

The Need to Convey Experience

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by

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Abstract

Online media has become a forum for heart-felt, first-hand accounts of what it's like to live with Non-Verbal Living Disability (NVLD), an obscure, misunderstood neurological condition for which there is no clinical diagnosis. The personal stories of those with symptoms helps to validate the existence of their condition through the lived truths experienced. This Auto-Ethnographic study explores the question ***how might the researcher's art practice support the NVLD community with a creative tool to convey their own lived experiences, and further, how can blog postings by the community offer insight and inspiration for the development of the tool?*** Narrative Inquiry is used as the primary method for data collection and analysis and the researcher acts as a proxy for the research subjects in the development of the visualized tool. The study reveals a range of common experiences from persons with NVLD and that these experiences are translatable into visual components (colour, shape, line etc.) that convey their lived experiences.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis research is structured as a series of five chapters that document the research process alongside my body of work.

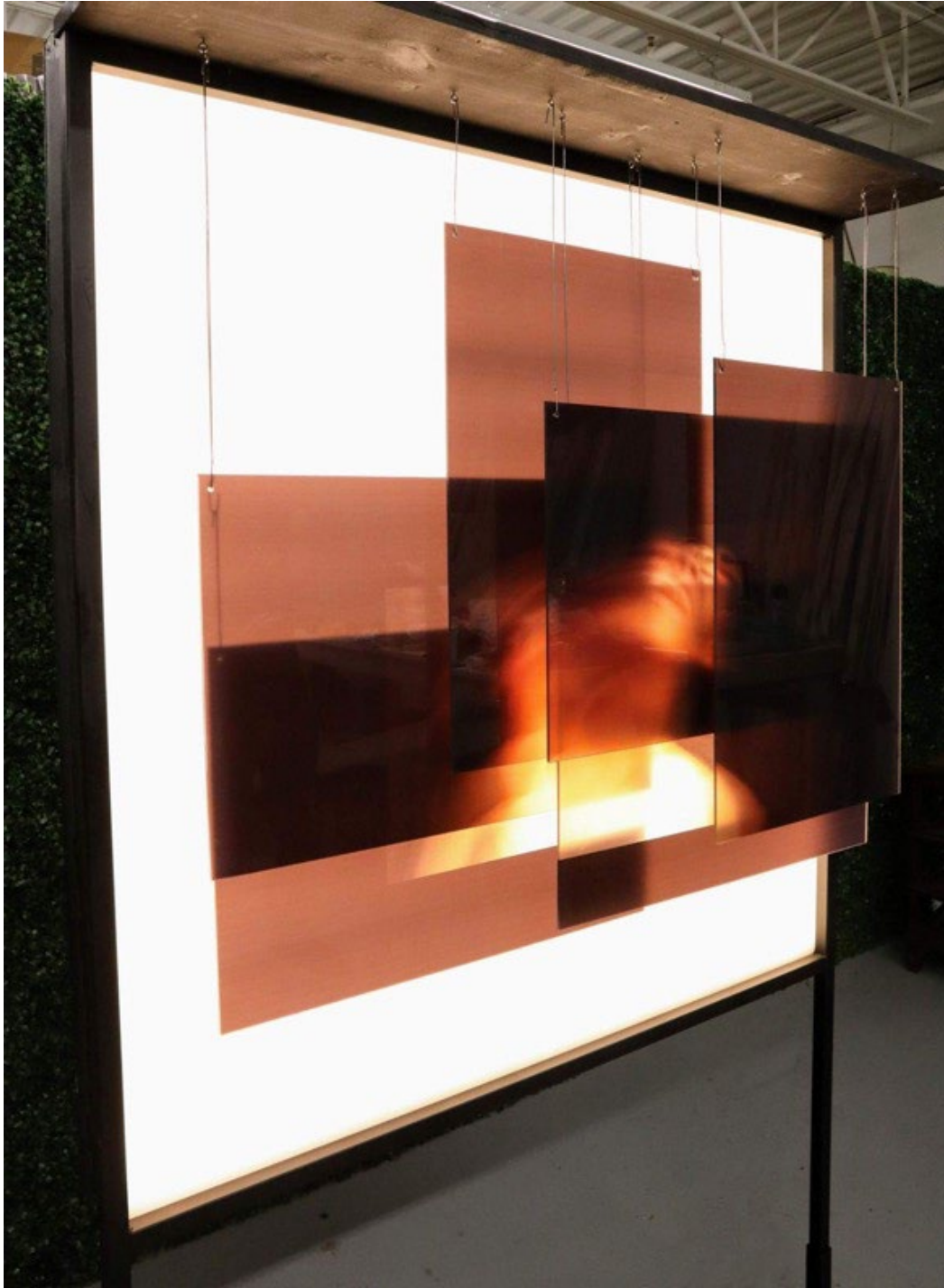
Throughout my educational experience in art, psychology, and media studies and in my career as an artist, I have taken personal experiences and interpreted them into creative outcomes and works of art. I have an art practice that is introspective, imaginative, builds on new mediums, and expresses my own lived-experience-one with a neuropsychological disorder.

Most of the art pieces shared in this research were based solely on my neuropsychological disorder as demonstrated in “Anosodiaphoria” (2018), a physical representation of an epileptic seizure. Untitled: “Importance of Invisibility” (2020) is autoethnographic piece, which examines individual inner conflict with anxiety. It is a self-reflective work, pulling together a range of personal experiences about anxiety and building on the interpretation of living with neurodivergence.



Other works in this research were based on experiences interacting with those with various intellectual disabilities and mental health issues over the last years. They are also

responses to the research findings about communities where lived-experiences are emerging through social media, social commentary, ad blogging, shared stories, and self-expression through creative practice such as artmaking, filmmaking and more.



Untitled: "Importance of Invisibility", December 2020

One such community of lived experience with neurodivergence, is Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD). According to Frye and Karanzalis (2019):

“(NVLD) may be the most overlooked, misunderstood, and under-diagnosed learning disability. The brain-based condition is characterized by poor visual, spatial, and organizational skills; difficulty recognizing and processing nonverbal cues; and poor motor performance.”

Learning Disability Association of America states that NVLD is a language-based disability that typically goes undiagnosed because it is not listed as a disability in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), nor in the IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act). Additionally, people with this disability show proficient reading ability and “reading ability tends to be regarded as the chief indicator of academic well-being by most public-school systems.” (LDAO, 2015). The diagnosis, if discovered, is usually found through assessment by a clinical practitioner. The social, emotional, and spatial impairments associated with this syndrome make it difficult for individuals to function in life leading to poor self-esteem, isolation, and safety concerns. My research deals with the need to convey the experiences of people with NVLD to help them feel validated through their lived truth. Providing them a collective voice through art expression and practice aims to allow others to understand the NVLD challenges and perspectives of those living with the condition, and for how they are living within the confines of socialized and spatialized norms.

The disorder in people is characterized by:

- tactile-perceptual deficits, usually on the left side of the body
- coordination difficulties, again often more marked on the left side of the body
- problems with visual-spatial organization

- extremely difficult adapting to new and complex situations
- reliance on rote behaviours (which may or may not be appropriate) in new situations
- trouble understanding nonverbal feedback in social situations
- problems with social perception, social judgment, and social interaction
- distorted sense of time
- very strong rote verbal abilities (e.g., large vocabulary)
- reliance on language as the primary means for social relating, information-gathering, and relief from anxiety
- difficulties with arithmetic and, later, with scientific concepts and theories
- inattention and hyperactivity earlier in childhood, and social withdrawal and isolation late

(LDAO, 2015)

1.1 Background and Purpose

According to Statistics Canada (2017), over 1 in 5 Canadians are living with a disability. Most disabilities are visible and familiar to us, but some are not. In our recent history, governments, nonprofits, interest groups and individuals alike have launched advocacy and awareness campaigns to help create a world of inclusion and tolerance based on a mutual understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities. Non Verbal Learning disability (NVLD) is a disability unfamiliar to most and easily undetected.

With 93 percent of communication being non-verbal (Frye and Karanzalis, 2019), those with NVLD bridge this gap by talking excessively to compensate for their challenges. Their

large vocabularies, outstanding memory and auditory retention often mask their social challenges in understanding the subtleties of communication. Left undetected, this may lead to social isolation, low self-esteem, mental health issues, broken relationships, and a strain on the health system and social services.

NVLD is classified as a learning disability which typically manifests in early childhood, but because it is not classified according to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-5), it is not diagnosable, rarely detected and oftentimes mistaken for other impairments such as ADHD (Frye and Karanzalis, 2019). Its existence therefore often rests in the subjectivity of the affected individual rather than through the objectivity of the diagnostic tool. Their ability to detect that something is wrong and describe their experiences through lived examples is therefore an important step in the identification of the impairment. It also aids in their self-actualization, self-advocacy, and their ability to get the understanding, support, and treatment that they need.

For those with disabilities, the frustration of not being able to socially connect with people is a very painful experience. The challenge needs to be understood and expressed for individuals with NVLD to feel understood and validated.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, self-actualization is an essential psychological need. Perceptions may be expressed creatively, such as through pictures, inventions, or paintings (McLeod, 2020).

The need for others to understand that this is a true impairment despite the official diagnosis is critical.

This research was carried out during the time of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which was first identified on December 31st, 2019 (WHO, 2020). Various health and safety constraints and numerous lockdown restrictions made it challenging to obtain primary data from/by the subject group through direct observation, participant surveys, direct observations, case studies and in-person interviews. In this regard, the restrictions caused the researcher to work around the Research Ethics Board (REB). In the process, the researcher discovered the online blog community of self-proclaimed individuals with Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities (NVLD). Their first-hand accounts of life experiences became the basis of the Narrative Inquiry research. This was augmented by the researcher's own experiences and insights of living with epilepsy. The different methodologies used in collecting data; in this case, the blogs of the NVLD community, can offer insight and inspiration for the development of the tool in this study. With these considerations in mind, the purpose of this research is to explore the question: How might the researcher's art practice support the NVLD community with a creative tool to convey their own lived experiences, and further, how can blog postings by the community offer insight and inspiration for the development of the tool for understanding these experience? The history of art itself which is inherently concerned with validating human experiences is equally at the root of this study (Dewey, 1934; Popova, 2016). This is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

1.2 Objectives

In this research, art, as a means of "...conscious expression and introspection" (Dewey, 1934, p. 247) as well as creative imagination and skill, is a key vehicle for both self-

actualization, and conveyance of the subjective realities of those living with NVLD. This need is important as it helps to validate the existence of their neurological condition.

To answer the research question, the following objectives have been set for the study:

1. To identify how art-making plays a role in communicating lived experiences of individuals with Non-verbal Learning disabilities (NVLD).
2. To analyze the blog posts of individuals with NVLD using the theoretical frameworks to support this research, and based on the aggregated results, identify themes that reveal common experiences, emotions and related colours to those common experiences.
3. To utilize the study results (experiences, emotions and colours) along with reference to relevant artistic influences, to inform the development of an art piece that communicates the lived experiences of individuals with Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities (NVLD).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The practice of art as therapy recognizes a broader context for Art. Here, art is understood to be a way for people to connect, express thoughts and communicate feelings that may be tough to talk about. This may be because of someone's experience such as trauma, cognitive issues, or physical health conditions. This is also by means of making art, having discussions with others, and then reflecting on the artwork created; hence building relationships with others. In terms of Theoretical Frameworks for this study, emotions theory and colour psychology provided the analytical frameworks through which the content of textual data from the blogs were analyzed. The graphic visualizations using Tableau software helped to synthesize the results and identify conclusions.

Overall, art therapists are able to assist these individuals involved with tools such as “problem solving, developing insights and self-awareness, improving self-esteem, managing stress, and enhancing interpersonal skills” (Canadian Art Therapy Association, 2017).

Unlike art therapy, the practice of art-making in this study is not being performed by the participants as part of a therapeutic treatment nor is it being produced for the affected individuals to receive therapeutic benefit through its observation. Rather, art is being used to make concrete their subjective reality captured through their written words. Through this research, and by examining the collective narratives of others living with NVLD traits, the phenomena as a whole can be better understood, and its existence validated. This hybrid perspective is driven forward by my personal experience, followed by the storytelling of others, and finally testing and applying future tools. This is important in order to drive systemic change, particularly in clinical practice in terms of diagnosis.

In this research, I chose to review the principles identified by John Dewey in his book *Art As Experience* (1934). As the researcher and artist, my work focuses on symbolizing experiences, and applying symbolic and aesthetic codes to words that represent people who have NVLD, along with their experiences and feelings. Below are some of the proponents and counter arguments of Dewey's *Art as Experience*.

2.1 John Dewey, and “Art As Experience”

Art has been an effective tool to capture peoples' lived experiences. John Dewey, in his book *Art as Experience* (1934) discusses that “the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience” (p.1). This becomes important in my research because while the outcome of artwork may be appealing, the process to get to the outcome is more explorative, eye opening, and expressive within the representation of the community of those with Non Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD). Popova (2016) identifies works of art as being “heart transfigurations of lived human experience” (np) and questions why art is often reduced to being solely objects or commodities. For folks with NVLD, words become too difficult too fast. This research focuses on developing a way to connect words with experience as represented by colours. I go into this further in the later chapters of this document. It is also important to take the time to look at diagnostic tools used by medicine to identify and determine ‘characteristics’ of NVLD. This is to examine how multiple medical professionals (such as specialists in the condition, or neuropsychologists) are able to pinpoint NVLD without a clear diagnosis from the DSM-5 or the IDEA.

To understand Dewey's *Art as Experience*; you need to have personal experiences (whether good or bad) partnered with an objective reality, so that both the content and

intent are realized (Dewey, 1934, p. 318). The last concept in understanding *Art as Experience* is seeing what happens to the object and the viewer when you combine them together. The impulses from past experiences that come from within doesn't necessarily link to one experience; but it can be from multiple experiences that lead to something. When there's an impulse to create, it usually comes from the past. When you have these experiences and take them in through your subconscious mind, you see inspiration and emotional imagery from within.

Dewey argues that creative arts create the expansive use of one's identity. You must put life events into art, as art is a way of taking all that energy and expressing it to heal yourself. You need it as much as it needs to be made. You need to do "die" emotionally for all foreign thoughts to be aware in the brain. (Dewey, 1934, p. 67). The knowledge of past experiences leads to inspiration, which grapples with the chosen medium; and that equals overall expression.

For my research, Dewey's highlighted point in the chapter 'Act of Expression' is relevant to the creation of the final art piece that is to represent the NVLD community. Having all aspects of the artwork laid out and emotion connected to it, allows the final product to be created and moved forward. He states:

"The determination of the mot juste, of the right incident in the right place, of exquisiteness of proportion, of the precise tone, hue, and shade that helps unify the whole while it defines a part, is accomplished by emotion. Not Every emotion, however, can do this work, but only one informed by material that is grasped and gathered. Emotion is informed and carried forward when it is spent indirectly in search for material and in giving it order, not when it is directly expended."

