
An Introduction to the Special Issue: *Disrupting and Expanding the Status Quo*

USURJ's Special Issue, *Disrupting and Expanding the Status Quo*, was conceptualized as complementary to the journal's student-led initiative towards inclusive leadership and publication practices. In Canadian universities, colonial and heteropatriarchal norms reinforce Eurocentric notions of validity. Academic systems perpetuate epistemic marginalization by minimizing the rigour and seriousness of ways of knowing that deviate from the scientific histories of White, Western men.¹ *This USURJ special issue* was formulated to challenge this pattern of systemic race and gender-based exclusion in academia.

The *Disrupting and Expanding the Status Quo* initiative was completed with the support of a special issue "panel" community of experts, united through the efforts of USURJ's student Editors-in-Chief and advisory board team. **Alina Sami**, former co-Editor-in-Chief for USURJ (2022-2023), helped to promote and develop USURJ's inclusive leadership and inclusive publishing initiatives, which precipitated the formulation of this special issue. **Emily Hopkins**, the Repository Coordinator at USask and USURJ's Open Journal Systems (OJS) staff advisor, works to share and preserve open access articles, theses and dissertations, and other academic works. Emily also runs USURJ's Open Journal Systems infrastructure. Emily helped to update USURJ's OJS and website with inclusive language and worked to integrate open peer-review functionality within OJS. **Kandice M. Parker**, former co-Editor-in-Chief for USURJ, just completed her doctoral degree in psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. Kandice endeavours to foster more equitable and empathetic spaces through research and advocacy work that challenge oppressive narratives and systems, bringing actionable solutions toward equality and justice. **Joshua W. Katz** is a PhD candidate studying psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. Throughout his various research initiatives, Joshua seeks to provide voices to those who occupy marginalized positions, highlighting individuals' intersubjective experiences in the process. **Rebekah Bennetch** is a lecturer of technical communication who teaches in the College of Engineering. She is also a PhD candidate in

education, a published author, and a narrative inquirer. In her teaching, she strives to create a supportive and engaging learning environment for her students. **Liv Marken** coordinates academic writing programs and services at the USask Library, where she manages the Writing Centre, leading a team of student tutors from across the disciplines. A founder and staff advisor for USURJ since its inception in 2013, she trains, mentors, and supports student editors in scholarly publishing and journal management. She is currently interested in the ethical implications of widely available generative artificial intelligence on writing, teaching, and publishing. Liv has a master's degree in English (USask) and wrote her thesis on the subversive, anti-sentimental child poetry of Emily Dickinson. **Max Pospisil** is a PhD candidate in environment and sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan. Through their research, Max uses multispecies ethnographic and visual arts methods to explore the multiple ways of knowing and listening to wild animals that are employed by the humans who encounter them in daily life. **Mabiana Camargo** is a final-year PhD Candidate in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on ideas of space and gender in Margaret Atwood's speculative writing. She is a research assistant for Dr. Wendy Roy and a writing tutor at the University of Saskatchewan Writing Centre. **Amy St. Jacques** has been helping create the layout for USURJ covers since 2020. She has enjoyed getting to see all the wonderful student-submitted art for the cover and working with the USURJ team on fun and interesting layouts. **Challen Gladman** is an MA student in the Department of English. They are an avid artist of many mediums. They have interests in fiction, myth, storytelling, various literatures from the margins (notably those that speak to their own experiences as queer, non-binary, and neurodivergent), ethics, accessibility, and the overall pursuit of human happiness. Their thesis work explores themes of landedness and place-thought as imbued into the alternative American settler-colonial narrative of *Battlestar Galactica* (2003-2009). **Chelsea Davis** is a cross-departmental Ph.D. student in the College of Education at the

¹ Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press.

University of Saskatchewan. Chelsea's doctoral research topic is a critical race analysis of K-12 educational policy.

