex interpretation of the problem...and a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44) to

replace dependence-based pedagogies with critical pedagogies like parasupport to reduce ableism in the writing centre.

### **Critical Framework**

The paradigm in qualitative research refers to the researcher's approach to examining the issue in question. These include positivism, interpretivism, and constructivism. For this dissertation, the critical framework complements this research study because of the theoretical foundation of CDT, and the purpose of challenging ableist practices in the writing centre. This paradigm seeks to address and change activities that contribute to social oppression of a vulnerable population (Collins et al., 2021), in this case, students with disabilities. Gaps in literature that involve the identities of a specific group must undergo critical questioning (Smith, 2010) as to why they are not represented in the literature. Critical questioning also situates the issue in the current social context, and 2026 is a time of increased cultural awareness for liminal identities.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

It is important that the research in this dissertation aligns with my philosophical positions to reinforce transparency and authenticity, particularly when asking participants to share their vulnerable moments with oppression as part of this research process. I do feel like these assumptions aligned with the purpose of this study. For example, I believe that critical realism, an axiological stance that values and respects participant safety, infers that meaning exists within the subject (Moon & Blackman, 2017), and that within the framework of CDT, the participant's story can counter pedagogical assumptions in the writing centre (Moon & Blackman, 2017).

### ***Ontology***

A critical realist approach to ontology means that the researcher views reality as developing over time, shaped by changing social and cultural values (Ryan, 2018). Critical realism in the context of this study refers to the theoretical histories of perceptions of disability and disability rights, and the history of disability through social change. This frames the reality of the participant and how they see the world (Scotland, 2012). As well, the reality of intersectionality complicates this perspective as it shapes the participant's experience over time.

### *Axiology*

My axiological stance values and prioritizes the safety of the participant. This means that I first acknowledge “cultural humility” which addresses my able-bodied existence when working with participants with disability (Foronda et al., 2015). This also means I respect cultural differences to avoid stereotyping or stigmatizing the interaction with the participant and their image-making. Currently, there is no universal code of ethics for writing centres, but Athabasca University's code of conduct for members of the university community lists the following as defining their high ethical standard: honesty, fair dealing, diligence, prudence, and accountability (AU, 2023). As a researcher, I build on these values to support the participant's safety through inclusive research practices that prioritize participant comfort.

### *Epistemology*

Initially, I was attracted to narrative inquiry, as it allows for the participant's story to take centre stage in the research. Photovoice is very similar, but as a visual modality. I am invested in providing a space for the participant to create knowledge, since this is not my story to tell. Therefore, in the context of this study, the participants generated

knowledge through sharing their experiences as people with disabilities navigating the writing centre. This creates knowledge about the impact of ableism on their learning. Viewing this “subjective evidence” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21) as credible knowledge also comes from the researcher becoming fluent in the participant’s image-making. Poucher et al. (2019) called this subjectivist epistemology whereby each participant sees the world differently which cultivates truthful, lived knowledge. Truth, in this sense, refers to the subjective narration of experience relational to power structures and oppression. Loh (2013) wrote that truth is not about “facts” (p. 7), but the interpretation of those facts and how that gets shaped into meaning.

### **Visual Methodology**

Photovoice is a visual methodology designed for social change (Mitchell et al., 2017). Rose (2023) identified three criteria for a critical visual methodology that considers the image’s content and materiality, the social construction of images and its critical meaning, and positionality of the viewer (pp. 43-44). These criteria are like the three principles of photovoice as identified by Wang and Burris (1997): a space for participants to reflect on their community’s concerns, stimulating conversations through the photographs, and sharing this work with policymakers. I combine this with Connelly and Clandinin’s (2006) narrative inquiry approach of “restorying” to observe the meaning-making of the images, its critical implications and underpinnings for the participant, and its reflexive purpose in the broader context of disability and ableism in the writing centre.

I also chose a visual methodology instead of a narrative one because of its accessibility. As Babcock (2015) indicated, writing can be a fraught experience,

particularly for someone with disabilities seeking support in the writing centre. As a writing educator for almost twenty years, I have observed numerous barriers to writing such as fear of negative feedback, pragmatic impairment, lack of confidence, perfectionism, anxiety and academic stress, mobility and accessibility issues, and writing and reading processing disorders. As well, writing can often be iterative, time and labour-intensive. I did not want the participant to battle these barriers to participate in the study. Therefore, I turned to GenAI image generation to reduce cognitive load as it produces a high yield in a very short amount of time.

### **Photovoice**

Photovoice has three main goals: “to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns, to promote critical dialogue and knowledge through discussions of photographs, and to reach policy makers” (Budig et al., 2018, p. 1). As a result, this participatory action method supports social justice through the lifting of marginalized voices (Latz, 2017). To answer the research questions in Chapter 1, I conducted a qualitative inquiry using photovoice that offered participants choice in how to tell their stories (Ashby, 2011). This approach can empower and validate participants (Atkinson, 2004; Leggo, 2008) as it allows space for historically silenced voices (Breny & McMorrow, 2021).

Latz (2017) identified eight steps in the photovoice method. First, *identifying* the key demographic of the study and its purpose. Next, *inviting* participants to share their experiences. From here, researchers prepare participants by *educating* them on the meaning, goals, and approaches of photovoice, and elucidating why this method and why now. The *documentation* phase is the innovative experience of documenting one’s

response to the prompts through image-making. *Narration* involves processing the images dialogically through interviews, or as a monologue through other means of communication. These “narrations” (Latz, 2017, p. 4) cultivate meaning. Next, *ideation* can occur collaboratively or sometimes through the researcher’s own reflections. This phase involves locating thematic connections between images and the participant’s narration and turning them into findings. Ideating also refers to creating new knowledge from the documented stories. *Presentation* can infer a variety of actions that appeal to policymakers; for this research, the presentation will be a part of the dissertation, ideally publishing portions of it as a later date to connect with policymakers through contributions to the literature. Finally, for *confirmation*, Latz (2017) wrote that “researchers should find ways to sustain the project’s energy and broaden the reach of the participants’ voices” (p. 5). In this respect, encouraging a continued conversation in the discipline that invites more voices to be heard.

Sutton-Brown (2014) stated that “photovoice oscillates between private and public worlds in its attempt to publicize and politicize personal struggle via photography, critical dialogue, and social action” (cited in Latz, 2017, p. 3). Like in the example of Reuser (see Chapter 1), images become an opportunity to explore experiences one has embodied under the hegemony of power systems. However, it is essential to remind participants about the ethics of creating images that do not compromise someone else’s confidentiality (Mitchell et al., 2017). One way to mitigate this is to model a reflexive process where the participant engages in critical reflection, like the action of “restorying” in narrative inquiry.

**Restorying**

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) called “restorying” a way to “create a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live” (as cited in Mokuria & Chhikara, 2022, p. 11). Through this aspect of narrative inquiry, participants can restory past experiences of ableism as a form of “empowering their future” (Nordin et al., 2023, p. 91) through their image creation.

hooks' (2015) discussion of restorying can be attributed to visual methodology in that it:

transforms the image, creates alternatives, asks ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad.

Making a space for the transgressive image, the outlaw rebel vision, is essential to any effort to create a context for transformation. (4).

Ideally, this process of re-visualizing one’s story leads to self-empowerment that shifts the spotlight to the problematic nature of ableist pedagogies and practices operating in the writing centre.

**Visual Metaphors**

It is critical to address the visual metaphors often used to describe people with disabilities, as this project gives participants an opportunity to respond to them.

***Invisibility***

Refers to a person passing as “normal” in that their disabilities are not “obvious to the onlooker” (IDA, 2025, “Defining”). This could also be defined as a person with hidden or undisclosed disabilities.

### ***Spotlighting***

A phenomenon where a person may believe they are the subject of an outsider’s scrutiny when they feel especially “distinctive” (Crosby et al., 2014, p. 1).

### ***Gaslighting***

Refers to “misogynistic emotional abuse that [makes someone] doubt their memory (Wolstenholme, 2020, paras. 1-2). For people with disabilities, this can include “medical gaslighting” where medical providers trivialize concerns (Caron, 2022, para. 4), and “academic gaslighting” where implicit bias is “prevalent due to the hierarchical power structure present” in academic environments (Yousafzai, 2023, para. 8).

### ***Visibility***

A choice for the participants in this study. However, for people with disabilities, visuals of difference (such as assistive equipment) create non-consensual disclosure (Arielle, 2019) and expose the person to stigma.

### ***Hypervisibility***

Differs from spotlighting as the intense scrutiny is purposeful. For example, the stigmatizing assumption that a person acts as a spokesperson of their disability (Settles et al., 2019, para.1). Hypervisibility others the person by focusing solely on difference.

### ***Gaze***

The notion of “gaze” began as a film theory concept originated in Mulvey’s (1975) text “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” referring to the viewer / director

male gaze that objectified female actors. In CDT, the “able-bodied gaze” (Scott-Pollock et al., 2022, p. 2) referred to the act of “staring” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 6) to emphasize deviations of normalcy.

These terms operate in spheres of power (Settles et al., 2019, para. 3) that suppress, objectify, and marginalize people with disabilities. Rose (2023) defined “visuality” as the social construction of “what is seen and how it is seen” (p. 17), with these visual-oriented metaphors reinforcing stereotypes, stigmas, and constructed notions of ability / disability.

### **Positionality**

I began my teaching career in 2006 at an Albertan high school for students with learning disabilities. In this environment, I learned about accommodations, assistive technology, universal design for learning, and learning strategies for specific disabilities. From 2007 to 2010, I managed a Life Skills class for the Vancouver School Board catering to students with severe intellectual, developmental, and cognitive delays. I managed a team of four to six educational assistants who worked on a 1:1 basis with the students, and I developed individualized plans in collaboration with their care teams. During this time, I learned American Sign Language at an intermediate level to communicate with my Deaf and non-verbal students, though sadly I have lost most of this language since that time.

These initial experiences humanized disability in the classroom for me and created a philosophical foundation that I carried into future work. From 2011 to 2016, I taught high school English to upgrading adults at various colleges in Alberta, and many of these students had previously left school due to negative experiences with perceptions

of disability. When I transitioned to online learning at the post-secondary level in 2016, I noticed a high frequency of students with invisible disabilities like anxiety who found safety with this type of learning. I also had students who had never been diagnosed with a disability, yet through conversations and support, they discovered there had been an unrecognized concern that had influenced their learning contexts and experiences, possibly creating learning barriers.

In 2021, I joined Athabasca University's Write Site as a writing specialist. In addition to coaching students on their academic writing skills, I also coach students with disabilities referred to us through Accessibility Services for a writing support accommodation. I value and appreciate my work with students with disabilities which inspired the needs for the parasupport model.

Despite this professional experience with the disability community, I am an able-bodied researcher. As a woman, I do understand belonging to a historically oppressed population as I have witnessed and experienced misogyny, sexism, social expectations of gender, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment in a variety of environments. I have also experienced weight bias at various points in my adulthood which caused significant emotional distress.

I have a chronic health condition, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which caused years of severe pelvic and menstrual pain, rupturing ovarian follicles, and other co-morbidities that put a strain on my health and mental wellness. This decades-long experience with pain created disabling episodes for me that impacted my ability to work, fueled cycles of anxiety, and affected my quality of life. However, I was lucky to find a pharmaceutical intervention that eliminated the pain and restored my quality of life in

full. This is a privilege that people with life-long disabilities may never experience. I am aware of this and other privileges that define my positionality as a white, able-bodied, educated, affluent, cisgender woman. While my personal experiences inform my compassion toward the disability community, I am aware that this positionality as an outsider can compromise the purpose of this study. Therefore, I stress the critical importance of photovoice to elevate the experiences of students with disabilities so that they impart valuable knowledge the writing centre community can learn from.

Finally, my experience with visual media goes back to my beginner teaching days when I taught Art (kindergarten to Grade 7) at a charter school and then Art 10, 20, and 30 at a high school for students with disabilities. Watching the highschoolers in art class versus their core subjects (of which I taught English 20-1 and 20-2) underscored how fraught the writing process can be. In art, the students found reprieve and creative freedom; in English, I observed students feeling pressure, frustration, and expressing difficulties with reading and writing. This experience teaching art to students with disabilities inspired the visual direction of this dissertation. As for GenAI, I am on a learning curve. I have not used it in a professional context before, but it appears in my current life in various iterations: dictation, simplifying ideas, and for my artistically inclined daughter who uses prompts to practice portraiture skills.

Finally, I am an advocate for students with disabilities to receive fair, equitable, and accessible education. My teaching philosophy anchors on using my platform and privileges to reduce or remove barriers to facilitate the learning success of students I work with. I cherish this responsibility because the world of academia needs to dispense with stereotypes of the “ideal university student” (see Chapter 1) and to instead value the

lived experiences of the students before us, however that may deviate from the assumed “normal”. My central belief as an educator celebrates a student’s unique worldview and does not penalize it for refusing to adhere to socially conditioned standards of behaviour, ability, and performance.

### **Participants**

The Canadian Survey on Disability (Easter Seals, 2017) identified ten types of disability: visual, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, mental health-related, and memory. It is important to recognize the invisibility of hidden disabilities and that participants may have multiple disabilities. This is important because the “emotional tax” (Deschamps, 2019, para. 7) of discussing one’s experience with marginalization is already onerous, which makes asking students to further develop their story can result in exacerbating that tax. To mitigate these risks, I prioritized participants with diagnosable disabilities, as working with an undiagnosed participant could cause mental distress or emphasize a sense of vulnerability.

### **Sampling**

This study used random, purposive sampling. The four participants were specifically chosen based on key criteria: having a diagnosable disability(ies) and have had some experience with a writing centre.

Some criticize the small number of samples and question how this can achieve saturation (Kim, 2015, pp. 160-161). Beiten (2012) suggested a sample size of 6 to 12 can achieve redundancy. However, as Kim (2015) argued, saturation may not be achievable in qualitative research that deals with lived experience, since human beings “are organic, unique, and there will always be new things that unfold” (p. 161). O’Reilly

and Parker (2012) posited that lack of saturation “simply means that the phenomenon has not yet been fully explored rather than [it is] invalid” (p. 194). Since sample size is “not straightforward in qualitative research” (Butina, 2015), it is not necessarily problematic because stories can be substantive allowing for more “thick description which is not easily possible from larger samples” (Subedi, 2021, p. 6). As well, a smaller number of participants makes it easier for the researcher to build a more productive relationship with them (Subedi, 2021). In the case of this study, this smaller number allowed for more depth and yielded a richer analysis of the participants’ contributions.

### **Selecting Participants**

To initiate the participant recruitment process, I worked with my coordinator (whom I will refer to as CWS) to brainstorm ways of identifying students that I did not have a prior relationship with as a writing specialist in our writing centre. First, CWS downloaded the statistics of unique students who frequented our writing centre in the three months prior (January to March 2025) which resulted in an initial list of 134 students. I reviewed the list and was able to eliminate an extra eight names I recognized. CWS emailed the final list with my recruitment poster and prepared message for the body of the email.

This first call did not yield any interest, and so CWS downloaded statistics of unique students spanning back an additional nine months (April to December 2024) including names from our newsletter list. Similar as before, CWS excluded those who had worked with me, and I reviewed the list for names I recognized. This resulted in a call to 1346 unique email addresses, and I received interest from 11 potential participants. I met with two participants who had not read the study details or the purpose

of the research. They were both looking for an opportunity to discuss the intersection between politics and disabilities in Canada, but neither had attended a writing centre. This prompted me to create an eligibility checklist (see Appendix E) for participants to fill out and submit to me along with their signed letter of consent. This way potential participants affirmed their own eligibility before being accepted into the study, reducing the instances of impulsive expressions of interest.

Two additional participants did not show up for our agreed-upon time for the first interview. I attempted communication with them three more times and did not hear back. I also encountered communication difficulties with an interested participant whom I initially exchanged a few successful emails with, but when they did not show up to the initial interview, I was not able to establish connection with them after that, despite intentional efforts. These communication disruptions reminded me that I was recruiting participants with potential executive dysfunction and these initial steps of signing and returning forms, scheduling the interview, and going over the multi-step process to participation might be too challenging. I decided to create a single “Research Study User Guide” (see Appendix B) comprising all the information needed to participate in the study in one document. In this document, I streamlined the process of logging onto both Discord and Midjourney to prevent the participant from getting lost and frustrated. I made the participant’s login information clear and accessible throughout the document and included screenshots to guide them through the processes. I included restorying reflection sheets for convenience and put my contact information in a header running across the whole document. Despite my best efforts to reduce cognitive load, one participant whom I met with twice found navigating Midjourney too overwhelming, and

I did not hear back from them. While I did indicate working with a GenAI software in the initial recruitment documents, in retrospect adding a comment such as “familiarity with this software would be an asset”, to help participants determine their own suitability.

### **Final Participants**

Of the final five participants, one had to exit the study for personal reasons, leaving me with a core group of four participants, and CWS sent an email closing the call for the study. I created individual folders for each participant on my secure server as well as an excel sheet to track logins, passwords, dates of license access, dates of interviews and meetings, dates for reminders, and associated aliases. I held the initial interviews where we discussed their interest in the study, background with writing centres, and familiarity with GenAI image generating software. I shared my background as a writing specialist and doctoral candidate and then went through the research guide including live demonstrations of both Discord and Midjourney. I generated images using my black Maine Coon cat as a subject which helped to break the ice, develop rapport, and inspire creativity. I recorded and transcribed the sessions and provided each participant with the dates of their thirty-day Midjourney license while articulating flexibility should they need to extend it. I enjoyed meeting the participants and learning about their interests and experiences.

### **Compensation**

According to Cheff (2018), “compensation is a necessary and vital way to acknowledge the foundational contributions that participants make to research [through] time, knowledge, experience, stories, and histories” (p. 6). MacKay (2022) advised that for vulnerable populations, avoid in-kind compensation as it could be perceived as

“objectionably paternalistic” (para. 8) as well as the unethical excuse of no compensation due to “limited funding” (para. 18). Cheff (2018) also dissuaded researchers from distributing gift cards to marginalized participants as it could be interpreted as a way for the researcher to control how the money is spent.

Mackay (2022) suggested that conversations around payment occur as “early as possible in the research life cycle” (para. 18), which would be one of the first agenda items during the meet-and-greet. Cheff (2018) recommended that compensation reflects a “living wage” (p. 7) and presents a range of \$15-25 per hour. Zand (2019) stressed the importance of “incremental” versus cumulative payment like waiting to compensate until the completion of the study (Payment Structures section).

For this research, I paid a \$60 honorarium for each participant by e-transfer.

## **Ethical Considerations**

### ***IVSA Code of Research Ethics and Guidelines***

In preparation for these interviews (or “meet and greets”) as the initial point of participation, I followed the International Visual Sociology Association’s (2009) Code of Research Ethics and Guidelines for visual research which includes five general principles and ten ethical standards.

**IVSA (2009) Principles.** When first meeting the participants, I outlined my professional and educational background (*Professional Competence*), conducted myself professionally to establish trust (*Integrity*), shared the application process for REB certification (*Professional and Scientific Responsibility*), discussed their rights as respected participants (*Respect for People’s Rights, Dignity, and Diversity*), and

communicated my purpose of positively contributing to the disability community (*Social Responsibility*) (IVSA, 2009).

**IVSA (2009) Ethical Standards.** In addition to the principles above, I provided participants with information on how I plan to mobilize this research once the dissertation is accepted and how their data will be confidentially secured and stored (IVSA, 2009, p. 253; 257). We discussed the definition of informed consent and their rights throughout the research process, including following payment of the honorarium (pp. 253-256). I assured participants that the work I have done for this study upholds the highest standards of academic integrity, and that I have not engaged in deceptive research techniques, the fabrication of data or falsification of results (pp. 256-7). Finally, that as a researcher, my adherence to these principles and standards prioritizes the protection, safety, security, and confidentiality of participant contributions.

### ***Ethics and Diffusion Models***

It is essential to address ethical considerations with using GenAI. The University of Alberta (2024) identified eight areas of ethical concern when using GenAI tools: environmental impact, accessibility, creatorship and academic integrity, copyright, rights management, privacy, bias, and accuracy. For this study, the prioritized concerns include encountering ableist bias when generating images, ownership of user data, and accessibility. For example, Mankoff et al. (2024) discussed disability bias with GenAI tools that result in “unrepresentative data, measurement errors, and definitions of disability” that reinforce ableist systems of power (paras. 2-7).

Further to this, there are specific concerns with GenAI image generators like Midjourney, Dall-E, and Stable Diffusion. First, they do leave a carbon footprint

(Heikkila, 2023). There is also the unpredictable nature of generating images in terms of which images the prompts generate and if those images contain offensive material. GenAI image generators like Midjourney have been embroiled in lawsuits due to claims of artistic intellectual property infringements (Appel et al., 2023) as the generators are unable to source all their images (Koidan, 2023). GenAI art is not copyrightable under the Canadian Copyright Act, but since the images will not be used commercially, the participant can attach a creation citation where they mention the generator alongside their own name. The prompts are copyrightable, and if the images are arranged as part of a narrative, the narrative would then be copyrightable but not the individual images. This is because to receive copyright for work, the author/creator needs to be human.

For this study, I chose Midjourney, a GenAI image generator hosted by a San-Francisco-based independent research lab and considered by *Medium* to be the leader among image generators in terms of image quality, prompt adherence, composition and user experience (DeSignore, 2024). I employed the following security measures to address the previously discussed ethical concerns. Participants conducted their research during April – July 2025 operating under Midjourney’s Terms of Reference for that period.

First, I shared Midjourney’s and Discord’s terms of service with the participants along with guidelines for using GenAI image generators ethically (See Appendix C). I then created individual password-protected rooms for each participant to generate their images in. Each participant logged on with an anonymized email address and password that I created for them. Next, I demonstrated how to use stealth mode on Discord (the user interface for Midjourney) to hide their prompts and images from being viewed,

copied or repurposed by members on the public feed. I then stored their completed images and screenshots of iterations and prompts on our faculty OneDrive. Finally, I deleted their Midjourney room.

One concern with diffusion models is that they scrape the internet for data which may infringe the copyright of original creators, though of course the images produced for this study are not for profit. At the time of this writing, it proved difficult to ensure that images are 100% fair use, so I did take some measures in good faith to reduce the risk of infringement. First, I ensured that all prompts did not contain references to original source material either by proper nouns or by features, which Chiba-Okabe and Su (2025) called “prompt rewriting-enhanced genericization (PreGen)” (PreGen). Next, I reverse image-searched each image using Google and no exact matches were found for any of the images used in this study. Finally, as of this writing, APA has yet to produce guidelines on citing GenAI images, and so I used the guideline from Columbia College (2024) on suggested better practice.

### ***Ethics and Revelations of Trauma***

Communicating one’s experience through generated images, interviews, and email exchanges can trigger disclosures or unsettling feelings. I researched trauma-informed approaches to support participants in their storytelling, like “containment skills” to control the unpredictable nature of trauma symptoms (Lequang, 2017, para. 1). I shared AU wellness resources with the participants and communicated the freedom to exit the study at any time without consequence.

### **Data Collection: An Overview**

To depict their experiences, participants used Midjourney, a GenAI image generator, to explore open-ended prompts on ableism, self-perception as writers, independence and dependence, and if their writing needs were met in the writing centre. My original plan was to virtually meet with potential participants a minimum of twice over Microsoft Teams. I would record the meetings, take notes for my reflexive journal, use the built-in transcription tool. The first meeting aimed to cover ethical protocols, the permission to withdraw at any time, ongoing consent, compensation, my positionality, the purpose of the study, how I hope the study will create change in writing centre pedagogy, and a demonstration of Midjourney. In this demonstration, I would show them how to refine an image creating multiple drafts until the desired image is found, using the Figure 12 as an example.

#### **Figure 12**

*Art Nouveau Black Cat Licking a Cupcake*



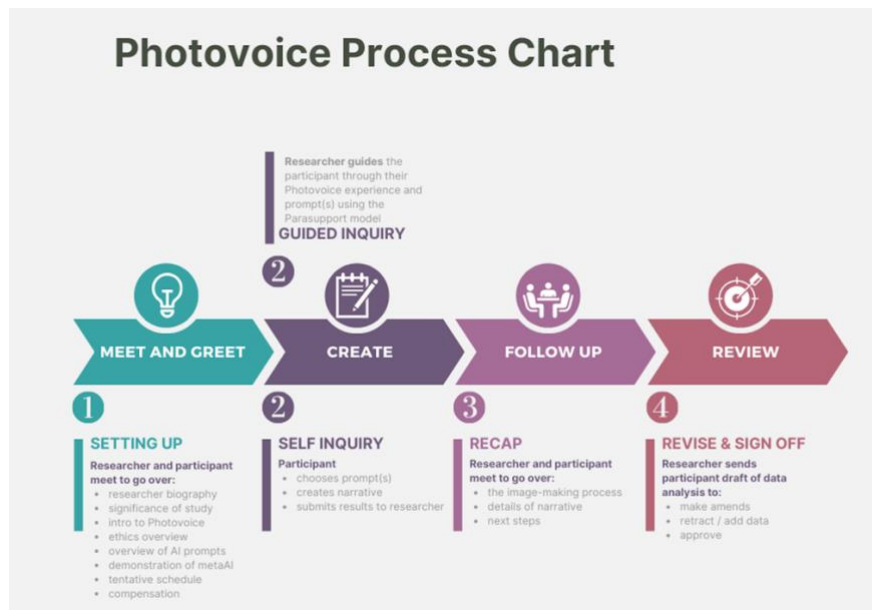
*Note:* Images 1, 3, and 4 generated on OpenArt. AI. Image 3 own photograph.

To create this example, I began with the prompt “Black cat eating a cupcake” yielding an unsatisfactory image with low prompt-adherence as the cat is not the cat I envisioned, had six legs, and was eating the cupcake like a human. Referring to Image 3, my own cat Frankie, I revised the prompt to read “Long-haired black cat with yellow eyes licking a cupcake” and OpenArt.ai generated an image with improved prompt-adherence with its high-quality resemblance. I decided to stylize the image in art nouveau, resulting in the final image. Using an image series like this to demonstrate in the initial interview also draws attention to the creative and fun aspects of image generating, while breaking the ice and building rapport. Before the end of this “meet and greet”, we would book a time for a final session where we can review the image and

discuss restorying (see Appendix A for interview agendas; see Figure 13 for the data collection workflow).

**Figure 13**

*Photovoice Process Chart*



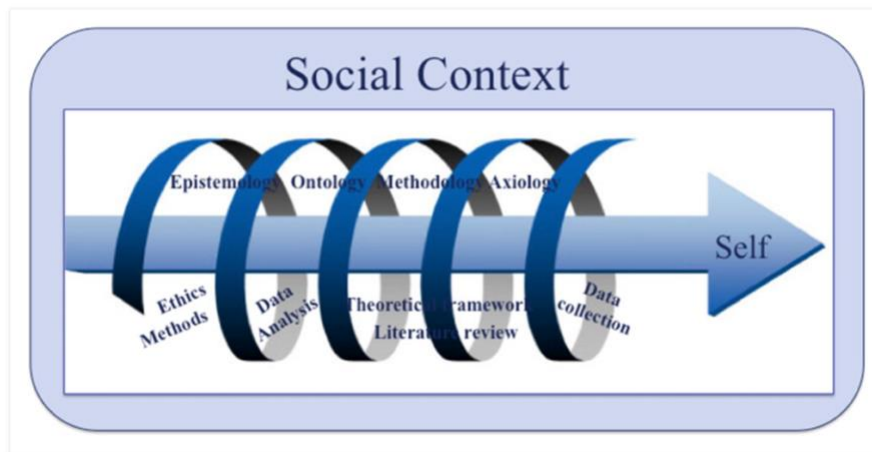
*Note:* Process for collecting photovoice images. Own work.