(Dewey, 1934, p. 71)

From Richard Shusterman's point of view, he restates Dewey's principles, as he is also a neo-pragmatist. He believes that "non-conceptual understanding" and experience are extremely important in terms of which he thinks that society should be as "democratized as much as possible" (2020). Shusterman claims that the challenges of practice are able to show new interpretive development directions. Similar to Rorty, he also looks to expand on Dewey's theories (naturalistic philosophy of art) by bringing together both the past and the present thoughts and practices dealing with the same *soma* (living). In short, Shusterman considers philosophy as an art of the living.

2.2 The NVLD Research Methodologies

To show the process of finalizing the topic of Non Verbal Learning Disability (figure 2.2.3), what I first did was research six different ways in which art therapy was best used in society / situations. I then was able to decide which direction I wanted to go in, whilst exploring the uses of art therapy. I separated these uses into terms within general topics. I wanted to further explore "Cope with Physical Illness / Disability" (labeled in purple), since I was curious to see how individuals overcome challenges in this category.

I ended up choosing the sub-category labeled "Disability" because I wanted to expand my knowledge on what I have learned through my personal experiences. After examining the four sub-sub-categories of Disabilities, I was most interested / drawn to "Intellectual / Learning Disabilities", as my background is in intellectual disabilities, and I was more interested in learning about Learning Disabilities (LDs). I hear more and more about Learning Disabilities and wanted to investigate what actually defines a Learning Disability.

The Learning Disabilities that are chosen in the diagram above are known as Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs). SLDs apparently is the most typical category in the IDEA; and even though this is the case, it is a small category. Why is such a small category considered the most common? That is what I wanted to find out. Out of these SLDs, I was most drawn to Non Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD), as there was a specific difference I noticed in this SLD. NVLD actually does not affect their skills of writing more speech; but more so their ability to socialize properly and attain the proper skills to do so. Hence, individuals have a hard time understanding communication that is NOT verbal, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. For example, those with NVLD may struggle to make friends, as what other people may find amusing or sarcastic, these individuals usually lack this skill.

Although Art Therapy holds true to a spectrum of definitions, for my research I define art therapy as a psychological method involving artistic production and communication for the purpose of perceiving and/or alleviating the emotions and experiences of others.

The figures below are a part of my process of the journey to Non Verbal Learning Disability stated above.

Figure 2.2.1

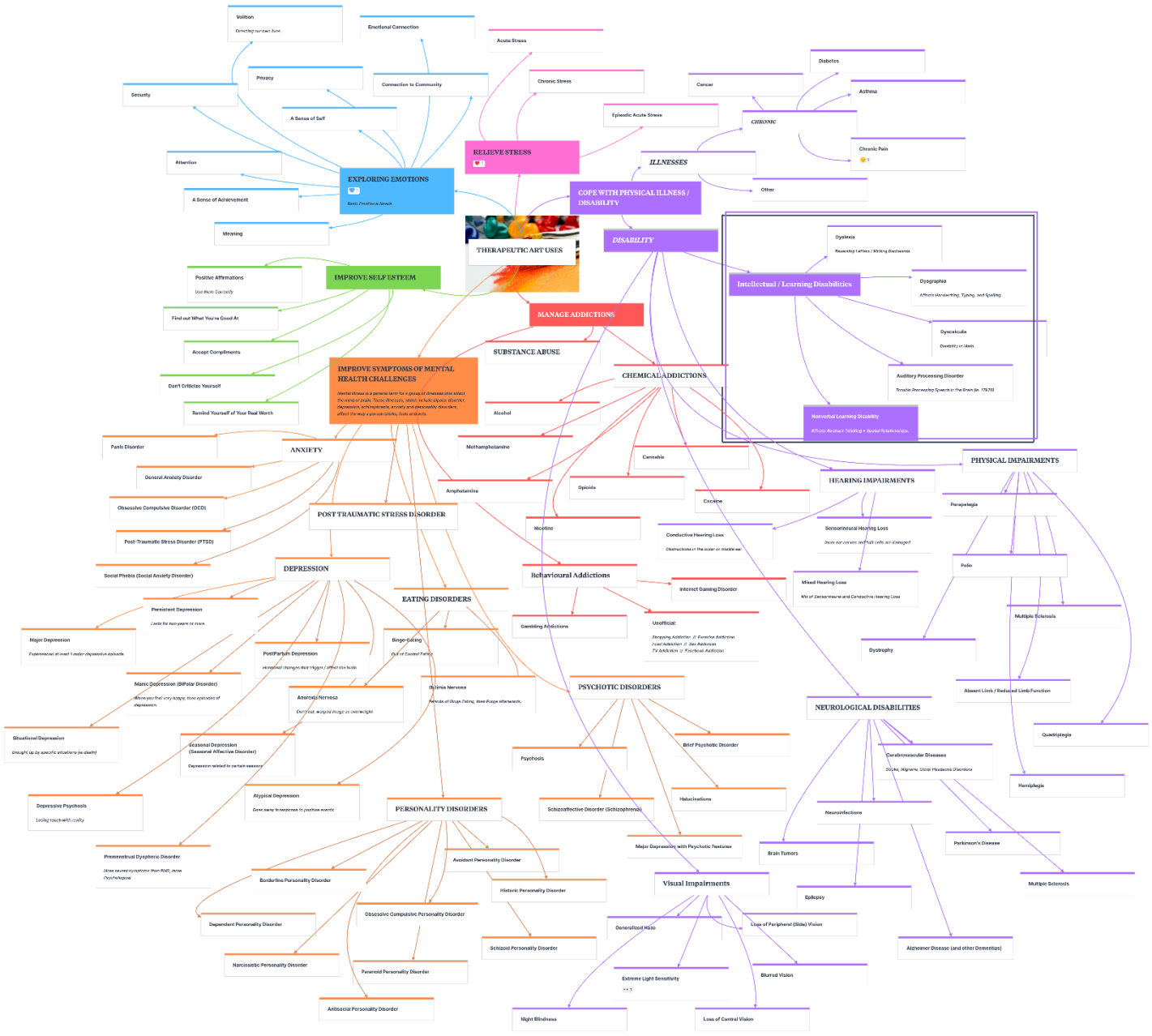


Figure 2.2.2

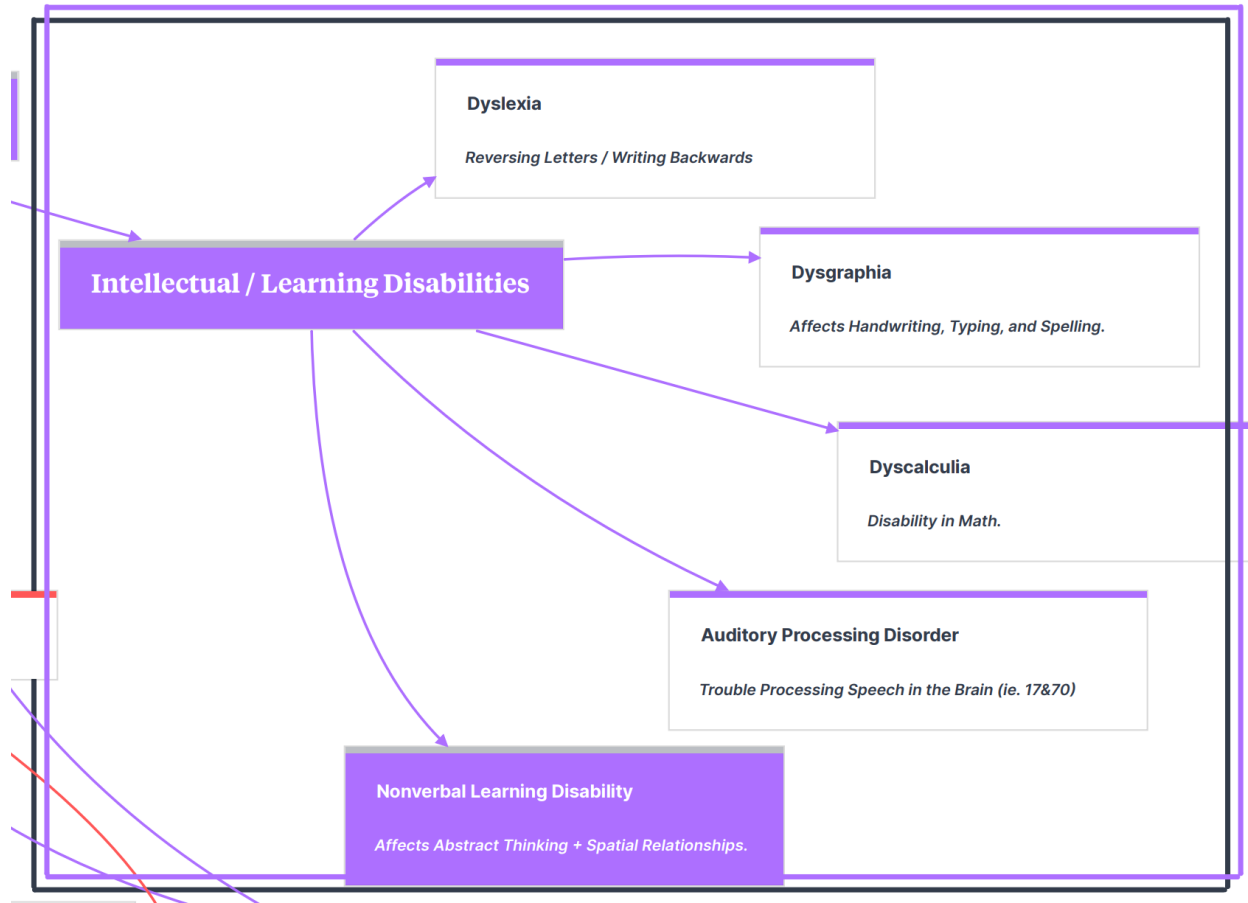
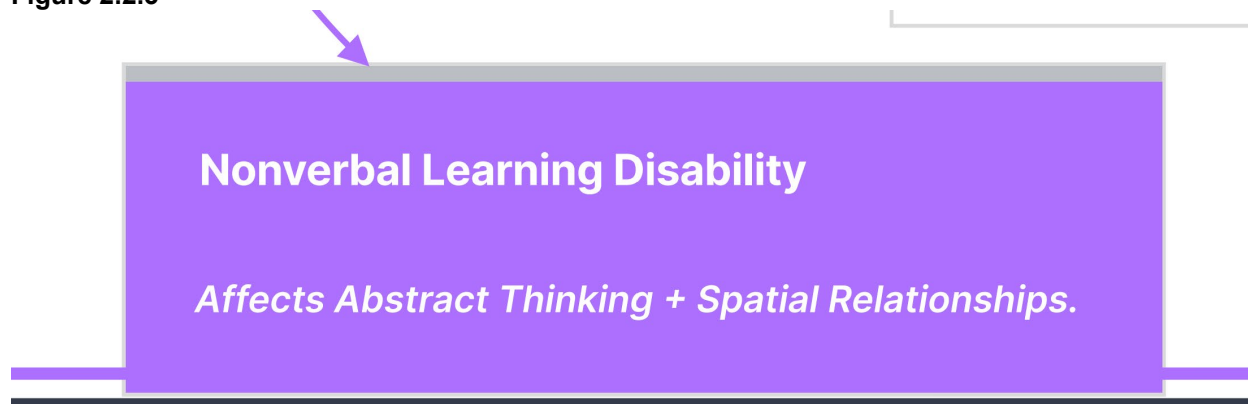


Figure 2.2.3



2.3 Artistic Influences

The techniques used in conveying experience through artists' art-making

I recognize the need to identify artistic influences to inform my body of work in terms of what types of pieces to create, what techniques to incorporate, and what materials to use. In addition, contemporary artists were researched to understand ways of expressing emotions and experiences through similar art practices. Even though the artists below are not necessarily addressing NVLD, they both have an autoethnographic and ethnographic point of view in terms of their creations. The colours that they use for their artworks are connected to emotions felt in the audience's experiences they are representing, as well as in themselves. They both spend time with specific groups of people to understand their emotions and experience; later on attempting to create artworks reflecting that collected information along with their own personal thoughts.

I have taken similar aspects of this practice and adopted it, in an attempt to convey the experience of those living with NVLD, and used the research data collected to both inform and verify this approach.

Key Artists Whose Works Inform By Technique

a. Jennifer Awad

The elements that I admire and stood out to me in Awad's work were the placement of each colour she portrays onto the canvas. Much of the work is separated into blocks of colours, and sometimes lightly blended into one another. The techniques of the art pieces that are blended create a sense of harmony (other synonyms) in both the positive and negative sense. Prominent blocks of colours in a painting work together to create a beautiful story and appear in a variety of shapes and sizes in the piece. These pieces

actually stand out more that the colours are prominent and separate; and because of this observation, I will be taking this same approach in the final art pieces created for this thesis, as it will show the emotion through colours and specific textured brushstrokes.

The emotion behind the art piece is also very important, as the subject matter plays a vital role in setting the scene for how people subjectively observe it. Negative space along with the scale at which it is created at is showing the foreground and background being either important, or making the subject emote a specific feeling, either positive or negative. The textures that are observed in Awad's paintings also add more emotion to the story and draw the viewer in even more. I will also use this technique when creating the final art pieces.



(Figure 2.3) Example of Jennifer Awad (Emergence, 2012)**b. Ella Prakash**

What I really admire in Prakash's artwork is the way the multiple colours come together on the canvas without interrupting the significance and representation of one another. The flow in which the coloured brushstrokes go in brings a sense of both peace and chaos at the same time; depending on where the colours are placed. If the darker colours are near the middle of the group of brushstrokes, it would give off a very different vibe than if there were lighter colours near the middle of the group of brushstrokes. The amount of colour that is used in her art pieces evokes multiple emotions to me as the viewer, especially that there are different shapes and sizes of brushstrokes used.

The amount of textures used here are representing a complexity to the piece, emotionally and literally; confirming my earlier comment about peace and chaos shown. The shapes created in Prakash's art piece replicate many of the theories I will research throughout my thesis. The patterns explored in the art piece imitate a unique texture that is subjectively very appealing to the eye, and that I may play around with in my final art piece.



