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Unpacking the Alberta Advantage through an Intersectional Lens: Social Class, Gender and Minority Groups in Alberta

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ABSTRACT: The province of Alberta has a reputation of being a political maverick. Fighting against Ottawa for more control over its natural resources is one of its distinctive characteristics. Over the years, Alberta has created a model of prosperity based on a particular ethos and the political adage called the "Alberta Advantage," an often-seen appellation for equality and abundance. Our research seeks to understand the extent of that so-called advantage by examining the intersection of social class, gender, race, marital status and immigrant status for two distinct periods – before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this, we used the 2016 Canadian census and the Alberta Viewpoint survey of 2021. By using those two datasets, we shed a light on the dynamics of inequality and rethink social class in the West.

KEYWORDS: Social Class; Intersectionality; Alberta; Inequality; Gender; Minorities

Introduction

In 2019, United Conservative Party of Alberta candidates, including the former Premier Jason Kenney, claimed to want to "bring back" and "renew" the proverbial *Alberta Advantage,* a concept popularized during the Ralph Klein era. Kenney's own definition meant that those who worked hard should be rewarded accordingly. What working hard actually means is another story, but the very idea of "advantage" is a recurring dictum that has little to do with equality. Although politicians often redefine the Alberta Advantage for political purposes, its core elements are the intertwining of an individualistic ethos, limited taxation, and an unresisted laissez-faire perspective. Put into practice decades ago by corporations and small businesses with the clear support of the state in the 1990s, those principles are expected to increase wealth for those at the top of the distribution and then trickle down to everyone else. But do these principles really accomplish such goals for all Albertans?

Although wages and employment rates are usually higher in Alberta than in other provinces, so too are disparities by race, class, and gender. Data from the 2016 Census show that, for example, wage gaps between Black workers and workers not from visible minority groups were about 25% higher at the mean in Alberta than in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2020). For Indigenous workers, gaps were 73% larger in Alberta. Alberta also has one of the highest gender pay gaps in the country (Flanagan, 2015). Across the economy, two interesting but somehow contradictory dynamics occurred from 2015 to 2020. On the one hand, Alberta recorded the largest decline in after-tax income due to lower oil prices, but on the other, the cushioning effect of the Federal's fiscal policy, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), during the

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pandemic largely contributed to the temporary decline of income inequality (Statistics Canada, 2021). Alberta's usual free market mantra and Ottawa's Keynesian approach created an interesting situation for social scientists to examine. Needless to say, subsequent studies based on the 2021 census might show the effect of this unprecedented situation, which will inevitably raise questions of "durable inequality" in Alberta.

Given that social positions within society also depend on different contexts and determinants, we investigate where people in Alberta fall on the social ladder and what brings them to the position they are. We address the following research questions: How are categories based on gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, and citizenship status associated with people's position among Alberta's stratified society? What do our results say about Alberta and its "advantage"? In these times of uncertainty and economic hardship, who actually profits from the said advantage?

Given the background and context mentioned above, this article seeks to unveil the different inequalities that shape Albertan society. Using data from the 2021 *Alberta Viewpoint Survey* and the 2016 Canadian Census, we address in the same breath categorical inequalities – class, gender, ethnicity, political status, marital status– and individual's positionality – self perceived social position, level of identification to their social group, and perception of social mobility – in order to provide an informed analysis of Western Canada. First, we examine the Alberta Advantage and its periodization. Then, we discuss the use of the intersectional framework in quantitative analysis and concepts such as "categorical inequalities" and "relational inequalities." Finally, we present our data and analysis followed by a critical discussion of inequalities in the Albertan context.

Debating the Alberta Advantage in the 21st century

Alberta's –and much of Canada's– economy depends on fossil fuels. A fossil economy, a system based on self-sustaining growth in which the mere consumption of fossil fuels is the central characteristic (Malm, 2016), is detrimental to the whole ecological system and democracy. Since the 1950's, Alberta has fully embraced fossil capitalism and thus became a state rentier province. While promoting a specific economic model and western lifestyle unique to Canada, "Alberta's so-called "tax advantage" primarily relies on an extreme dependence on oil rents from producers who are either fully foreign-owned or majority foreign-owned (Laxer, 2022) resulting in a clear "deterioration of the link between the state and citizens" (Carter & Zalik, 2018, 58).

The Alberta advantage is a prominent feature of Alberta culture that cuts across political periods. The slogan was first utilized by Ralph Klein, along with cuts that gave rise to period of austerity and arguably harmed the notion of Alberta as a place of equal opportunity and prospects. In 2006, Ed Stelmach replace Klein as premier of the province. Stelmach sought to change the slogan of the Alberta Advantage, introducing instead "Freedom To Create...Spirit To Achieve." He sought to rework the province's dependence on oil (Macleans, 2009). Then in 2011, Stelmach was replaced by Allison Redford, followed by Prentice. Stelmach and Redford's platforms

included raising royalties for diversifications and social services, but this divided the conservative movement to their detriment (Lawson, 2022).