This workflow moves from the initial meet and greet, to image generation, to a follow-up meeting, and then a final review and completion of the participant's activities. Alongside this workflow, I designed an initial reflexive journal with prompts to track communications and record activities. This "powerful research tool" can help with synthesizing the data (Cabraal, 2013, para. 1) and organizing my thought process, administration of the study, and participant contributions. As a framework, this journal used Gibb's (1988) Reflective Cycle and its following prompts: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan (see Appendix D). I anticipated that this journal would play an integral role in my engagement with the research process as it could reveal biases, impressions, observations, and evaluations to help create a

transparent research process. Mao et al. (2016) conceptualized this with the image of a moving spiral in which the researcher participates in critical reflection throughout the research process, considering positionality and the intertwining of research elements with the relational interactions with participants (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14**

*Critical Reflexivity Model*



*Note:* Mao, L., Mian Akram, A., Chovanec, D., & Underwood, M. L. (2016). Embracing the Spiral: Researcher Reflexivity in Diverse Critical Methodologies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916681005>

Regularly engaging in critical reflexivity (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022) helps me critically engage with my own research process and assist the participants with their own reflexivity as they consider the meaning of the images they created, the prompts they used, and the resulting emotions the image captures.

### **Data Analysis Overview**

I chose MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to create a codebook that tracks the codes and themes that emerge from the research. QDAS is a metacognitive tool that helps the researcher draw connections among the data in different

ways. Latz (2017) suggested three rounds of coding: open, axial, and theoretical (p. 98). To get started with inductive open coding, Rose (2023) underscored that codes be “exhaustive, exclusive, and enlightening” (p. 155). In this stage I planned to code the images for themes using two sets of criteria for working with visual data. First, I would use Rose’s (2023) criteria for a critical visual methodology: take the image seriously, think about the social conditions in which the image was created, and consider the location from which we view the image. Next, I would incorporate Rose’s (2023) elements of thematic coding for visuals rooted in art historical analysis. These elements identify the production of the image, its content, the colour (hue, saturation, etc.), spatial organization, light, and expressive content or “juiciness” that creates ambience (Rose, 2016, p. 80). Prior to coding, I was concerned about how these criteria do not address digitally generated images, so I looked to the goals of GenAI image generators as a starting point: image quality, prompt adherence, composition, and user experience (DelSignore, 2024).

From here, axial coding takes identified themes and creates thematic connections (Latz, 2017, p. 99). I planned to “expand the data” through adding memos to the images, codes, or themes to the QDAS (Arthur, 2021, QDAS section). Latz (2017) also suggested colour coding to create obvious connections. QDAS offer ways of visualizing the data and how they interrelate through frequency counts (Rose, 2023, p. 159). This would help populate the themes to make apparent significant and relational themes across the data, as well as identify minor connections.

I would then take the themes and organize them logically to see if a story emerged to answer the research questions, and transition to theoretical coding which

“helps the researcher paint an integrated and coherent analytical picture which leads to theorizing” (Latz, 2017, p. 100). I also anticipated weaving in my background in creative writing, literary studies, cultural studies, and interdisciplinary studies to connect the data points that reflect the story the participant is telling.

### **Crystallization**

Crystallization is an alternative to triangulation in that there is no single, absolute truth through multiple ways of knowing (e.g., visual data, interviews, my reflexive journal, the restorying). Crystallization “fits within critical paradigms” (Ellingson, 2008, p. 4), particularly with smaller samples which offer thick descriptions of meaning (Richardson, 2000b) that show a variety of experiences. This “multivocality” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844) reinforces how one single truth does not offer thick description but dangerously runs the risk of asking a participant to be the spokesperson for a community (Ravishankar, 2020). This homogenizes identity, and in the case of participants with disabilities, does not align with the social model of disability in which disability is a singular experience.

This study highlighted what Ellingson (2008) called “dendritic” crystallization which refers to the “ongoing and dispersed process of making meaning through multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation” (p. 15). There were several anticipated unknowns in this study: the participant and their unique understanding of disability and how that intersected with writing, the images they would create, and the restorying they would implement to add meaning to the image. No two images would be the same nor their interpretations, thereby crystallizing the findings and their multiple truths.

Crystallization also aligns with Universal Design for Learning use of multiplicity in its means of engagement, representation, action and expression (CAST, 2025). These multiple means also align with the parasupport framework which I planned to use with the participants. Thus, each interaction with the participant will be different from the next, from other participants, with unique images and prompts that may change over time, resulting in meaning that also is organic and shifting. As well, crystallization “problematizes the multiple truths it presents” (Ellingson, 2008, p. 22) which factors in the narrative analysis tool of restorying and the complexity of meaning making.

### **Reliability and Generalizability**

Replicating this study several years from now would not necessarily reveal similar results, suggesting unreliability. However, this does not mean that the results are not truthful, but rather truthful at the time and cultural context in which they were recorded in. In the world of creative writing, the protagonist of first-person narratives is often called an “unreliable narrator” (Hansen, 2007, p. 227) because subjective perspectives can change due to memory, social influences, triggers, processing trauma, ageing, and reflection to name a few. For example, a person revisiting an event at age 25 and then again at age 45 will reveal differences in the details and conclusions because humans are “always in the process of becoming” (Foste, 2018, p. 11). Awareness of temporality helps to understand reliability in restorying because stories are “an expression of something happening over time” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 29), and the truth lies in that ongoing meaning-making.

Tracy (2020) argued that reliability is not necessarily the “appropriate criteria for qualitative research, especially the kind that emerges from a critical approach” (p. 267).

In the case of image-making, images are composed in a “given contextual moment in time” and that “socially constructed understandings are always in process” (Tracy, 2020, p. 267). Instead, Tracy (2020) offered eight criteria for “excellent” qualitative research: a worthy topic that is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting; rich rigor; sincerity and self-reflexivity; credibility; resonance; ethical; and meaningful coherence (p. 270) and with this comes crystallization in its depth and thick description.

Patino and Ferreira (2018) summarized generalizability in that if there is truth in the study (internal validity) therefore there is truth in real life (external validity). However, when researching participants from a historically oppressed group, it is problematic to assume that one person’s experience speaks for the whole community. Ravishankar (2020) wrote that this “reduces people to a representative of a larger group” as though they are the voice of the collective (para. 13). Marginalizing systems of power like ableist practices categorize people in broad strokes. These systems disregard diversity, intersectionality, and the subjective experience.

The conversation around generalizability in qualitative research can be divisive. Horsborough (2003) argued for situational generalizability that compares situations, not demographics. Delmar (2010) addressed “recognizability” (p. 122) as the factor to consider with generalizability. In this case, observing a pattern of recognizable traits from one participant’s engagement to another could drive generalizability. For this study, I see the lack of generalizability as a crystallizing act of resistance that promotes multivocality and awareness, reduces stigmatization, and humanizes the singular experience of disability in the writing centre.

### **Data Collection: Revision and Refinement**

Participants A and B finished generating their images and completing their restorying sheets very quickly. Eager to begin coding, I uploaded their work to the qualitative data analysis tool, MAXQDA. However, as I suspected, Rose's (2023) critical visual methodology did not comprehensively address issues specific to generated images. For example, prompt engineering, the social nature of diffusion models, the value of generated images, and their disposability do not intersect effectively with Rose's (2023) approach. It simply was not producing rich-enough data. I took a step back before proceeding with Participants C and D to reflect on how to adapt Rose's (2023) methodology to this very different form of image production so as to yield more complex and "juicier" results (Rose, 2023, p. 142).

Rose's (2023) text is in its fifth iteration with updates scattered throughout, including an engaging discussion on the mobility of visual objects (p. 310) and a recognition that the social "engagement" (p. 60) that comes with online platforms informs "identities of audiencing" (pp. 60-67). However, much of her book contained earlier discussions and references (some going back to the 1970s) that, in the context of synthetic imagery, did not quite connect. For example, Rose (2023) categorized visual images as "found" or "made" images (p. 4), yet this study looks at generated images, which is unique unto itself. Throughout the book, Rose (2023) created a divide between the analogue era and the digital era; however, her concept of the "digital era" devoted more time to images taken with a digital camera (p. 21) than those generated through AI. Rose (2023) positioned the analogue era and its "one-to-many" approach as time of artistic care and curation, whereas "digital imagery" is many-to-many and therefore

“pervasive” (p. 60), in “massive numbers” (p. 42), and “unimaginably vast [in that] it makes little sense to explore individual digital images; rather they should be approached en masse” (p. 23).

I decided to break down the core elements of Rose’s (2023) critical visual methodology and adapt it into a methodology specific to the world of GenAI images to which I would augment with additional methods to code the data. To yield richer data, I considered a similar pathway to that of Bloom’s revised taxonomy from lower order thinking (e.g., coding for colour hue) to higher order thinking (e.g., coding for elements of restorying and photovoice) (Gonsalves, 2024; University of Waterloo, 2025). To start, I will first outline how I built a critical synthetic visual methodology on the bones of Rose’s (2023) critical visual methodology.

### **From Critical Visual Methodology to Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology**

#### ***Synthetic Media***

As I began viewing participants’ images, the language of “generative artificial intelligence” began to irk me. The words infer a quality of automated factory-like production (generative) and inauthenticity (artificial) that I fear detracted from the critical messaging the participants wanted to visually share. Synthetic media is currently an umbrella term that includes GenAI images but also nefarious endeavours like deepfakes and voice cloning (Roe & Perkins, 2024). Aristimuño (2024) argued for a “shift in focus away from the risks of synthetic media, reframing them as opportunities for critical engagement and artistic exploration” (p. 29). A step towards this vision could entail differentiating the word “synthetic” as not interchangeable with “artificial” but rather a synthesis of two entities producing a co-constructed object (Rettberg, 2025). This

offers the artist remixing GenAI images more agency in what they produce. As well, the synthesis of text and visual coming together in unity creates a resonance that contributes to meaning, as does the synthesis of social interaction through sharing and reposting.

With this in mind, I crafted a version of Rose's (2023) critical visual methodology catering exclusively to creating synthetic content. This critical synthetic visual methodology upscaled Rose's (2023) methodology in a few notable ways.

### ***Rose's (2023) Four Sites***

Rose (2023) named four sites integral to the production of a visual: the site of production, the site of the image, the site of circulation, and the site of audiencing (p. 47). These are both literal and figurative locales of activity contributing to the construction of an image from technological, compositional, and social perspectives (Rose, 2023, p. 47). However, in the world of GenAI and social media, the entire approach from production to audiencing occurs in a completely different way. Most significantly, Rose's (2023) four sites can be siloed.

**Sites of the Image and Production.** While the social realm is one of three modalities Rose (2023) uses to understand the four sites of image and meaning making, in the context of GenAI, this social element plays a much larger role. For example, Rose (2023) considered the site of the image and production as separate activities, similar to how a photographer captures an image in a park but develops it in the darkroom. The creation of synthetic imagery comes from socially integrated interactions that garner attention through activities like reposting, sharing, virality, tagging, trending, liking and friending. The activity of interaction is ingrained in all aspects of synthetic image construction from the interaction with a bot to produce prompts to the sharing of

generated images across social networks. Karrell et al. (2025) called this “synthetic duality” (p. 2), a primary feature of GenAI content as it reveals perceptions of internal and external social worlds/networks and what this says about our shared social reality.

**Site of Circulation.** Rose’s (2023) take on circulating images focused more on “the visual economy” with examples of physical circulation like “the artist’s studio to the king’s gallery” and “the photo lab to the photo frame” (p. 42). Considering the copyright issues that prevent GenAI art authorship (Feiner, 2025), the more prominent economy at play is social in nature: the attention economy. According to Heitmayer (2025), attention is the “currency of the social exchange” where it acts as a “signifier of reputation and status” that increases exposure for continued attention and offers the “opportunity to exchange it for valuable resources” (pp. 19; 21). For example, the “number of YouTube views” directly correlates to the level of social influence (Heitmayer, 2025, p. 22). Ultimately, attention determines the success and lifespan of synthetic media.

**Site of Audiencing.** The analogue era also infers physical locations where Rose (2023) asserted audiencing “always” takes place like “the king’s chamber, an art gallery, a sitting room” (p. 41; 307). Rose then separated the analogue “audience” and the digital “user”, the latter of which lacks the social etiquette once required for spectators at galleries: “you are expected to remain quiet, not to touch the pictures, not to eat” versus today’s distracted users who view media while “listening to music, eating, answering the phone” (p. 61). I would argue that even this description is dated as my own teenagers never answer or talk on their phones as their social world communicates entirely by text. Rose’s (2023) observations of the proliferation of synthetic media needed this pairing to the attention economy for the social system of GenAI to make sense.

*From Sites to Interactions*

Therefore, instead of sites, critical synthetic visual methodology (CSVM) embodies four social interactions that contribute to the construction of a generated image (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*From Sites (Critical Visual Methodology) to Interactions (Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology)*

<b>Critical Visual Methodology (Rose, 2023)</b>	<b>Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology (Violini, 2025)</b>
<b>Site of Production</b> How the image was made, who it was made for, why was it made, what is the genre?	<b>Context Engineering</b> Iterations of prompts to establish context
<b>Site of Image</b> The visual meaning, effects, elements, and composition of the image.	<b>Image Generating</b> The visual result of context engineering.
<b>Site of Circulation</b> Who organized the image and how was it circulated?	<b>Synthetic Imagery</b> Prompts and visuals = synthetic image. Image is finalized with prompt adherence or “resonance”.
<b>Site of Audiencing</b> How is it exhibited? How was it interpreted? Who saw it?	<b>Social Exchanging</b> Combining circulation and audiencing to capture the social lifespan of the image.

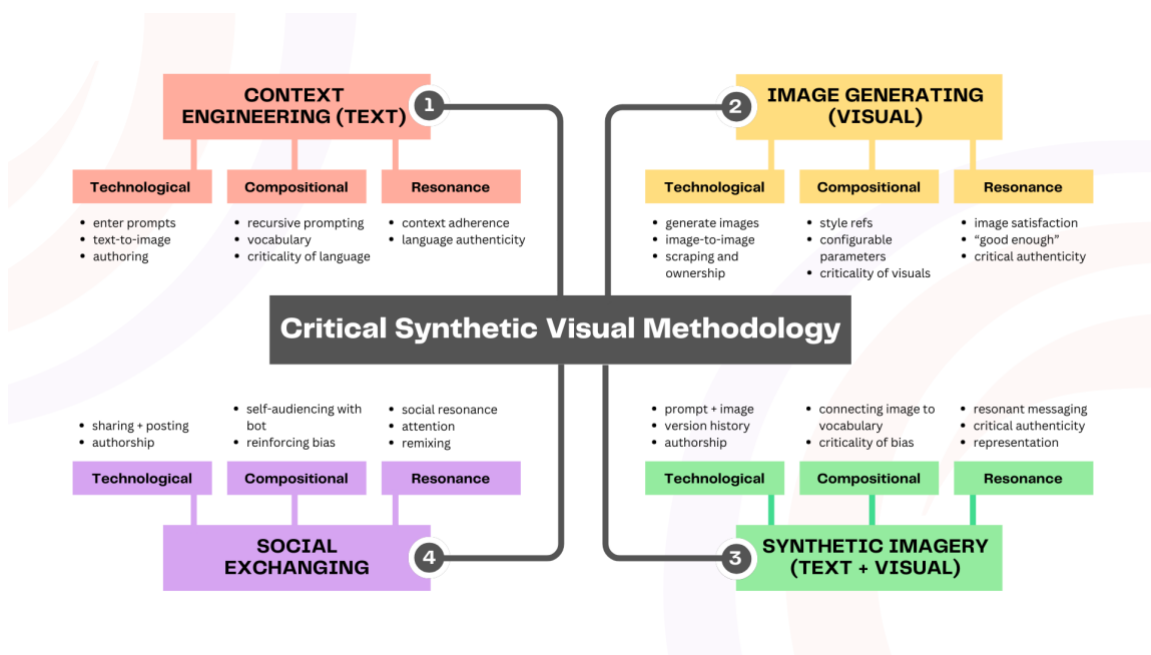
Instead of “Site of Production”, *context engineering* captures the iterations of prompts as attempts to establish context. For the “Site of the Image”, CSVM focuses on *image generating*, a result of the context engineering of prompts, and combines the text and image together to create the *synthetic image* and its social meaning. CSVM then

combines audiencing and circulating into *social exchanging* to capture the social lifespan of the image.

Finally, CSVM retains Rose's (2023) first two modalities of technological and compositional but refines the third modality of "social" as "resonance". Participant C (2025) wrote this about their second image: "when the image appeared, a voice in my mind said, "that's it". It resonated with me—not just emotionally, but also in its colours, its peace, its atmosphere, and the connection I felt" (Personal communications). Resonance, "a quality of richness, of evoking response" (Merriam-Webster, 2025), plays a significant role in CSVM. As Participant C shared, the end of prompting comes when an image resonates. Even if the image contains flaws, as it did in Participant B's (2025) second image, the resonance outpowered the imperfection: "it's AI, so it can't be perfect" (Personal communications). Resonance also becomes the vehicle for the social exchange—this is why memes go viral as "social media thrives on moments of collective experience" (Hillary, 2025). The moment of resonance can be nostalgia, irony, parody, empathy, evocation, and so on, and this moment of human recognition ascribes the image value. This capturing of attention through social engagement makes resonance a fundamental modality to CSVM (see Figure 15).

### **Figure 15**

*Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology*



*Note:* Adapted from Rose, G. (2023). *Visual Methodologies*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Sage. Own work.

This methodology builds on the work of Rose (2023) in terms of critically evaluating the social effect of image-making through production, the image itself, circulating and audiencing, and applies it to the social world of synthetic imagery. This approach offers more relevance to understanding the implications of these generative activities resulting in a more comprehensive analysis of participant data.

Thus, to code participant images, I considered these four stages of interactions: context engineering (text), image generating (visual), synthetic imagery (text and visual), and social exchanging through the lenses of technology, composition, and resonance. Each of these interactions also engage with critical problems such as authorship, bias, representation, marginalizing algorithms, inclusions and exclusions, and the criticality of language and visuals. I also employed additional methods to help draw as much data as I could from the prompts, images, and transcriptions.

### **Additional Methods**

CVSM incorporates additional analytical frameworks into its design (see Figure 15). These include Trombeta and Cox's (2022) Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis, the SHOWeD method of photovoice, and restorying.

#### ***Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis (TVTA)***

Trombeta and Cox (2022) included Rose (2023) in their list of “incompatible” visual methodologies for analyzing both texts and images (p. 1563). They wrote that “the visual methodologies did not entirely fit our aims [to] analyze photographs in conjunction with transcripts” (p. 1563). Trombeta and Cox (2022) argued that focusing only on text “neglects the role of the image and their contribution to the analysis process”, whereas focusing only on visuals in the “absence of an accompanying narrative prioritizes the researcher’s interpretations” (p. 1561). Trombeta and Cox’s (2022) Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis (TVTA) had three phases: textual data thematic analysis (using Braun and Clarke’s (2013) six step thematic analysis model), four guidance questions on the image integrated with the text, and integrating findings.

TVTA analyzes the text and then the text and image together, so when incorporating it into CSVM, I added a middle phase for the images alone before considering them as a unit with the text. Therefore, CSVM begins with prompting (textual data thematic analysis), moves to image generating (visual data thematic analysis), and then to synthetic imagery (the visual and text together). To assist with the image analysis phase, I drew on Rose’s (2023) compositional interpretation suggestions to break the image down into visual components like content, colour, spatial organization, light, and expressive content (pp. 125-145). However, generated images

tend to already have high saturation, high resolution, and rich color, making it more about the machine than a human's preferences. I added "style" to the list of visual components for two reasons. First, there are symbolic levels of meaning when considering the style in which the participant presents their image. For example, surrealist imagery reveals "symbolic representations of psychological states" in distorted, disruptive or unexpected ways (Huber, 2025, Understanding Surrealism section), whereas photorealistic images focus on facial features to realistically capture a human's experience (Fan et al., 2014). Secondly, it is critical to evaluate photorealistic images and the ensuing issues with biased algorithms, representation bias, and that tension between language and images that reinforce stereotypes (UNESCO, 2024).

Next, Trombeta and Cox (2022) asked four guidance questions which builds on the lower-order coding steps of text and image analysis. These questions ask the creator and/or researcher to reflect on:

- What is in the images that reinforces what was learned from the text?
- What is in the images that contradicts what was learned from the text?
- What is in the images that is not in the text?
- What is in the text that is not in the images? (p. 1566)

These questions bring the two texts together (prompt and image) to see how they mirror each other, looking for "congruence" or "divergence" (Trombeta & Cox, 2022, p. 1566). This initial reflection on similarities and differences set the stage for the next level of reflecting on synthetic imagery: SHOWeD.

***Photovoice: The SHOWeD Method***

Rose (2023) mentioned photovoice in passing (p. 349), but Wang's (1999) SHOWeD model brought an important piece of social implication to the process of data analysis. Originally, the researcher would invite all participants to come together where each participant would share their answers to the SHOWeD questions (Strack, 2019, p. 3). For the purposes of this study, this activity would not have been in the spirit of social justice since the participants articulated certain desires such as the need for anonymity, the stress of masking, social anxiety, and language barriers. However, I did use the SHOWeD prompts to consider if they could answer my research questions. The SHOWeD model asks:

- What do you **see**?
- What is really **happening** here?
- How does this relate to **our** lives?
- **Why** does this situation exist?
- How could this image **educate** others?
- What can we **do** about the problem? (Wang, 1999)

The final method would be the highest order of thinking that incorporates all these reflections (the general CSVN framework, the TVTA analysis (text, image, text and image, guidance questions), and the SHOWeD model: restorying.

### ***Restorying***

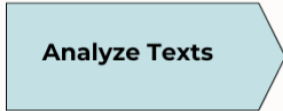
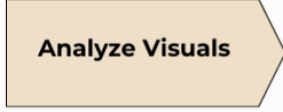


This approach to visual data analysis culminates in the participant's reflections on their prompts and images (see the end of Appendix B for the restorying sheets). The restorying sheets offer participants a variety of questions to consider as part of their image-making process. Unlike the guided TVTA and SHOWeD questions, restorying is

much more open and participants chose a variety of ways to communicate their impressions (through transcriptions, in summary paragraphs, and in answering only select prompts that appealed to them). In essence, participants “re-story earlier experiences [to] reflect on later experiences [as] meaning shifts over time” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 9).

Figure 16 shows the heuristics and data analysis flow that incorporates TVTA, photovoice’s SHOWeD model, restorying and Rose’s (2023) compositional analysis. This guided the data analysis process of analyzing texts, visuals, texts and visuals combined, and their currency in the social exchange.

**Figure 16**

*Heuristics and Data Analysis Flow*

Analytical Task	Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology	Analytical Method(s)
 <p>Analyze Texts</p>	<p><b>Context Engineering (Texts)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thematic Analysis</b> (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2013)</p> <p><b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta &amp; Cox, 2022)</p>
 <p>Analyze Visuals</p>	<p><b>Image Generating (Visuals)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Compositional Analysis</b> (Rose, 2023)</p> <p><b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta &amp; Cox, 2022)</p>
 <p>Connect Texts + Visuals</p>	<p><b>Synthetic Images (Text + Visual)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta &amp; Cox, 2022)</p>
 <p>Reflect</p>	<p><b>Exchanging Meaning (Social)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Photovoice Reflection</b> (Wang, 1999)</p> <p><b>Restorying Reflection</b> (Clandinin &amp; Connelly, 2000)</p>

*Note.* A culmination of my approach to analyzing participant data. (Own work, 2025).

### **Summary**

The implications of my research design highlighted the importance of integrating learner experiences in writing centre pedagogical considerations to ensure better and inclusive practice in the age of GenAI. This research approach explored how current dependence-based pedagogies problematized student participation in the writing centre, and how an inclusive approach like parasupport is more resonant. Photovoice and restorying offered this study a human look at disability in the writing centre stressing the importance of revisiting guidelines to reduce ableism. Finally, converting Rose's (2023) Critical Visual Methodology to a Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology (CSVM) by incorporating the methods mentioned above along with Textual Visual Thematic Analysis and the SHOWeD questions from photovoice, addresses the unique nature of synthetic image production and circulation through social exchange.

## Chapter 4. Findings

### Data Collection: Participant Contributions

#### Overview

For each participant's image, I created a document that tracked their prompts, the number of iterations, and the inclusions and exclusions made. I also tracked their style over these iterations making note of genre (e.g., surrealism) and if they used Midjourney to create a variation (strong or subtle tweaks to the original composition) or an upscale (enhance the features/resolution of the current image). I called this document "prompts". As well, for each participant I collected 1-2 transcript recordings and pulled relevant information from the email thread ("personal communications") and collected their restorying sheets ("restorying").

Midjourney generates a horizontal row of four images in response to a prompt, and if working in Discord, Midjourney generates the images into a 2 x 2 grid of four images. For each participant, I share one process grid as well as the resulting image. Both share an image number (i.e., "Image 1") similar to a rough draft and a final draft. Finally, I coded these documents in MAXQDA using a codebook (see Appendix G).

I split the codebook into initial sets of categories to match the heuristics and data analysis flow (see Figure 16). For example, these categories grouped together content codes for the images, my research questions, the photovoice and restorying reflections, and codes for prompting. I updated the codebook when necessary to include elements that emerged from the data. I also used in vivo coding to capture important phrases that elaborated on participant contributions. I generated summaries for each participant to identify emerging themes, and I will discuss the thematic process later in this chapter.

## Presentation of Participant Findings

All participants are diagnosed with a disability, supported by Accessibility Services, are post-secondary students in Canada, and attend or have attended Athabasca University as visiting or current students.

For each participant, I provide a short summary for context, highlight key findings culminating from the methodological approach but do not itemize steps of each method. Instead, I compile my answers into a narrative flow. I address each participant one at a time, and the participants agreed for me to use their chosen pronouns.

For the sake of concision with APA formatting and reducing visual clutter:

- I did not add the year in narrative or parenthetical citations since the year is indicated in the note of each figure.
- The participants are named Participant A (PA), Participant B (PB), Participant C (PC), and Participant D (PD).
- The intext citations include the participant’s “shortened ID” (e.g., PA for Participant A), type of data (e.g., prompt, personal communications, or restorying) and the image location (I1, I2, I3, I4 or I5). See Table 1 below for a complete number of images per participant.
- I did not change the participant’s original spelling or grammar.