(Figure 2.4) Example of Ella Prakash (The Rising Sun, 2020)

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

This research was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first reported on December 31st, 2019, according to the World Health Organization (2020). Lockdown restrictions including health and safety concerns created barriers to physically accessing participants, in particular those who are vulnerable. In short, the nature of this research and the public health restrictions made collaborating directly with individuals with NVLD a challenge. At the beginning of this thesis, full participatory research was the selected approach to be carried out. According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), participatory research methods “are geared towards planning and conducting the research *with* those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study.” Accordingly, participatory research involves spending generous amounts of time with subjects and their communities which was not an option during this period. In addition to limited access to participants, participatory research was also not suitable also because of the limited time available to carry out the study. Hence, the study had to shift to a different approach, philosophy, and theoretical lens as expounded in the rest of this chapter.

3.2 Theoretical Perspective

In keeping with the research question, “how might the researcher’s art practice support the NVLD community with a creative tool to convey their own lived experiences, and further, how can blog postings by the community offer insight and inspiration for the development of the tool?”, an inductive approach to the research was taken, with a preliminary hypothesis that arts, specifically fine arts and the practice of art, may offer a

viable means of expression, communication and demonstration of personal and/or collective experience of those living with NVLD. With this premise in play, the theoretical lens applied was one of Subjectivism where the individual's world is based on their own lived-realities, and where the researcher respects the interpretations of individuals as both truth and expertise in the matter” (Gray, 2020).

According to Qutoshi (2018), qualitative research is typically subjective as opposed to quantitative research which is objective. They note that “the subjectivity and personal knowledge in perceiving and interpreting it from the researcher's perspective” is central to this reasoning (ibid). This is the case with this research.

Burns talks about subjective information versus objective information collected in terms of their differences in assumptions, the purpose, the method, and the role of the researcher. Quantitative and qualitative strategies also have differing profiles. As seen here in this chart by Burns (2000), the profile of qualitative research includes assumptions, purposes, and methods that align with the needs of this study. For example, qualitative research views events from the informant’s perspective.

Table 3.1

<u>Qualitative</u>	<u>Quantitative</u>
Assumptions	
Reality Socially Constructed	Facts and Data have an Objective Reality
Variables Complex and Interwoven; difficult to measure	Variables can be measured and identified
Events Viewed From Informant’s Perspective	Events Viewed From Outsider’s Perspective
Dynamic quality to life	Static Reality to life
Purpose	

Interpretation	Prediction
Contextualization	Generalization
Understanding the Perspectives of others	Casual Explanation
Method	
Data Collection Using Participant Observation, Unstructured Interviews	Testing and Measuring
Concludes with Hypothesis and Grounded Theory	Commences with Hypothesis and Theory
Emergence and Portrayal	Manipulation and Control
Inductive and Naturalistic	Deductive and Experimental
Data Analysis by themes from Informants' Descriptions	Statistical Analysis
Data reported in Language of Informant	Statistical Reporting
Descriptive Write-Up	Abstract Impersonal Write-Up
Role of Researcher	
Researcher as Instrument	Researcher Applies Formal Instruments
Personal Involvement	Detachment
Empathetic Understanding	Objective
Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Strategies (Burns, 2000)	

These comparative perspectives were seen to be helpful in validating the suitability of a qualitative approach to this study. Its strength in discussing the character or attributes of a situation, place, experience, or subject align with the nature of the data collected through the methods and approaches utilized. Additionally, since secondary data statistics and samplings were not to be used as part of this study, a quantitative approach was not relevant.

3.3 Philosophy and Approach

Cresswell (2006) puts forth five typical approaches to inquiry in qualitative research. They include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research, and case studies. After considering the nature of the research objectives, and to explore the hypothesis, (auto)-ethnography and narrative inquiry were selected as the most appropriate approaches for the research. Auto-Ethnography represents the researchers' exploration of how to apply an art practice, gather people's words about themselves and demonstrate how it can be synthesized and evolved into a new creative language / expression of lived experience and further, how the creative process might become a tool, a practice for individuals living with NVLD.

According to Ellis et al. (2011), autoethnography is defined as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product” (p. 1).

3.3.1 Narrative Inquiry

The concept of narrative is often used in connection with how to represent a qualitative research study. According to Gudmundsdottir, “narrative research is defined as...the study of how human beings experience the world, and narrative researchers collect these stories and write narratives of experience” (2001; Moen, 2006, p. 2). The media and

practices used to embed narrative inquiry into research are endless and go beyond writing; hence capturing, telling, and sharing stories is the core objective of this method (Cresswell, 2006) as it is with this research. Using Social Media to capture the experiences of those with NVLD was the goal throughout the study. In addition, the use of art by the researcher was used as a way to communicate these experiences. In this case, these experiences were expressed specifically through blogs. Content analysis was the method used to analyze the data through the application of two theoretical frameworks: Emotions Theory to understand the emotions of the participants; and Thematic Analysis to understand shared experiences.

3.3.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology, the goal of which is to study people and how they make meaning of their lived experience is employed in part as an overarching methodology for the research. Smith (2002) suggests that the goal of phenomenology is to study people and how they make meaning of their lived experiences. By utilizing this approach, it allows the researcher the ability to carry out a first-hand study of people and what they say about themselves. However, as the researcher didn't have a first-hand study of the individuals with NVLD, only what they said about themselves from a small sampling and no way to validate the findings, it could not be stated as the principle approach being used.

Husserl (1913, 1962) defines phenomenology as "a science of understanding human beings at a deeper level by gazing at the phenomenon" (p. i). Phenomenology's concern with engaging with, and making meaning of individuals lived experiences, allow it to function as both a philosophy and method of inquiry (Qutoshi, 2018). The evolution of Phenomenology in this regard is discussed from both a historical and theoretical

perspective. Fochtman, 2008, p. 186; Wojnar & Swanson (2007), p.179; note that “Phenomenology as a philosophy and a method of inquiry is not limited to an approach to knowing, it is rather an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning making that is used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level of understanding”. Its suitability to the research is linked to its goal to study people and how they make meaning of their experiences living with NVLD. By utilizing this approach, it allows the researcher the ability to carry out the study of these individuals and what they say about themselves.

As a phenomenon, NVLD relies on the disclosure of lived experiences to validate its existence, as it is an impairment unrecognized as a diagnosable disability. This helps in the understanding of what this condition is defined as, and how it is experienced. A phenomenological inquiry allows for these understandings to be explored.

3.4 Methodology / Research Design

The study was carried out in four parts that involved both theoretical and practical considerations. Firstly, by reviewing the principles of art practice as both experience and symbolism and by reviewing art therapy as tools for diagnosis, communication, and expression for people with learning disabilities. Secondly, through an examination of the life stories of individuals with NVLD posted online in social media blogs. Thirdly, the review of contemporary artists and their techniques used in conveying expression through their work. This was carried out as a means of affirming the researcher's position in the research. Lastly, the visual communication of the research results through creative art practice as the researcher's body of work.

The materials gathered through Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the examination formed part of the Narrative Inquiry, findings from which were translated and codified into theoretical frameworks to underpin creative outcomes. This included a proposal for visualizations of findings. These creative tools aim to convey the results of research through art to both the NVLD community and more broadly, to society.

3.5 Methods

According to Qutoshi (2018), phenomenological research methods may include interviews, observations, and discussions. Several factors affected the selection of appropriate methods for the study including the unique circumstances related to health, safety, limited time and access, created by the global pandemic. Also, since accessing participants who perhaps didn't have a known diagnosis was a challenge, wording for questionnaires and surveys had to be carefully considered. With a range of unclear variables at play, a flexible research design was adopted. Robson (2016) supports this rationale, indicating that since "qualitative researchers often based around social and behavioural studies in which specific outcomes cannot be expected, and so exact ways in which to measure data are undetermined, a flexible design is preferable typically anticipating that the design will emerge and develop during data collection" (p. xxii).

3.5.1 Secondary Data / "Blog Research"

Although the circumstances of the global pandemic made it difficult to access and physically interact with participants, the internet was being used as the primary communication tool globally. This became the platform for a great deal of rich, first-hand

life stories published by individuals on social media blogs to be identified. Rich accounts of human life reflections were being openly shared by individuals with NVLD. Because of this, and the positive ethical implications (discussed below), hence secondary data became the primary method of data collection. However, the survey that was originally prepared was used as a screening tool to identify suitable participants through the reading of the online content. Also, the questionnaire that was originally prepared was used as a reference point to identify strings of text in the narratives which illustrated life experiences. The concept of secondary data analysis first emerged with Glaser's discussion of re-analyzing data "which were originally collected for other purposes" (1963, p. 11), yet there remains a dearth of literature that specifically addresses the process and challenges of conducting secondary data analysis research (Andrews et al., 2012, p. 13; Smith, 2008, p. 21-38). Hakim (1982) defines secondary analysis as "any further analysis of an existing dataset which presents interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main results" (p. 1). Most research begins with an investigation to learn what is already known and what remains to be learned about a topic through reviewing secondary sources and investigations others have previously conducted in the specified area of interest. Secondary data analysis takes this one step further, including a review of previously collected data in the area of interest. While secondary data analysis is a flexible approach and can be utilized in several ways, it is also an empirical exercise with procedural and evaluative steps, just as there are in collecting and evaluating primary data (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). Secondary data analysis remains an under-used research technique in many fields, including LIS. Given the increasing availability of previously collected data

to researchers, it is important to further define secondary data analysis as a systematic research method. Yet, few frameworks are available to guide researchers as they conduct secondary data analysis” (Andrews et al., 2012, p. 13; Smith et al., 2011, p. 920; Johnston, 2014, p. 620).

Locating Potential Participants

Based on discussions with peer researchers and supervisory staff during the fall of 2020, the following list of potential avenues to recruit suitable participants was prepared. Due to the short time frame, I planned on using contacts I already had with clinical offices at select colleges and universities. Lockdown restrictions due to the pandemic made these resources inaccessible. Therefore, they could not be used.

Table 3.2

Optional Avenues to Recruit Participants	Strategy	Notes
Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University	Posters around Campus	Students not on campus - working remotely
	Student Wellness Centre	E-blast
	Student Accessibility Office	E-blast
University of Toronto (UofT)	Student Accessibility Office	E-blast
Seneca College	Student Accessibility Office	E-blast
Social Media Community Groups	Twitter	
	LinkedIn	
	Facebook	

Online NVLD Community: An Alternative Research Participant (Recruitment of Participants)

As described on their website, “The NVLD Project is dedicated to raising awareness, building support, and creating helpful solutions for children, adolescents, and adults with

Non-Verbal Learning Disability. The NVLD Project is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization”. The organization hosts a blog where individuals with NVLD can share their lived experiences. They also have links to other similar sites and posts for individuals, parents, and clinical experts.

A participant registry was created for my study based on the profile of 23 individuals from the blog. Their names were anonymized, and the suitability for my study was verified by identifying those who met the following criteria:

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 below:

Inclusionary Criteria		Example
1.	Over 18 years of age	“In my senior year of University...”
2.	Self-disclosed diagnosis of NVLD	“After being diagnosed at the age of three...”
3.	Content was written by the actual individual with NVLD, not someone writing about them.	“I experienced this feeling...”

Exclusionary Criteria		Example
1.	Content from individuals thanking, championing, celebrating those with NVLD	“I learned so much about NVLD from their point of view...”
2.	Someone writing about the individual with NVLD	“My best friend has NVLD, and they have been so strong through it all...”

In addition, the blogging content had to generally reflect some aspect of the participants’ lived experiences. Participant names and other personal identification were anonymized

to ensure ethical “protection” was taken into account. The Research Ethics Board was conferred with to verify that ethical consent through them was not necessary.

Participant / Blogger Codes

To anonymize the bloggers, each was given a unique code. I created table 3.5 to summarize this information.

Table 3.5

Blogger Number	Blogger Code
1	M5-1
2	A3-1
3	D8-1
4	M3-1
5	R4-1
6	M8-1
7	E6-1
8	N8-1
9	M5-2
10	N3-1
11	A4-1
12	O6-1
13	C11-1
14	K7-1
15	K5-1
16	Z1-1
17	J8-1

The Use of Secondary Data Through Social Media in the Public Realm

Primary data made it seem like I was cornering each participant to find out if they even have the traits of NVLD, and then forcing them to disclose about personal experiences they had. In this case, I would have required a more clinical background, which I currently do not obtain.

However, Social Media is a place for people in general to express how they feel; allowing them to feel empowered, and 'participate' on their own; which in this situation of secondary data collection brings about more accurate results. If I went in as a researcher collecting that information, it would actually take away that power from these individuals; no matter how polite and respectful I appear to be. Some methodologies say that is actually good because it's researcher's work, which makes it all the more valid; and also, the fact that there is the issue of how people act during stressful situations. Examples of a stressful situation in this context is being surrounded by other participants that are unknown, video taping, and recording during data collection. Participants in general are sometimes anonymized, therefore just seen as a data number. Because of these drawbacks, I did not follow that primary data capture participatory system, as much as it seems like ethnography should go down that route. The source I used was secondary data from my research; clinicians, professional organizations, and other sources that I stumbled upon in the process. Throughout the process, I realized that this direction may be the more ethical-friendly; in terms of not encountering multiple varieties of stressful participant situations if contacted directly. The most important source was individuals' words online regarding the subject, where they were able to feel freer to express themselves.

Also, participatory research does actually require a lot of rigor, which takes a large amount of time to bring forth and complete. Ethics also played a large part in this as the participants are part of a vulnerable population, and it takes years to engage with participants and allow them to fully trust researchers. Even after engaging with them, researchers would also need a lot of time to build a further relationship with those that actually want to participate. These individuals need to know how the study and information would benefit them in the long run, after providing personal information, their experiences, and possibly even their past hurts.

Chapter 4: The Analysis of Data that Informs the Creative Work

To address the research question “how can creative art practice act as agency and a voice for individuals with NVLD to inform society of their lived experiences and perspectives?”, the analysis of data also needs to speak to the requirements for creative art practice to visually communicate the lived experiences of the research subjects.

As a starting point, the significance of the 9 themes representing experiences coming out of the data analysis, will inform the development of the creative work.

9 canvases will be utilized, each representing an experience. Also, the emotions and colours from table 4.3 will be referenced in each art piece in terms of which colours to include. The visualizations from Tableau speak to the quantity of each colour to use.

Colours

In terms of creating the body of work, the pieces aim to show the experiences (themes) and the emotions (colours); however, they don't necessarily point out the dominant emotions. This is necessary. So, I will rate the colours for each theme based on their placement in the data analysis. For example, the colour green (which was the most resulted outcome in the data), and then shades of each colour accordingly, etc.

I want to communicate the results to people who can change the system, however, it may shift to communicating the results to clinicians as they can intervene and have the proper expertise to deal with this topic.

4.1 Study 1: Understanding the Emotions of Individuals with NVLD

During the review, each NVLD blog was read through to determine two key elements: First, if the person challenged with NVLD was the one communicating via blog post; and

second, if they spoke about one or more experiences that occurred at any time during their life. In total, I was able to look at, and use 41 different blog entries composed by 23 authors after answering these questions. The content from the online blogs was then securely saved as PDF's.