In 2015, the Progressive Conservative leadership ended as Rachel Notley of the Alberta New Democratic Party came into power. The Alberta advantage was still a prominent political feature, but its meaning shifted. Notley argued the government could preserve the Alberta advantage without a sales tax as PST was politically too risky (Gibson, 2015), given the inertia of the Alberta Advantage (Salomons & Béland, 2021). Finally, Jason Kenney became premier in 2019 with the United Conservative Party and resurrected the neo-liberal notions in the Alberta Advantage. Despite major social issues, Alberta remains an attractive land of work opportunity, particularly in the energy sectors which contributes about a quarter of the province's GDP and directly accounted for about 6% of the province's employment (National Energy Board, 2019).

Evidently, oil and gas are a crucial aspect of political culture in Alberta and have implications for how inequality is experienced across Albertans. Oil booms have created intense interprovincial migration and increased international migration, periodically changing the socioeconomic structure of the province. To truly understand if the Alberta Advantage exists, we want to engage in an intersectional analysis across key categorical groups in Alberta. The results from the Alberta Viewpoint Survey and the 2016 census are a snapshot of this fluctuant economy and the categorical inequalities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality focuses on the distribution of power and resources in a given society through axes of privilege, domination, and oppression rooted in historically institutionalized categorical inequalities (Collins 2001; Crenshaw, 1989). The framework is perhaps "the most valid approach to the sociological study of social stratification" that considers the irreducible complexity of human life (Yuval-Davis, 2015,94). Intersectionality is also a demanding theoretical framework due to the inherent complexity of social interplays. Nonetheless, the intercategorical complexity of intersectional analysis helps capture the different configurations of inequality of a given society (McCall, 2005). The intersectional approach focuses on the very detrimental cumulative effect of racism, sexism, and other status characteristics. Incorporating dimensions of oppression and intersectionality, historians and sociologists have addressed long lasting inequalities. For instance, French sociologist Colette Guillaumin's binary framework on language of discrimination (1995), Bourdieu's persisting social antagonism of *dominant* and *dominé* (2001), and Charles Tilly's (1998) creative socio-historical analysis of inequality have presented interesting historical conditions for domination and oppression.

As a framework, intersectionality has been extensively used in qualitative analyses (e.g., semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participatory research). It is less common in quantitative work (McCall, 2005), but interest in statistical analyses using the intersectional framework has risen considerably over the past few years (Bauer et al.; 2021, Fehrenbacher & Patel, 2020; Dubrow, 2013). As different methodologies produce different knowledge, and a broader scope of methodologies is necessary to grapple with issues that arise at particular

intersections (McCall, 2005), expanding the scope of quantitative intersectional approaches is valuable, particularly to expose where inequalities may lay.

Intersectionality provides an open-ended framework and encourages creativity to explore novel areas (Davis, 2008; Yural-Davis, 2015). However, this does not mean all potential intersections must be incorporated in an analysis, instead, the focus should be on the most important intersections for the proposed research question (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Misra et al., 2021). Quantitative models can study groups separately, allowing for an examination of intersections without interaction terms, but using a multiplicative approach through "interaction effects" (Guan et al., 2021; Bauer et al., 2021; Dubrow, 2013) helps to show how categories interact with each other and affect the outcome. For some researchers, by definition, intersectional approaches necessitate the need for interaction terms (Choo & Ferre, 2010; Dubrow, 2008) and this allows them to better identify multiplicative effects of inequalities, rather than additive ones (Abichahine & Veenstra, 2017; Scott & Siltanen 2016). Both qualitative and quantitative intersectional methods give researchers the freedom to uncover relations of power not only in a creative way, but in accordance with the theoretical framework of intersectionality.

Of course, there are limits with this line of analysis, and statistical models need to be combined with conceptual strategies. Quantitative analyses of interactions between social categories can sometimes lead to speculation and generalization and undermine the process of theorization. Social relations, institutions, and historical processes shape categories such as class, gender, and ethnicity. Here, the *contextual* dimension of inequality is primordial. How social categories interact with each other and how individuals and groups experience them in each period and a given society, are important parts of the analytical process. This further pertains to identity formation.

Identity – through the lens of intersectional categories – may be understood as "categories of practice" rather than mere homogeneous and individual properties. These include "categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000 4). In particular, Tilly's (1998) analysis of historically rooted organizational capacity to create social categories helps grasp the persistence of a binary conception of society. Using categorical pairs such as *citizen/immigrant, men/women, white/non-white,* and *secular/religious,* Tilly (1998, 86) delineates four central causal mechanisms throughout history for their institutionalization as categorical inequalities: (1) *exploitation*, (2) *opportunity hoarding*, (3) *emulation* and (4) *adaptation*. These mechanisms, when reproduced across organizations and time, help to make categorical inequality durable and lasting.