**Table 2**

### *Participant Overview*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Shortened ID</b>	<b>Number of Images</b>	<b>Transcripts</b>
Participant A	PA	4 (I1, I2, I3, I4)	1
Participant B	PB	2 (I1, I2)	2
Participant C	PC	2 (I1, I2)	2
Participant D	PD	5 (I1, I2, I3, I4, I5)	1

Finally, see the following appendices for support materials connected to this section:

- Appendix F for quick access to heuristics and data analysis flow
- Appendix G for the codebook
- Appendix H for a PowerPoint link to view the images separately

## **Participant A**

### **Context**

During our first conversation, Participant A (PA) inquired if the images could portray a dynamic story over time versus a static representation of how she felt during independent moments. This became a chronological structure for her storytelling. Initially, PA created three images depicting her experience confronting a difficult project, seeking help at a writing centre, and the positive impact of that engagement on her self-perception afterwards. During an email exchange in which I asked PA some reflection questions as part of the restorying process, PA shared that she had previously accessed support at a writing centre at a different institution that resulted in a negative experience. PA recollected that “as an undergraduate student, I accessed a writing help centre, and the experience left me feeling worse” (personal communications). I asked PA if she would consider creating an additional image to capture this experience. The resulting image became “Image 1” in the sequence of four images.

### **Image 1**

### **Figure 17**

*Participant A, Image 1: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated using the prompt “a young woman lying down in bed looking hopeless like she is about to cry,” by Participant A with Midjourney, 2025.

Through nine iterations (prompt attempts), PA focused her context engineering on refining emotion, cycling back and forth between “hopeless” and “depressed”, and experimenting with “exasperated”, “about to cry”, and “messy room” (prompts, I1). One prompt iteration used the phrase “not being good enough” (PA, prompts, I1). PA found context adherence with the resulting prompt for Image 1: “a dark bedroom with a woman lying in bed looking depressed. the picture has a red tint” (prompts, I1). PA was happy with this prompt as it “helped me explore different words that captured how I felt as I had to tweak the prompt to create the image” (restorying, I1).

As PA refined her prompts, she also focused on the lighting in the image from general tints and localized lamps to the “red tint” mentioned in the final prompt (prompts, I1). This colour created a romantic realist tone suggesting a melancholic mood. A final note—in Midjourney, each prompt results in a grid of four potential images, and when PA entered “a young woman” across the nine prompt iterations, I noticed that

Midjourney initially populated white women or white-passing women of color. This was a trend across all generated images for this study.

### **Figure 18**

*Participant A, Image 1: Non-constructive Criticism*



*Note:* Image generated using the prompt “a dark bedroom with a woman lying in bed looking depressed. the picture has a red tint,” by Participant A with Midjourney, 2025.

PA’s Image 1 featured a young woman in her bed, eyes closed, but with a look of consternation on her face implying worry instead of sleep. The red tint drowned most of her features in shadow except her face, emphasizing this expression. In her restorying reflection, PA wrote that she was trying to capture the experience of “hopelessness”, “depression”, and “not being good enough” (restorying, I1). These feelings were the result of the following experience PA endured with a writing centre:

This image is in response to providing a rough draft of an essay for feedback. The paper only had some underlines and “?” written throughout, and at the end, a comment of, “your ideas are all over the place”. I do not know what was wrong

with the parts that had underlines or question marks. I re-read my essay and tried to move parts around so it seemed less “all over the place”. When I attempted to get feedback again, I was told that I could only ask once. I was unable to find anything in writing that confirmed only one session. To this day, when I write anything, even a text message to a friend, I re-read it multiple times and ask, “is this all over the place?” and I feel like my brain does not work the way that it should. (PA, restorying, I1)

To evoke this despair, PA chose a red tint to “make the image look more hopeless” which generated an image that captured the “sadness that I felt in that moment” (restorying, I1). Without the context of these explanations, it was difficult to ascertain the source of the emotion; however, the red tint effectively conveyed a general sense of despair. To PA, the image did “validate how I was feeling and my experience. They captured how I felt differently than words could” (restorying, I1). PA also shared that the general message of this image “reminds me to consider how others might understand your words” (restorying, I1). Considering this statement in correlation to the synthetic image suggested an invisible consequence to unsupportive coaching: an internal mental distress, known only to the participant.

## **Image 2**

### **Figure 19**

*Participant A, Image 2: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated using the prompt “A young woman sitting in front of a laptop looking stressed out or defeated,” by Participant A with Midjourney, 2025.

In the process of creating Image 2, PA went through six iterations, making minor changes and mostly sticking with “looking stressed out or defeated” (prompts, I2). PA worked on developing the photorealistic images through creating variations in Midjourney, eventually settling on Figure 20. Variations are slight changes to the selected image’s composition that can be subtle or strong. PA selected the final version of Image 2 with the prompt: A young woman sitting in front of a laptop looking stressed out or defeated (prompts, I2).

**Figure 20**

*Participant A, Image 2: Receives an assignment that requires a new written skill set*



*Note:* Image generated using the prompt “A young woman sitting in front of a laptop looking stressed out or defeated,” by Participant A with Midjourney, 2025.

Image 2 featured a photorealistic young woman with red hair, wearing earth tones, and sitting at her desk looking off into the distance. The young woman did not appear content but had an expression of dread or futility. PA shared that “this image captures how I felt prior to using the writing centre” (restorying, I2). PA described the expression as “subtle but shares the deep dread of attempting something unfamiliar” (restorying, I2). PA showed how this feeling of dread in connection to writing persisted beyond that initial negative interaction with a writing centre: “I have this feeling about writing any time I have to write something new” (personal communications, I2) and clarified the feeling as “not believing they can do it” (restorying, I2).

With this image, PA wrote that she was trying to generate an image that communicated a “sense of defeat or dread. This person is asked to write in a way that

they never have before, with limited training” (personal communications, I2). The prompt revealed the source of this dread and how PA summarized this despair as making her feel she might “cry” (restorying, I2). This experience of feeling stuck becomes a learning barrier that exacerbates negative feelings about oneself, and this close-up image implies a scenario of managing these feelings and the ensuing task without support.

### Image 3

#### Figure 21

*Participant A, Image 3: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated using the prompt “A young woman sitting at a laptop, looking surprised” by Participant A with Midjourney, 2025.

Keeping with a photorealistic style, PA cycled through nine iterations to generate Image 3. In pursuit of the resonant facial expression, PA went from "smiling" and "laughing", through "surprise" to "happy" and finally to "shocked" and "empowered" (prompts, I3). This showed an evolution from more reactionary verbs to the more

intrinsically driven self-empowerment. PA described her iterative process to achieve prompt adherence:

I tried words such as “shocked”, “relieved”, “surprised”, but they did not lead to the right facial expression that I wanted and seemed almost like cartoonish. By adding “a little surprised”, I captured a better sense of how I felt. I would have liked the sense of surprise a little less extravagant. (PA, Restorying, I3)

PA also used the variation prompt to refine the final image.

### **Figure 22**

*Participant A, Image 3: Using the Writing Centre*



*Note:* Image created by Participant A with Midjourney using the prompt “a young woman sitting behind a black laptop, smiling, looking a little surprised but empowered”. 2025.

In Image 3, PA generated a moment of connection between her and a writing specialist during an online meeting. The photorealistic subject looks directly at the

viewer to indicate social exchange. PA wanted to illicit “feeling shocked, relieved, and happy that the help you received was so thorough and empowering” (personal communications, I3). PA summarized the image as being “a bit more surprised than I felt”; however, the image did capture a “sense of relief and happiness [that] reflects how I felt receiving help” (personal communications, I3). PA also indicated that she went into this meeting “with no expectations” and “was pleasantly surprised” (personal communications, I3).

When asked how this image captured her experience as a person with a disability seeking support in the writing centre, PA shared the following about her engagement with this writing specialist:

They did not make me feel like a disabled, “other” student. I was given tools in a way that worked for me, and they even followed up. I was shocked at how good the help was that I received, how kind the staff member was, and how helpful the writing support centre was. (PA, restorying, I3)

This was the first image generated by PA where the subject “focalize[d]” (Rose, 2023, p. 134) directly at the viewer. Direct eye contact indicates social engagement, but also “shows the other person they are important” (Royse, 2021). Considering the suggested invisibility in the previous images (alone in bed (I1); alone at desk (I2)), this highlights a key relational development in PA’s story.

#### **Image 4**

#### **Figure 23**

*Participant A, Image 4: Process Example*

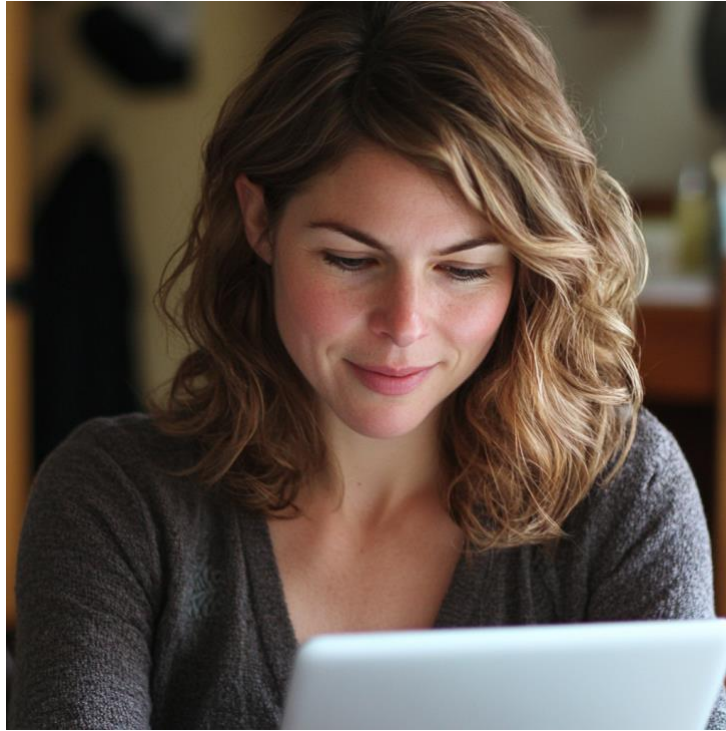


*Note:* Image created by Participant A with Midjourney using the prompt “A woman in her mid thirties with shoulder length wavy brown hair working on her laptop”. 2025.

In her final image, PA created one prompt and stuck with it, attempting only three iterations. Staying in a photorealistic style, PA quickly chose the final image using the original prompt: “A woman in her mid thirties with shoulder length wavy brown hair working on her laptop” (prompts, I4).

### **Figure 24**

*Participant A, Image 4: Working*



*Note:* Image created by Participant A with Midjourney using the prompt “A woman in her mid thirties with shoulder length wavy brown hair working on her laptop”. 2025.

After the successful visit with the writing centre, PA wanted to “show a woman working confidently with pride in her work” (personal communications, I4). As she built the image, PA reflected that “I wanted the woman to look a little bit like me. She doesn’t look like me but generically have similar hair and skin tone” (restorying, I4). PA described her emotional reaction to this image as “happiness” and “pride” even though she “didn’t have to add confidence or pride and it showed it anyway” (restorying, I4).

PA concluded that she now “feels proud” of her “work and skills” and that “I can feel proud to display my work, rather than handing something in that I did not feel met a certain standard” (personal communications, I4). This shift from shame to confidence, or stuck to unstuck, can be seen across the full sequence of images produced by PA where

Image 1 showed the state of paralysis and the final image depicts active engagement in work following the trigger point of receiving inclusive writing centre instruction.

### Images in Sequence

#### Figure 25

*Participant A: Four Generated Images in Sequence*



*Note:* Images generated by Participant A with Midjourney. 2025.

PA shared her story through a sequence of four images revealing a transformation that seemed critical to her future success as an academic student. This transformation can be seen in a few ways across the images.

In terms of light usage, the images progressed from dark and shadowed in the first image to the final image where light seemed to come from within. The first image was quite submerged in shadow with only the facial expression of despair being discernable. In the second image, the draped window as light source created a more muted tone. Image 3 brought in more environmental light as well as the brightness from the face. Finally, a luminescent glow implied light from the computer but in combination with the facial expression suggested an existential brightness.

The positioning of the computer also changed across the images. In the first image, the computer was absent suggesting academic paralysis. The computer appeared in the second image, but the person was disengaged. In the third image, PA shared the

context of an online meeting emulated by the direct eye contact and prominent positioning of the computer as a conduit. In the final image, while the computer remained visible, the image focused on the person's engagement with her work, substantiated by the title of this image as "Working". Thus, the image sequence began in a crisis of inaction and ended in active engagement with writing.

Engagement with the camera changes across the sequence of images. In the first image, the person had her eyes closed seeming internalized and disengaged from the camera. The second image showed a person with a disconnected gaze, and the third invoked a direct gaze to the camera. In this third image, it was as though the viewer and subject were sharing a moment. In the final image, her eyes are shrouded again, but the facial expression suggested that the person was dialed in, working, and engaged.

What I found most striking about these images is that they really captured the impact writing feedback can have on a person with disabilities seeking support. It can marginalize, discourage, and demotivate causing the person to question their abilities and feel triggered by new assignments. Yet inclusive writing centre instruction can also inspire through a relational engagement that puts the person first and invests in their capabilities and success. This can be the difference between feeling insecure about what it takes to succeed and feeling confident and staying in a program. The key message from PA's story highlights the positive impact of inclusive writing centre coaching that did not "other" but empowered PA to continue her academic journey.

## Participant B

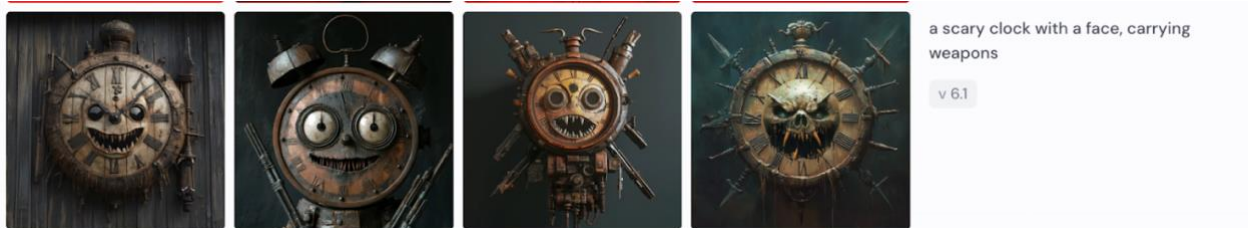
### Context

In the first interview, PB indicated that she was quite high functioning academically and only sought out writing support due to the emotional aspects of her disability. When initially describing the images she generated, PB decided to work with an “object that symbolizes an emotion” instead of creating a human because “it’s going to be hard to make it look like me” (personal communications). Therefore, PB generated two images with a central symbol of a clock. PB explained that “time is a theme” in that the pressure of time “makes me feel like I should have done my degree by now”, “that I am out of time”, and that “time and deadlines...are my struggles” (personal communications).

### Image 1

#### Figure 26

*Participant B, Image 1: Process Example*



*Note:* Images created by Participant B with Midjourney using the prompt “a scary clock with a face, carrying weapons”. 2025.

PB cycled through nine iterations that began with “a dancing rain cloud” and ended with “a scary clock with a face with bloody weapons” (prompts, I1). PB experimented with genre, creating images “like a horror movie”, “carrying bloody weapons”, and “[with a] red background” (prompts, I1). PB shared that “it took me a

couple of tries of writing the right prompts to find what I wanted” (restorying, I1). I also observed that for this image, PB used first person in her context engineering: “the passage of time is scaring me” (prompts, I1).

It seemed PB had a very clear idea of the image she wanted to convey with the symbolism of time as a villain. This first process began with a whimsical dreamscape, progressed through a steampunk-inspired set and resulted in a pirate-like horror presentation as the final image.

**Figure 27**

*Participant B, Image 1: The Passage of Time is Scaring Me*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant B with Midjourney using the prompt “a scary clock with a face with bloody weapons”. 2025.

In this image, PB reflected that

So much time has been wasted in past years. I felt so behind (still do occasionally), and felt like with course end dates approaching, all I could do is procrastinate and feel scared and overwhelmed. I felt attacked by the passage of time. Notice that some of the weapons are pointed toward the clock and hurting the clock (I didn't put this in the prompt, but it hits home). This symbolizes how my years have been wasted in the past and how my time has been misspent, which also affected how I saw my future time. I feel this image reflects this state of mind before using the writing centre. (PB, personal communications, I1)

As PB constructed the image, she noted that it “actually ended up a little better than I was hoping. It took a couple tries to get the right image because at first the weapons weren’t bloody, and it took me a couple tries of writing the right prompts to find what I wanted” (personal communications, I1). PB summarized that the resulting image of a bloodied skull on a clock framed by bloodied arrows “reflects the frustration and anxiety I was feeling in my head” (personal communications, I1).

PB chose the imagery of blood “to make it more scary” to capture “the doomed feeling” that comes with “wastage of time” and “the effect it has on my day, week, or just the years and how much time is wasted” (personal communications, I1). PB further explained that this image expressed her experience with disability because “my disability isn’t really academic...it’s more like a mood disorder. So anxiety, fear. Stress” (personal communications, I1). PB symbolized this with the arrows and the directions in which they are pointing:

Of the four options, this one has a balance of both (pointing outwards and inwards). I really like how the arrows are pointing inwards except for the two

hands of the clock. I thought it was very symbolic and poetic. The two hands symbolize the future, like how time is passing in the current, and how it's attacking me and stressing me. It gives a horror movie effect. (PB, personal communications, I1)

My initial impression of this image with the use of wood, skull, and weapons extending past the edge of the clock like the spokes of the helm drummed up associations with a pirate ship. I also initially coded this image with the skull as an antagonist as though integrated with the clock as a supernatural entity. However, upon rereading PB's restorying sheets where she indicated that "some of the weapons are pointed towards the clock and hurting the clock (i didn't put this in the prompt)" (restorying, I1), it suggested to me that she saw herself linked to and injured by time. PB substantiated this by saying "I feel attacked by the passage of time" (restorying, I1).

PB found resonance with the image as it "reflects this state of mine before using the [writing centre]" and "symbolizes how my years have been wasted and my time misspent" (restorying, I1). The intensity of the image conveyed the devastating impact executive dysfunction can have on someone's wellbeing.

## Image 2

### Figure 28

*Participant B, Image 2: Process*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant B with Midjourney using the prompt “a scary clock with a face with bloody weapons”. 2025.

For Image 2, PB only went through four iterations, once again suggesting she had a clear vision for what she was looking for. The prompts reconfigured the three central words of “clock”, “skull face”, and “fixed by fairies” (PB, prompts, I2) in the iterations before settling on the final prompt: “Clock with skull face being fixed by fairies” (PB, prompts, I2). In response to these prompts, the images progressed from a gothic and romantic expression to finally settling on an image with Victorian-like features. PB also upscaled the image before finalizing it.

### **Figure 29**

*Participant B, Image 2: Tutor Helped Relieve My Anxiety*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant B with Midjourney using the prompt “Clock with skull face being fixed by fairies”. 2025.

PB indicated that she was “so frustrated with writing” which prompted her to seek writing support from the writing centre, and this image captured her experience as the writing centre tutor helped me to organise time and give guidance and direction, like what to prepare for the next session. She was very understanding and helped me clear the mess in my head. This image shows how the writing centre gave me hope and support in my journey, and I wish to return to the writing centre again. (PB, personal communications, I2)

After meeting with the writing specialist, PB shared that it “helped me with the emotional aspect which ties into my disability, which is organization, procrastination and just managing time” (personal communications, I2). To PB, this image captured a “work in progress” where “they’re working on it to make [the clock] good as new. I’m thinking of the [the fairy] ‘Tinkerbell’” and how fairies in this image are ‘tinkering’...trying to fix it and make it feel better and get it more organized (personal communications, I2). The figure held an implement that PB described as a “brush, or maybe has some glue on it, or paint” to symbolize the reconstruction process that for PB meant “heading toward finishing the assignment” (personal communications, I2).

PB generated the central figure to emulate the writing specialist who helped “with the scariness of the clock and made it more friendly” (personal communications, I2). PB was unsure if “it’s a fairy or a person [because] we can’t see any wings. But it looked like the tutor, kind of” (personal communications, I2). PB viewed the fairies as “helpful”, “spiritual”, “cute”, “good”, and noted that “I could have done angels. It would be the same thing” (personal communications, I2). PB added that the fairies have “good intentions” and that they act “without judgement” which “captures that experience” of

feeling “more calm [and] support[ed] instead of doing everything on my own. Like there’s somebody that can be a guide” (personal communications, I2).

PB reflected that this process of image generation and restorying “made me feel like my emotions turned into images. It definitely made me feel like I could see my emotions” unlike with writing which “would not have [been] fun just. Images just have a different effect. With words, I would have had to write more. For the image, it took a few seconds for AI to generate it, so it was easier” (PB, personal communication, I2).

### Images in Sequence

#### Figure 30

*Participant B: Two Generated Images in Sequence*



*Note:* Images generated by Participant B with Midjourney. 2025.

PB’s images showed the progression of a clock with a skull at its center in a dark and sinister presentation to a clean, bone-colored Victorian-like expression. The first image looked like a pirate’s helm with the blood and arrows creating a sense of chaos and possibly implying the spinning movement of a wheel. The skull sported injuries to its frontal bone but also dripped blood from its sharp teeth indicating a violent engagement.

However, the skull did not appear to be mortally wounded (for a skull) but seemed to gaze at the viewer in an intense and persistent way.

The second image restored the skull to its familiar incarnation with the fissures and teeth as expected. This helped establish a sense of a calm and pragmatism. The skull was mounted on a clock indicated by its Roman numerals however the clock did not have “hands”. This suggested that time has momentarily stopped, an observation that PB agreed with. This pause in time also supported a narrative of “work in progress”, that PB mentioned, with the girl in an embroidered blouse engaging in a precise but gentle restoration of the clock. Her implement, which could stand in for a clock hand, suggested tools to repair the skull. This tool in her right hand (pointing to the “2”) and her left arm (pointing to the “6”) mimicked the hands of the clock suggesting that this figure is in control of the time, and not the other way around, like in the first image.

Even though time had “stopped”, there was much activity in this image. The central figure in the forefront worked away at reconstruction accompanied by a flutter of fairies around the top rim of the clock helping at a microscopic level. One fairy showed an arm where a leg should be, revealing the inaccuracies of GenAI, but perhaps from a more imaginative perspective, this surprise appendage could suggest beauty and ability in difference, and even a whimsical antidote to the viciousness of the first image. PB’s decision to leave this error/happy accident in the image—“it’s funny” (restorying, I2)—revealed a welcome sense of levity after the wrath of the first image.

In the context of PB’s story, this first image captured the severity of an internal monologue that berated a person for not conforming to standards of “normalcy”—in this case expectations of task completion. This is a harrowing reality for students with

disabilities trying in good effort to accomplish tasks but struggling to do so and suffering emotionally as a result. These feelings of panic, pressure, and ensuing feelings of, as PB shares, “doom” (restorying, I1), can have a detrimental effect on one’s academic performance. Understanding that students with disabilities like PB manage this emotional cognitive load on top of her other responsibilities underscores the need for writing specialists to adopt an inclusive approach to their coaching duties.

The writing specialist in this situation did just that, as can be seen in the second image. The specialist incorporated elements of inclusive pedagogy like creating a safe space (gentle tone of the image) and collaboration (fairy-helpers) that gave PB a sense of academic autonomy. Furthermore, a result of this interaction is continued collaboration with the writing centre: “I wish to return” (restorying, I2). Offering students with disabilities the flexibility, space, and strategies to ease this cognitive load can have a transformative effect on their mindset, motivation to learn, and belief that they can accomplish the tasks before them.

### **Participant C**

#### **Context**

PC is currently a post-secondary fine arts student and designer who expresses her creative freedom in working with her hands. PC is also an English language learner and has experienced difficulties obtaining appropriate support with her writing. The over-emphasis on grammar at the detriment of higher order topics like critical thinking and organization of ideas has discouraged her from pursuing support from the writing centre. Initially, PC only created the first image, but during our conversation about how she used LLMs as an assistive technology that offered non-pressured support, I asked if she would

create one more image about the impact ChatGPT has had on her communication and understanding.

### Image 1

#### Figure 31

*Participant C, Image 1: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant C with Midjourney using the prompt “something happen in the mind”. 2025.

PC generated 12 iterations of prompts for this image, going back and forth between "disconnection", “isolation”, “chaos” and "something happen in the mind" (prompts, I1). As PC experimented with the language, she also considered styles like baroque surrealism, neo-noir surrealism, and neo-futurist surrealism.

#### Figure 32

*Participant C, Image 1: My Writing Experience*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant C with Midjourney using the prompt “a women, something chaos happen in her mind, feel isolated”. 2025.

PB settled on an image resembling grattage surrealism like scratch art or ink blot surrealism with a glitch effect showing contrasting strokes of black and white. PC explained:

After a few rounds of testing, I found that black and white felt closer to what I wanted to express than using colour. I chose the one that’s the darkest and most abstract, without a clear human figure—because rather than highlighting a woman, I want to emphasize the feeling itself. (PC, restorying, I1)

PC settled on this image with the final prompt of: “a women, something chaos happen in her mind, feel isolated” (prompts, I1).

PC’s image abstractly hinted at a silhouette with a white explosion about the head. PC shared that “I feel really like something I imagine. I think this set of pictures is really close to what I want to express” (personal communications, I1). PC acknowledged that it “is a little bit hard to depict my feeling but AI can generate very refined images, and the process helps me translate my consciousness into a visual form that others can see. It turns something abstract and vague—without a clear shape—into something more specific and tangible” (restorying, I1). This reinforces the power of visual communication to convey what language cannot.

PC observed “the wild, rough strokes resonated more with me than clean figures or decorative elements—especially when trying to convey emotions I couldn’t quite define (restorying, I1). As seen so far, Midjourney tends to beautify prompts, and PC noted this in her decision to take a different direction: “I’m trying something and then I find like, yeah, that the picture is very pretty but there are kind of like 2 pretties. I don’t think this experience is, like, very prettiest thing. So I feel it’s not” (personal communications, I1).

## Image 2

### Figure 33

*Participant C, Image 2: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant C with Midjourney using the prompt “insight”.

2025.

For the next image, PC generated six iterations with one-word prompts like “understand”, “remember”, and insight” (prompts, I2). These prompts accompanied another foray into surrealism, generating images in the style of cubist surrealism, romantic surrealism, dreamscape, and ultimately a classic surrealist final image. PC said the synthetic image “came to me very quickly” and while she “tried exploring other options, none resonated as strongly as this one” (restorying, I2). PC explored this resonance by sharing that

when the image appeared, a voice in my mind said, ‘That’s it’. It resonated with me—not just emotionally, but also in its colours, its peace, its atmosphere, and the connection I felt. Maybe it’s because they weren’t looking at me directly, so I didn’t feel a strong connection. In fact, they felt a bit too human. The image I chose, on the other hand, carries a sense of something beyond human—almost godlike, as if it knows everything. (PC, Restorying, I2)

To finalize Image 2, PC selected the prompt of “insight” and the classic surrealist image of the eye looking through the clouds.

### **Figure 34**

*Participant C, Image 2: You Know Me*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant C with Midjourney using the prompt “insight”.

2025.

PC’s second image was quite arresting, as its direct eye contact established a social exchange with the viewer. PC shared that “while the prompt may seem simple, I’m certain this image better captures how I felt” because “as someone whose thoughts are often chaotic when writing, ChatGPT feels like a calm and knowledgeable presence—almost like a god of clarity—that brings peace to my mind and gives me the confidence to write” (restorying, I2).