Initial panel meetings worked to establish the special issue's purpose and scope. The panel members were energized by the chance to "shake up" academic culture by disrupting the dull and competitive "imitation model of producing academic work" (panel member Rebekah Bennetch); including marginalized voices (panel member Joshua Katz); and challenging the culture of top-down power dynamics lauded within academia (panel member Kandice Parker). Panel discussions helped us to formulate the special issue's call for submissions, as was advertised

around campus and on the journal's website. The call for submissions encouraged "all types of non-conventional submissions" and included examples of work that *disrupts* and *challenges* the status quo, such as those that involved traditional ecological knowledge, creative writing, autoethnography, Indigenous ways of knowing, and multi-media. Helen Power (USURJ's faculty advisor) and Palak Dhillon's (USURJ's senior communications editor) colourful and fun call for submission graphic was in and of itself designed to challenge the plain and sober designs of calls for paper typical in academia.

DISRUPTING AND EXPANDING THE STATUS QUO
USURJ Special Issue

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

WE ARE LOOKING TO PUBLISH

Autoethnographic Work • Reflexivity/Positionality-Focused Work
• Traditional Ecological Knowledge • Indigenous Ways of Knowing • Land-Based Learning • Place-Based Pedagogy • Queer Methods • Creative Writing • Life Writing • Multi-Media: Podcasts, Drama, Music, Graphic Novels, Zines, Lesson Plans • Deep Ecological Approach • And More... Talk to us!

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To accommodate special issue submissions, USURJ's staff advisor Liv Marken developed a detailed submission evaluation rubric for editors. This special issue rubric adapted criteria from the original USURJ rubric, and built in new criteria for artist's statements, reflective writing,² autoethnographies, positionality, representation of a diversity of scholarly voices, accessibility of multimedia (e.g., closed captioning, alt text, strobe warnings, high-res images), respect for intersectional identities, language bias, citation of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers,³ respect for World Englishes.⁴ Furthermore, editors assessed works by or about Indigenous language, peoples and histories, following principles recommended in Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style*.⁵ These criteria in the new editorial checklist have had the additional benefit of informing the improvement of USURJ's editorial checklist for anonymous pre-review assessment.

USURJ's Graduate Editor-in-Chief, Kandice Parker, and USURJ's Copyright Advisor, Kate Langrell developed a special issue version of USURJ's publication agreement. Additions to the special issue publication agreement included the additional of a short biographical author note to complement the transparent open peer review process, and the requirement of written approval from a community representative, such as knowledge keeper or Elder, for all culturally sensitive information. USURJ's team and special issue panel members settled on the use of

open peer review⁶ for this special issue. While double-anonymous peer review has been upheld as a standard measure to maximize objectivity and minimize potential prejudice towards authors and reviewers, research has indicated that authorship is surmised by most reviewers (successfully in 62% of cases⁷). Undergraduate journals, which often have a smaller pool of reviewers, are more likely to experience issues with conflicts of interest and compromised anonymity. Further, unpaid peer review has been criticized for being unnecessarily exploitative.⁸ Our special issue worked to *disrupt* and *challenge* the status quo by implementing a transparent, collaborative open peer review process, and providing reviewers with compensation in terms of public acknowledgement. This transparency was critical to disrupting and challenging hierarchies of privilege; authors and reviewers were encouraged to be open and reflexive about their social position and power. Open peer review took the form of discussions via 1-1 meetings with authors and editors, and via *Open Journal Systems* platform conversations. This special issue comprises six pieces by University of Saskatchewan undergraduate students. While these authors' and creators' genres are distinct, taken together, these pieces challenge the status quo upheld within academic institutions in multiple and nuanced ways. In line with disrupting the status quo, one of our goals in creating this issue was to bring together a breadth of voices that may not normally find a home in the same venue. The fulfilment of this goal, we