Data Analysis

Due to the large amount of qualitative textual data to be reviewed, a qualitative data analysis software was used. Quirkos 2.4.1 was selected due to its visual interface, ease of use and the ability to closely engage with the material being evaluated. Additionally, Quirkos allows for content to be coded and used for its range of features. It's focus on data visualization was needed for the next stage of the study. According to Quirkos.com (2020), "The live visual interface keeps you close to the data, and it's designed with a few flexible features, rather than a clutter of things you don't need." Content from the online blogs that were securely saved as PDF's were then uploaded to Quirkos. Using Emotions Theory as an analytical framework, the specific emotions (figure 4.1) were coded into Quirkos (figure 4.2) as codes. Emotions Theory (Barker, Navamar, 2020) allows us to realize our fulfillment and happiness; and is required in order for one to know their own emotional needs to solve problems and go throughout life. A more in-depth definition is in Appendix 2.

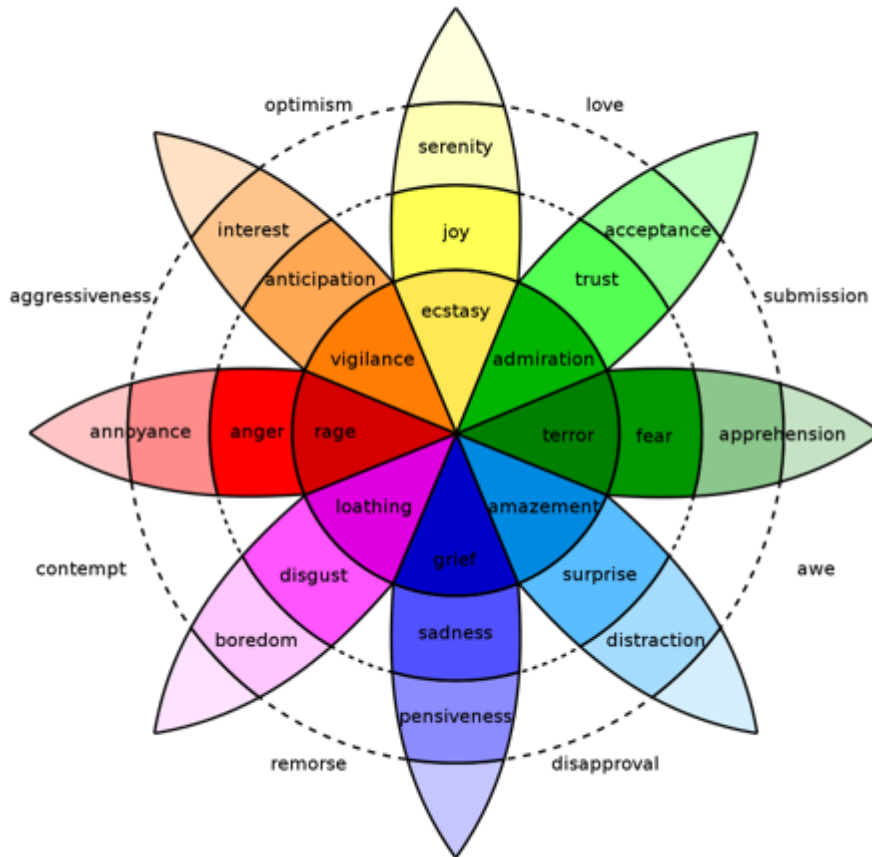


Figure 4.1 - Machine Elf 1735, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The narratives from the blogs were reviewed to determine how they related to the emotions in the codes. Relevant words or strings of text were coded accordingly. The meanings of each word, similar words, typical synonyms and what each word is revealing, were referenced during the analysis of participant data for sense making. This process helped to link emotional descriptors to long strings of stories from participants.

Once all of the content from the blogs was coded, the software Quirkos was able to show how many quotes were attached to each emotion. Figure 4.2 shows an example of the results of text coded to emotions. 24 primary emotions (assigned a colour) and 8 overlapping emotions (no colour assigned) which are a mix of two primary emotions, shown in Plutchnik's Wheel of Emotions (figure 4.1) were uncovered. Based on these

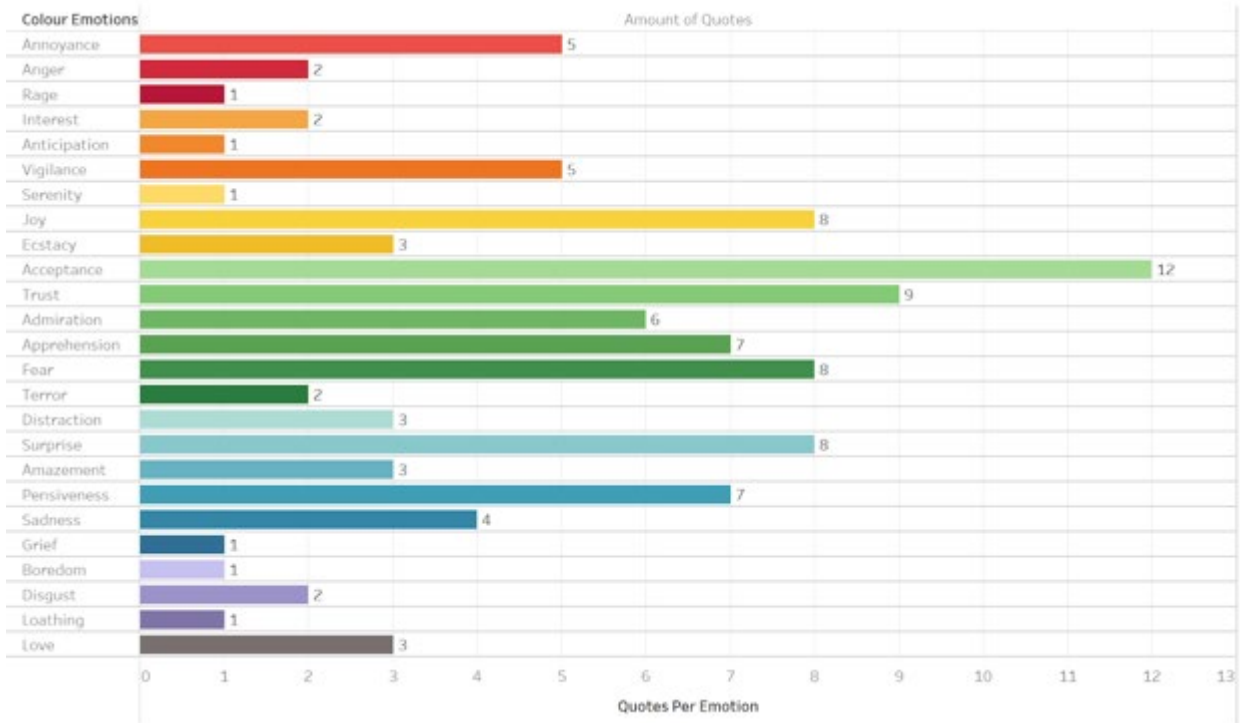
findings, we could see how many people expressed positive and negative emotions through their experiences based on the amount of quotes from the blogs that were organized and grouped accordingly.



Data Collection on Quirkos, Figure 4.2

To understand what the data was saying, another program had to be accessed to help to visualize the data. Tableau was selected because it was free to research students, it had the capability to read .CSV (the file extension from Quirkos) and it offered numerous visualization options. Once the content was uploaded from Quirkos, some of the codes had to be re-named and labelled to what they were originally in Quirkos.

In Tableau, the second software I used, a number of data visualization options were available. A block diagram, circle diagram, word association diagram, pie chart (all located in Appendix 4), and bar chart (Figure 4.3) were reviewed to make sense of the data in terms of which emotions were experienced more than others from the participants.



The bar chart (Figure 4.3) was the easiest to understand in terms of visualizing the emotions that were experienced, the number of quotes tied to each emotion, and the exact colour of the emotion represented according to Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions. This shows how this population was feeling during their lived experiences, and what emotions were most prominent.

4.2 Study 2: Understanding the Experiences of Individuals with NVLD

In terms of preliminary conclusions from both the block and the bar charts, the results are showing that:

- More emotions are leaning towards positive than negative emotions.

These included positive emotions such as Acceptance (#1), Trust (#2), Joy (#3) and Surprise (#3) ranked in order of dominance.

You can see that Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions (figure 4.1) lists the emotions that elicit specific feelings inside of us; both positive and negative.

However, Fear (#3), a negative emotion, rated equally with the positive emotions, Joy (#3) and Surprise (#3). What couldn't be gauged was whether fear was related to a positive or negative experience. The need to capture experiences related to the emotions became equally important for this research especially because this research is concerned with conveying experience.

Therefore, a secondary review of the participant's blogs was conducted, this time to examine their experiences. As the strings of narratives were examined it became clear that similar experiences were faced by numerous participants. Themes began to emerge when reading these quotes. The themes represented the shared experiences - (dominant themes in the data). These include rejection, exploitation, isolation, intimidation (bullying), hope, uniqueness, advocacy, not fitting in, and true-to-self.

The themes were charted along with synonyms for use as descriptors. The synonyms were based on the range of words used and meanings sensed from the strings of text from the participants.

The participant quotes related to each theme were charted accordingly. Finally, the emotions related to each quote were charted as well.

My creation of table 4.1 shows the consolidation of all of this data related to experiences and emotions. After organizing the information, colour was then added to this chart based on colour psychology, which was directed from table 4.2. Those ‘not highlighted’ include similarities with key words that fit the dominant theme, however, do not have colour or emotion associated with them. The process is discussed in the next section.

Table 4.1 - (Experiences and Emotions of individuals with NVLD)

Experience Table		
Dominant Theme	Participant Example	Colour / Emotion
REJECTION	1. Participant #1 feels grief and regret after admitting how they blindly gave their heart to people, many whom they thought were undeserving of their care, loyalty, and benevolence.	Grief
	2. Without verbal assistance, Participant #2 found it both challenging and terrifying to change their way of managing their internal emotions.	Terror
	3. Accepting their disability made Participant #3 feel less valuable or significant, especially during their teenage years.	Pensiveness
	4. Participant #4 would feel personally responsible for broken friendships which in turn had negative, permeating effects on their social morale.	Terror
EXPLOITATION	1. Participant #5 had a difficult time at school, having been a victim of bullying and social manipulation.	(not highlighted)
	2. Participant #6 lamented their ability to secure a job - despite what the companies promote to them. Generally speaking, the participant feels a strong sense of dishonesty in the corporate world, and they can't find a place that really cares about their success in the workplace.	Disgust
	3. Participant #7 feels discouraged with the way that comprehensive support programs are being run in colleges.	Sadness

	They believe that virtualizing these programs takes a lot away from the experience, especially for those with non-verbal learning disabilities. The participant fears that these programs will eventually disappear if the circumstances stay the same for a longer period of time.	
	4. Participant #8 was frustrated that despite their clarity and honesty of intent, it had not made a difference to other peoples' decisions.	Anger
ISOLATION	1. Recalling their past experiences, Participant #5 believes that they were deliberately being isolated from partaking in activities with their peers. This isolation has left the participant in a state of ongoing confusion and agony.	(not highlighted)
	2. Participant #9 had struggled to comprehend the social nuances of their peers. It was hard for them to fully realize that they were the ones being targeted or bullied, albeit in subtle ways.	Pensiveness
	3. Participant #10 speaks lowly of their cognitive framework in comparison to autistic individuals.	Rage
	4. Living with a NVLD, Participant #10 is irritated as they usually have to deal with voices that assume or declare their inability to do something.	Admiration
	5. Participant #7 laments how those with an NVLD are wrongly labelled or judged by society for their lack of self-maintenance, while overlooking the prominence of their physical and/or mental struggles.	Annoyance
BULLYING / INTIMIDATION	1. Despite the confidentiality of certain settings, Participant #11 still feels a sense of discomfort, distrust, and fear when having to share their disability.	Pensiveness
	2. Participant #12 uses their disability to console or redeem themselves if they fail to meet the social expectations of their friends.	Distraction
	3. Participant #1 believes that their vulnerability automatically implies moments and experiences of trauma, which they comprehend as a foregone conclusion no matter what they say or do.	Trust
		Annoyance

HOPE	1. Participant #13 hopes and desires to encourage those with NVLDs to accept their disability as a unique personal attribute that they can use to their advantage as opposed to a cognitive or physical impediment.	Trust
	2. Participant #11 reflects on their life over the years, feeling a strong sense of peace and content with what they have accomplished. Moreover, they are highly optimistic about a brighter future ahead of them.	Serenity
	3. Participant #8 has a hard time expressing themselves, preferring to admire their crush from a distance while opting to conceal their feelings in fear of rejection or ridicule.	Apprehension
	4. Participant #10 is aware of their cognitive challenges to deal with certain issues in their lives, but they are still determined to push through in order to attain true happiness with themselves.	Vigilance
UNIQUENESS	1. Participant #14 naturally prefers to be blunt and direct about their feelings and expressions, even in sensitive situations when communicating with their loved ones. Because of this, the participant admits being labelled as “weird”, especially in a social context.	Admiration
	2. Participant #12 has a hard time coming to terms with the notion that the more we learn, the more we understand. They explain how people with disabilities are sometimes sensitive to public recognition because of the many ways that it could be perceived by others.	Acceptance
	3. Participant #10 reflects on their unique cognitive trait and how despite producing positive results on a personal level, it has fostered negative results in their social life.	Amazement
	4. Participant #7 believes that people with disabilities have a much harder time managing their social life, especially when it comes to relationships.	Anticipation
ADVOCACY	1. Participant #7 is optimistic that more people will come to an affirmed conviction that with hard work and dedication, they can still achieve what they aspire for.	Vigilance
	2. Participant #5 hopes that they can inspire as many people as they can (especially those with disabilities) to believe that they are fully capable of reaching their goals or aspirations.	Interest
	3. This participant (Participant #15) feels a strong sense of internal accomplishment and satisfaction when they see their	Joy