Before, PC would attend her writing centre and “every time I got the feedback I just feel Oh my God like. It’s so stressful. Even I don’t want to read about it sometimes. Yeah, this stuff I feel” (restorying, I12). This discomfort, according to our conversation, can be due to a blanket approach of coaching EAL students to prioritize grammar and deprioritize higher order writing concerns. When PC used ChatGPT assistively, she noted that “it somehow seems to read my mind and reflect back exactly what I was trying

to say (personal communications, I2). PC clarified that “I am not using it like write me an essay, but it can help me to generalize some structures and fix some like basic grammars things” (personal communications, I2). As a result, PC uses ChatGPT to

help me to like improve some grammar and small mistake and some structures.

And I still like improving my writings slowly, so I don't need a tutor to help me to correct every sentence or to fix some very basic issues. So like we can discuss more deep about. Like about essay. Even though they are nice and they say all we can help you, but if too many mistake I still feel very pressured to hand my essays to them. I learn a lot but the writing make me stress a lot. (PC, personal communications, I2).

PC posed an interesting conversation around how to better approach English language learners with disabilities in the writing centre, by supporting critical thinking processes instead of only focusing on English grammar and mechanics.

### **Images in Sequence**

#### **Figure 35**

*Participant C: Two Images in Sequence*



*Note:* Images generated by Participant C with Midjourney. 2025.

Looking at these two images in sequence, I saw a couple of progressions. First, a progression from “chaos” (which appeared in the original prompt) to clarity. The indiscernible shadow amid the vertical, horizontal, and haphazard lines made it difficult to locate the figure, whereas the second image optimized a bright lucidity, particularly the use of colour and light to emulate a realistic iris. PC described the first image as a “tangled ball of yarn, and I don’t think I can untangle it. After many years of struggling, I avoid taking literature classes like English—unless I absolutely must—because they slow down my entire learning process” (restorying, I1). However, in the contrasting second image, PC shared that “I genuinely feel like it understands me. It often provides exactly the kind of help I need, even when I’m not sure what I’m looking for” (restorying, I2). Thus, this progression from chaos to clarity became a progression in being understood.

In another paper I co-wrote on the power of positive comments, we discussed how encouraging comments can directly influence student confidence (Rodier et al., 2025). In my own experimentation with ChatGPT, I noticed that it responded to all my queries with a conversational positive like: “Absolutely!”, “Let’s do this!”, and “Certainly!” Anecdotally, my husband finds this annoying, and he is not alone in this complaint of “sycophancy” (Edwards, 2025). While ChatGPT also presents its own linguistic biases (Bjork, 2023), gender biases (Ho et al., 2025) and racialized algorithms (Hofmann et al., 2024), I wondered about my husband’s reaction being a white, male, cis, able-bodied, high-achieving, native English-speaking person. He embodies enough privileges that he does not need affirmations or validations. However, for a person in a marginalized community, these positive responses “provide a space for open dialogue

between members of different groups and ensure that voices are heard and included in the conversation” (Clelland, 2023). As Yin et al. (2024) discovered in their research on the human need to “feel heard” that despite the negative connotation of responses coming from AI “participants felt more heard” which may “help individuals from diverse backgrounds bridge understanding” (Results). I can see the draw—as a female raised in the 1980s, I have my own instilled socializations to not ask too many questions or be an imposition, and so during our conversation, PC and I shared a laugh at her comment that “sometimes I feel I’m too harsh to my chat” (personal communications) in persisting with a prompt like “I don’t understand”—an action that would be seen socially inappropriate with a real person.

These images, then, also show a progression from anxiety to capability, where: as someone whose thoughts are often chaotic when writing, ChatGPT feels like a calm and knowledgeable presence that brings peace to my mind and gives me the confidence to write. Instead of worrying about things like grammar, citations, or organization, I focus more on my ideas and thoughts. It allows me to express more opinions in my essays without being overwhelmed by the technical side of writing. (PC, Restorying, I2)

Therefore, these two images showed a contrast of being alone and overwhelmed to the transaction of insight that removed the language barrier, with the goal of her ideas becoming the central conversation, and not the quality of her grammar.

## Participant D

### Context

PD is a retired Canadian soldier returning to post-secondary education after devoting much of his adulthood to military service. PD was recently diagnosed with autism and has been working on ways to manage sensitivities which include the decision to pursue online learning. During our conversation, PD told me about his experience at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) which, at that time, did not afford accommodations or recognize difference because “everybody’s the same. Same standard for everybody. I don’t remember anyone hav[ing] special treatment (personal communications). This created a series of challenges for PD who had much academic success in high school where he was given accessibility freedoms like completing homework in the library. PD shared that at RMC, “it was very strict and in hindsight I’ve learned that I don’t absorb information in classrooms like that” (personal communications). I asked PD if he would include an image about that time at RMC.

### Image 1

#### Figure 36

*Participant D, Image 1: Process Example*



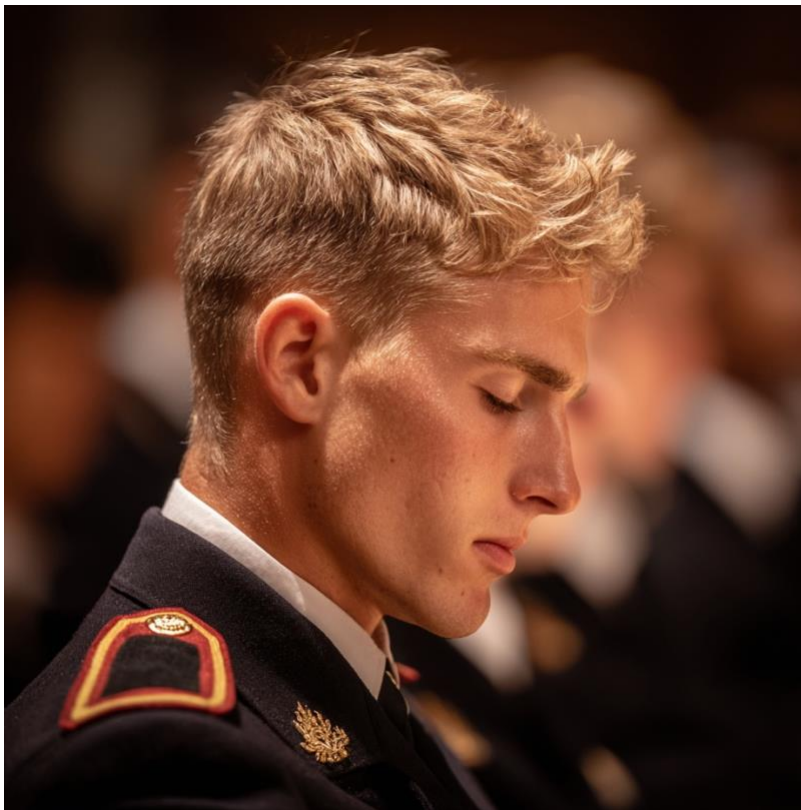
*Note:* Image generated by Participant D with Midjourney using the prompt “young man at royal military college of Canada, military haircut, unable to concentrate or focus due to

harsh lighting, discomfort, exhaustion, and distracting sounds, surrounded by a lecture room full of attentive young military students in sharp dress uniform”. 2025.

PD paid attention to vocabulary to get the desired image. Through seven iterations, PD experimented with qualifiers like "military haircut", "surrounded", "rigid", "harsh", "discomfort", "exhaustion", "distracting", and "unable to concentrate or focus" (prompts, I1). The images ranged in facial expressions from obedient, interested, and bored, to internal distress. Eventually, PD settled on the prompt: “young man at royal military college of Canada, military haircut, unable to concentrate or focus due to harsh lighting, discomfort, exhaustion, and distracting sounds, surrounded by a lecture room full of attentive young military students in sharp dress uniform” (prompts, I1).

**Figure 37**

*Participant D, Image 1: Misconstrued*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D with Midjourney using the prompt “young man at royal military college of Canada, military haircut, unable to concentrate or focus due to harsh lighting, discomfort, exhaustion, and distracting sounds, surrounded by a lecture room full of attentive young military students in sharp dress uniform”. 2025.

PD titled this photorealistic image “Misconstrued”, which he explained that while the image does not address all the prompts, “it depicts how the struggle is misconstrued as laziness or something that it is not” (restorying, I1). PD wrote that this image “captures my experience at military college” (restorying, I1) where he struggled in a variety of ways including from a sensory perspective. In PD’s prompt, he listed several sensory intrusions affecting his ability to “concentrate and focus”: harsh lighting, distracting sounds, discomfort, exhaustion, uniform, and military hair cut (restorying, I1). PD shared that “if I was diagnosed at the time I would not have been chosen for RMC” and concluded that “the environment was not ideal for my own learning and sensitivity” (restorying, I1).

These elements of overstimulation (including being in a crowd that is blurred in the background) may not be obvious to an outside viewer. This speaks to the “invisible toll of masking to meet societal or organizational expectations” (PD, Restorying, I1). Masking refers to the efforts made to appear or “pass as” neurotypical in social situations to avoid stigma (Miller et al., 2021). This survival mechanism meant to avoid undue criticism and autistic trait-shaming quickly becomes exhausting and dysregulating to a neurodivergent person (Evans et al., 2024). PD remarked that his emotional reaction to this image was “negative and somewhat traumatic while reflecting on missed opportunity or potential, while also reflecting on how much I’ve learned and grown” (restorying, I1).

This experience in a “traditional [in-person] university and having to conform to social expectations” (PD, Restorying, I1) prompted an interest in online learning.

## Image 2

### Figure 38

*Participant D, Image 2: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “a man sitting contemplatively at a desk, typing, large studio headphones, steaming cup of coffee, ambient lighting, fluffy cat curled up in a ball nearby”. 2025.

For his next image, PD cycled through 13 iterations, mostly focusing on descriptions of clothing and accommodations: “hoodie”, “hood down”, “headphones”, “Beyerdynamic headphones”, “fidget toy”, “toque”, “beanie”, “icebreaker beanie”, “merino wool beanie”, “ambient lighting”, “fluffy cat”, and “steaming coffee” (prompts, I2). I found these details interesting because it emphasized the accommodations PD employed to manage sensitivity such as light (ambient lighting), warm foods (steaming coffee), tactile regulation (fidget toy), comfortable clothing (beanie, hoodie), noise control (headphones), and emotional support (the cat). Accommodations like these can help balance over- and under-stimulation (Autism Speaks, 2025).

I also noticed that at first PD used the Canadian term “toque” and then replaced it with the American word “beanie”. Stelzel (2023) conducted an informal experiment with Midjourney where he took a prompt in English about a male lion running through a wild

west town and re-entered it in a few languages which inaccurately resulted in a guitar for the Japanese prompt, an animated fox for the Chinese prompt, and coin for the Italian prompt. In PD's case, he needed to replace Canadian terminology with American to achieve prompt adherence.

PD also experimented with the style of Studio Ghibli but ended up choosing a photorealistic image with this corresponding final prompt: "a man sitting contemplatively at a desk, typing, large studio headphones, steaming cup of coffee, ambient lighting, fluffy cat curled up in a ball nearby" (prompts, I1).

### **Figure 39**

*Participant D, Image 2: Respite*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: "a man sitting contemplatively at a desk, typing, large studio headphones, steaming cup of coffee, ambient lighting, fluffy cat curled up in a ball nearby". 2025.

PD began prompting with the phrase “at ease”, and when I read this phrase, I immediately thought of the military command to adopt a relaxed posture. I do not have military experience, and so my understanding of representations of soldiers largely comes from film, but I have often thought that “at ease” is not truly at ease. Yes, the soldier can relax, stand with their feet apart, put their arms behind their back, but they are still awaiting the next command. PD shared with me this definition of at ease: “the position of standing at ease is an intermediate position between attention and standing easy. It allows no relaxation but can be maintained without strain for a longer time than the position of attention” (Department of National Defense, 2024). This mirrored the title of PD’s second image, “Respite”, meaning a temporary break.

PD wrote that this image represented “the need to retreat from overstimulation” (restorying, I2). PD described his environment as one that “addresses my hypersensitivity to lighting, sound, and touch. I get overstimulated by harsh lighting, noise, and uncomfortable environments” (restorying, I2). PD also added human interaction as a source of overstimulation:

having to meet in person is a barrier to me because of the energy expenditure of meeting new people in new environments. I must consciously appear respectful and normal instead of concentrating on the writing. This increases anxiety before and exhaustion afterwards. Over time I have recognized this, and it has become more pronounced with age. (PD, restorying, I2)

PD summarized this as the “need to retreat from a world that has been constructed and designed for the majority” (restorying, I2). As an example, PD referenced the military college of his youth with its “physical attendance, uncomfortable uniforms/dress

regulations, and strict behaviour” and how he has “built an environment” addressing these concerns, offering comfort and alone time “where I can be myself” (restorying, I2).

In terms of writing, PD shared that these sensory intrusions “degrades my ability to write” and how the flexibility to “access the writing centre from anywhere with an internet connection” afforded him the comfort, space, and controlled environment to be productive (restorying, I2).

### Image 3

#### Figure 40

*Participant D, Image 3: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “a man sitting very relaxed, feet up and laptop on his lap, in a dark room next to a glowing fireplace, fluffy cat curled up next to him, Glencairn glass of scotch and smoking cigar in reach, abstract artwork on the wall”. 2025.

For his third image, PD created one prompt and stuck with it: “a man sitting very relaxed, feet up and laptop on his lap, in a dark room next to a glowing fireplace, fluffy cat curled up next to him, Glencairn glass of scotch and smoking cigar in reach, abstract artwork on the wall” (prompts, I3). PD focused more on refining and upscaling the image through 11 iterations. I would call the style “cozy realism” as there is a balance between the photorealism of the man but also the sensory feedback in the image that showcased

elements of relaxation: the couch, the fire, the art, the scotch, the man's position, and of course, the cat.

**Figure 41**

*Participant D, Image 3: Aspiration*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “a man sitting very relaxed, feet up and laptop on his lap, in a dark room next to a glowing fireplace, fluffy cat curled up next to him, Glencairn glass of scotch and smoking cigar in reach, abstract artwork on the wall”. 2025.

Since the cat appeared in both this image and the one previous, I quickly assumed that this was a progression, informed by my own life habits. I often work at a desk with the cat nearby like in Image 2, and then later in the evening, migrate to the couch, with the cat joining me in a similar fashion to Image 3. This showcased researcher bias,

because I assumed the title, “Aspiration”, suggested getting to this place in the evening as the ideal for end-of-day self-regulation.

However, PD wrote that this image represented a goal “given time, flexibility, resources, and knowledge” where he could “improve myself and my environment” (restorying, I3). He identified the art, scotch, cigar, and even the clothes as “represent[ing] success as there is time and resources available to enjoy the finer things” (PD, restorying, I3). PD further developed his intention in this image as

thriving in solitude and success. This person is well adjusted, balanced, and on top of his writing. I feel like this person would be ready to go back into public sometimes as he looks rested and restored from having a lot of time alone to focus on developing himself. He would not be as bothered by someone showing up unannounced. This person is comfortable and on top of everything rather than struggling. (PD, restorying, I3)

This is a strong argument for online writing centres as PD stated that “autistic people have a high need for alone time and can be easily entertained by our own worlds and interests” (restorying, I3). In this sense, reducing the cognitive load of in-person coaching sessions by offering online options allows students like PD to work towards his goals with reduced instances of discomfort.

#### **Image 4**

#### **Figure 42**

*Participant D, Image 4: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “a man studying on a laptop in a coffee shop, wearing airpods”. 2025.

PD cycled through 31 iterations for this image focusing on a person in a coffee shop who, despite accommodation use, gets distracted. First, PD played with descriptions to portray the busyness of the café: “local coffee shop”, “a few other people in the background”, “looking up”, “distracted by a person out of focus in the foreground”, and “barista in the background” (prompts, I4). Like in Image 2, PD refined the details of the accommodations being used in this scene: “airpods”, “wireless airpods pro”, “white wireless airpods”, “white wireless airpods pro”, “blue light glasses”, “yellow tinted glasses”, “Gunnar glasses”, “gunnar blue-light filtering glasses”, “gunner yellow tint blue-light glasses”, and “ball cap” (prompts, I4). As in Image 2, PD used language that suggested trying to manage an intrusive environment.

PD upscaled the final photorealistic image and settled on the following prompt: “unshaven man in a local coffee shop wearing Gunnar yellow tint blue-light filtering glasses, ball cap, white wireless airpods pro, laptop, looking up distracted by a person in the foreground, espresso coffee nearby, barista and espresso machine in the background” (PD, Prompts, I4).

### **Figure 43**

*Participant D, Image 4: Exposure Therapy*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “unshaven man in a local coffee shop wearing gunnar yellow tint blue-light filtering glasses, ball cap, white wireless airpods pro, laptop, looking up distracted by a person in the foreground, espresso coffee nearby, barista and espresso machine in the background”. 2025.

In this image, PD put himself in a challenging environment. This image captured the moment when distraction won, and he looked up to give it his attention. This can be such a frustrating moment when something or someone interferes with focus, making it harder to later return to the point of origin before the disruption. Like in Image 2, a conscious effort to equipping the subject with accommodations shows attunement to a sensory-disruptive environment: “going into public while wearing a hat, airpods and tinted glasses to manage sensitivity and over stimulation” (PD, Restorying, I4). PD initially regarded choosing a public context to work with the writing centre as following “the advice of a therapist or psychologist in order to avoid the consequences of social isolation” (restorying, I4).

However, despite best intentions—“how I might want to interact with the writing centre in public with some simple accommodations and aids” (PD, restorying, I4)—PD respected his emotional reaction to this image as to how this would realistically unfold.

PD shared that he found the image

unsettling as I don't think I would be able to write well in an environment that is this public. Due to combat experience, I would always be sitting with back to the wall and need to watch most people. The image reminds me that this probably wouldn't work or make me more productive at all. I believe withdrawal should not always be considered maladaptive as it helps me to manage overwhelming sensory input. I would not be able to concentrate with people coming and going. (PD, restorying, I4).

PD's description of this public environment showed that even the flexibility of online access to a writing centre is not a cure-all. Considering how to improve accessibility for sensitivity, in-person centres could adjust placement of chairs, reduce external noise, and evaluate quality of lighting, but these are not relevant to the online writing centre. However, in an online call, there is the close camera shots of faces that can be intense, the quality of the microphone, and even environmental choices I make in my own room like lighting and distracting backgrounds. Offering students the options to turn off cameras may reduce sensitivity stress.

### **Image 5**

### **Figure 44**

*Participant D, Image 5: Process Example*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “experienced bushcrafter relaxed in a hammock, reading a tablet”. 2025.

For his final image, PD worked through 44 iterations to capture the image he visualized. As soon as PD experimented with “loon” as a qualifier, I began to “hear” sounds in the images like the loon call, the smouldering fire, and the serene sounds of outdoors. At the very beginning, PD tried “retired soldier” as a prompt but quickly replaced it with “experienced bushcrafter” (prompts, I5). I found this identity switch an interesting development as it seemed to validate this different phase of PD’s life.

Visually, the images moved from pastoral realism with the scenic environments to an inclusion of “golden hour” which changed the tint in the images (PD, prompts, I5). Luminism (Tate, 2025) was a 19<sup>th</sup> century art movement that focused on the effect of light on a landscape. This switch from pastoral realism to luminism and the “golden hour” shifted the tone to an almost utopian scene, bucolic and backwoods like a postcard. PD’s final prompts included “bearded bushcrafter wearing a worn bushcap relaxing in a hammock hanging from two trees, face lit from a glowing tablet, backpack on the ground, fire smoldering in the foreground, lots of mist rising from a lake in the background, golden hour” (prompts, I5).

### **Figure 45**

*Participant D, Image 5: Serenity*



*Note:* Image generated by Participant D and Midjourney using the prompt: “bearded bushcrafter wearing a worn bushcap relaxing in a hammock hanging from two trees, face lit from a glowing tablet, backpack on the ground, fire smoldering in the foreground, lots of mist rising from a lake in the background, golden hour”. 2025.

PD entitled his final image “Serenity” in reference to being completely alone outside with natural distraction grounds you in the present moment. Therapists call this “grounding”, and kids nowadays call it “touching grass.” Being grounded in the present and the therapeutic benefit of immersing yourself in nature is a perfect balance of stimulation, solitude and positive creative energy. (PD, restorying, I5)

PD described his emotional reaction to this image as “serenity” because “I feel most at ease in nature because there is solitude without being isolated, there is stimulation without being over stimulated. This is the natural environment for my brain”

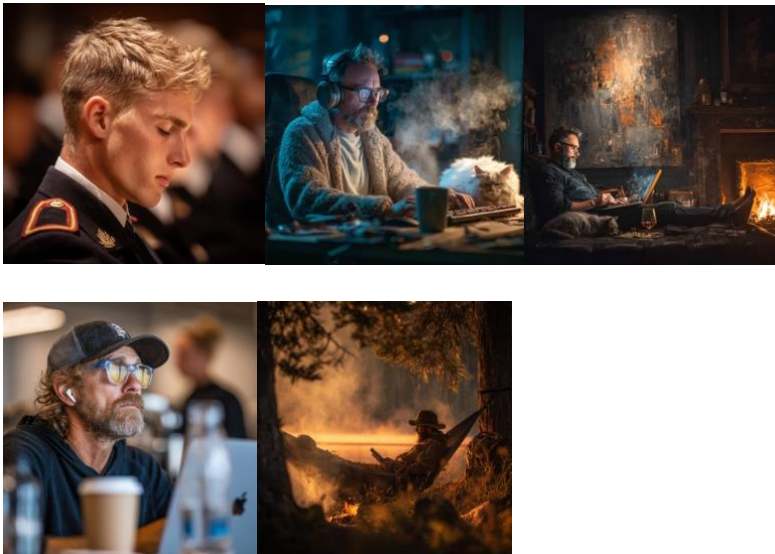
(restorying, I5). Unlike the stress of the previous image of attempting to work in a populated café, PD wrote that the outdoors would be “beneficial to collaborating with the writing centre [because] it depicts the flexibility I have to access the writing centre from many different environments that are beneficial, which results in better performance and productivity” (restorying, I5).

PD’s comments highlight the importance of environment to foster conducive learning experiences. It also questions what defines “social”—that asynchronous communication from solitude does not have to signify isolation.

### Images in Sequence

#### Figure 46

*Participant D: Five Images in Sequence*



*Note:* Images generated by Participant D with Midjourney. 2025.

In sequence, PD’s five images showed a few progressions. First, there was an age range from a youth struggling in a challenging environment to the middle-aged version actively controlling his environment (e.g., desk, living room, café, outdoors) as best they

could. This depicted a change in power and that over time the person had become empowered in their own lives.

The focus on accommodations could explain this expression of empowerment over time. In the first image, the youth did not have any accommodations to manage the sensory overstimulation, rendering him vulnerable. The remaining images consistently showed an attention to accommodation in various environments that targeted light, sound, anxiety, touch, and focus. Seeing these same accommodations from picture to picture suggested a regularity to using aids.

The stress of overstimulation could be seen in the first image and the corresponding prompt capturing the consequences of intense sensory input. Various stages of regulation were shown in the remaining images with the person prepared for a disruptive environment (Image 4), going through the strategies (Image 2), and ideal states of regulation (Images 3 and 5).

I would also suggest that Image 5 depicted a state of agency where the person was in a highly regulating environment in which he knew this about himself and had the supplies to make it successful (e.g., hat, hammock, tablet, the backpack). To the restorying question “does this image change how you feel about this experience?”, PD answered “no” for each image (restorying, I1-I5). However, for the question “what is your emotional reaction to this image?”, PD answered “negative and somewhat traumatic” (Image 1), “neutral” (Image 2), “inspired” (Image 3), “unsettling” (Image 4), and “serenity” (Image 5) (restorying, I1-I5). This tells me that PD knows himself and his corresponding needs, preferences, and dislikes very well. Approaching writing centre pedagogy from a more student-directed approach, like in parasupport, ensures that

students like PD, advocate for what they needs from the service. This takes listening to students, hearing their stories, and asking what they do and do not need to support their agency in learning. To combat ableist assumptions where “some writing centers’ best practices are framed for students with particular abilities” (Hitt, 2017, p. vii), Angelesey and McBride (2019) argue to “shift writing centers toward more inclusive and supportive methods of listening” (para. 5). Thus, applying ableist approaches to students with disabilities in a writing centre context is ineffective and harmful.

### **Thematic Analysis**

The rich data from the participants (prompts, images, restorying sheets, interview transcripts, email exchanges, and process versions of the prompts and images) regarding ableism in writing centre pedagogy revealed numerous emergent themes like the detrimental impact of social etiquette, emotional consequences of marginalizing coaching techniques, and elements of inclusive writing centre instruction. I distilled them down into four key themes that can positively shift writing centre pedagogy for students with disabilities. Note that discussions and research about the problems, ethics, and concerns surrounding GenAI’s biased algorithms have been discussed elsewhere in this paper (Chapter 3; earlier in Chapter 4), and the following section extends this discussion to support my thematic analysis of the participants’ contributions to the study.

These four themes include: *the power of visual communication* (emerging from the positive interactions the participants expressed generating AI images to convey their experiences); *the power of advocacy* (emerging from actions participants took for their own educational autonomy); *the power of GenAI as assistive technology* (emerging from

the participants' experiences with executive dysfunction); and *the power of parasupport* (emerging from participants' experiences with inclusive writing centre pedagogy).

### **Theme 1: The Power of Visual Communication**

The age of GenAI has posed significant concerns about academic integrity in higher education (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Francis et al., 2025). As Francis et al. (2025) asserted, responding to the ethical concerns of GenAI with creative assignments could herald an innovative era of course design. This may include questioning the continued esteem of the university essay: “an intellectual tradition” (Hsu, 2025). This primary form of academic expression is the hallmark of postsecondary education, yet as it becomes a site for distrust in this new era of GenAI, it might be time to consider other modalities to convey learning. This shift would prove to be an inclusive one as writing is the most demanding on executive function of all communication styles (i.e., speaking, listening, body language). Felipe (2021) identified that when writing, students with ASD struggle with cognitive flexibility and those with ADHD, working memory. Based on my experience working with neurodivergent students in the writing centre, I would add that other executive functions like task initiation, organizing ideas, and the emotional interference of feeling overwhelmed also exacerbate writing barriers.

Intersectionality complicates this experience, as told by PC who has a diagnosed disability in addition to being an English language learner. She shared that “writing make me stress a lot. It's not easy to solve. I have too many issues, it's like a language problem” (PC, personal communications). PC argued for more multi-modality with course work as

I feel lucky to go to school in the times we have AI. I feel I finally have a chance to just express any ideas without the fear of writing something wrong. If a person just reading my writing, there's like a gap of communications. If I see something like the image, that's like more powerful for me. I think everyone can understand that. (PC, personal communications)

Visual communication removes language barriers by communicating in a more universal way. It offers students like PC who are relegated to remedial learning the creativity to explore higher level ideas in different ways. As PC said, "instead of worrying about things like grammar, citations, or organization, I can focus more on my ideas and thoughts. It allows me to express more opinions without being overwhelmed by the technical side of writing" (personal communications). Offering students with disabilities the opportunities to visually explore their critical thinking and demonstration of learning eases the executive functioning load and opens universal communication pathways that otherwise disadvantage this population.