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- ² Two guides on reflective writing informed our rubric: Chabon, S. & Lee-Wilkerson, D. (2006). Use of journal writing in the assessment of CSD students' learning about diversity: A method worthy of reflection. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 27(3), 146-158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/152574010602700303> And Jones, S. (2015) Using reflection for assessment. Office of Service Learning, IUPUI. url: vp.studentlife.uiowa.edu/assets/Using-Reflection-forAssessment.pdf
- ³ MacLeod, L. (2024, February 4). More than personal communication: Templates for citing Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers. *Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.18357/kula.135>
- ⁴ World Englishes. (2024, February 21). Oxford English Dictionary. <https://www.oed.com/discover/world-englishes?tl=true>
- ⁵ Younging, G. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous people*. Edmonton, AB: Brush Education.
- ⁶ Through discussions about peer review, and ableist language was identified and subsequently removed from USURJ's materials and websites (completed by USURJ's Open Journal Systems Advisor, Emily Hopkins, and USURJ's Graduate Editor-in-Chief, Kandice Parker).
- ⁷ Snodgrass, R. (2006). Single- versus double-blind reviewing: an analysis of the literature. *SIGMOD Record*, 35(3): 8–21. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1168092.1168094>
- ⁸ Delic, V. (2022, February 17). Unpaid peer review is exploitative and unnecessary [Post]. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/unpaid-peer-review-exploitative-unnecessary-vedad-delic-ph-d/>

believe, is exemplified by the multiple, at times disparate, mediums, fields, and topics in the pages that follow.

This issue begins with an essay written by Maxwell Folk (reviewed by Max Pospisil and Liv Marken) that challenges the notion of “green capitalism.” Rather than serving to address environmental-economic concerns whilst simultaneously decolonizing Indigenous economies, Folk argues that the notion of green capitalism acts only to perpetuate the status quo through the emphasis it places on coerced consumption and compelled consent. In concluding this piece, Folk argues that such issues cannot be addressed as long as Indigenous peoples are forced to work within the confines of dominant settler frameworks; what is needed are distinct Indigenous voices which consider distinctly Indigenous concerns.

Taking a different approach to disrupting the status quo is psychology, religion and culture student, Zahra Ahmad’s poems “Divinity, You and I” and “Apollo’s Song” (reviewed by Challen Gladman) contain themes of spirituality, belief, human connection, and artistic expression. Ahmad’s use of white space and (in “Apollo’s Song”) musical notation bring us back to poetry’s foundation: sound and rhythm. Ahmad’s works remind us that poetry cannot be reduced to static words on a page; poetry has sound and has roots in oral traditions. It exists, with an audience, as an experience within time and space. The poems’ words and phrases occupy white space in a way that both creates rhythm and pushes the conventional boundaries of the page. Ahmad’s deployment of visual and musical features, along with careful diction and first-person point-of-view, convey the intensity of each speaker’s relationship to their subjects.

Also using a creative and interdisciplinary approach, Cellular Physiological and Pharmacological Sciences student Isha Noor’s artwork “A Whole New World” (artist’s statement reviewed by Liv Marken) symbolically captures various aspects of scientific exploration and knowledge acquisition, emphasizing the evolution of understanding the natural world. Noor’s artwork includes a DNA bridge representing genetic identity, initials paying homage to Rosalind E. Franklin, unwinding DNA strands symbolizing incomplete knowledge, duplicating cells in water

reflecting biological fundamentals, bacteriophages illustrating natural threats, and greenery symbolizing cell-binding proteins. These visual representations metaphorically echo key concepts encountered in biological studies during Noor’s academic journey. In fact, the presence of the student artist located in the bottom right corner of their art piece, reading a textbook, implies a degree of embodiment in the science, as well as interdisciplinarity, connectivity, and retrospection not normally seen in academia. USURJ cover layout editor Amy St. Jacques’ cover layout harmonizes with the bright colours of Noor’s work and preserves its symbolic features.