	<p>students and clients reach their goals. Furthermore, the participant is very passionate about what they do, and they feel deeply fulfilled as they see and hear about the others that they helped to achieve victory for themselves.</p>	
	<p>4. Participant #13 hopes and believes through advocacy to educate the public about NVLDs and inform them of the value that they bring to society as a whole. Above all, the participant hopes to empower youth to take pride and ownership of their NVLD, using it as an ability that can help them to find or engage in a different activity that optimizes their difference and cultivates feelings of happiness and fulfillment.</p>	Trust
NOT FITTING IN	<p>1. Participant #1 bewails their childhood and how their emotional sensitivity made them overly vulnerable to criticism and shame, especially in social settings.</p>	(not highlighted)
	<p>2. In their reflection, Participant #6 speaks on the value of opening our minds to think and act differently - and what that does to help us realize and articulate the strengths and abilities of disabled individuals, as opposed to looking at what they struggle to do. Participant #2 believes that deliberately focusing on these individuals' strengths is vital in order to help them realize and unlock their potential.</p>	(not highlighted)
	<p>3. Participant #3 confesses their long time struggle to understand and engage in the common nuances of social interaction.</p>	Anger
	<p>4. Participant #9 had struggled to comprehend the social nuances of their peers. It was hard for them to fully realize that they were the ones being targeted or bullied, albeit in subtle ways.</p>	Pensiveness
	<p>5. Participant #16 reflects on their struggles to maintain and manage their social life. When the pandemic came around, the circumstances became overbearing, and their social life collapsed.</p>	Apprehension
TRUE TO SELF	<p>1. Participant #1 sends a comforting message to others that they should always stay true to themselves. Moreover, the participant stresses the need for others (especially those with NVLDs) to recognize and appreciate the beauty of who they are, how they think, and where they are at in their lives.</p>	Admiration
		Acceptance

	2. Participant #1 reflects on how they used fear in a positive way to actively and aggressively work towards a future that they would feel satisfied about.	Interest
		Ecstasy
	3. Participant #17 has a very fond reflection of their disability as a gift, and how it had allowed them to recall and reenact past experiences that brought them joy and fulfillment.	Admiration
	4. Reflecting on their cognitive traits, Participant #11 takes strong pride, gratitude, and ownership of the strengths as well as the weaknesses that constitute their identity.	Acceptance

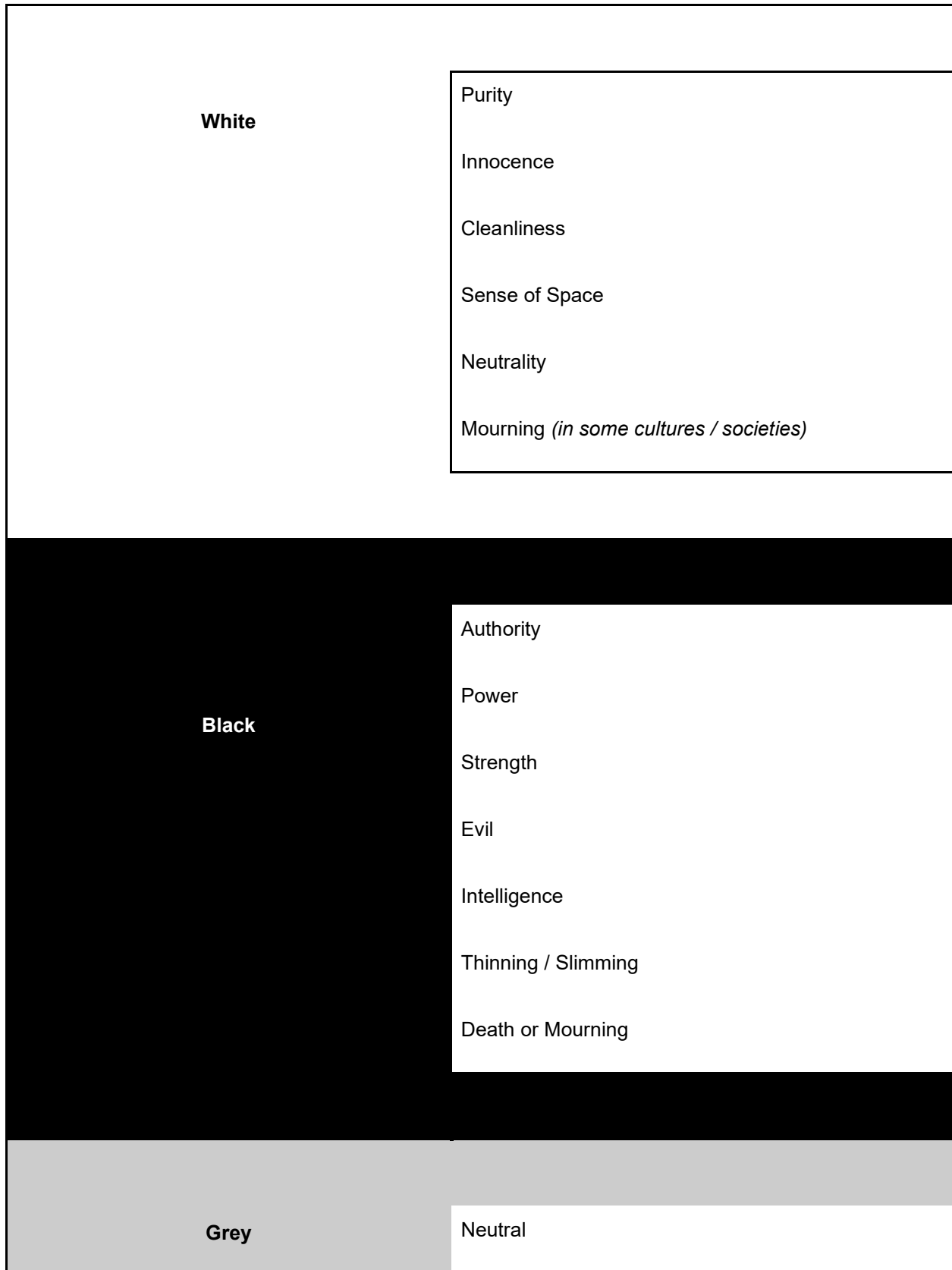
Linking Colours To Emotions Experienced

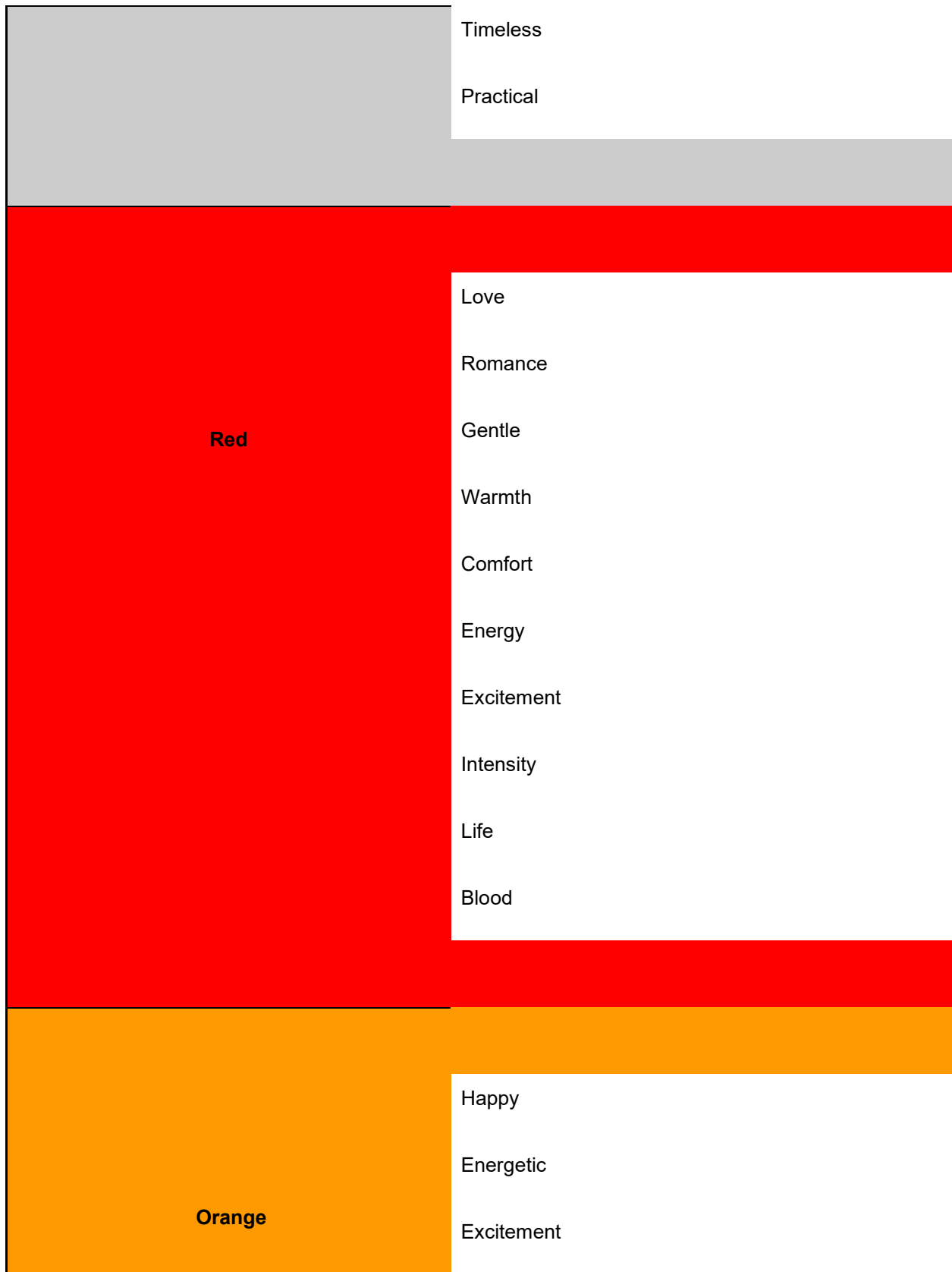
Up until this point however, theoretically, the coded colours had no relationship to the emotions.

Colour Theory could not be directly referenced because it deals with the science of hue, chroma, and value (Aristotle) which is not of concern in this study. The practice of Art Therapy, however, utilizes Colour Psychology and the use of colour as it relates to human emotion, social and cultural significance (Goethe, 1810). Goethe executed a series of studies which examined the psychological impact of multiple colours relating to emotion and mood (Popova, 2017, np). Color Psychology deriving from Goethe’s “Theory of Colours” (Elliot, 2015) therefore was used as the most appropriate theoretical reference to colour for this research. The following color psychology table (4.2) was used for meaning for this study:

Table 4.2 - Colour Psychology

Colour Psychology	
<u>Colour</u>	<u>Meaning</u>





	<p>Enthusiasm</p> <p>Warmth</p> <p>Wealth / Prosperity</p> <p>Sophistication</p> <p>Change</p> <p>Stimulation</p>
<p>The Colour Yellow:</p>	<p>Happiness</p> <p>Laughter</p> <p>Cheery</p> <p>Warmth</p> <p>Optimism</p> <p>Hunger</p> <p>Intensity</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Attention-Getting</p>

The Colour Green:

Natural

Cool

Growth

Money

Health

Envy

Tranquility

Harmony

Calmness

Fertility

The Colour Blue:

Calmness

Serenity

Cold

Uncaring

Wisdom

Loyalty



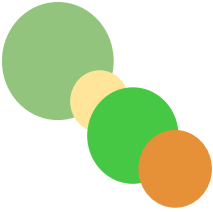
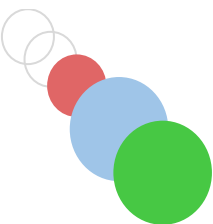
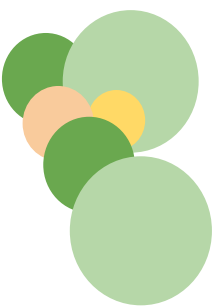
	Sadness
	Warmth
	Comfort
	Security
	Natural
	Organic
	Mourning (in some cultures / societies)
<p>The Colour Pink:</p>	
	Romance
	Love
	Gentle
	Calming
	Agitation

Table 4.3 shows the coding of colour to the participant’s emotions based on colour psychology. This table includes an addition to table 4.1, which collected data from the NVLD blogs. The third row shows the quantity of the indicated emotions being expressed overall in the data collection. For example, for Uniqueness, Acceptance was experienced

the most out of the emotions selected according to the research in figure 4.1. The larger the circle is, the more people with NVLD experienced this emotion. For each theme, I will use the selected amounts of colours related to the specific emotion, to determine which colours are more prominent in the artwork.

Table 4.3 - Quantities and Range of Colours Related to Emotions and Experiences

Quantities of Colour Related to Emotions and Experiences		
Theme / Experiences	Colour / Emotion	Quantity and Range of Colours
Rejection	1. Grief ● 2. Terror ● 3. Pensiveness ● 4. Terror ●	
Exploitation	1. (not highlighted) ● 2. Disgust ● 3. Surprise ● 4. Anger ●	
Isolation	1. (not highlighted) ● 2. Pensiveness ● 3. Rage ● 4. Admiration ● 5. Annoyance ●	
Bullying / Intimidation	1. Pensiveness ● 2. Distraction ● 3. Trust ● / Annoyance ●	

<p>Hope</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trust ● 2. Serenity ● 3. Apprehension ● 4. Vigilance ● 	
<p>Uniqueness</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admiration ● 2. Acceptance ● 3. Amazement ● 4. Anticipation ● 	
<p>Advocacy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vigilance ● 2. Interest ● 3. Joy ● 4. Trust ● 	
<p>Not Fitting In</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (not highlighted) ● 2. (not highlighted) ● 3. Anger ● 4. Pensiveness ● 5. Apprehension ● 	
<p>True To Self</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admiration ● / Acceptance ● 2. Interest ● / Ecstasy ● 3. Admiration ● 4. Acceptance ● 	

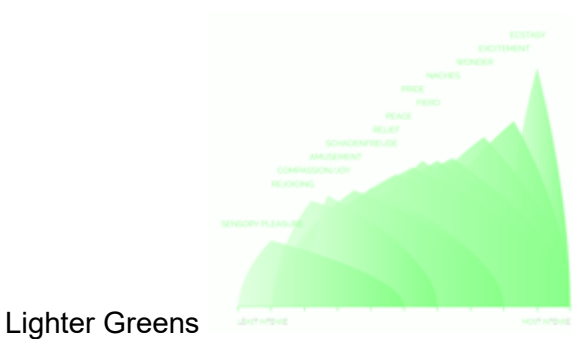
Analysis of Results Relating to the Final Art Piece

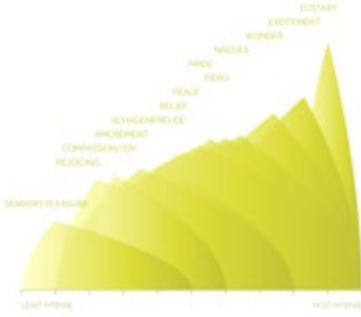

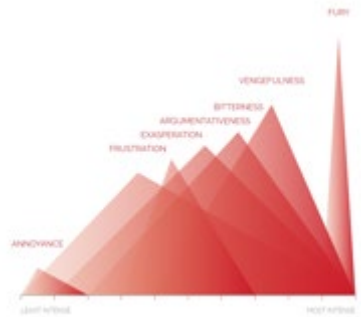
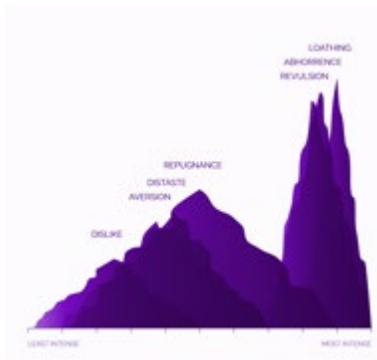
In order to grasp the accurate way to go about the final artwork, I decided to look at the relationship between shapes and colours in regard to emotions.