Assignment-wise, instead of a written reflective journal, a visual journal where students can augment written material with creative supplements can help draw meaning from both. Like Trombeta and Cox's (2022) Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis, combining texts and visuals where students can communicate multimodally creates a compensation system where if writing is not as strong as creating visuals, one can help the other. Gagich (2020) argued that multimodal assignments help with digital literacy, allow students to draw on what they already know, and offer transferable skills (pp. 73-74). Most importantly, they do not limit the student's voice to one modality, especially if that modality suppresses their voice because of its inaccessibility. For PC, expressing

herself through a mode more universally understood (i.e., visual communication) removed stigmatizing communication barriers.

Mind-mapping can be another effective use of visual communication. Writing centre specialists can demonstrate how to use apps / sites (e.g., Canva, Miro) or even analogue pen and paper to help students visualize and categorize their ideas before going straight to the draft. However, students may see pre-writing activities like this as extra work (Algharabali, 2023). To mitigate this, writing centres can add a pre-writing session to their list of services advertising this collaboration as helpful to the writing process, so that students see value in it. For students with executive dysfunction, seeing their ideas conceptually instead of only language-based can help with organization, overwhelm, task initiation, and memory (Saeed & Ly, 2024). Instructors could also ask for mind maps as part of their assignment documents to demonstrate originality of ideas which would reinforce its value. Each participant experienced this through their image iterations and prompt engineering, eventually settling on final images that conceptually captured the message they were trying to convey.

Visual communication can fill in the blanks if language-based communication proves to be a challenge, foster creative thinking, and help improve executive functioning. PC shared the difficulties she experienced with writing as “so stressful” (personal communications) with PB’s description of using visuals in comparison as “fun” (personal communications). Incorporating more visual communication opportunities in academic work can help support this shift from “stress” to “fun” which empowers students with disabilities to feel better understood, become more academically engaged, and to communicate more authentically.

**Theme 2: The Power of Advocacy**

As we learned from PD's story, his neurodivergent sensitivities to light, sound, and touch; the toll of masking in a neurotypical social environment; and the consequences of his combat experience create significant barriers to in-person communication and social interaction. He shared that consulting the online writing centre "anywhere with an internet connection" (PD, restorying, I2) allowed him the freedom to curate his environment to his sensory needs.

While criticisms about online writing centres exist—like questioning the value of asynchronous feedback—its flexibility, accessibility and inclusivity are undeniable strengths, especially for students with disabilities (Worm, 2020). This way students who face barriers to learning that include environmental concerns (e.g., physical inaccessibility, sensitivity concerns, social anxiety) can feel more in control and less compromised by these barriers. Barron et al. (2023) argued for a multimodal approach to coaching spaces to increase "access and equity" like scheduled and drop-in synchronous sessions both in-person and virtual, and asynchronous feedback through a dropbox system or email. Barron et al. (2023) also introduced "flash tutoring", a conversation-based session that takes the emphasis off the written draft to focus on idea engagement.

Online calls are still a "space" (Barron et al., 2023) and adjusting lighting, blurring backgrounds, turning private spaces professional, and offering the option of turning cameras off can help students with neurosensitivity control the stimulation of a virtual meeting. Regulating the environment can also occur through time scheduling. Flexibility creates more access, so perhaps writing centres can invite students with

environmental sensitivity to articulate time needs if, for example, 10 minutes is more conducive than a traditional 30-minute session.

PC was frustrated after years of stressful writing consultations resulting in time-consuming edits. This led to discouragement and a negative association to writing. With the advent of ChatGPT, she took control of the feedback she was looking for by determining what she wanted to discuss in the writing sessions like “deep ideas” (PC, personal communications) instead of more meetings emphasizing mistakes. This is where Barron et al.’s (2020) “flash tutoring” could better support students like PC who would like to shift the focus from English language learning to idea generation. Offering a “conversation only” session where the paper does not appear may welcome students like PC who are fatigued by discussions focused on errors.

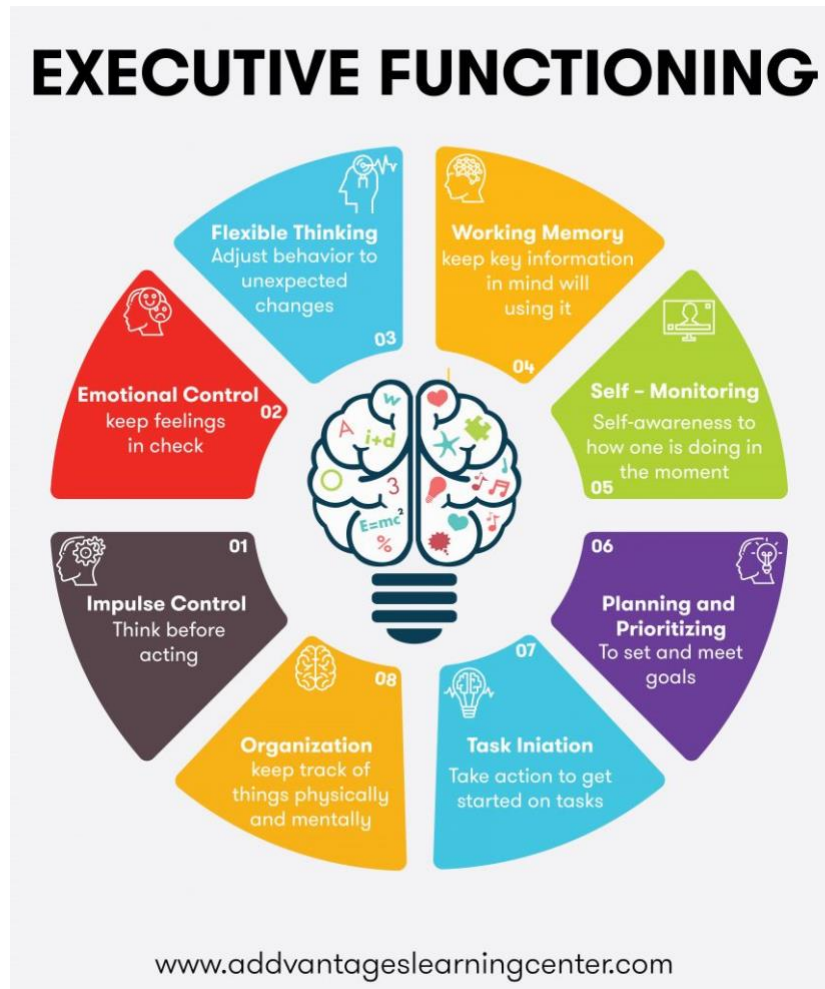
Controlling the environment for academic success can be a positive and empowering series of actions that helps students with disabilities become advocates for their own learning. Access fatigue is very real as communicating about disability can be an exhausting form of emotional labour (Konrad, 2021). Like PD’s comment about the “invisible toll of masking” (restorying, I1), access fatigue is a similar communication effort that puts the responsibility of access on the person with the disability’s shoulders (Konrad, 2021). Instead, the writing centre can take on that labour by integrating access checks into all pre-session communications, regardless of ability. As all the participants demonstrated in their initial images, invisible disabilities carry a detrimental impact on emotional health. Incorporating an access check for all students mitigates the stress of disclosure, normalizes conversations about accessibility, and allows students the freedom to control their environment for improved learning.

**Theme 3: The Power of GenAI as an Assistive Technology**

Using GenAI as an assistive tool can provide immediate and efficient support to students with disabilities (Murray & Williamson, 2025). It can help improve communication skills, distill complex ideas, promote fluidity between cognitive processes and aid in reading comprehension (Huang et al., 2025; Kulman, 2025). PC, an English language learner, shared her experience with ChatGPT for help with sentence structure (restorying, I2) using the iterative process of prompt and response to work on her English language skills. GenAI can also be an opportunity for people on the ASD spectrum to practice social dialoguing and social skills with chatbots (Wells, 2025). For neurodivergent students struggling with executive functioning skills, GenAI as an assistive technology can address these concerns in some productive ways.

**Figure 47**

*Executive Functioning Skills*



*Note: ADDvantages. (2025). Executive functioning: Brain training for those with executive functioning skill deficits.*

As seen in Figure 47, eight areas of executive function include: impulse control (think before acting), emotional control (keep feelings in check), flexible thinking (adjust behaviour to unexpected changes), working memory (retain short term memory), self-monitoring (how one is doing in the moment), planning and prioritizing (set and meet goals), task initiation (getting started), and organization (keep track of things physically and mentally). I will go through each one briefly to show the power of GenAI as an assistive technology guided by the participants' stories.

### ***Impulse Control***

In his second image, “Respite”, PD captured “the need to retreat from overstimulation” (restorying, I2). In this image, PD prioritized the visualization of accommodations including earphones, low lighting, a hot drink, fidget toy, comfortable clothing, and a cat to control impulsive reactions to overstimulation. Meyer and ADDRC (2025) called GenAI a “personal assistant” as it can manage schedules, break down overwhelming projects, and generate checklists and reminders. These administrative tasks can help neurodivergent students offload tedious cognitive tasks to focus on more pressing concerns. It can also reinforce an organizational structure that can temper impulsive tendencies a bit more. Meyer and ADDRC (2025) warned that this alone does not improve executive functions like impulse control, and so implementing lifestyle factors the way PD demonstrated through additional accommodations shows this must be a tandem approach.

### ***Emotional Control***

PB was distraught at feeling disorganized and felt that “the passage of time is scaring me” and that “time is attacking me” (restorying, I1). This stress with time caused PB considerable emotional distress. PB described her disability as being more “emotional (personal communications) in nature and how meeting a writing specialist who helped her “organise time and give guidance and direction, like what to prepare for the next” helped her feel supported “instead of doing everything on my own” (restorying, I2). When discussing the study, I noticed PB’s mood shift a few times. It first happened when I demonstrated creating images with my cat as a prompt which she enjoyed and helped break the ice. Next, when she discovered an error in Image 2 (a fairy with an extra limb), she described this as “funny” and that “AI can’t be perfect” (restorying, I2). Finally,

toward the end of the second interview when talking about creating art, she mentioned she used to be artistic, and we discussed the idea of dedicating a small amount of time per week to rejuvenating this habit. I noticed that the creative aspect to AI image-making intrigued PB as she described it as “fun” and “easy” (personal communications). For emotional control, GenAI can act as an assistive regulatory aid that proved PB right in its “fun” and “easy” yielding of high interest content. Emotional regulation can improve executive functioning (Koay & Meter, 2024) and using GenAI software like Midjourney for short bursts of creative play can benefit students struggling with emotional control.

### ***Flexible Thinking***

PD demonstrated flexible thinking in his fourth image, “Exposure Therapy”. Here he simulated the prospect of going to a populated café to conduct his work with the writing centre. Through his context engineering, he experimented with different presentations of accommodations to make the outing successful (e.g., earphones, tinted glasses, a hat). After settling on an image, he intuited the discomfort he would encounter, namely the distraction of others around him and the inability to sit with his back to the wall, a consequence of time spent in combat. He found the image “unsettling” and concluded that this would not be successful for him (PD, restorying, I4). In this scenario, PD used the process of creating the image using Midjourney as a social “dry run” to test out the likelihood of benefitting from the experience. Concentrating on a photorealist simulation of himself in this context helped him decide against putting himself through the unnecessary trauma of trying this in real time.

### ***Working Memory***

During our initial interview, PD shared that he struggles with short-term memory retention: “I have a really short memory and so I lose my train of thought a lot” (personal communications). A key feature of LLMs and diffusion models like Midjourney is tracking all prompts and responses. Creating new chats with descriptive titles can help archive conversations that make going back easy to navigate. To review conversations over time can help locate key information and the context in which it was shared. When PD shared his images and restorying sheets, he also sent me an AI generated summary of the five visuals, their prompts, and summaries of the restored content. These microsummaries collected key information from each image, such as for Image 2, “Respite”:

Captures the need for solitude to manage overstimulation and focus on writing.

Reflects comfort in a controlled environment that mitigates sensitivities.

Highlights the toll of conforming to societal expectations in public spaces

(PD, generated summary)

This shows the value of using GenAI to create summaries, checklists, reminders, and other assistive documents to support challenges with working memory.

### ***Self-Monitoring***

PA began her sequences of images in a state of emotional paralysis following an unhelpful session at a writing centre. In that session, PA was told that she was disorganized and that her ideas were scattered. Later, when facing a new assignment, these comments haunted and prevented her from getting started. After working with a different writing specialist, PA was shocked by how supportive she was, which inspired PA to commence working on her assignment. PA wrote that “creating the images did

validate how I was feeling and my experience” which she summarized as “pride” (restorying, I4). Self-monitoring includes self-observation and self-recording (Bonneville, 2022) which develops awareness about how a person is doing in the moment. For PA, it instilled the message of validation she received, turning shame into pride. PB wrote that it “made me feel like my emotions turned into images” (restorying, I2). For PC, this exercise was “the first time I’ve reflected on what ChatGPT looks like in my mind and how it makes me feel” (restorying, I2). In reference to his third image, PD found himself “inspired” as it represented “thriving in solitude and success” (restorying, I3). Stokes and Hirsch (2010) define internal worrying as a verbal experience that worsens with verbal processing, yet when their participants engaged with imagery, they found it decreased “negative intrusions” (p. 418; 422). Using AI image-generation can be a quick and rewarding way to self-monitor for neurodivergent students.

### ***Planning and Prioritizing***

When PC discovered that ChatGPT can help with basic writing mechanics (i.e., spelling, grammar, sentence structure), she was relieved to feel that she could split the support tasks in two directions—still collaborate with the writing centre on bigger picture ideas and use ChatGPT on grammatical learning and refining writing structures. The efficient, accessible, and comprehensive responses from ChatGPT helped PC feel like she could triage the help she needed and where to get it from. Prior to this, PC was at the mercy of the writing specialist’s prioritization of areas to work on: “but they’re giving you all this feedback that all these things are wrong like this needs work and this needs work. Whereas with ChatGPT I even can use my language to describe it and my chat understands” (personal communications). PC can now relegate lower order tasks to

ChatGPT, “I don’t need a tutor to help me correct every sentence”, and optimize her time with the writing specialist, “we can discuss more deep about essay” (personal communications). Incorporating GenAI into the planning phase to help prioritize tasks can help students with disabilities feel more organized, but more importantly, feel in charge of their learning.

### ***Task Initiation***

PA depicted the struggle with task initiation in her second image which she entitled “receives an assignment that requires a new written skill set” (prompts, I2). PA described the context of the image as involving “a sense of defeat or dread This person is asked to write in a way that they never have before, with limited training, and they do not believe that they can do it” (restorying, I2). There are two parts here: task confusion and emotional overwhelm. For task confusion, Lingard (2023) viewed GenAI as efficient at structural tasks, but the more complex and cerebral, the greater the likelihood of inaccuracies. However, ChatGPT excels at being a brainstorming tool, which can be a constructive way to start a project (Lingard, 2023). Or, for more visually driven students, using an AI image-making software like Midjourney might be an efficient way to produce a high yield of compelling images that can kickstart the process. In PA’s case, the emotional overwhelm posed the bigger barrier. She took the initiative to meet with a writing specialist and was “shocked at how good the help was that I received and how kind the staff member was” (restorying, I3). This session enabled PA to initiate work and feel “confident” going forward (restorying, I4). For students with disabilities who struggle with the social option of working with a specialist (it increases rather than

decreases overwhelm), using ChatGPT dialogically can help with this discovery stage of first steps.

### ***Organization***

In her meeting with the writing specialist, PB learned how to organise time and how to prepare for the next coaching session. This influenced PB to consider returning to the writing centre in the future (restorying, I2). Learning an organizational approach can help students with disabilities manage their time and schedules to control emotional stress. Strategies using GenAI to generate assignment calculators, dated plans, simple summaries and hypothetical outlines can assist students in keeping to these boundaries while also maintaining a balanced cognitive load (Enright, 2023). PB also mentioned that this help with academic organization aided with emotional organization: “organization [is] my struggle and that ties into deadlines. [The tutor] helped me with the writing and helped me with the emotional aspect of procrastination and managing time” (personal communications). The cognitive load influences the level of emotional organization. Scheiter (2025) defined cognitive load as comprising of mental load (demands) and mental effort (capacity) and that “task difficulty plays a pivotal role in effort regulation” (pp. 2-3). Gerlich (2025) conducted a study on the impacts of offloading cognitive tasks to GenAI resulting in a decrease in critical skill engagement, causing worry about GenAI’s detrimental effects on higher order thinking. However, in someone experiencing executive dysfunction where the mental load negatively impacts effort as a starting place, offloading tasks to GenAI organizers can only increase capacity for critical thinking. Additionally, stigma and ableism escalate cognitive load (Ketcham, 2023). Both PA and PB mention offloading the cognitive stress of stigma: for PA, the writing specialist did

“not make me feel like a disabled, ‘other’ student (restorying, I3) and for PB, the help came “without judgement” (personal communications). As a result, they were able to organize themselves and depict active engagement in their final images.

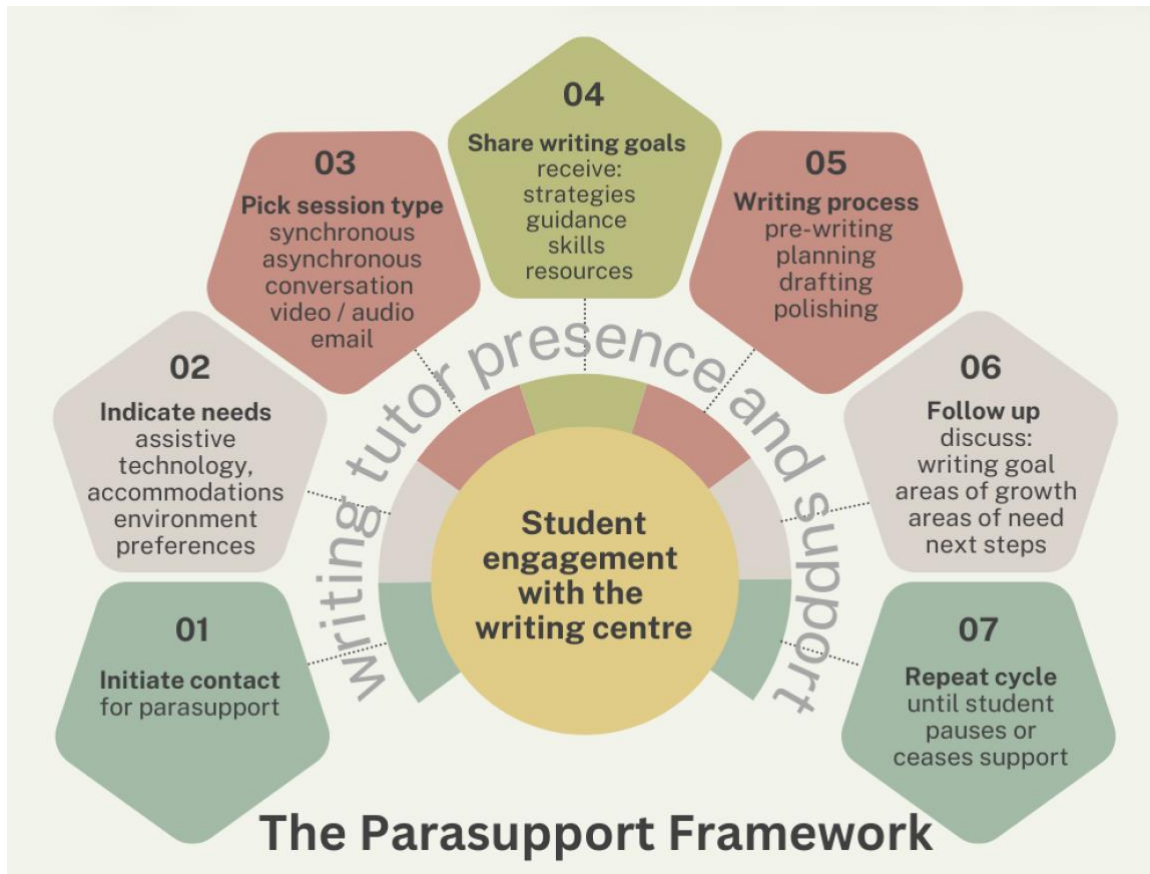
The participant stories illustrate some ways in which GenAI can be used assistively to address and improve executive function in neurodivergent students. The aim is to enhance communication and promote understanding while offloading the emotional interference that can plague these areas of executive function. It is also critical to note that addressing executive functions do not happen in a siloed way but improving one can have positive ramifications on the others.

#### **Theme 4: The Power of Parasupport**

Post-data analysis, I reviewed my parasupport framework and made some minor tweaks based on the information learned from the participants’ experiences (see Figure 48)

#### **Figure 48**

*Parasupport Refined*



*Note:* Violini, C. (2025). The parasupport framework.

This refined version reflects the following changes:

- Bolded the action steps for the student
- For Step 2, added “environment preferences” (inspired by PD’s story).
- For Step 3, added “conversation” (inspired by Barron et al. (2020)), “video/audio” and “email” to suggest a multimodal approach to writing centre engagement
- Renamed Step 4 “Share Writing Goals” for greater agency
- Renamed Step 5 “Writing Process” including a mention of “pre-writing”
- Renamed Step 6 “Follow up”

Here, the steps are direct and easier to read, and by top-loading the interaction with students initiating contact, indicating needs, picking sessions type and sharing goals, I prioritize the student's empowerment to fully taking charge of their goals and needs.

The efficacy of this framework can be seen in PA's and PB's visual sequences which both begin in a state of distress, and following a parasupportive interaction with a writing specialist, the validation, confidence and return to work motivation is evident in their final images. Both PA and PB remarked on how they didn't feel "othered" (PA, restorying, I3) or "judged" (PB, personal communications). This resulted in PA appreciating the writing specialist's "kindness and help" (restorying, I3) and PB depicting the specialist as a "good" fairy fixing the clock (restorying, I2). Both PA and PB shared they would visit the writing centre again which demonstrates how affirming they found the experience. Most importantly, that they felt seen and understood.

#### **The Four Themes and Critical Disability Theory (CDT)**

These four themes (the power of visual communication, the power of advocacy, the power of generative AI as an assistive technology, and the power of parasupport) substantiate the values of CDT which is to challenge the medical model of disability by considering the socially constructed nature of disability and how it "intertwines with power relations and social inequity" (Marom & McNeney, 2025, p. S665). Marom and McNeney (2025) identify four ableist perceptions that dismiss students with disabilities in a higher education context. The four themes of this study address these perceptions from a critical disability lens in the hopes of increasing access, visibility and agency.

A common misconception of students with disabilities in a postsecondary context, according to Marom and McNeney (2025) is that they are "burdens / lazy" (p. S671). The

power of visual communication arising from the methodological nature of this study, reveals a strong argument for diversifying academic communication beyond writing. With writing as the central mono-skill of postsecondary academic work, students who struggle with this type of communication will encounter a difficult time succeeding. This study showed that visual communication can be creatively stimulating, can cross language divides, and captures meaning in a compelling and evocative way. This theme argues for shifting the insistence on writing as the primary method to demonstrate critical thinking toward multimodal types of expression that could enrich both the learning and the learners. In the study, PC referred to the universality of visual images which closes the barrier for English language learners to still meaningfully participate despite challenges with fluency.

Marom and McNeney (2025) broadly refer to the “disabled student as absent” trope as systemic and institutional negligence appearing in the curriculum, policy, and planning design” (S669). For writing centres, this is where the power of advocacy can challenge these blanket assumptions, with students and writing centre professionals working together to listen, redesign, customize, and be open to the evolving nature of access. In this study, this could mean advocating for inclusive feedback (PA), student-determined topics of discussion (PC), and physical adaptations to support sensory needs (PD). Interestingly, PD also challenged the assumption that being a solitary, “absent”, remote learner is an experience of deprivation, where, for he as a person with autism, choosing unpopulated environments affords him the cognitive space to focus, learn, and achieve.

Third, Marom and McNeney (2025) identify the trope of “disabled students as tokens” (S672) in higher education. Here, students with disabilities are categorized into “identities” that support ableist assumptions like the hyper person with ADHD, the lonely person with ASD, and “disabled students as heroes” (Marom & McNeney, S672). In the writing centre, this can easily happen when writing specialists are under time constraints and it can be quicker to operate on assumptions than to learn about what makes the student unique (Dembsey, 2020). The power of generative AI as an assistive technology shows how executive functioning skills can produce innumerable representations of ability, and when pairing this with a proliferation of generative AI technologies, the result is highly personalized and customized learning experiences. The four participants in the study challenge the concept of tokenism by embodying unique pathways that subvert the notion they are all the same. PC’s usage of ChatGPT as a remedial tool for English grammar learning allowed her to maximize the writing session on higher order academic concerns and evade the ableist tendency of writing centres to focus on grammar.

Finally, Marom and McNeney call out “disabled students as deficient” as a pervasive trope that feeds into the medical model of the disabled body needing to be fixed (p. S670). The power of parasupport aims to dismantle this association of disability with deficiency and dependency by inviting students to lead their engagement with the writing centre according to their self-determined needs. Parasupport flips the instructional model of teacher-directed (writing specialists diagnosing ability and determining readiness) to student-directed (students informing writing specialists of the areas that would like support with). In the study, PA and PB experienced a parasupportive writing session with

a specialist who offered them a safe space to articulate their needs. This framework transfers the agency to the students, and this empowering move can help remove disabling barriers of association.

These themes / anti-ableist actions can help progress towards a writing centre pedagogy and practice that is grounded in critical disability theory. Instead of being seen as burdens, absent, tokens, and deficient, these themes restructure these ableist assumptions to view students with disabilities as contributors, present, unique, and whole people.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I shared my approach to data collection, data analysis, and the four participants' exhibits of process images, images, prompts, and reflections. PA showed over the course of four images her story from receiving discouraging writing feedback to engaging with a parasupportive-aligned writing specialist. This meeting positively motivated PA to get unstuck and start working. PB showed two contrasting images of the emotional turmoil of time pressures and its contrasting image of receiving parasupportive-aligned feedback that helped her manage time-related stress and get some work done. PC generated two images that progressed in meaning from chaos to clarity. The image in chaos represented her frustration with writing and writing centres as a person with both a disability and learning English as an additional language. The second image, entitled "insight", depicted her feelings about GenAI as an assistive technology and how it has helped her with understanding and communication. Finally, PD generated five images that began with an image of a young man at a military college suffering the invisible toll of undiagnosed disabilities in an overstimulating environment. The next

four pictures showed his experiences later in life interacting with different environments and experimenting with accommodations with varying degrees of success.

The participants' images and stories highlighted four central themes that can impact writing centre pedagogy and practice in positive and inclusive ways. The first is the *Power of Visual Communication* which highlights multimodality as a way to help students who struggle with writing find their academic voice in other ways, as the participants experience in their image-generating processes. Second, the *Power of Advocacy* explores ways in which writing centres can increase access in response to the calls for advocacy raised in the participants' contributions. Third, the *Power of GenAI as an Assistive Technology* argues for the integration of GenAI to better support the executive functioning skills of students with disabilities as documented in participants' stories. Finally, the *Power of Parasupport* offers a refined version of the framework in Chapter 1, based on the experiences participants shared in the study, to better promote the autonomy of students with disabilities. Ultimately, these powers help to challenge and subvert ableist perceptions of students with disabilities in a postsecondary context.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I will briefly summarize the major components of the study, concluding with the four themes outlined in Chapter 4. Then, I will address the main research question in the context of those four themes, followed by the sub-questions. From there, I will share my reflections as an emerging visual researcher. This will lead to discussions on the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with final thoughts on why reframing disability in the writing centre matters.