In addition to art, poetry, and essays, this issue sees USURJ’s first publication of lesson plans, written by education students Emily Zepick and Junita Subangani Raj. Emily Zepick’s “We Are All Treaty People: A Reflection and Research-Based Look at Incorporating Indigenous Content into Saskatchewan High School Arts and STEM Classrooms” (reviewed by Joshua W. Katz and Kandice M. Parker) seeks to highlight paths forward to Reconciliation. Zepick challenges the lack of integration of Indigenous examples and voices into disciplines that have traditionally excluded these perspectives and argues that current Saskatchewan curricula still need to play their part in implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action around education. Zepick’s lesson plan offers a practical, tangible way forward. Education student Junita Subangani Raj also presents a lesson plan that tackles contemporary reconciliation issues. Their piece “Anti-Racist Lesson Plan: How to Teach Early Elementary Students about Canadian Residential Schools” (reviewed by Chelsea Davis, Joshua W. Katz, and Kandice M. Parker) focuses on teaching early-year elementary students about the horrors and realities of Canadian Residential Schools in an age-appropriate way. Just as Zepick does, Raj presents a way for the Saskatchewan education system to provide improved instruction regarding Indigenous-settler relations while simultaneously challenging hegemonic approaches still adopted within dominant education systems.

Finally, this special issue concludes with a piece written by Lujaine Salem, “Disrupting the Status Quo: Forbidden Love and the Use of Heterotopias in

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" (reviewed by Mabiano Carmago and Rebekah Bennetch). Salem argues that Roy's novel challenges the necessity to adhere to the status quo by utilizing heterotopic environments to explore topics such as forbidden love. In so doing, Salem's article directly addresses the special issue theme by highlighting how hegemonic ways of being can be opposed within select works of literature, as well as the importance of this opposition within specific cultural contexts.

The editorial board for *Disrupting and Expanding the Status Quo* wishes to thank the editors who devoted their time to the process of putting together a diverse and stimulating issue. Most of all, we wish to thank the students who submitted their work. Whether or not their work was published, these undergraduate authors made themselves vulnerable, accepted feedback, and worked with our editors in an open review process that brought a more inclusive, transparent, and humane approach to academic publishing. We hope that you enjoy reading, hearing, and viewing their original contributions that disrupt and expand the status quo.

Editorial Board and Acknowledgements

Reviewers

Kandice M. Parker, University of Saskatchewan
Department of Psychology, USURJ co-Editor-in-Chief (2021-2023)

Joshua W. Katz, University of Saskatchewan
Department of Psychology

Rebekah Bennetch, University of Saskatchewan
College of Engineering and College of Education

Liv Marken, University of Saskatchewan Writing
Centre, Library, USURJ staff advisor

Mabiana Camargo, University of Saskatchewan
Department of English

Challen Gladman, University of Saskatchewan
Department of English

Chelsea Davis, College of Education

Max Pospisil, University of Saskatchewan School of
Environment and Sustainability

Layout

Meet Patel, University of Saskatchewan College of
Medicine, USURJ Senior Layout Editor

Amy St. Jacques, University of Saskatchewan
Library

Communication

Palak Dhillon, University of Saskatchewan College
of Physiology & Pharmacology, USURJ Senior
Communication Editor (2021-2023)

Helen Power, University of Saskatchewan Library,
USURJ faculty advisor (2021-Present)

Journal Platform and Accessibility Support

Emily Hopkins, University of Saskatchewan Library,
USURJ Open Journal Systems Advisor

Publication Agreement Expertise

Kate Langrell, University of Saskatchewan Library,
USURJ Copyright Advisor

Issue Conception

Kandice M. Parker, University of Saskatchewan
Department of Psychology, USURJ co-Editor-in-
Chief 2021-2023

Alina Sami, Medicine, University of Toronto, USURJ
co-Editor-in-Chief 2022-2023

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home of the nēhiyawak, Anihšīnāpē, Dēnēsūlīnē,
Nakoda, Dakota, and Lakota Peoples. We pay our
respects to the First Nations and Métis ancestors
of this place, and to all Indigenous Peoples in the
territories where our journal is read. We recognize
the importance of truth and reconciliation and
embrace our role as an undergraduate university
research journal to strive to uphold our
responsibilities to community and land in our
policies, practices, and publications.