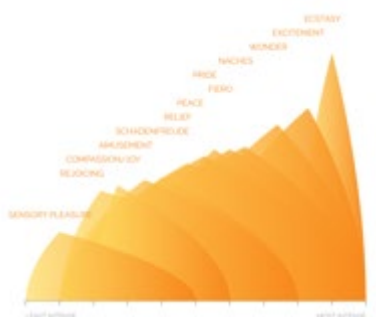
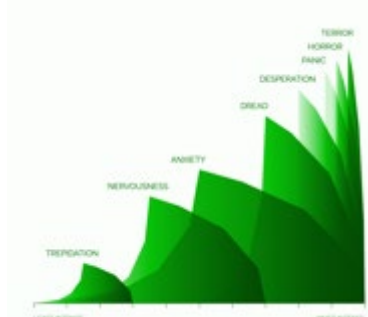

After looking at the Atlas of Emotions created by Ekman, and comparing it to Plutchik’s Wheel of Emotions, I decided to combine the colours of the latter, and associate them with the shapes of the former as my contribution to overall NVLD research. In table 4.4, I have associated and combined the colours and shapes from the Atlas of Emotions with the emotions felt from the NVLD blogs. In some cases, the shape was correct, but the colour was incorrect. For example, the image of the orange shape is the original image; however, feelings were also associated with other emotion categories. Hence, it was appropriate to use the same shape, but associate it to the correct colour of the emotion, as you can see for the Lighter Green and Yellow categories.

This subjective rendering of emotions into shapes and colours, is autoethnographic, therefore it is not guaranteed that all individuals with NVLD will associate the same shapes with the same colours.

Table 4.4

SHAPES AND COLOURS IN EMOTION	
Emotion	Colour / Shape
(12) Acceptance ● (9) Trust ● (6) Admiration ●	 <p>Lighter Greens</p>

<p>(1) Serenity ● (8) Joy ● (3) Ecstasy ●</p>	 <p>Yellows</p>
<p>(7) Pensiveness ● (4) Sadness ● (1) Grief ●</p>	 <p>Darker Blues</p>
<p>(5) Annoyance ● (2) Anger ● (1) Rage ●</p>	 <p>Reds</p>
<p>(1) Boredom ● (2) Disgust ● (1) Loathing ●</p>	 <p>Purples</p>

<p>(2) Interest ● (1) Anticipation ● (5) Vigilance ●</p>	<p>Oranges</p> 
<p>(7) Apprehension ● (8) Fear ● (2) Terror ●</p>	<p>Darker Greens</p> 
<p>(3) Distraction ● (8) Surprise ● (3) Amazement ●</p>	<p>Lighter Blues</p> 

Chapter 5: Artwork

This is where the creation of art began, and when the importance of process came to light.

As seen below, it will be understood how much each technique is so important in relation to those with NVLD, instead of the final products.

I was also able to produce a work of art based on the needs of individuals with visual impairments. The experience allowed me to consider both the voice of the person for whom I was communicating as well as the audience. Most people in the NVLD community often have trouble communicating in a socially correct manner, according to chapter one. With lack of social interaction as one of the characteristics of NVLD, expressing thoughts and feelings is so important in order for others to fully understand what they are going through. This really allowed me to think about the final outcome as a conversation starter between those with NVLD and the audience.

During my research of different disabilities and disorders, that use therapeutic art, I found that NVLD was the only disability that was not in the DSM-5 or in the IDEA (see chapter one), therefore creating a gap. This gap results in an unfair playing field in society, and a disadvantage against those with other disabilities. As an artist exploring Narrative Inquiry, it is my duty to creatively inform others through artistic representation of the thoughts of those with NVLD. It also exposed me to thinking more conceptually about the work I produce as well as the range of materials and art techniques available for use in communicating the same.

Using the specific colours, shapes and emotions from the theoretical references researched, accurate representations were planned to be created of each dominant theme present.

However, before I applied colour to the artworks from the research, I instead decided to try a different technique for each theme that was related to the research. As you will see below, some of the mediums used were Photography, Plywood, Acrylic Paint, Spray Paint, Paper Mache, Spray Foam, Clay, Fairy Lights, and Wet Foam. Dewey stated that connection between different art mediums are able to “reenforce one another as variations that build up an integrated complex experience” (1934, p. 170).

The table below is the template followed to attempt to create the artwork related to colours and emotions.

Table 5.1

Streams of Data	Results	How the Data is Used
Data from Research	Experiences - Themes as Words Emotions - Colours and Shapes	Inform the names of each piece of work as well as colours and shapes
Artistic Influences	After researching, the main takeaways I am going to input into the final art pieces are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using blocks of colours to represent colour through emotions, - Using a decent amount of color, - Blending in some aspects to show connections of some dominant themes, - A sense of harmony, flow; and a sense of both peace and chaos, - Specific brushstrokes that vary in texture, shape, size and colour to elicit emotion from the viewer 	Informs the techniques used to convey lived experiences in art.
Researcher Reflections/Technique		Taking my experiences as an artist to create similar experiences for others. Techniques used and learnt

		from my practice will be implemented in these art pieces.
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5.1 Photographs

I decided to go into society and take photographs of what was inspiring to me. During this process, I was thinking about the definition of each theme, and how specific settings and environments of photographs could communicate them specifically. After taking almost 800 photographs, I narrowed it down to 55 photographs, which were narrowed down to nine. These nine photographs (Appendix 4) helped represent the themes accurately, and ultimately gave me a better idea of how to move forward using multiple media in this thesis; representing those with Non Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD).



Appendix 4-H for Isolation



Appendix 4-D for Bullying

5.2 Abstract Portraits

For the abstract portrait, the goal was the process of the artwork, and not necessarily the outcome. I was able to take the theme “Advocacy / Hope / True To Self”, and express it through abstract gestures, which ended up becoming a face. In the end, I experimented by taking some tissue paper, dabbing it in red and yellow paint, and lightly streaking it on the left side of the face creating internal emotion becoming externalized. I went a step further and decided to take one of the abstract testers and place it where the brain is located. After trying different techniques in this portrait, this is not the way I wanted to go either; even though it had the benefit of “being in the moment” during the process, which was similar to how those with NVLD expressed themselves.



Figure 5.1

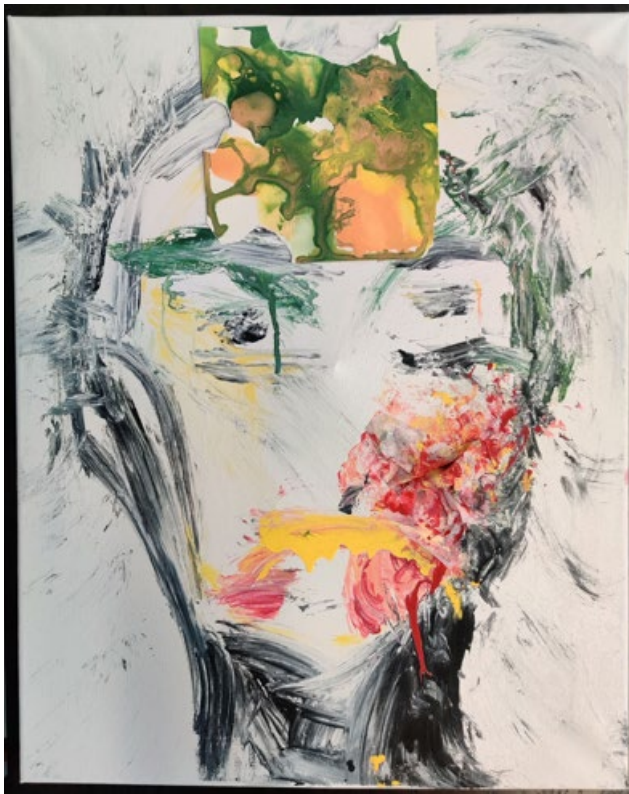


Figure 5.2

Colours used for the Abstract Portrait were impacted by the theme of Hope, and its intertwining emotions of Trust, Serenity, Apprehension, and Vigilance shown in Table 5.1.

Hope	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trust ●2. Serenity ●3. Apprehension ●4. Vigilance ●	
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Table 5.1

5.3 Colour, Spray Paint, Thread

For this technique, I took some cardboard and spray painted it red. On top of the red, I had thread that I arbitrarily placed. After the thread was placed, I grabbed black spray paint, and overlaid everything. When everything was dry, the thread was removed, and what was left over was small hints of red underneath which was similar to neurons of the brain. Even though the process of this technique was very enlightening, I was also keeping in mind what NVLD bloggers were expressing in the research. I realized that the data collected, and the act of creating this art piece were somewhat connected. The act of the string (representing the act of remembrance), and the black spray paint (representing the events the subjects encounter) create a sense of confusion or difficulty. Even though I loved this technique and the process as well, I decided to keep trying different techniques as well.



Figure 5.3



Figure 5.4

5.4 Paper Mâché

When it came to the process of paper mâché, I was able to use that technique to build on top of the wood panels that I had created prior. Using this artistic approach allowed me to produce a shape that I believed would portray what may be going on inside the minds of those with NVLD, according to the research. Building up the paper mâché for over a week allowed me to add elements underneath to enhance the shape I was aiming to depict. Some of these elements included water bottles, and multiple variations of paper. The elements mimicked the shapes shown in the Atlas of Emotions, relating to multiple emotions that are present in the brain when in specific situations. The shapes of anger, sadness and fear for example, were taken into account while creating the sculpture. These are also subconscious emotions, just like the way they are represented.



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6

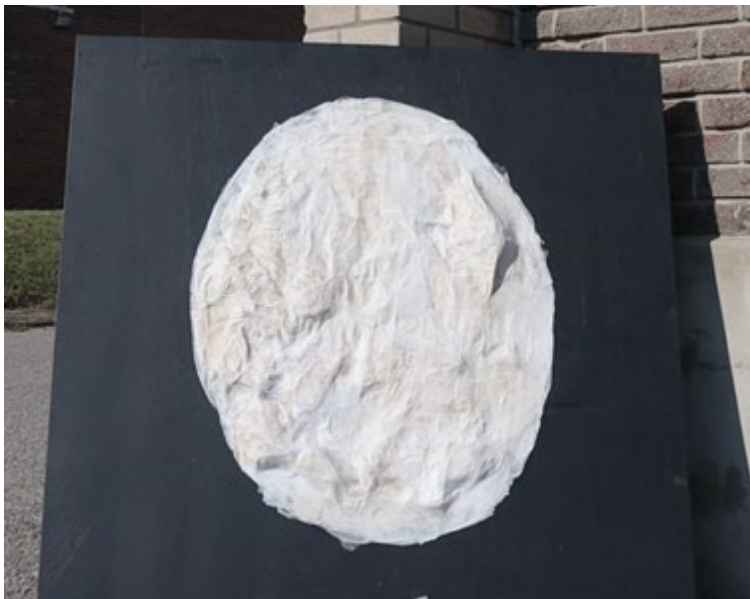


Figure 5.7

5.5 Spray Foam

The medium of spray foam was very interesting to use, yet I felt it was extremely accurate for the audience I was representing. I utilized spray foam in a couple of the paper mâché sculptures, to build them up a little bit. After the foam had expanded over a period of time, they ended up overflowing in some areas, creating an effect that depicted a sense of those with NVLD trying to understand the specific social cues in society, but not entirely being able to compose or recollect that information. I felt that this technique was very important, even though it may be abnormal for people that first glance at it.



Figure 5.8

5.6 Clay Sculpture

I decided to use clay as a medium when I was able to elaborate the meaning behind the implementation. Clay is known as a material that is malleable in the beginning stages, however overtime, the medium dries and cracks under external pressure. In several of the NVLD blogs investigated, this is what they were experiencing. Through this technique, I aimed to represent specifically the process, disregarding and not knowing what the outcome would be. The process of using the medium was difficult, however very eye

opening. This is because as I was thinning out the clay to lay on top of the paper mâché template, I was able to see various patterns throughout. The patterns represent the differences that all humans have; but most importantly, the differences of those with NVLD. The story I aimed to evoke was the fact that some days, a portion of people with NVLD start out okay and composed; however, they start to encounter barriers along the way throughout the day, specifically throughout their minds and thoughts. This process definitely represented the story; with the clay illustrating muddled colors of the emotions exhibited in the artwork, and the texture representing the “decay” of the mind throughout the day that some with NVLD experience.



Figure 5.9



Figure 5.10



Figure 5.11

5.7 Lights

The installation of lights throughout the paper mâché template was representative of neurons in the brain, constantly firing to keep up with conversations and situations in society. This technique was definitely not for aesthetic purposes, but to show that the brain is not just a one dimensional object. One of the many layers that the brain has is the neurons, which send off messages to different parts of the body. Showing the lights embedded in the template is just to show how much work the brain (especially of those with neurological disorders) have to go through, in order to partake in a simple conversation for example.



Figure 5.12



Figure 5.13



Figure 5.14

5.8 Painting

The painting process was definitely the most difficult, as there were many approaches within this technique that were very interesting to experiment with. Using the paper mâché template as the foundation, white spray paint was applied as the base colour. Some of the approaches I tried were dry painting and finger painting. In terms of dry painting, I took colours and wiped the excess paint off to create a “dry” effect. I then painted this on

top of the paper mâché, so that the viewer can see the wrinkles which represented somewhat realistic neurons. I found this to be a successful approach as it was not only a beautiful outcome, but also representative of the hard work going on in the brains of those with NVLD. For the finger painting, the outcome was more concentrated as the focus was to create the theme within the colours of the paintings. As you can see below, the paintings look contrived, and this is because I created drafts of where the colours of each painting should go, according to the research. This did not turn out expectedly, felt contrived, and was disappointing to show.



Figure 5.15



Figure 5.16



Figure 5.17



Figure 5.18

Colours used for one of the Paintings were impacted by the theme of Hope, and its intertwining emotions of Trust, Serenity, Apprehension, and Vigilance shown in Table 5.1.

<p>Hope</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trust ● 2. Serenity ● 3. Apprehension ● 4. Vigilance ● 	
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Table 5.1

Colours used for the other Painting were impacted by the theme of Exploitation, and its intertwining emotions of Disgust, Surprise, and Anger shown in Table 5.2.