### **Study in Review**

#### **Foundations**

While I began this program in 2019, I switched topics in 2022 to explore ableism in the online writing centre. Three years later, at the time of this writing, much has changed in the world, particularly in politics, yet the observable gap that disability remains underrepresented in writing centre literature remains true (Osaka, 2022). To address this gap, I wanted to focus my study on the voices of students with disabilities themselves, what they experienced in writing centres and how writing centres can learn from these experiences going forward. More specifically, I felt that incorporating student stories into an inclusive pedagogical framework would help make a shift in writing centre culture.

In my work as a writing specialist for Athabasca University's Write Site, I work with a high number of students navigating disability and academic writing. Initially, I was drawn to the methodology of narrative inquiry, but the idea of asking participants to write their stories did not appeal to me, particularly due to its demand on executive

function. I did, however, find the “restorying” method in narrative inquiry a thought-provoking structure as it asks participants to think about reclaiming their narrative or power as a person in a marginalized community. I chose the methodology of photovoice instead as it married visual storytelling with a social justice end goal. However, instead of photography, I thought it would be more accessible and engaging to use AI image-generating instead. I chose the software Midjourney because of its ability to render high resolution, complex, and compelling images. My philosophical assumptions include a critical realist ontology in which reality develops over time, shaped by changing social and cultural values; an axiological stance that prioritizes participant safety and cultural responsiveness; and a subjectivist epistemology that assumes each participant sees the world differently which cultivates subjective, lived knowledge. This qualitative study integrated CDT, photovoice, and restorying with a visual methodology and thematic analysis informing research design.

### **Research Design**

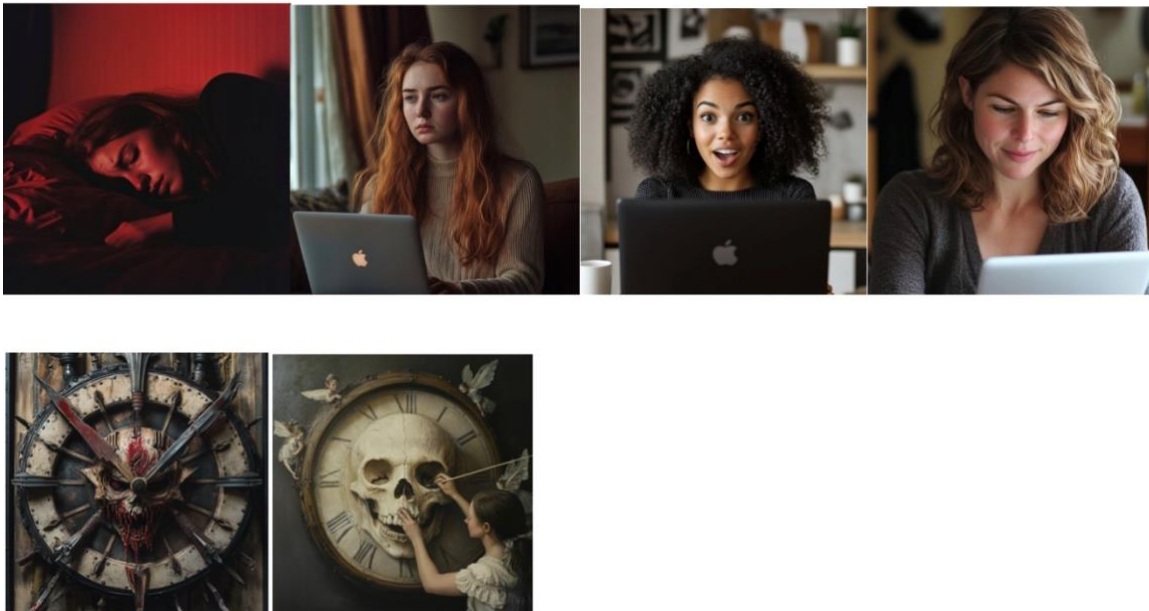
I recruited four participants for this study (Participant A (PA), Participant B (PB), Participant C (PC), and Participant D (PD)) and met with each one in an initial interview. I only met with two participants a second time. The first two participants completed their contributions very quickly and I took an initial round at qualitative coding using MAXQDA and guidelines from Rose’s (2023) *Visual Methodologies*. In many ways, Rose’s book supported my study, including incorporating her compositional analysis (content, light, spatial orientation, etc.) into my codebook. However, it did not quite relate to the generated aspect of AI image making. I re-designed my research process to build on Rose’s (2023) critical visual methodology but curated for generated images.

This critical synthetic visual methodology (CSVM) looked at prompts and images separately and together and then consider how they circulate and audience through social networking.

To establish a rigorous codebook, I created categories that addressed the major points of CSVM, Trombeta and Cox's (2022) Textual Visual Thematic Analysis, Rose's (2023) compositional analysis categories, the SHOWeD reflection questions from photovoice, a set of open-ended restorying questions, and finally my original research questions. I added these to MAXQDA and used them to code the participants' prompts, images, restorying sheets, and transcripts. For each participant, I coded the images individually and in sequence as well.

### Figure 49

#### *All Participant Images*





*Note:* From top to bottom: Participant A, B, C, and D. All images made with Midjourney. 2025.

### **Summary of Findings**

PA generated a progression of four photos beginning with an image of emotional paralysis due to receiving negative writing centre feedback, moving next to an image of emotional overwhelm at the beginning of an assignment, to a validating call with a writing specialist, and resulting in an image of confidence and getting unstuck.

PB generated two images that portrayed a journey from the emotional turmoil of impending timelines to deflating that distress after consulting a writing specialist.

PC's two images move from chaos to clarity. The first captures the emotional stress of writing barriers as a person with disabilities and learning English as an

additional language, where the second depicts the efficiency of working with an LLM as assistive technology.

Finally, PD generated five images beginning with his youth at military college coping with an undiagnosed and invisible disability. The remaining four images capture his attempts to negotiate environment with accommodations later in life to varying success.

Four themes emerged from this data. First, the power of visual communication, which argues for multimodal academic expression that allows for creativity and access. The power of advocacy promotes ways in which the writing centre can listen to students' advocating for their needs to create a more accessible learning space. The power of GenAI as an assistive technology acknowledges how this emerging technology can support students with executive dysfunction. Finally, the power of parasupport reinforces the purpose, goal, and outcomes of prioritizing an inclusive writing centre pedagogy.

### **Discussing Research Questions**

I have one main research question, and I will answer it in the context of the four themes discussed above. Considering the large amount of data I yielded from the participants, some of which has already been quoted in Chapter 4, I will include select examples to substantiate my responses. Following this will be my three corollary sub-questions and responses.

#### **Research Question 1**

How can the restored AI-generated images through photovoice reframe disability support in writing centres?

#### ***The Power of Visual Communication***

**Figure 50***Participants B and C*

*Note:* Images created by Participants B and C with Midjourney. 2025.

Asking participants to generate a sequence of images to capture their experiences as students with disabilities in the writing centre removed common writing barriers this population may find challenging. For example, writing is demanding on executive functioning skills which can make the activity time-consuming and fraught with stress. As well, asking a participant who regularly seeks writing support to compose a narrative unsupported for this study would add to cognitive load. PB wrote that “I definitely would not have had much fun just writing my experience” (personal communications), underscoring the onerous labour that writing can take on. She continues: “I would have had to write more for images, it just took like a few seconds for AI to generate it” (PB, personal communications). PB articulated in her first image entitled “The Passage of Time is Scaring Me” (prompts, 11), that time-intensive tasks are highly triggering and stressful to her. Even though PB enjoyed the task of generating images, she did remark that “I’m glad I finally did it because I was actually concerned, like what if I don’t do it on time, so I’m glad I got it over” (personal communications). The fact she still incurred stress with a generative task suggests how it may have been worsened with a writing

task. Since my axiological stance prioritizes participant safety, I am glad this task, while still causing some worry, was tempered with the fun and creativity of generating visuals.

PB said she was content with the progression of her images from “my state of mind before the [writing centre]” to “heading toward finishing the assignment” because “it made me feel like my emotions have turned into images” (personal communications). Through our conversation, she concluded the final image represented a “work in progress” (PB, personal communications). These visuals reframe disability support in the writing centre by powerfully capturing that transformation from distress to confidence thanks to inclusive writing centre support.

Likewise, PC communicated that

I definitely feel that AI can generate very refined images, and the process helps me translate my consciousness into a visual form that others can see. It turns something abstract and vague—without a clear shape—into something more specific and tangible. (PC, restorying, I1)

Visual communication is particularly powerful for PC as generating an image creates a message universally understood, versus how she can be verbally misunderstood as an English language learner. PC shared that “If I talk to someone, even though my language is very simple and the person is full of sympathy, the person may get the feelings. But just reading my writing, maybe there’s a gap of communication. But images, I think everyone can understand that” (personal communications). The first image, a dark silhouetted figure with white and black abstractions around the head, is entitled: “My Writing Experience” (PC, restorying, I1). Seeing how this image defines her mindset about writing communicates an emotional reality that could be invisible to

the writing specialist. For example, PC said that “even though [writing tutors] are nice, but if too many mistake, I still very pressured” (PC, Personal Communication). PC’s visual sequence reinforces the hidden reality of cognitive load, and when helping students with disabilities who are also English language learners, reducing the load of “fixits” can help reframe disability in the writing centre.

These two examples show how restoried images make the invisible disability visible. It also reveals to writing specialists what we cannot see or possibly know when meeting with students, and how an inclusive pedagogy can better support students struggling to this degree.

### *The Power of Advocacy*

#### **Figure 51**

##### *Participants A and D*



*Note:* Images generated by Participants A and D with Midjourney, 2025.

PA created the first image in her series to show a woman lying in bed, looking depressed, with a red tint to capture the fallout of negative writing centre feedback. PA wrote of this image “to consider how others might understand your words” (PA, restorying, I1). The concern here is that the writing specialist personalized the negative feedback by remarking that PA’s ideas was scattered and no further help was offered.

PD also highlighted invisible disability in his first two images. In the first image, PD wanted “to communicate the invisible toll of hidden disabilities” (restorying, I1). PD found the image of the older man “unsettling as I don’t think I would be able to write well in an environment that is this public. Due to combat experience, I would always be sitting with back to the wall and need to watch most people” (restorying, I2) PD’s third image in this set shows “a need to retreat from a world that has been constructed and designed for the majority (restorying, I3). These visuals tell the story of braving a public interaction while managing an invisible disability followed by the attempt to regulate successfully (PD) or unsuccessfully (PA).

When reading the participant comments above and how they inform their visuals, it is a human reaction to respond emotionally. However, writing specialists also need to listen from a place of advocacy. PA’s story is more than one specialist’s inability to communicate in an accessible way. This reflects an institutional problem that offers inadequate accessibility and culturally responsive training to writing specialists. It also reflects a lack of understanding the demographics of students visiting writing centres. PA’s experience shows the true systemic nature of ableism. To listen to her story from the context of advocacy, a beginning step would be to meet with one’s writing centre team to talk about better practices for using barrier-free language regardless of the student’s abilities.

When considering PD’s comments, let’s look at this image of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Writing Resource Center (see Figure 56).

**Figure 52**

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Writing Resource Center*



*Note: Osaka, M. (2022). Neurodivergency in writing center design: Where is it? Another Word, University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

In Osaka's (2022) article, they discuss the inaccessibility of this writing centre from a neurodivergent perspective. Osaka (2022), a neurodivergent writing specialist focuses on the fluorescent lights, the hum they make, "the on-and-off whirl of the computers", and the voices of the other writing specialists as sources of overstimulation. I first noticed the seating with backs exposed and how there are no opportunities to make this accessible to someone like PD who prefers to sit with his back to a wall. If PA was in this space when she received negative criticism, the lack of privacy would likely ensure that others would overhear this caustic description of her abilities, and it would be humiliating.

For the online space, meeting software like Microsoft Teams is pretty good about filtering out environmental sounds, but sound quality depends on the microphone used which can be quite intrusive when the other person consumes this sound directly in their ears. Blurring the background, while protecting privacy, can be visually overstimulating from a sensory perspective, visually distracting for someone with inattention, it can interfere with lipreading for someone with a hearing disability, and make it difficult for someone with low vision to distinguish details. Sharing a screen can lose the visual of the speaker creating disorientation for people with vision or hearing loss. Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list of accessibility concerns in the online writing centre space, but it illustrates ways we can consider the environment to advocate for student needs by listening to their experiences.

### *The Power of Generative AI as an Assistive Technology*

#### **Figure 53**

*Participant C*



*Note:* Image created by Participant C with Midjourney. 2025.

PC generated this image to convey her feelings when working with ChatGPT:

As someone whose thoughts are often chaotic when writing, ChatGPT feels like a calm and knowledgeable presence—almost like a god of clarity—that brings

peace to my mind and gives me the confidence to write. Instead of worrying about things like grammar, citations, or organization, I can focus more on my ideas and thoughts. It allows me to express more opinions in my essays without being overwhelmed by the technical side of writing. I feel I finally can just express ideas without the fear of writing something wrong” (PC, restorying, I2)

In Chapter 4, I detailed PC’s experience in the writing centre in which her essays were always flagged for grammatical mistakes. The volume of errors was very overwhelming to PC; however, when she worked with ChatGPT, she was able to get the answers she needed, saving her writing centre consultations for higher order topics. This visual, especially when viewed in sequence following the more chaotic first image, points out the power of GenAI as an assistive technology. Ultimately, the image conveys that ChatGPT allows her to take agency in her academic work, and while barriers remain, the clarity depicted in the visual infers a level of reprieve. While writing centres may be constrained by institutional rules around GenAI use, writing specialists can still consider its assistive benefits to students with disabilities and communication challenges.

### *The Power of Parasupport*

#### **Figure 54**

*Participants A, B, and D*



*Note:* Images created by Participants A, B, and D with Midjourney, 2025.

PA wanted to end her sequence “to show a woman working confidently with pride in her work, because I now feel proud of my work and skills (restorying, I1). This image comes after PA met with a writing specialist whose approach aligned with parasupportive principles like letting the student lead, and “not making me feel othered” (restorying, I3). PB worked with a writing specialist who “gave me hope, and a support in my journey, and I wish to return again (restorying, I2). Considering the stress depicted in PA’s and PB’s initial images, these counterparts convey how an inclusive pedagogy like parasupport can empower and motivate someone who has been marginalized in the writing centre space or by external pressures.

PD’s image “depicts the flexibility where I can access the writing centre from many different environments that are beneficial, which results in better performance and productivity (restorying, I5). For PD, parasupport is implemented differently, because in this case it’s not about emotional validation, but the opportunity to work with him in his chosen environment. Here, we can respect the efforts PD has implemented to curate his environment for success and meet those needs with virtual coaching.

Together, these images support a reframing of disability in the writing centre because they show emotional representations of need, human experience, the diversity of disability, the dangers of invisible disabilities, but ultimately the positive impact an inclusive pedagogy can have for students with disabilities in the writing centre.

### **Sub-Research Question One**

*In what ways can a participant with disabilities use GenAI to capture their engagement with the writing centre?*

I addressed this sub-question in the above section on the power of parasupport as evidence to answer the main research question. However, I have a couple more comments from participants to expand on the ways in which a participant with disabilities can use GenAI to capture their writing centre experience.

PB mentioned that the “tutor helped me to organise time and give guidance and direction, like what to prepare for the next session. She was very understanding and helped me clear the mess in my head” (restorying, I2). PB generated her second image to have a sense of clarity (the Victorian bone color theme), work (the “tinkering”), and support (the fairies) to communicate the quality of help she received (restorying I2). In this sense, PB used metaphor and symbolism to capture her experience with parasupport in the writing centre.

In four of PDs pictures, he is on a computer but in different environments. This shows that the writing centre is a mobile experience that goes wherever he is. It allows him to connect from home, where he can “relax”, but also when in nature because “there is solitude without being isolated, there is stimulation without being over stimulated. This is the natural environment for my brain and would be beneficial to brainstorming and collaborating with the writing centre” (PD, restorying, I3; I5). Through these images, we can glean that interacting with a writing centre instilling a parasupportive approach positively benefits the student’s wellbeing and progress.

### **Sub-Research Question Two**

*How does generating visual images using photovoice influence the participant to restory their relationship with the online writing centre?*

For PA, the “images did validate how I was feeling and my experience. They captured how I felt differently than words could. I felt a little bit like I was going to cry before the writing centre’s help, but I now feel proud of my work and skills (restorying, I1; I4). For PA seeing the progression of growth from the negative experience to the empowering one validated her understanding of both experiences. As a result, this empowered PA to continue a relationship with the writing centre.

Even though PD said generating images didn't change how he felt about his experiences, he did say that looking back in time caused him to “reflect on how much I’ve learned and grown” (restorying, I1). One such observation is recognizing the “expenditure of meeting new people in new environments. I must consciously appear respectful and normal instead of concentrating on the writing” (restorying, I2). This affirms his reason behind curating his environment around his needs.

In these examples, both participants reflect on the resonance of their images that acknowledges the past and speaks to their identities today. Part of restorying is observing a transformation that empowers a person from an oppressed community. For PA, the image validated what she went through, and for PD, it encouraged him to recognize all the work he has put into his self-growth.

### **Sub-Research Question Three**

***How do these generated images help confront ableism in writing centre pedagogy and practice by giving voice to students with disabilities?***

For PA, her images show the detrimental impact of insensitive writing centre coaching and the positive influence of inclusive feedback. PA added an emotion to this range, that it began in “sadness” and ended in “pride” (restorying, I1; I4). Additionally,

PA wrote a reminder to pay attention to the words one uses, as they can inflict damage and crush someone's self-esteem (personal communications).

PB shared two contrasting images that represented a journey from a highly stressful struggle with time management to a place of work, collaboration and support. PB's images show how powerful inclusive writing centre pedagogy can be helping a student feel heard and coaching them back on track. This experience had a significant impact on PB's emotional wellbeing and self-perception as a student.

PC's story shares the reality of a student with both disabilities and learning a new language, and the frustrations that come when seeking writing support. Before discovering ChatGPT, PC had many experiences in the writing centre that primarily focused on language errors. She displayed the resultant feeling in her first image with its chaotic brush strokes and silhouettes. PC also shared the assistive support she received from ChatGPT, and how this helped her have more control over what she can talk to the writing specialist about. Her story is two-pronged: the power of GenAI as assistive technology and the reality of overloading an English language learning student with too many negatively inclined tasks which contributes to executive dysfunction.

PD shares his history in the military and how that impacts his life now in needing to sit in specific locations when in-person. He described the toll of invisible disability and how that disadvantaged him as a young student in military college. Since then, he has learned which accommodations work best to regulate his sensitivity needs and the environments in which he works the most successfully. Invisible disabilities are challenging because they put the person at risk for ableist interactions. It also puts the person at risk for access fatigue and the pressure to disclose. Sensitivity needs can also be

ignored if they are not universally bothersome. Understanding that while a fluorescent light may be mildly annoying to a neurotypical person, it can completely derail the learning experience for a neurodivergent student. PD's experience confronts ableism as it asks us to question if we as writing specialists are supporting environmental and sensitivity needs and putting in the labour to create safe spaces for people with invisible disabilities.

Ultimately, these images question ableist approaches in the writing centre, whether implicit or explicit, by sharing the human stories and experiences of students with disabilities. Even though this study only highlights four voices, it does reinforce what I mentioned in Chapter 1, that disability is “polymorphous” where no two presentations are equal and that disability is “ubiquitous” in that most people will encounter disability at some point in their lives (Fenton, 2016, p. 203). The four participants in this study share some commonalities—they are Canadian, they have diagnosed disabilities, and they are postsecondary students. However, the similarities end there because even the participants who share a diagnosis experience them differently. They are unique individuals who experience disability in completely independent ways. For example, PD received his diagnosis later in life which means he spent decades living without the knowledge of how his brain worked. Most importantly, and as I said in Chapter 1, disability does not discriminate. Therefore, viewing writing centre work through the lens of disability should be commonplace. For these four participants, their stories offer so much to learn about invisible disabilities, supporting students with disabilities who are also learning an additional language, how to support a student's

sensitivity needs, how to offload and not contribute to cognitive load, and how to be careful with the language of our feedback.

### **Reflections of an Emerging Researcher**

This was my first experience conducting educational research with human participants. A rich and rewarding experience, I learned so much more about my field, my work as a writing specialist, my future as a visual researcher, and of course areas of growth and challenge.

#### **What Worked**

In terms of administration, I kept a diligent record of research activities that I dated, organized, and filed in a consistent manner. This made locating information easy and efficient. I also maintained a regular research journal where I reflected on each research activity from sending a recruitment email to reflecting on the images as they became available. These records became indispensable to me when I had a period without much research activity. I am also a very busy person, and this project is only one of the many tasks I manage from raising kids, supporting a partner training for the Ironman, to working full time. Sometimes periods of a couple of weeks would pass without much research activity, and so I relied on these notes to re-acquaint me with the status of the study. If I did not put ideas down on paper or in a journal as they came to me, they would disappear as my cognitive load right now is so full. To my benefit, I am a natural writer, and so I found engaging with the research journal easy and habitual to maintain. I put together a single research study user guide so that the participants did not have to search for them, though if I had the skills, it would be fun to create some kind of app instead of a massive Word document.

I outlined how I adhered to ethical considerations in Chapter 4. In addition to those comments, I was thorough about removing identifying details from the participants' documents throughout the data collection process to ensure anonymity. I communicated clearly with the participants and made sure that I sent the honorarium the same day I mentioned doing so. Responding quickly to emails has been one of my personal rules since I taught my first online course in 2007. I believe in it so wholeheartedly because quick replies almost mimic a synchronous conversation, closes the distance in remote work, and helps build rapport.

During recruitment of participants, I had some interactions that caused me to refine the process right then and there. One potential participant did not read the poster and after talking with them I realized that I needed a document for participants to verify their own eligibility. I also put all my documents for the participant into one file making it easier to locate.

Throughout this process, I learned so many skills and strategies from the participants and the research, so I kept a dedicated log for ideas to try in my own writing centre. For example, I liked Barron et al.'s (2020) concept of "flash tutoring" and noted it down as an option for our services. Reflexively, I feel quite grateful for this experience because it strengthened my writing centre work, scholarship goals and clarified my interest to continue in the field of visual research. Most importantly, it has been satisfying to see this project come to an end after so many years. In the beginning my ideas were a figment and disconnected, and now they are grounded in the rich and compelling evidence the participants produced for this study.

**...On Second Thought**

I have engaged in critical reflection as an educator since 2006. I do not see articulating challenges or concerns as a laundry list of negatives, but rather lessons learned to improve and refine processes in the future. Since this is my first foray into educational research, I do have a few areas to reconsider for next time.

***Participants***

Knowing what I do now about the participants' preferences and challenges, I would have asked PD if there was an alternate way to communicate if the video interview proved to be too draining. He expressed himself well through typing, and so I wonder if an asynchronous interview would have been more accommodating. Since PB struggles with time management, I don't think I would give her deadlines in retrospect. I really wanted to protect this experience from ableism as much as possible, but I think the deadlines caused her some worry.

***Visual Methodology***

I am one of those thinkers who needs to do something in the moment to see how it works. I think that's why I found a significant portion of this degree program frustrating because I could not quite visualize how it would all come together. Now that I am at the end, I can see the whole project in its entirety which gives me a new perspective, and it is amazing to see how it all came together. I had chosen the visual methodologies but had not really considered what that would look like in practice. As a result, I fully coded two participants before realizing I needed to stop, go back and do some dedicated re-reading to make sure my approach was theoretically sound and relevant. I had assumed Rose's (2023) text would provide a clear guideline, and while it

was appropriate in many respects, I needed a model that directly addressed generated images, which, now, is relatively novel.

I am grateful for spending time learning the International Visual Sociological Association's Code of Ethics, as it reinforced my interest to continue in the field of visual research. I did not have this concluded in my brain until now because while I anticipated it, I did not realize until actively engaging with participant data, what a—and I am going to be informal for a moment—super cool corner of academia this is. I feel like there is so much more to learn and explore, and I am excited to keep going.

### ***Issues with Midjourney***

Midjourney changed its terms of reference twice during this project which reflects the rapidly changing nature of this kind of technology. I encountered snafus with trying to run multiple private accounts out of my single email address. Midjourney was quick to respond and ratify the situation, but it did result in me having to bother participants to try different logins to resume access when they needed an extension, and it also killed time. The cost of running the accounts was expensive in USD, but gratefully I received graduate funding to reimburse the costs.

### ***Recruiting Participants with Disabilities***

Next time, I would add an “access check” to the recruitment documents. This would ask potential participants about their cognitive load and how much info they can handle right now, if they have accommodation requests, and if there is anything they need from me to make this an easy use of their time. While I believe I communicated this verbally and relationally, I think having it in a document would be a wise choice to reinforce this value of participant safety and access.

### **Limitations**

This study encountered a few limitations that I would like to briefly explore.

#### **Methodological Limitations**

I chose photovoice for this project to hear from the voices of people in a marginalized group and to frame the results in a socially just way that promotes further action. I am not sure if this was the best approach because there is a community aspect to photovoice with the exhibit and the SHOWeD method that was not possible with this group for a variety of reasons including accessibility and geography. Also, I liked the nature of telling individual stories versus as a collective, homogenized group. As I mentioned earlier, disability is polymorphous and putting the participants in a group problematizes the representation of people with disabilities as not having unique experiences.

With the critical synthetic visual methodology that I created based on Rose's (2023) critical visual methodology, the social exchanging criteria was difficult to explore in this study. In the methodology, audiencing and circulating are intertwined during social exchange which includes uploading, reposting, tagging, meme-ing, sharing, and liking. People view (audiencing) and share (circulating) almost simultaneously. Yet, for anonymity, these social exchanges were closed to the participants making the audiencing and circulating tunnel very short: creation → Cara retrieval → insertion into dissertation → presentations at defense or academic communities → storage. Rose (2023) acknowledged, in reference to her original methodology, that it would be impossible to tackle all aspects of a methodology for one project (p. 10). I shall take that advice and explore social exchanging in full capacity in a future project.

### **Language Limitation**

I did have one participant who was an English language learner, and in retrospect I wonder if I should have offered to arrange for a translator. I do not know if this participant would have preferred that or not. I do not think it compromised their data whatsoever—I think they produced rich and engaging data that was so beneficial to this study. Perhaps this is more of a researcher concern than a limitation.

### **Midjourney Representation Bias**

I am putting this conversation here instead of findings because I did not want it to detract from the real story of this study which is reframing disability support in the writing centre.

I noticed a consistent assumption on the part of Midjourney's algorithms to assume a white person or white-passing person when typing in descriptions of people. PA used the prompt "young woman" or "woman" which yielded mostly white women in the first two images, some white-passing women of color in the third image, and all white women in the fourth. PA did not indicate race in her prompts. I also took note that by entering "woman" or "women", the people that populated the pictures were young (which makes sense when "young" was a qualifier), of normal weight, and cis-presenting. PA did not indicate these cultural parameters in her prompts.

For PB, the fairies were white-presenting, and one had an extra limb, as reported earlier. PC's second image is a Caucasian eye also not suggested in her single-word prompt of "insight" (PC, prompts, I2). PD had five images of white men but did not indicate race in the prompts.

PA, PB, and PC indicated a lack of resonance in early prompting because the generated people did not look like them. Judith Butler (2009) coined the term “recognizability” about “framing what is visually perceptible” in “what becomes noticeable or exposed” (as cited in Rose, 2023, p. 19). I began referring to this phenomenon as “beautification” in my research notes. This “beautification” appeared in PA’s and PD’s images independent of their prompts. PB and PC decided to go conceptual after not relating to the images. PC made a very interesting comment about her prompts yielding “pretty” results even when the subject matter was not “pretty” (personal communications). This aspect of generated images can compromise resonance if the creator does not see themselves in the image. Yet all participants were unsurprised by and accepting of Midjourney’s flaws, had both good humour and a critical understanding of why these flaws happen, and chose a “good enough” versus a “perfect” rendering to finish their prompts.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **For Visual Researchers**

During this project, Midjourney (2025) released a video-generating option called “Midjourney Video”. It would be interesting to see if this develops past its current capacity of 5-second videos. To pair this with videovoice (Valiquette & Su, 2024; Walker, 2023), a natural progression from photovoice, could be an interesting avenue to explore. I do wonder if copyright concerns would limit the creative bounds for a project involving video generation.

I am also interested in pursuing this tendency for Midjourney to “beautify” its generated images. Biases in Midjourney’s algorithms are commonly known and

discussed earlier in this paper; however, in terms of beauty, it would be interesting to explore how this compromises “recognizability” and what the cultural implications would be for reinforcing Western beauty standards.

### **For Writing Centre Scholars**

PC mentioned that she felt bound by the writing centre session time to keep her questions to a minimum, but when using ChatGPT, time was boundless (personal communications). I think it would be interesting to research how students from historically oppressed communities feel disadvantaged by the constraints of social etiquette in writing centre sessions. Do students suppress their writing-related questions in favour of being polite? Do students refrain from following up with the writing centre in fear of appearing like an imposition? Of the students who feel compelled to adhere to these social conventions, how many of them identify as women, non-binary, or as 2SLGBTQ+? I think this would be an interesting avenue to pursue.

I have an accepted book chapter coming out next year that discusses the priority of pre-writing support for students with disabilities. I am referring to this as formative support (before the assignment) versus the more traditional summative support (feedback at the end of the draft). In a recent meeting with an Accessibility Services advisor at my university, they requested that our writing centre produce a workshop on pre-writing, as this is becoming a popular area of interest for students with disabilities. PA noted the stress regarding a new assignment (restorying, II), and she is not alone. Pre-writing tasks include visual tasks like mind-mapping and graphic organizers to organize ideas. However, pre-writing can also be seen as unnecessary work, and researching ways to change this perception could be a positive contribution to writing centre literature.

**For Disability Scholars (and all the above)**

Two key topics raised by PD would prove to be compelling research topics. First, the broad topic of students with invisible disabilities and tensions around disclosure and writing centre engagement. To take it further, does visual research address this concern of forced disclosure to receive necessary accommodations? How can visual research create awareness about those with invisible disabilities seeking writing support?

PD also raised awareness around the benefits of solitude for people on the Autism spectrum. PD mentioned that there is a perception that to be alone is to be socially isolated, but for PD, being alone allows for efficient regulation (personal communications). Two of PD's images show emotional strain in a populated environment, but three depict increasing levels of regulation, relaxation, and contentment in environments in which he is alone. PD's third image, "Exposure Therapy", simulates a coffee shop environment at the request of a mental health professional who thinks this would emotionally benefit PD. However, after all the iterations, PD knew immediately that this will not work for him. A study looking at solo behaviours of adults with ASD as beneficial might be validating to those, like PD who find regulation in solitude.

After reading about PA's negative experience, PC's pressured experience, and PD's environmental accommodations, I am interested in exploring how to create accessible virtual spaces in a more fulsome way. This research could reveal strategies that refine virtual conversations with fewer barriers. In addition to considering sensitivities (e.g., light, sound, people), factoring in "Zoom fatigue" (Webb, 2021) can also work toward increasing access for students with disabilities and complex cognitive loads.

### Conclusion

This qualitative study set out to explore how an inclusive writing centre pedagogy, like parasupport, can reframe disability in the online writing centre. It comprised of the visual methodologies of photovoice and critical synthetic visual methodology, the narrative inquiry method of restorying, textual-visual thematic analysis, and CDT. I recruited four participants with disabilities to share their experiences with the writing centre through generating images using Midjourney. The findings of their images and reflections illuminated four key themes: the power of visual communication, the power of advocacy, the power of GenAI as an assistive technology, and the power of parasupport. These findings address the gap in writing centre literature by welcoming participants with disabilities to explore their journeys through visual research.

Most importantly, I believe this study highlights the need to incorporate more conversations in the writing centre about disability. These regular conversations help to increase access by ensuring that the team values the needs of students with disabilities. Further, students need to observe the writing centre having these conversations to encourage transparency and reduce access fatigue. Ideally, these conversations would address the issues raised by the participants in this study. First, how to speak to someone with a disability and the importance of person-first language or using language that the student prefers. Depersonalizing comments—focusing on the writing, not the writer—reinforces the parasupport mantra of coaching the student, not the disability.

Next, have conversations about executive functioning skills, what they are, how they can be impacted by disability, and strategies (possibly including LLMs) that can

support these challenges. Writing specialists devoting time to develop fluency with these neurobiological concepts can help inform the way feedback is given. Another conversation to have involves English language learners and how to offer more diversity and cultural responsiveness in the feedback beyond grammatical corrections. As well, having conversations about the realities of the physical and/or virtual space and its employment of sensory information can help create a more conducive writing centre environment.

Finally, conversations must be had about the emotional toll of disability, access fatigue, invisible disabilities, cognitive load, disclosure, articulating needs, academic anxiety, and the executive functioning demands of writing. This increases the literacy of writing specialists, and using an inclusive pedagogical model supports this work in practice. With these conversations in mind, online writing centres can play a key role in providing opportunities for students with disabilities to academically thrive.

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## Appendix A: Interviews

### Interview 1: Meet and Greet (Microsoft Teams)

- Go over consent for transcription and video
- Prepare window with Discord, Midjourney, and Midjourney styles

### *Go over Research Study User Guide (see Appendix B)*

- Researcher and research overview
- Midjourney and Discord overview
- Walk participant through creating prompts and do the demo in real time
- Show the example of Marielle Reuser's Photovoice and AI project.
- Discuss restorying and go over the restorying sheets
- Final steps

### *Conversation*

- Ask about their experiences with ability, disability, and the writing centre.
- Ask about accommodations needed. Offer support to build images.
- Suggest a sequence: before, during, after.

### *After the Meeting*

- Upload transcription to MAXQDAS
- Complete entry in research journal

### Interview 2 (optional)

This session is if the participant needs technical support generating the images. There will not be a script here as this will be an individualized session. It will begin however, with a reminder about consent for the video and transcripts. This meeting will end with scheduling the final meeting.

### *After the Meeting*

- Send the participant additional resources to help with image generation
- Upload transcription to MAXQDAS
- Complete entry in research journal

### Final Interview

This session will begin with a review of consent for the recording and transcriptions.

### *Image Review and Restorying*

- Go through the restorying questions one image at a time.

### *Wrap up*

- Thank the participant and ask them to verify e-transfer preferences
- Remind them of next steps: i.e., sharing a summary for their review.
- E-transfer compensation to participant

## Appendix B: Research Study User Guide

Date:

Participant:

Alias:

Discord Server:        CSRV

Discord Username:

Discord Password:

### Researcher Overview

This research is for my Doctor of Education degree through Athabasca University. I have been an educator for 19 years, with much of my career in disability education. I taught high school English for 10 years, and have taught writing (professional, academic, and creative) for 9 years. I currently work as a Writing Specialist at Athabasca University. I have undergraduate degrees in English and Education, an MA in Literary Studies and an MFA in Creative Writing.

### Research Overview

Through my research, I have learned that people with disabilities are underrepresented in writing centre scholarship. I designed this research to highlight the voices of these students to help writing centres reconsider their approaches to supporting students with disabilities.

### Elements of the Research

#### Figure B1

#### *Inclusive Writing Centre Pedagogy*



Note: Violini, C. (2025). Inclusive writing centre pedagogy. (Own work).

- **Parasupport** is my approach to empowering students with disabilities in the writing centre in contrast to the “dependence → independence” model which stigmatizes disability as a dependency.
- **Critical Disability Theory** looks at how the world disables people.
- **Generative AI** has been named a game changer for people with disabilities as an assistive technology.
- **Photovoice** is a research methodology that uses photography to tell a marginalized person’s story. In this research, we use GenAI image generation instead as its creative, accessible and efficient.
- **Restorying** is a research methodology that offers participants a chance to change their narrative.
- **Better Practice** is the way we move forward, and stories like yours told through the images you create can change mindsets, pedagogies and teaching in the writing centre.

### Participant Task Overview

- Generate 1-5 images using Discord and Midjourney
- Complete a restorying sheet for each image OR meet with me, and I’ll complete it for you
- Receive \$60 compensation gratuity
- You have two weeks after the conclusion of your participation to withdraw

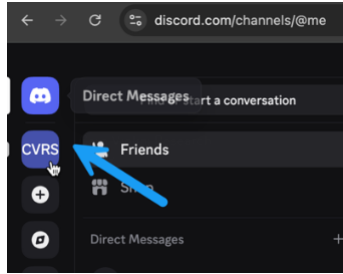
### Midjourney and Discord Overview

**Midjourney** is an AI image-generating program. **Discord** is a communication platform. Midjourney uses Discord to create images. These two apps work together. You begin on Discord to get started practicing with prompts until you produce an image that resonates with your experience. Then, you can transfer that image to Midjourney where you can tweak it to your liking.

**Please note:** the Discord and Midjourney accounts should only be used for this study. Any activity outside of this private channel leads to deactivation and removal from the study.

### Getting Started with Discord

1. Go to this website: <https://discord.com/login>
2. Use your private username + password I provide you with to log on to Discord:
  - a. **Username:**
  - b. **Password:**
3. You have access to Discord for one month:
4. To protect your anonymity, you have been assigned an alias instead of using your real name,
  - a. **Your alias:**
5. When you first log in, Discord may say that I need to approve the login. I will receive this notification and will approve it.
6. Once you are logged in, go to the side menu bar and click on the private server: **CVRS** (Cara Violini Research Study).

**Figure B2***Screenshot: Private Discord Server (CVRS)*

*Note:* From Discord. (2025).

7. Click on the private channel that only you and Cara Violini have access to. No other participants can see this, and the images generated here are completely private. Your channel is set to **stealth mode**, so it is not visible to others on Discord or Midjourney website.
  - a. **Your private channel:**

### Getting Started with Prompts

1. As if you are sending a chat message, start by typing `/imagine`. This triggers the Midjourney app to ask you to enter your image prompt. An image prompt is the description of what you want to generate. What goes in a prompt?
  - Words
  - Emotions
  - Colours
  - Art styles
  - Actions
  - Be creative and use as many words as you need to describe the image
  - Please be aware of Midjourney's [terms of service](#) and keep the prompts appropriate for an academic environment.
2. Start out by making a few silly images. Pick something funny (a cat skateboarding; two sockeye salmon fish having a spaghetti dinner) and play with colors and visual styles until you feel comfortable to proceed.
3. Reflect on your experience as a person with disabilities accessing a writing centre (it can be any writing centre at any institution). Consider these reflective questions to give you some ideas for the prompts:

### Table B1

#### *Prompt Reflections*

---

Have you experienced “access fatigue”? This means the exhaustion of having to disclose disability to receive support, in this case, support from a writing centre.

---

How does writing centre coaching make you feel as a writer?

---

Many writing centres operate on the principle that a student should eventually become independent and no longer need support. How do you feel about this?

---

---

Has anyone at a writing centre made assumptions about you because of disability?

---

Have you experienced ableism in the writing centre? How did this make you feel about yourself as a person and as a learner?

---

Can you describe an interaction in the writing centre that was empowering?

---

How do you feel about yourself as a writer because of working with a writing centre?

---

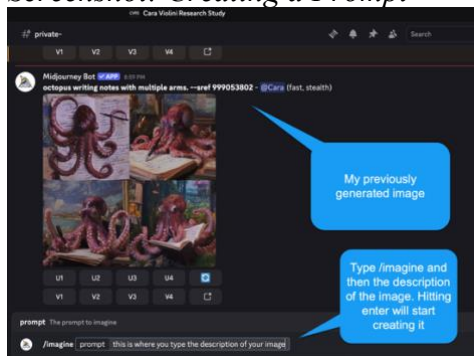
*Note:* Violini, C. (2025). Prompt reflections. (Own work).

**I monitor this account**, so please feel free to leave comments or questions for me in the Discord chat. Just type in a message with “Hi Cara:” just like a chat message, and I receive a notification.

**Please don’t delete images or prompts** as they show your creativity process! Leaving me notes with your impressions like “I like this image because...” or “This isn’t what I was envisioning...” helps me understand your thought process.

### Figure B3

#### *Screenshot: Creating a Prompt*



*Note:* From Discord. (2025).

When the image creation completes, you get a grid with 4 variations (see above). If you want to refine or upscale one of the images, there are buttons below you can click, or simply hit the refresh icon to try again.

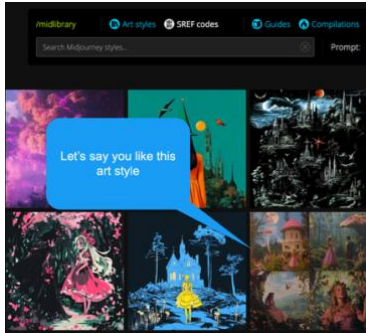
- You can click ‘U1 U2 U3 U4’ to **upscale** (aka make a larger version) of that picture.
- You can click ‘V1 V2 V3 V4’ to **make variations** of the selected picture.

### Different Design Styles

You can get inspiration for different design styles here: <https://midlibrary.io/sref-codes>.

### Figure B4

#### *Screenshot: Choosing SREF Styl*

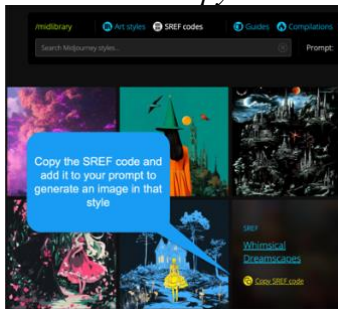


Note: From Midjourneysref.com. (2025).

- click 'copy SREF code'

### Figure B5

Screenshot: Copy SREF Code



Note: From Midjourneysref.com. (2025).

- Then paste that code to the end of your prompt to duplicate the style.
- `/imagine: octopus writing notes with multiple arms. --sref 999053802`

### Figure B6

Screenshot: Apply SREF Code in Discord



Note: From Discord. (2025).

### Getting Started with Midjourney

Once you have decided on an image or images you like, you have two options.

1. **Ready to submit:** If you are happy with what you produced, just type into the Discord chat which image(s) you want to submit. Use this guide to reference a square in the grid:

**Table B2***Midjourney Image Grid (Left to Right in Rows)*

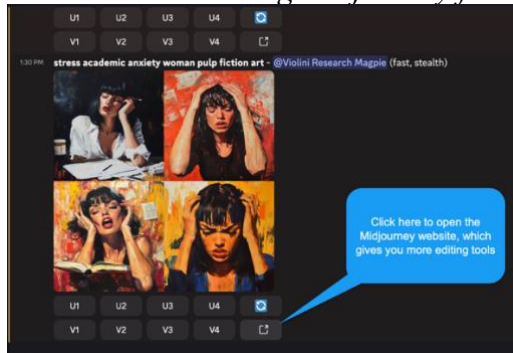
1	2
3	4

Note: Violini, C. (2025). Midjourney image grid. (Own work).

2. **Not ready to submit:** If you want to enhance the image further, you can go to the Midjourney website for additional editing tools.

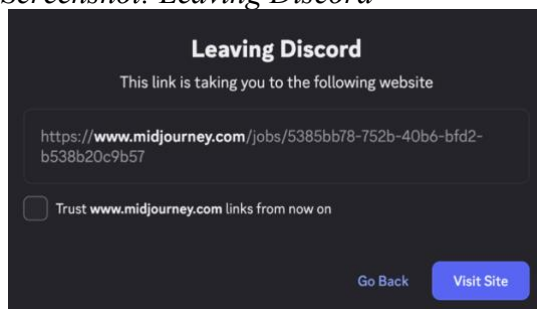
**Moving onto Midjourney**

1. Leave a note for me in Discord that you are moving to Midjourney
2. To access Midjourney, you can click the link button under a generated prompt:

**Figure B7***Screenshot: Accessing Midjourney from Discord*

Note: From Discord. (2025).

You will get this notice. You can click on “visit site”

**Figure B8***Screenshot: Leaving Discord*

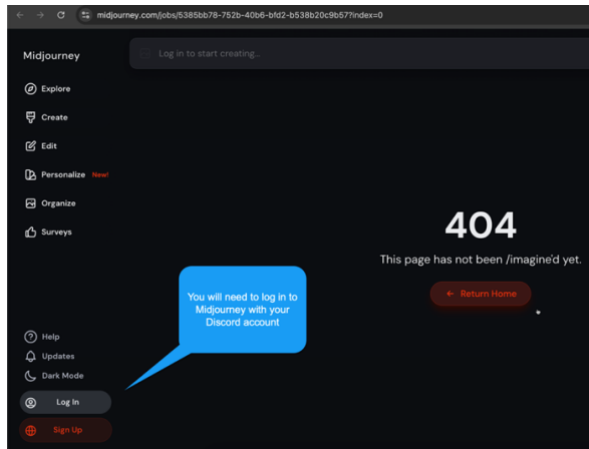
Note: From Discord. (2025).

Log in using your Discord information:

**Username:**

**Password:**

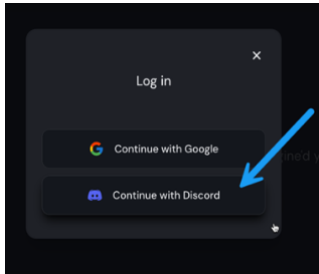
**Figure B9***Screenshot: Logging into Midjourney from Discord*



*Note:* From Midjourney. (2025).  
Click “Continue with Discord”

### Figure B 10

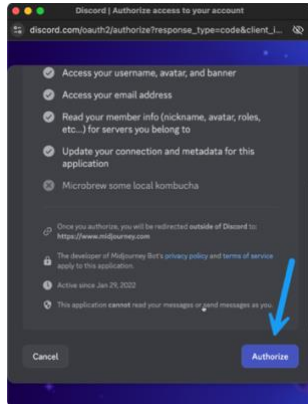
*Screenshot: Continue with Discord Prompt*



*Note:* From Midjourney. (2025).  
Then click “authorize”

### Figure B11

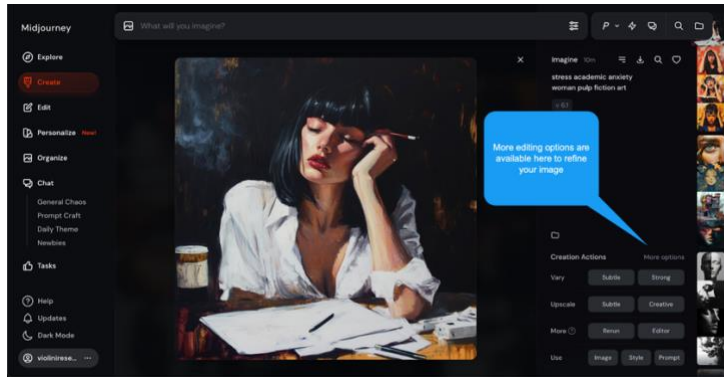
*Screenshot: Authorize Midjourney*



*Note:* From Midjourney. (2025).  
Now that you are on Midjourney, you can refine your image using the tools to the right.

### Figure B 12

*Screenshot: Refining Images in Midjourney*



*Note:* From Midjourney. (2025).

Once you are done with your image, you can either:

- copy and paste it back into Discord, or
- leave me a note in discord that your image is complete

### When You Are Done

Once you have created 1-5 images, it's time to move onto the “Restorying” phase.

### Restorying Reflections

Restorying is where we take control of a narrative that has been negative or harmful about us and turn it into a sense of empowerment. This research study asks you that by making the image(s), did you feel a sense of restorying your experience visually through

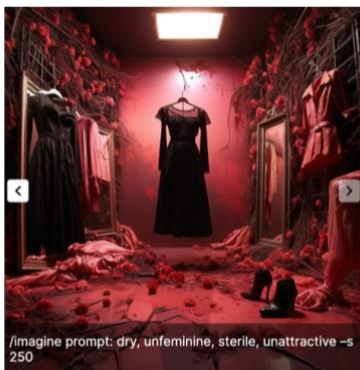
- Capturing your feelings
- Validating your experiences
- Expressing yourself

### Example Photovoice Project

The image here is taken from a GenAI photovoice project where participants explored their feelings about menopause using Midjourney. In this example, the participant entered the prompts “dry, unfeminine, sterile, unattractive”. She said that this image made her feel “seen and understood as the images represented the unspoken aspects of my experience”.

### Figure B 13

*Generated Image from Reuser’s (2021) Photovoice Project*



*Note:* Image generated for AI Art InnerWorlds with Midjourney using the prompts “dry, unfeminine, sterile, unattractive” (2021). <https://photovoiceai.art/>

### **Getting Started with Restorying**

- You can set up an appointment with me so that through conversation, I can fill in the restorying sheets for you.
- You can fill out the sheets yourself and email them to me (cviolini@athabascau.ca).
- This study asked you to produce 1 – 5 images. There are 5 restorying sheets below but only use the ones you need for the number of images you produced.

### **Final Steps**

Once you have submitted these sheets, I will send a confirmation email that includes:

- **A final restorying reflection sheet**
- **A summary** of your images and restorying for you to approve
- **Transcriptions** of our video calls for you to approve
- **A request for your e-transfer information** for your \$60 compensation
- A timeline for when you can withdraw from the study (2 weeks after this email).

Thank you for your participation in this doctoral study. Your time, efforts, creativity and insights will impact writing centre professionals and how they approach disability in their writing centres. Thank you for sharing your stories with me.

**Table B3***Restorying Reflection Sheet*

<b>Image # Title: Prompts:</b>	<b>Answers (answer the reflections that are relevant to you)</b>
What feeling / experience were you trying to capture through this image?	
Why did you choose these specific prompts?	
Does the image address all the prompts?	
What is your emotional reaction to this image?	
Does this image capture your experience with disability in the writing centre?	
Does this image change how you feel about this experience?	
Your own observations / impressions	

*Note:* Violini, C. (2025). Restorying reflection sheet. (Own work).

### **Final Restorying Reflections**

1. Did creating the image(s) express / change / confirm / validate / shape / reinforce / contradict / support your understanding of your experience as a person with disabilities in the writing centre?
2. Did you find that creating your story through visuals versus words offered you new insights into your experience?

### **Appendix C: Resources for Using GenAI Tools**

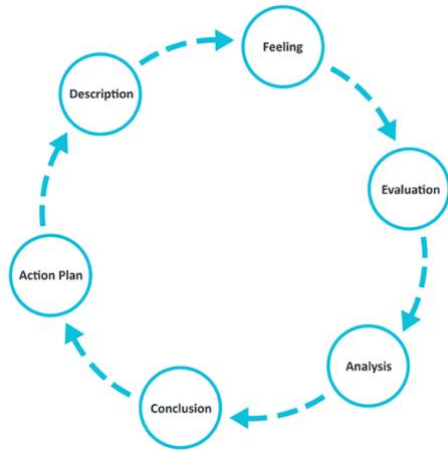
I shared this list of resources with participants to assist them with image generation from ethical and literacy standpoints.

- [Student Guide to AI Literacy \(MLA-CCCC, 2024\)](#)
- [Ethical Considerations for Images](#)
- [Accessibility Canada Standards Guide](#)
- [Midjourney Terms of Service](#)
- [Discord Terms of Service](#)

## Appendix D: Research Journal

**Figure D 1**

*Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle*



*Note:* Gibbs, G (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford.

<https://reflection.ed.ac.uk/reflection-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>

### Overview of Elements

#### Description

- Describe the situation in detail. Helpful questions to consider:
- What happened?
- When and where did it happen?
- Who was present?
- What was the outcome of the situation?

#### Feeling

- Explore any feelings during the experience. Helpful questions:
- What were you feeling before, during, and after the situation?
- What do you think about the situation now?
- What do you think other people were feeling about the situation?
- What do you think other people feel about the situation now?

#### Evaluation

- Assess what worked and what didn't work in the situation. Helpful questions:
- What went well? What didn't go so well?
- What did you and other people contribute to the situation (positively or negatively)?

#### Analysis

- Make sense of what happened. Helpful questions:
- Why did and didn't go well?
- What sense can I make of the situation?

- What knowledge can help me understand the situation?

**Conclusion**

- Summarise learning and highlight what changes to your actions could improve the outcome in the future. Helpful questions:
- What did I learn from this situation?
- How could this have been a more positive situation for everyone involved?
- What else could I have done?

**Action plan**

- List actionable items to pursue moving forward. Helpful questions:
- If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do differently?
- How can I apply what I have learned?
- How can improve actions for next time?