<p>Exploitation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (not highlighted) ● 2. Disgust ● 3. Surprise ● 4. Anger ● 	
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Table 5.2

5.9 Abstract Mini Brain Sculpture

The Abstract Mini Brain Sculpture was an idea that emerged at the end of the research and other creative processes. I used wet foam as the base, with gesso on top to keep the colours from seeping through. To create this technique, pouring paint was implemented with multiple colours. Techniques such as spreading and applying sharp objects were used to achieve this outcome. In relation to individuals with NVLD, the way the paint ended up looking is basically showing the process of how situations in life shift dramatically; whether it's in a few seconds, or over a period of time. The process in itself, seeing the paint form on its own, just goes to show the pace the brain moves at; some colours moving fast, and others moving at a slower pace.



Figure 5.19



Figure 5.20



Figure 5.21

Colours used for the Mini Brain Sculpture were impacted by the theme of Hope, and its intertwining emotions of Trust, Serenity, Apprehension, and Vigilance shown in Table 5.1.

They were also impacted by the theme of Exploitation, and its intertwining emotions of Disgust, Surprise, and Anger shown in Table 5.2.

Hope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trust ● 2. Serenity ● 3. Apprehension ● 4. Vigilance ● 	
------	--	--

Table 5.1


Exploitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (not highlighted) ● 2. Disgust ● 3. Surprise ● 4. Anger ● 	
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Table 5.2

5.10 Conclusion

As you can see above, my goal was to create nine pieces of artwork, each representing emotions and colours through specific themes pulled out from the research. In the end, I ended up with nine unique techniques which aimed to equally represent those with NVLD. These techniques aimed to express the data and research gathered of those with NVLD, whilst making sure that no theme was underrepresented. I was able to do this by paying attention to each theme connected with the data, and confirming that it was being used in the techniques produced. Even though it took me two weeks of experimentation, the processes of each technique were eye opening, and “made more sense” with what the research was expressing. Previous to this time period, I spent the last year and a half researching how to make these paintings. I achieved the knowledge of the process becoming more effective in using art practice, and did my best for it to act as agency and

a voice for those with NVLD, versus the end product. What I need to work on is being able to communicate these processes with those with NVLD to have a stronger and more accurate depiction of what the specific community is going through. With these thoughts in mind, I will continue to perfect my process for representing NVLD experience through art works, even after my thesis defense.

Since most likely the subject is able to comprehend and relate to the artwork, I believe that their act of grasping the fact that I am able to create agency and a voice for them in this way is a triumph in terms of answering the underlying research question.

Because of the data collected, and a combination of the statements discovered and contributions made throughout the research; the overall colour associations made by folks with NVLD may be different. The textures, shapes, and even the whole process of art making ultimately trumped colour in the creation of these pieces.

What is really powerful about the thesis research work is its priority and the act of privilege of process based thinking and research. With the intended art pieces I sought out to accomplish, I found that it wasn't necessarily that important to achieve something perfect. But the fact that process is a valid part of art making is something that I will never forget.

Chapter 6: Implications and Recommendation for Future Research

Conclusions in this chapter are abundant with information captured throughout the research and data such as common and prevalent emotions, and emotions and experiences. These included: Rejection, Exploitation, Isolation, Bullying / Intimidation, Hope, Uniqueness, Advocacy, Not Fitting In and being True to Self. The conclusions informed the colours, textures and shapes aimed to be used in the development of the visualized tool through artists interpretation.

When experimenting on the final templates of the artworks, it was very interesting that it was not the colours that were being focused on, hence the techniques used and the process of each technique. The final product did not matter as explained in the beginning. The process is what was most important to those producing creative art practice as agency and a voice for individuals with Non Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD).

In the next stages of my exploration, I will be able to focus on the aspects of colour and psychology when experimenting further.

I definitely need to do more work in either shifting my discipline to the processes and techniques of art as therapy, or focusing on completing artworks that align with my current research. To get to this, I may need to contact those with NVLD, and collaborate with them to take part in creative art practice to act as a voice for their own community, therefore the artwork becoming more accurate. In the end, if this ends up happening, the NVLD community will be able to see that the actions I have shown are valid and build more trust with me.

Developmentally, the need for friendships at a young age is critical to self-confidence. The inability to socialize can easily lead to mental illness in later years causing a strain on the individual, their family and the economy and health system (understood.org, n.d.). The problem is that the condition is controversial in medical circles as the diagnosis does not appear in the DSM-5 (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*). It is also not recognized as a disability covered by the IDEA (*Individual with Disabilities Education Act*). However, the impairment and its impact still exist (understood.org, n.d.). The need for these individuals to be understood is paramount to their self-worth (see Maslow on self-actualization).

The principle of the research study can be generalized to include other similarly affected groups. The roots of this research lie within the principles of phenomenology and ethnographic research, the researcher's own life history as an autoethnographic artist with special needs and also within the history of art itself which is inherently concerned with capturing man's experiences.

The study is of value to clinical practice in terms of a way of informing criteria for diagnosis. The findings can also aid in the accurate development of social programs to treat and service individuals with NVLD. The results contribute to fostering the mental health of individuals living with NVLD traits through self-actualization. Finally, the wider implications of this research could be its use as a method in clinical practice to identify undiagnosed impairments and validate the need for systemic changes in diagnostic models.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: List of Abbreviations

Table 1-A - List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ADHD	<i>Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</i>
ASD	<i>Autism Spectrum Disorder</i>
CDC	<i>Centers for Disease Control</i>
DSM	<i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i>
FAPE	<i>Free Appropriate Public Education</i>
IDEA	<i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</i>
LD	<i>Learning Disability</i>
NVLD	<i>Non Verbal Learning Disability</i>
OP	<i>Online Participant</i>
REB	<i>Research Ethics Board</i>
SLD	<i>Specific Learning Disabilities</i>

Appendix 2: Definition of Terms

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5)

Originating from the American Psychiatric Association, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders has become the standardized and universal point of reference for clinical practice in the mental health field for over 60 years. Precisely, the DSM is a guide that organizes content and criteria to articulate the accurate diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders (see DSM-5 2019).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The IDEA, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, has primary purposes to fulfill such as “provid(ing) a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities”, and “giv(ing) parents or legal guardians a voice in their child’s education” (Lee, 2019). Schools are to provide special education to students with eligible disabilities, and the aim of this is to help students advance in school. Other necessary services such as Counselling and Speech Therapy are also included to assist in whatever the student is struggling with / through.

Disability

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020), a disability is defined as “any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).” There are multiple categories of what defines a disability, such as developmental conditions, something caused by a long

standing condition, condition caused by an injury, conditions at birth, or even a progressive condition (ibid),

Intellectual Disability

An Intellectual Disability is a disability which is characterized by significant limitations both in *intellectual functioning* (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in *adaptive behavior*, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 22 (AAIDD, n.d.).

Learning Disabilities covers a wide range of diagnoses including Learning Disability (LD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Learning Disabilities

Learning Disability is defined as disorders which alter information in the brain such as understanding, retention, organization, acquisition, and the use of (non-)verbal information (LDAO, n.d.). The topic of Learning Disabilities turned out to be a very broad topic, hence I narrowed my search.

I particularly looked into Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), which “affects a child’s ability to read, write, listen, speak, reason, or do math.” (Lee, n.d.). There are a range of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD); some are identified as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, and Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD).

Art Therapy

In terms of the topic of disabilities, Art Therapy is a construct of psychotherapy, communicating fundamentally with various art media (British Association of Art Therapists). “Art therapy has a dual heritage from art and psychodynamic ways of thinking. As a result of this there is a spectrum of definitions and ways of working” (Case & Dalley 2014:1).

According to Paul and Wilkins, the definition of Art Therapy is multi-faceted. They explain that some people believe “(Art Therapy) is about the art itself as the main agent of therapeutic experiences” (2014); while others consider it to be the importance of relationship with the therapist. They explain that the importance is not imbalanced from one another; and preference is held according to the client.

Through practice, art therapy is comprised of two events. The first being the creation of image making through media and the process of turning something “from crude scribbling through to more sophisticated forms of symbolic expression”; and the second being able to provide a relationship based on counselling and therapy (Paul & Wilkins, 2014).

Ultimately, one’s definition of art therapy depends on a variety of factors. For the art therapist, the goal of art therapy is to use art as a tool to capture and understand the lived experience of others.

Emotions Theory

Emotions Theory is required to know one’s own emotional needs to solve problems and go throughout life. It is noted that there are a total of nine emotional needs in this theory that a person (needs). These include Security, Volition, Attention, Emotional Connection, Connection to Community, Privacy, A Sense of Self, A Sense of Achievement, and

Meaning (Barker, Namavar, 2020). These needs allow us to realize our fulfillment, and happiness; and without them, negative experiences begin to arise such as frustration. D.O. Namavar expresses that “emotional nourishment” is normally sought out in human beings, and are also personal to each individual. This is best expressed through the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, which is discussed below.

Self-Actualization

At the top of the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Self-Actualization is defined as “the desire to become the most that one can be” (1962). The nine emotional needs of the Emotions Theory fall into this category.

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, this is an essential psychological need. There are a variety of perceptions of Self Actualization; such as academically, economically, or athletically. In this case, it may be done creatively, such as through pictures, inventions, or paintings (McLeod, 2020).



(Figure 2-A): *An Interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, Matana Geraghty, 2020

Appendix 3: Colour-Emotion Associations

The diagrams below were created and reviewed to make sense of the data in terms of which emotions were experienced more than others from the participants.



Figure 3-A - Block Diagram



Figure 3-B - Emotion Circle Diagram

Acceptance Admiration Amazement Anger Annoyance Anticipation Apprehension Boredom Disgust Distraction Ecstasy Fear Grief Interest Joy Loathing Love
Pensiveness Rage Sadness Serenity Surprise Terror Trust Vigilance

Figure 3-C - Word Association

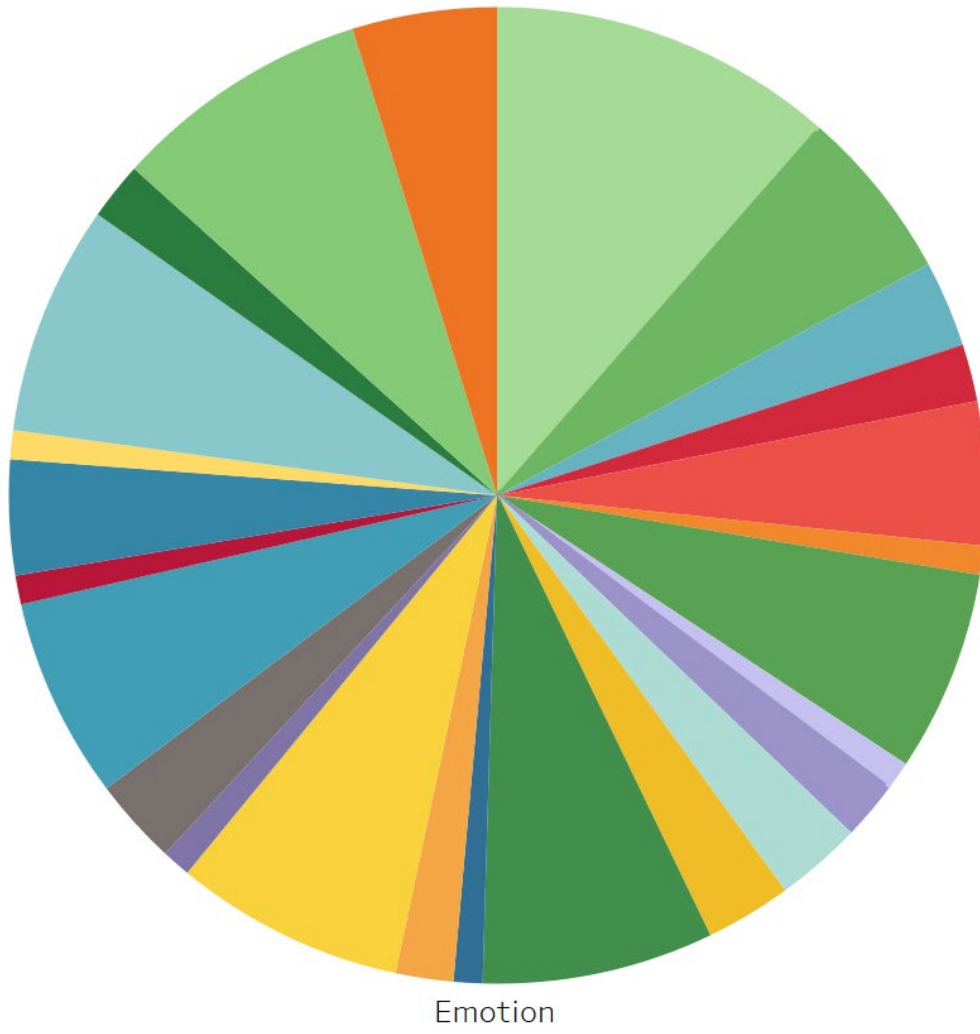


Figure 3-D - Emotion Pie Chart

Appendix 4: Photo-Documentation of Emotions Experienced by Those with NVLD

Rejection

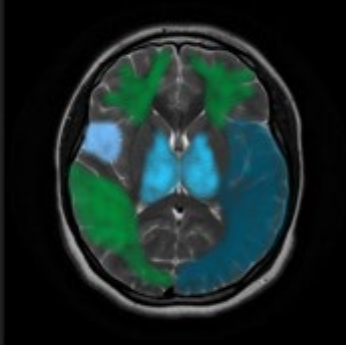

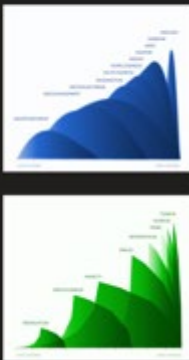


Figure 4-A

Definition: to refuse, to accept, consider, submit to, take for some purpose, or use (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being rejected by society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays grief, terror, and pensiveness.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are shades of greens and blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals and curved triangle peaks. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.

Theme / Experiences	Colour / Emotion	MAPPING (PRACTICE)	Quantity and Range of Colours	Shapes Associated with Colours
<p>Rejection</p> <p>Def: to refuse, to accept, consider, submit to, take for some purpose, or use.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grief 2. Terror 3. Pensiveness 4. Terror 			

Exploitation

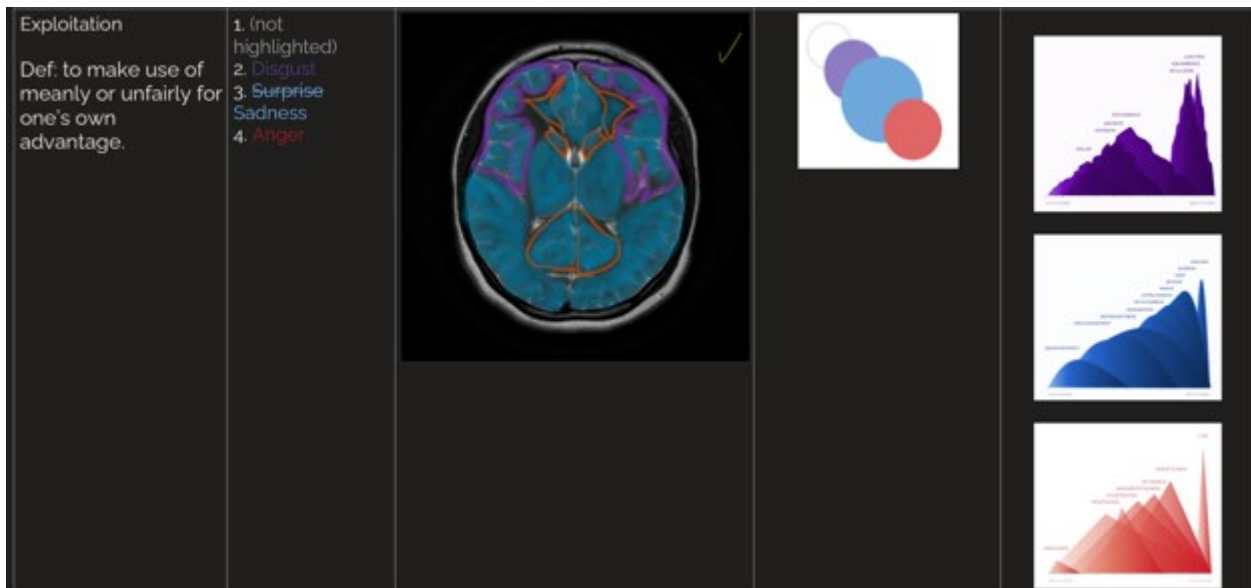


Figure 4-B

Definition: to make use of meanly or unfairly for one's own advantage (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being exploited by society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays disgust, surprise, and anger.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are purples, reds, and blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, triangles, and squiggly mountain peaks. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.



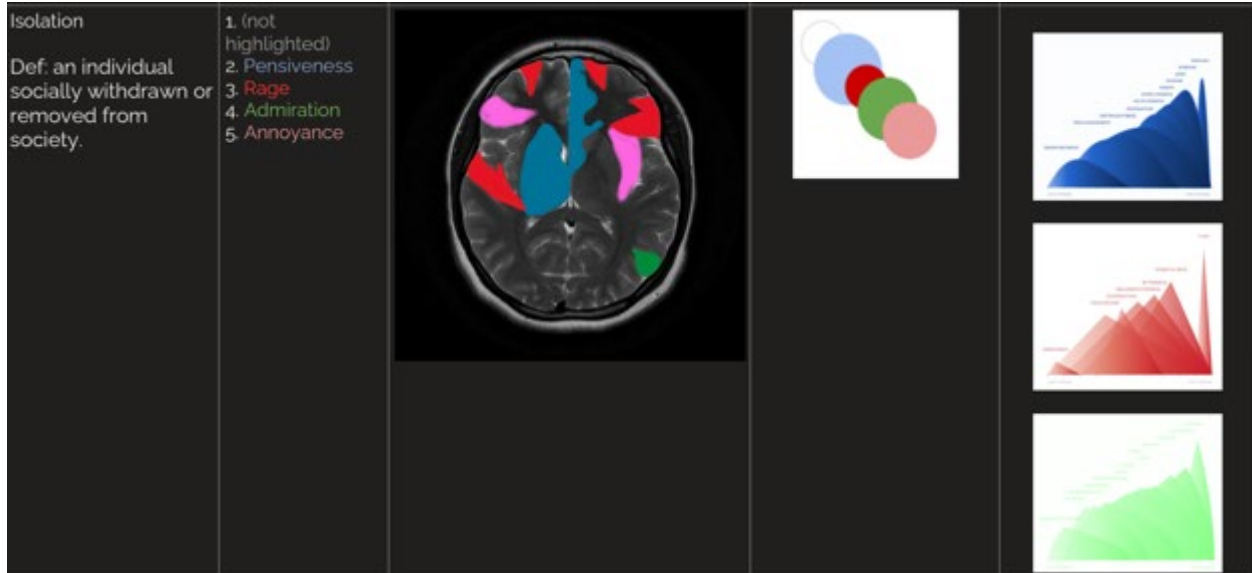
Isolation



Figure 4-C

Definition: an individual socially withdrawn or removed from society (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being isolated by society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays pensiveness, rage, admiration, and annoyance. According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are light greens, pinks, reds, and blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, and triangles. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.



Bullying / Intimidation



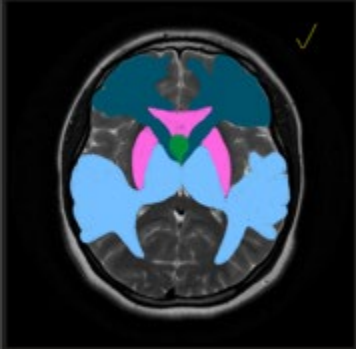

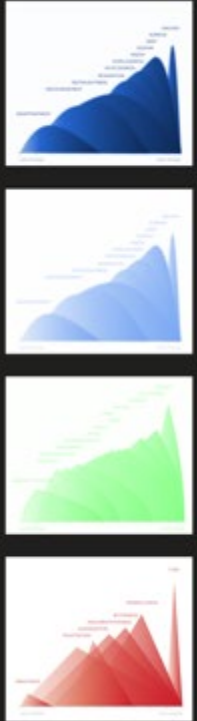
Figure 4-D

Definition: to compel or deter by or as if by threats (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being intimidated and bullied by society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays pensiveness, distraction, trust, and annoyance.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are light greens, reds, and blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, and triangles. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be

conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.

<p>Bullying / Intimidation</p> <p>Def: to compel or deter by or as if by threats</p>	<p>1. Pensiveness 2. Distraction 3. Trust / Annoyance</p>			
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Hope



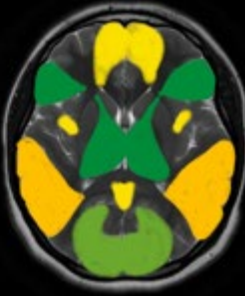


Figure 4-E

Definition: to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience HOPE in and around society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays trust, serenity, apprehension, and vigilance.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are greens, yellows, and oranges; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, flower petal shapes, and curved triangle peaks. The associated colours and shapes

are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.

<p>Hope</p> <p>Def: to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trust2. Serenity3. Apprehension4. Vigilance			
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Uniqueness



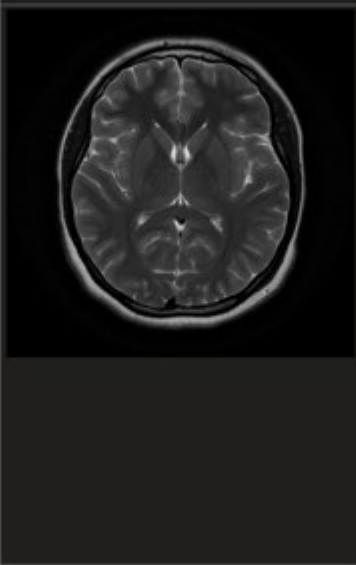


Figure 4-F

Definition: able to be distinguished from all others of its class or type (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being unique through society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays admiration, acceptance, amazement, and anticipation.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are greens, oranges, and light blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, and flower petal shapes. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed

to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.

<p>Uniqueness</p> <p>Def. able to be distinguished from all others of its class or type</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Admiration2. Acceptance3. Amazement4. Anticipation			
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Advocacy



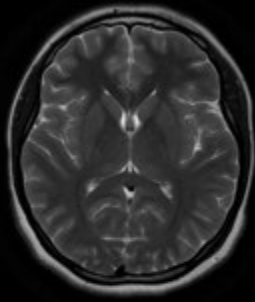


Figure 4-G

Definition: one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience being an advocate in society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays vigilance, interest, joy, and trust.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are oranges, light greens, and yellows; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are flower petal shapes. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed

to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.

<p>Advocacy Def. one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Vigilance2. Interest3. Joy4. Trust			
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Not Fitting In

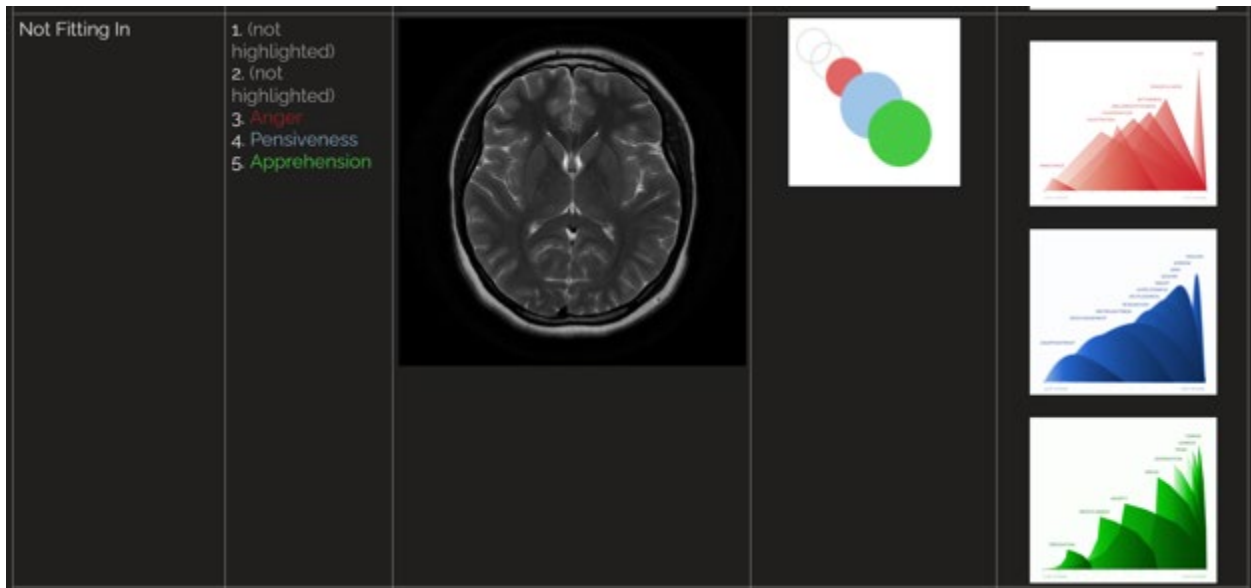


Figure 4-H

Definition: To feel uncomfortable in a new environment (Farlex Dictionary of Idioms, 2015)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experience not fitting into society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this photograph portrays anger, pensiveness, and apprehension.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are dark greens, reds, and blues; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are ovals, triangles, and curved triangle peaks. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.



True To Self

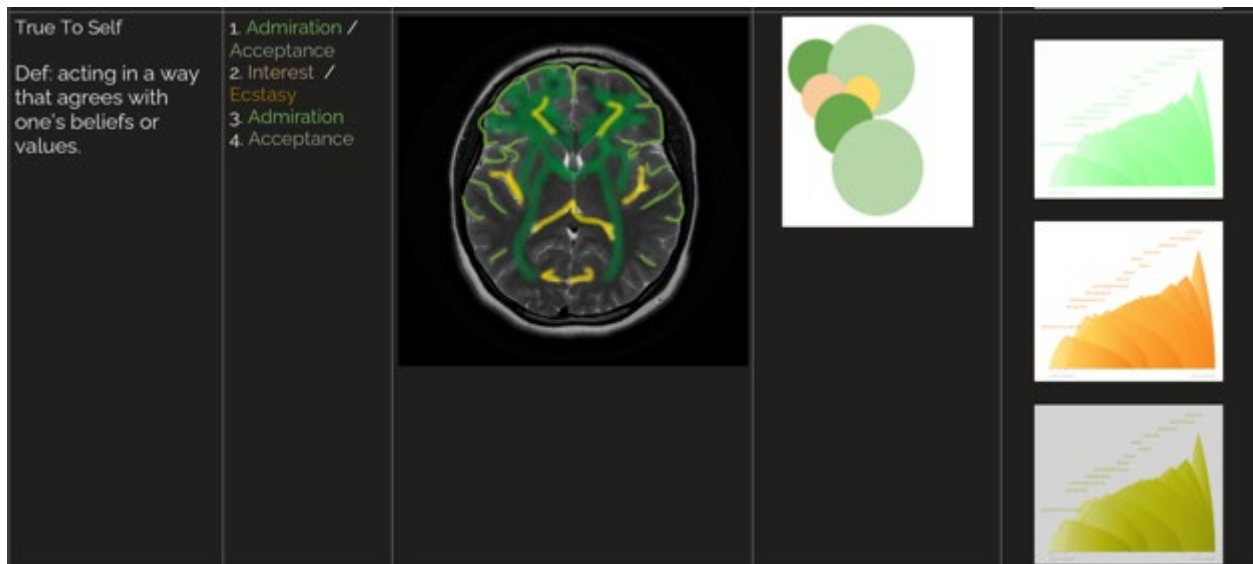


Figure 4-1

Definition: acting in a way that agrees with one's beliefs or values (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

This piece captures the challenges that persons with NVLD experiencing truth to self in society in various contexts of their daily life. Through the use of colour, shape, texture, light and shadow, this painting portrays admiration, acceptance, interest, and ecstasy.

According to tables 4.3, the colours associated with these emotions are oranges, light greens, and yellows; and according to table 4.4, the shapes associated with these emotions are flower petal shapes. The associated colours and shapes are not supposed to be conveyed in this photograph. Other emotional associations are possible, however, this task was to document photos based on emotions.



Appendix 5: Other Art Techniques Used

5.1 Abstract Testers

At the beginning stages of using mixed media, I decided to take small slips of heavyweight paper, and proceeded in adding colours in interesting ways. As you can see, these abstract testers consist of methods including blowing paint, dots with shapes, texture with paint on tissue paper, smudging, blurring, and mixing. This exercise was beneficial in figuring out that these methods did not work with what I was trying to represent and achieve. Autoethnographically, the abstract testers would not be able to work because it was not lining up with the data results and findings in terms of combining shape, colour, and emotion seamlessly.



Figure 5-A



Figure 5-B



Figure 5-C



Figure 5-D

Colours used for Abstract Testers were impacted by the theme of Hope, and its intertwining emotions of Trust, Serenity, Apprehension, and Vigilance shown in Table 5.1.

Hope	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trust2. Serenity3. Apprehension4. Vigilance		0020
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Table 5-A