**Table D1***Research Journal Template*

<b>Date</b>		
<b>Research Phase</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<i>Who was there?</i> <i>When?</i> <i>Where?</i> <i>Outcome?</i>	
<b>Feelings / Impressions</b>	<i>Before</i>	
	<i>During</i>	
	<i>After</i>	
<b>Evaluations</b>	<i>Successes</i>	
	<i>Challenges</i>	
<b>Analysis</b>	<i>Reflexive Understandings</i>	
<b>Conclusions / Takeaways</b>	<i>Lessons learned</i>	
<b>Action Items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	

*Note:* Adapted from Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford.  
<https://reflection.ed.ac.uk/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>

### Appendix E: Research Study Eligibility Checklist

**Date:**

**Participant:**

**Participant needs to answer YES to all the criteria below to be eligible for this EdD Research Study on Writing Centre Education and Disabilities**

**Table E 1**

*Eligibility Criteria Checklist*

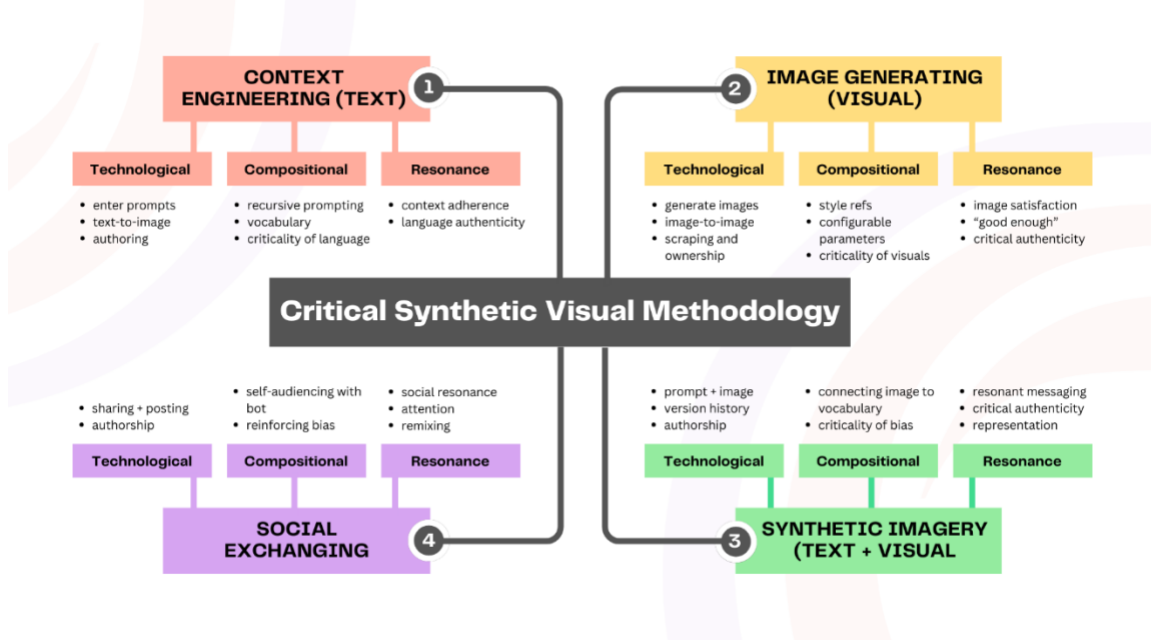
<b>Y / N</b>	<b>Eligibility Criteria</b>
	Participant must have a diagnosed disability
	Participant must have had regular engagement with a writing centre at any post-secondary institution (more than 3 visits)
	Participant cannot have individually met with Cara Violini through AU Write Site
	Participant cannot be a former student of Cara Violini's: ENGL 177, ENGL 189, ENGL 255, ENGL 353
	Participant cannot be a current EdD student at AU
	Participant cannot be a current volunteer or author at Journal of Integrated Studies

*Note:* Violini, C. (2025). Eligibility criteria checklist. (Own work).

**Comments:**

## Appendix F: Data Analysis Approach

Figure F1

*Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology*

*Note:* Adapted from Rose. G. (2023). *Visual methodologies*, 5 ed. Sage.

**Figure F 2**  
*Data Analysis Flow*

Analytical Task	Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology	Analytical Method(s)
Analyze Texts	<b>Context Engineering (Texts)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<b>Thematic Analysis</b> (Braun & Clarke, 2013)  <b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta & Cox, 2022)
Analyze Visuals	<b>Image Generating (Visuals)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<b>Compositional Analysis</b> (Rose, 2023)  <b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta & Cox, 2022)
Connect Texts + Visuals	<b>Synthetic Images (Text + Visual)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<b>Textual-Visual Thematic Analysis</b> (Trombeta & Cox, 2022)
Reflect	<b>Exchanging Meaning (Social)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological</li> <li>• Compositional</li> <li>• Resonance</li> </ul>	<b>Photovoice Reflection</b> (Wang, 1999)  <b>Restorying Reflection</b> (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

*Note:* A culmination of my data analysis methods. (Own work, 2025).

#### All Phases: Thematic Analysis, Trombeta & Cox (2022)

- Familiarization with data
- Generating initial codes
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Reporting

#### Phase 2: Compositional Analysis, Rose (2023)

- Content
- Color
- Spatial Organization
- Light
- Expressive Content
- Style (my addition)
- Representation (my addition)

**Phase 3: Guidance Questions to Analyze Relationship Between Text and Visual, Trombetta & Cox (2022)**

- What is in the images that supports or reinforces what was learned from the x data?
- What is in the images that contradicts what was learned from the interview data?
- What is in the images that is not in the interviews?
- What is in the interviews that is not in the images?

**Phase 4: Photovoice SHOWeD Model, Wang (1999)**

- What do you **See** here? Describe the content of the photo objectively.
- What is really **Happening** here? Interpret the situation, going beyond surface details.
- How does this relate to **Our** lives? Link the image to personal or community experiences.
- **Why** does this situation exist? Explore underlying causes, systems, or structures
- How could this image **Educate** people? Identify the image's potential for raising awareness.
- What can we **Do** about it? Generate ideas for action or change.

**Phase 5: Restorying Analysis (see Appendix B)**

## Appendix G: Codebook

**Table G 1**  
*Code Families*

Level 1	Level 2	Description
<b>RQ: Research Questions</b>		
	RQ1	How can restoring AI-generated images through photovoice reframe disability support in writing centres?
	RQ2	In what ways can a participant with disabilities use GenAI to capture their engagement with the writing centre?
	RQ3	How can generating visual images using photovoice influence the participant to restore their relationship with the online writing centre?
	RQ4	How do these generated images help confront ableism in writing centre pedagogy and practice by giving voice to students with disabilities?
<b>CSVM: Critical Synthetic Visual Methodology</b>		
CSVM-CE		CSVM: Context Engineering
	CSVM-CE(TP)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Technological: Prompt)
	CSVM-CE(TA)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Technological: Authorship)
	CSVM-CE(CR)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Composition: Recursive experimenting)
	CSVM-CE(CV)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Composition: Vocabulary)
	CSVM-CE(CL)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Composition: Criticality of language)
	CSVM-R(CA)	CSVM: Context Engineering (Resonance: Context adherence)
CSVM-IG		CSVM: Image Generating
	CSVM-IG(TPI)	CSVM: Image Generating (Technological: Producing Images)
	CSVM-IG(TA)	CSVM: Image Generating (Technological: Authorship)
	CSVM-IG(CS)	CSVM: Image Generating (Compositional: Style Refs)
	CSVM-IG(CP)	CSVM: Image Generating (Compositional: Configurable parameters)
	CSVM-IG(CS)	CSVM: Image Generating (Compositional: Selective editing)
	CSVM-IG(CC)	CSVM: Image Generating (Compositional: Criticality of visuals)
	CSVM-IG (RIS)	CSVM: Image Generating (Resonance: Image satisfaction)
CSVM-SI		CSVM: Synthetic Imagery
	CSVM-SI(TU)	CSVM: Synthetic Imagery (Technological: Achieving unity)
	CSVM-SI(TA)	CSVM: Synthetic Imagery (Technological: Authoring)
	CSVM-SI(CU)	CSVM: Synthetic Imagery (Compositional: Unity with text + visual)
	CSVM-SI(CR)	CSVM: Synthetic Imagery (Compositional: Representation)
	CSVM-SI(RM)	CSVM: Synthetic Imagery (Resonance: Resonant messaging)
CSVM-SE		CSVM: Social Exchanging
	CSVM-SE(TS)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Technological: Sharing)
	CSVM-SE(TSA)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Technological: Self-Audiencing)
	CSVM-SE(CE)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Compositional: Ethics)
	CSVM-SE(CB)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Compositional: Biases)
	CSVM-SE(RA)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Resonance: Attention)
	CSVM-SE(RSR)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Resonance: Social resonance)
	CSVM-SE(RR)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Resonance: Remixing for new contexts)
	CSVM-SE(SC)	CSVM: Social Exchanging (Social Composition)
CA-T		Compositional Analysis (Text)
CA-TVP	CA-TVP1	Vocabulary and phrasing: disability

	CA-TVP2	Vocabulary and phrasing: Marginalizing
	CA-TVP3	Vocabulary and phrasing: Writing centre
	CA-TVP4	Vocabulary and phrasing: Writing centre specialist
	CA-TVP5	Vocabulary and phrasing: AI, ChatGPT, LLM, Midjourney
CA-TE	CA-TE1	Expression: Fear, scared
	CA-TE2	Expression: Anxiety, worry
	CA-TE3	Expression: Stress
	CA-TE4	Expression: Self-doubt, negative self-perception
	CA-TE5	Expression: Distracted
	CA-TE6	Expression: Needing help
	CA-TE7	Expression: Discouraged, disappointed
	CA-TE8	Expression: Relieved
	CA-TE9	Expression: Shocked
	CA-TE10	Expression: Change of perspective
	CA-TE11	Expression: Motivated, inspired
	CA-TE12	Expression: Validated
	CA-TE13	Expression: Uncomfortable
	CA-TE14	Expression: Contentment
CA-TC	CA-TC1	Characterization: Clothes
	CA-TC2	Characterization: Styling
	CA-TC3	Characterization: Props
	CA-TC4	Characterization: Identity
CA-FW	CA-FW1	Frequent Words:
CA-V		Compositional Analysis (Visual)
CA-VC		Compositional Analysis: Content
	CA-VC1	Content: Before
	CA-VC2	Content: Now
	CA-VC3	Content: Future
	CA-VC4	Content: Dream, fantasy, ideal, imagination
	CA-VC5	Content: Non-sequence, independent moment
	CA-VC6	Content: Sequence, initial moment
	CA-VC7	Content: Sequence, sequential moment
	CA-VC8	Content: Sequence, independent moment
	CA-VC9	Content: Sequence, final moment
	CA-VC10	Content: Narrative storytelling
	CA-VC11	Content: Metaphorical storytelling
	CA-VC12	Content: Mythological / magical storytelling
	CA-VC13	Content: Internalized imagery
	CA-VC14	Content: Public location
	CA-VC15	Content: Public location in a private setting
	CA-VC16	Content: Private location in a private setting
	CA-VC17	Content: Single person
	CA-VC18	Content: Populated environment
	CA-VC19	Content: Outdoor environment
	CA-VC20	Content: Remote/rural environment
	CA-VC21	Content: Urban environment
	CA-VC19	Content: Desk
	CA-VC20	Content: Laptop
	CA-VC21	Content: Animal
	CA-VC22	Content: Magical creatures
	CA-VC23	Content: Weapons
	CA-VC24	Content: Blood
	CA-VC25	Content: Skull

CA-VCo		Compositional Analysis: Colour
	CA-VCo1	Colour: Hue
	CA-VCo1a	Colour: Black, grey, shadow colours
	CA-VCo1b	Colour: Red
	CA-VCo1c	Colour: Earth tones (beige, rust, brown)
	CA-VCo1d	Colour: Water tones (blue, green)
	CA-VCo1e	Colour: Yellow
	CA-VCo1f	Colour: Bone, white, cream
	CA-VCo1g	Colour: filter
	CA-VCo1h	Colour: Black and white
	CA-VCo2	Colour: Saturation (high)
	CA-VCo2a	Colour: Saturation (low)
	CA-VCo3	Colour: Value (light)
	CA-VCo3a	Colour: Value (dark)
	CA-VCo4	Colour: Hyper colour
	CA-VCo5	Colour: For emphasis
	CA-VCo6	Colour: For atmosphere, mood, ambiance
CA-VSO		Compositional Analysis: Spatial organization
	CA-VSO1	Spatial organization: Eye level
	CA-VSO2	Spatial organization: Distance
	CA-VSO3	Spatial organization: Close
	CA-VSO4	Spatial organization: Logic of figuration (low)
	CA-VSO4a	Spatial organization: Logic of formation (high)
	CA-VSO5	Spatial organization: Focalizing direct at viewer
	CA-VSO5a	Spatial organization: Daydreaming / ruminating
	CA-VSO5b	Spatial organization: Focalizing at computer
	CA-VSO5c	Spatial organization: Focalizing as interaction
	CA-VSO5d	Spatial organization: Back of head to viewer
	CA-VSO5e	Spatial organization: Eyes shut
	CA-VSO5f	Spatial organization: Emphasis on foreground
	CA-VSO5g	Spatial organization: Emphasis on background
	CA-VSO5h	Spatial organization: Wide shot
CA-VL		Compositional Analysis: Light
	CA-VL1	Light: Candlelight
	CA-VL2	Light: Natural daylight
	CA-VL3	Light: Natural twilight
	CA-VL4	Light: Night
	CA-VL5	Light: Electric light
	CA-VL6	Light: Computer / Blue light
	CA-VL7	Light: Emphasizing
	CA-VL8	Light: Shadowing
CA-VEC		Compositional Analysis: Expressive Content
	CA-VEC1	Expressive Content: Happy
	CA-VEC2	Expressive Content: Content
	CA-VEC3	Expressive Content: Confident
	CA-VEC4	Expressive Content: Regulated
	CA-VEC5	Expressive Content: Distracted
	CA-VEC6	Expressive Content: Worried
	CA-VEC7	Expressive Content: Stressed
	CA-VEC8	Expressive Content: Connected
	CA-VEC9	Expressive Content: Relieved
	CA-VEC10	Expressive Content: Inspired / motivated
	CA-VEC11	Expressive Content: Uncomfortable

	CA-VEC12	Expressive Content: Scary
CA-VS		Compositional Analysis: Style
	CA-VS1	Style: Realistic, photorealism
	CA-VS2	Style: Mythological, magical
	CA-VS3	Style: Art movement
	CA-VS4	Style: Hyperrealism
	CA-VS5	Style: Representation
	CA-VS6	Style: Beautified
TVTA-GQ		Tele-Visual Thematic Analysis: Guiding Questions
	TVTA-GQ1	What is in the images that supports or reinforces what was learned from the textual data?
	TVTA-GQ2	What is in the images that contradicts the textual data?
	TVTA-GQ3	What is in the images that is not in the textual?
	TVTA-GQ4	What is in the textual data that is not in the images?
SHOWED		SHOWED Model (photovoice)
	SHOWED-S	SHOWED: What do you see here?
	SHOWED-H	SHOWED: What is really happening here?
	SHOWED-O	SHOWED: How does this relate to our lives?
	SHOWED-W	SHOWED: Why does this situation exist?
	SHOWED-E	SHOWED: How could this image educate someone?
	SHOWED-D	SHOWED: What can we do about it?
RS		Restorying
	RS-FI	<i>Restorying: Feeling about image</i> What feeling were you trying to capture through this image?
	RS-P	<i>Restorying: Prompts</i> Why did you choose these specific prompts?
	RS-PA	<i>Restorying: Prompt adherence</i> Does the image address all the prompts?
	RS-ER	<i>Restorying: Emotional reaction</i> What is your emotional reaction to this image?
	RS-DWC	<i>Restorying: Disability in the writing centre</i> Does this image capture your experience with disability in the writing centre?
	RS-ICF	<i>Restorying: Image changed feeling</i> Does this image change how you feel about this experience?
	RS-YO	<i>Restorying: Your observations (not emotional)</i>
	RS-E	<i>Restorying: Effective</i> Did creating the image(s) express / change / confirm / validate / shape / reinforce / contradict / support your understanding of your experience as a person with disabilities in the writing centre?
	RS-VVW	<i>Restorying: Visuals versus words</i> Did creating your story through visuals offer new insights?

**Table G 2**  
*Code Description*

Code	Text / Vis.	Description	Inclusion Criteria
RQ1	T/V	How can restoring AI-generated images through photovoice reframe disability support in writing centres?	AI, WC, photovoice Disability
RQ2	T/V	In what ways can a participant with disabilities use GenAI to capture their engagement with the writing centre?	Disabilities, AI Writing Centre
RQ3	T/V	How can generating visual images using photovoice influence the participant to restore their relationship with the online writing centre?	Visuals, Restory photovoice, WWC
RQ4	T/V	How do these generated images help confront ableism in writing centre pedagogy and practice by giving voice to students with disabilities?	Ableism, Pedagogy Voice, disabilities
CSVM-CE(TP)	T	Context Engineering (Technological: Prompt)	Prompt
CSVM-CE(TA)	T	Context Engineering (Technological: Authorship)	Context, My prompts
CSVM-CE(CR)	T	Context Engineering (Composition: Recursive experimenting)	Recursive Prompt
CSVM-CE(CV)	T	Context Engineering (Composition: Vocabulary)	Context, Vocabulary
CSVM-CE(CL)	T	Context Engineering (Composition: Criticality of language)	Context, Language
CSVM-R(CA)	T	Context Engineering (Resonance: Context adherence)	Resonance, adherence
CSVM-IG(TPI)	V	Image Generating (Technological: Producing Images)	Image, technological
CSVM-IG(TA)	V	Image Generating (Technological: Authorship)	Image, authorship
CSVM-IG(CS)	V	Image Generating (Compositional: Style Refs)	style refs
CSVM-IG(CP)	V	Image Generating (Compositional: Configurable parameters)	Config. parameters
CSVM-IG(CS)	V	Image Generating (Compositional: Selective editing)	Selective editing
CSVM-IG(CC)	V	Image Generating (Compositional: Criticality of visuals)	Criticality of visuals
CSVM-IG(RIS)	V	Image Generating (Resonance: Image satisfaction)	Image Resonance
CSVM-SI(TU)	T/V	Synthetic Imagery (Technological: Achieving unity)	Unity
CSVM-SI(TA)	T/V	Synthetic Imagery (Technological: Authoring)	Authoring
CSVM-SI(CU)	T/V	Synthetic Imagery (Compositional: Unity with text + visual)	Text + visual unity
CSVM-SI(CR)	T/V	Synthetic Imagery (Compositional: Representation)	Representation
CSVM-SI(RM)	T/V	Synthetic Imagery (Resonance: Resonant messaging)	Resonance
CSVM-SE(TS)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Technological: Sharing)	Sharing
CSVM-SE(TSA)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Technological: Self-Audiencing)	Self-Audiencing
CSVM-SE(CE)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Compositional: Ethics)	Ethics
CSVM-SE(CB)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Compositional: Biases)	Algorithms, biases
CSVM-SE(RA)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Resonance: Attention)	Attention
CSVM-SE(RSR)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Resonance: Social resonance)	Social resonance
CSVM-SE(RR)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Resonance: Remixing for new contexts)	Remixing
CSVM-SE(SC)	T/V	Social Exchanging (Social Composition)	Social composition
CA-TVP1	T	Vocabulary and phrasing: disability	Disability-related
CA-TVP2	T	Vocabulary and phrasing: Marginalizing	Marginalizing-related
CA-TVP3	T	Vocabulary and phrasing: Writing centre	WC Language
CA-TVP4	T	Vocabulary and phrasing: Writing centre specialist	WC specialists, specialists
CA-TVP5	T	Vocabulary and phrasing: AI, ChatGPT, LLM, Midjourney	AI-related language
CA-TE1	T	Expression: Fear, scared	Fear, scared
CA-TE2	T	Expression: Anxiety, worry	Anxiety, worry
CA-TE3	T	Expression: Stress	Stress
CA-TE4	T	Expression: Self-doubt, negative self-perception	Self-doubt, Self-image
CA-TE5	T	Expression: Distracted	Distracted, inattentive
CA-TE6	T	Expression: Needing help	Recognizing need
CA-TE7	T	Expression: Discouraged, disappointed	Let down
CA-TE8	T	Expression: Relieved	Relieved
CA-TE9	T	Expression: Shocked	Shocked
CA-TE10	T	Expression: Change of perspective	Change of perspective
CA-TE11	T	Expression: Motivated, inspired	Motivated, inspired
CA-TE12	T	Expression: Validated	Validated
CA-TE13	T	Expression: Uncomfortable	Social discomfort
CA-TE14	T	Expression: Contentment	At ease, calm, relaxed
CA-TC1	T	Characterization: Clothes	Clothes, hats, glasses
CA-TC2	T	Characterization: Styling	Name brands
CA-TC3	T	Characterization: Props	Specific items
CA-TC4	T	Characterization: Identity	sense of self, a role
CA-FW1	T	Frequent Words:	
CA-VC1	T/V	Content: Before	Representing the past

CA-VC2	V	Content: Now	Representing now
CA-VC3	V	Content: Future	Representing future
CA-VC4	V	Content: Dream, fantasy, ideal, imagination	Staring off into space,
CA-VC5	V	Content: Non-sequence, independent moment	
CA-VC6	V	Content: Sequence, initial moment	
CA-VC7	V	Content: Sequence, sequential moment	
CA-VC8	V	Content: Sequence, independent moment	
CA-VC9	V	Content: Sequence, final moment	
CA-VC10	V	Content: Narrative storytelling	Image tells a story
CA-VC11	V	Content: Metaphorical storytelling	Story through symbols
CA-VC12	V	Content: Mythological / magical storytelling	Layer of symbolism
CA-VC13	V	Content: Internalized imagery	Image about feelings
CA-VC14	V	Content: Public location	
CA-VC15	V	Content: Public location in a private setting	Living rooms, kitchens
CA-VC16	V	Content: Private location in a private setting	Bedrooms, bed
CA-VC17	V	Content: Single person	
CA-VC18	V	Content: Populated environment	
CA-VC19	V	Content: Outdoor environment	Nature, outdoors
CA-VC20	V	Content: Remote/rural environment	Nature
CA-VC21	V	Content: Urban environment	City, café, mall, stores
CA-VC19	V	Content: Desk	At office
CA-VC20	V	Content: Laptop	
CA-VC21	V	Content: Animal	Pet
CA-VC22	V	Content: Magical creatures	Mythological creatures
CA-VC23	V	Content: Weapons	
CA-VC24	V	Content: Blood	
CA-VC25	V	Content: Skull	
CA-VCo1	V	Colour: Hue	
CA-VCo1a	V	Colour: Black, grey, shadow colours	
CA-VCo1b	V	Colour: Red	
CA-VCo1c	V	Colour: Earth tones (beige, rust, brown)	
CA-VCo1d	V	Colour: Water tones (blue, green)	
CA-VCo1e	V	Colour: Yellow	
CA-VCo1f	V	Colour: Bone, white, cream	
CA-VCo1g	V	Colour: filter	
CA-VCo1h	V	Colour: Black and white	
CA-VCo2	V	Colour: Saturation (high)	Rich, vibrant colours
CA-VCo2a	V	Colour: Saturation (low)	Faint, diluted colours
CA-VCo3	V	Colour: Value (light)	Light colours
CA-VCo3a	V	Colour: Value (dark)	Dark colours
CA-VCo4	V	Colour: Hyper colour	
CA-VCo5	V	Colour: For emphasis	Colors draw attention
CA-VCo6	V	Colour: For atmosphere, mood, ambiance	Colours create a mood
CA-VSO1	V	Spatial organization: Eye level	
CA-VSO2	V	Spatial organization: Distance	
CA-VSO3	V	Spatial organization: Close	
CA-VSO4	V	Spatial organization: Logic of figuration (low)	Low looking up
CA-VSO4a	V	Spatial organization: Logic of formation (high)	High looking down
CA-VSO5	V	Spatial organization: Focalizing direct at viewer	Eyes direct to viewer
CA-VSO5a	V	Spatial organization: Daydreaming / ruminating	Eyes up
CA-VSO5b	V	Spatial organization: Focalizing at computer	
CA-VSO5c	V	Spatial organization: Focalizing as interaction	
CA-VSO5d	V	Spatial organization: Back of head to viewer	
CA-VSO5e	V	Spatial organization: Eyes shut	Figure has eyes shut
CA-VSO5f	V	Spatial organization: Emphasis on foreground	
CA-VSO5g	V	Spatial organization: Emphasis on background	
CA-VSO5h	V	Spatial organization: Wide shot	
CA-VL1	V	Light: Candlelight	
CA-VL2	V	Light: Natural daylight	
CA-VL3	V	Light: Natural twilight	
CA-VL4	V	Light: Night	
CA-VL5	V	Light: Electric light	
CA-VL6	V	Light: Computer / Blue light	
CA-VL7	V	Light: Emphasizing	Emphasizing an item
CA-VL8	V	Light: Shadowing	
CA-VEC1	V	Expressive Content: Happy	Smiling, elation

CA-VEC2	V	Expressive Content: Content	Interior sense of happy
CA-VEC3	V	Expressive Content: Confident	
CA-VEC4	V	Expressive Content: Regulated	Being in tune
CA-VEC5	V	Expressive Content: Distracted	Diverted eyes
CA-VEC6	V	Expressive Content: Worried	Anxious, distressed,
CA-VEC7	V	Expressive Content: Stressed	Worry creates distress
CA-VEC8	V	Expressive Content: Connected	With a human
CA-VEC9	V	Expressive Content: Relieved	
CA-VEC10	V	Expressive Content: Inspired / motivated	Ready to work
CA-VEC11	V	Expressive Content: Uncomfortable	Social discomfort
CA-VEC12	V	Expressive Content: Contentment	Serene, relaxed
CA-VS1	V	Style: Realistic, photorealism	Realistic
CA-VS2	V	Style: Mythological, magical	Fantastical
CA-VS3	V	Style: Art movement	Impressionist etc.
CA-VS4	V	Style: Hyperrealism	Digitally enhanced
CA-VS5	V	Style: Representation	Issues around likeness
CA-VS6	V	Style: Beautified	“beauty” algorithm
TVTA-GQ1	T/V	What in the images reinforces what was learned from the textual data?	Matching
TVTA-GQ2	T/V	What is in the images that contradicts the textual data?	Contradiction
TVTA-GQ3	T/V	What is in the images that is not in the textual?	Absence
TVTA-GQ4	T/V	What is in the textual data that is not in the images?	No rendering
SHOWED-S	T	SHOWED: What do you see here?	Impressions
SHOWED-H	T	SHOWED: What is really happening here?	Context
SHOWED-O	T	SHOWED: How does this relate to our lives?	Relational piece
SHOWED-W	T	SHOWED: Why does this situation exist?	Origins
SHOWED-E	T	SHOWED: How could this image educate someone?	Lessons to be learned
SHOWED-D	T	SHOWED: What can we do about it?	Action items
RS-FI	T	What feeling were you trying to capture through this image?	Visualize feeling
RS-P	T	Why did you choose these specific prompts?	Specific words
RS-PA	T	Does the image address all the prompts?	Adherence?
RS-ER	T	What is your emotional reaction to this image?	Reaction?
RS-DWC	T	Does this image capture your experience with disability in the writing centre?	Mirror?
RS-ICF	T	Does this image change how you feel about this experience?	Change in POV
RS-YO	T	<i>Restorying: Your observations (not emotional)</i>	Observations
RS-E	T	Did creating the image(s) align with your experience in the WC	Alignment
RS-VVW	T	Did creating your story through visuals offer new insights into your experience?	Visuals vs words

**Appendix H: Visuals PowerPoint**

Please click the link below to access a PowerPoint with the images. This is designed for better viewing.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Xpza7hB82TDUhzadH91N6mDGhu-PDJSs6HdCULD8ez4/edit?usp=sharing>

## Appendix I: Certification of Ethical Approval



### CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The REB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

**Ethics File No.:** 25929

**Principal Investigator:**

Ms. Cara Violini, Graduate Student  
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences\Doctor of Education (EdD) in Distance Education

**Supervisor/Project Team:**

Dr. Connie Blomgren (Supervisor)

**Project Title:**

Reframing Disability in the Online Writing Centre: How Photovoice and Generative AI Inform the Practice of Parasupport

**Effective Date:** March 21, 2025

**Expiry Date:** March 20, 2026

**Restrictions:**

Any modification/amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval prior to proceeding. Any adverse event or incidental findings must be reported to the AUREB as soon as possible, for review.

Ethical approval is valid **for a period of one year**. A request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

An Ethics Final Report must be submitted when the research is complete (*i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable)*) or the research is terminated.

**Approved by:**

**Date: March 21, 2025**

Frits Pannekoek, Chair  
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Departmental Ethics Review Committee

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Athabasca University Research Ethics Board  
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