Categorical approaches can be useful in highlighting the privilege of certain categories, such as Whiteness in Canadian society, but they also can homogenize race-based experiences of others. We incorporate these with an intersectional perspective to study the linked dimensions of race, ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and marital status using data from the 2016 Census and the Alberta Viewpoint Survey. Although the Alberta Viewpoint questionnaire was not designed following a specific intersectional methodology, the survey, however, directly approaches social

class, as linked to both income and self-identification; gender and marital status; race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity; and immigrant status.

Dimensions of Categorical Inequality

Categories carry different meanings within social and historical contexts. Hence, it is necessary to assess categorical and relational inequalities as institutionalized and routinized practices, rather than as random acts that have lingering effects on groups and individuals. Looking at the intersection of two or more categorical inequalities across groups is informative of the social and historical patterns of injustice and inequity.

Social Class

Social class describes a person's position in a social and economic hierarchy. Social class can be explored objectively through measures, such as income, education, and occupation, and subjectively, through a person's perception of their class location relative to others (Diemer et al., 2013). Intersectionality primarily focuses on race, class, and gender, but frequently other categorical variables are considered as axes of inequality. Class is usually seen as an explanatory variable in intersectional analysis. The relation of power between poverty class and upper class can contribute to prejudicial effects such as classism. However, class itself is the product of a long process, starting with the social reproduction of a parent's own position within society, social actors' agency, and other exogenous factors. We argue that gender, political status, marital status, and ethnicity can interact with each other and with different contexts, and influence and define an individual's social positioning. Social class, although not necessarily fixed, is linked to these dynamics. Our research focuses specifically on those intersectional determinants of social class.

The variety of measures that can be used in social class research and inequality is not necessarily problematic, instead it is problematic when the chosen measures do not match the research question (Williams, 2009). Given our focus on the Alberta advantage, including the individualistic ethos, limited taxation, and an unresisted laissez-faire perspective, measuring income is an instinctive way to identify class. We have approached class in a conservative, perhaps more convenient way to have a better identification process. As such, income what we use in both the census and survey data, and we were able to recreate both objective and subjective class positions. However, we are aware of other cultural and symbolic dimensions that constitute what a social class *is*, but in the context of this article, we focus on class position related to income and examine its relationship with gender and marital status; race, ethnicity, and Indigeneity; and immigrant status.

Gender and Marital Status

The structure of society produces certain gender inequalities (Blackburn, Jarman & Racko, 2016), as evident in an increasing gender gap since the mid-1900s in Alberta (Al-Zyoud et al., 2018). Across Canada, women have lower average personal incomes and hourly wages than men

(Fortin, 2019; Fox & Moyser, 2018). They are also less likely to occupy higher-paying occupations and are overrepresented in lower-paying sectors.

Given experiences of inequality, gender differences can also persist across subjective class identity. Prior Swedish research reported small non-significant effects in terms of gender and status perceptions, but women who identify within the working class placed themselves lower on a status scale than working-class men (Karlsson, 2017). Meanwhile, other research finds men place themselves higher than women (Evans & Kelly, 2004). Some of these different findings are likely linked to marital status and household structure where research indicates husbands and wives utilize the same cues in determining their subjective class identity (Plutzer & Zip, 2001).

Gender disparities must be considered in relation to marital status, which changes individuals' financial circumstances, allows individuals to pool resources, provides social mobility, and conditions class awareness. "Marital supremacy," as being the legal privilege of marriage, shapes the legitimacy of family status, and that supremacy varies among class and race (Mayeri, 2015). Mayeri's intersectional account of marital status applies to Canada as well, though there are strong disparities between common-law couples and married couples.

Between 1976 and 2011, marriage rates dropped drastically for the lowest earners as opposed to a slight decrease among the highest earners. The existing "marriage gap" between rich and poor Canadians has persisted for decades (Cross & Mitchell, 2014). Meanwhile, divorced people often experience the economic shock of divorce, have child or spousal support payments, and may no longer have the economic support of their partner. In these situations, women are more likely to be exposed to precarity (Margolis & Choi, 2019). More generally, outside marriage, women tend to be more vulnerable economically, and there are differences in terms of economic well-being across marital status and gender. Taken together, gender and marital status have clear implications for objective and subjective class measures, along with other demographic considerations.

Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity

Across various racial and ethnic groups, differences prevail through indicators of social class. For instance, in Canada, Livingstone and Weinfeld (2015) observe a decreasing trend of the socioeconomic status of most Black families with children. The effect of racial identity on class identification is complex and linked to racial discrimination (Sosnaud et al., 2013; Speer, 2016). Ethnicity, different from race with a focus on culture, can also influence social positions. Levine-Rasky (2011) finds the intersection of whiteness and middle-classness is reinforcing, but when ethnicity is considered, these positions can contradict each other, demonstrating variation by ethnicity. Ethnicity as a category can also be subject to controversy.

In historically colonial societies, such as Canada, Indigenous peoples "have not regarded themselves as one monolithic racial society" (Bird, 1999, 2). This is one of the reasons the identification of Indigenous peoples can be contentious. Indigenous and ethnic identities differ, and the former must be regarded as a historically and culturally distinct group of the society

(Williams & Schertzer, 2019). For this reason, we treat "Indigeneity" as a single category rather than an ethnic one.

As our study examines Alberta where four numbered treaties have shaped the political relations of settlers and First Nations, the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples require special consideration in assessing social class and inequality. Their experiences of poverty are rooted in colonialism and racialization (Harell et al., 2014). The transgressions of residential schools, the 1960s scoop, and intergenerational trauma continue to negatively affect Indigenous peoples, and this is evident when looking at reports of higher rates of unemployment (Lamb, 2015), over-representation within the working class (Liodakis, 2009; Wotherspoon, 2003), along with the prevalence of inadequate housing and poorer health (Department of Justice, 2022). Despite governmental recognition of the dire circumstances some Indigenous peoples face, such as water boiling adversaries on reserves, inequalities persist.

Despite the importance of studying and addressing inequality, there is little research on social class and Indigenous peoples (Norris et al., 2013), although expanding this research is useful in analyzing inequality within Indigenous populations. We contribute to an important research gap by examining the experiences of marginalized groups, and Indigenous peoples, given the context of Alberta, home of the Blackfoot, Cree, Chipewyan, Dene, Sarcee, and Stoney (Nakoda Sioux) First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Alberta is also home for many immigrants as immigrant landings continue to support population growth (Government of Alberta, 2022).

Immigrant status

Being an immigrant in Canada is a socially and economically complex situation. First, the country recognizes various types of immigrants –non-permanent residents, economic immigrants, immigrants sponsored by family, temporary foreign workers, and other immigrants and refugees– which represent a multifold challenge for the concerned persons. Second, even though most immigrants access citizenship at some point, they might continue to be perceived as immigrants by the dominant group. Many individuals experience stigmatization, and this situation intensified during the pandemic (Lin, 2022). Citizens with immigrant backgrounds also experience discrimination in the labour market (Beauregard et al. 2019; Eid, 2012). The adage of the market as being "colour-blind" is thus directly contradicted by the many immigrant job-seekers' experience.

Furthermore, transitioning to a new country can influence social class, as immigrants often leave behind their social networks, which are beneficial in terms of finding a job and experiencing occupational mobility (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013). Common concerns are devaluation in the labour market in terms of education and skills and discrimination (Akkaymak, 2016; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Salami et al., 2020). Prior Canadian research indicates concerns with employment (Liu, 2019), in particular for older immigrants (Ferrer et al., 2022), African immigrants (Salami et al., 2020), and immigrant women (Premji & Shakya, 2017; Wing et al., 2019). Overall, immigrants often fare worse than non-immigrants in terms of poverty (Kazemipur & Halli, 2000, 2001a, 2001b).

These studies indicate immigrants' experiences can influence objective class measures, but also, immigrant status can influence subjective class identification, with some studies finding changing social status post-migration (Vaquera & Aranda, 2017). However, immigrants are not a homogenous group and taking other factors such as ethnic origin and gender into consideration also reveals further variation in the experiences of immigrants (Hogarth, 2011), indicating the necessity of an intersectional approach.

Together, the categories mentioned above shape the experiences and life chances of Canadians. However, their effects likely vary by region, province, and city. Cultural, economic, and political contexts, as well as the availability of social assistance, all affect how ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and marital status are linked to social class outcomes. We explored whether and how these relationships are predominant in the experience of social class in Alberta.

Methods

We use data from the September 2021 Alberta Viewpoint Survey (N=1,115) and the 2016 Canadian Census (N=107,460) to examine relationships between ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, immigrant status, marital status, and social class. The Alberta Viewpoint Survey is a recurring cross-sectional online survey of residents of Alberta (Citation for AB Survey). The September 2021 wave was conducted via Leger.

The Canadian Census of 2016 is the most recent microdata available for researchers (Statistics Canada, 2019). We restrict our analyses to Alberta adult residents in 2016, resulting in a sample size of 82,945 respondents. The Census provides an overview of disparities in Alberta in 2016, prior to the pandemic, and the Viewpoint Survey provides updated information for life during the pandemic. The larger sample size for the Census also allows for an intersectional analysis of key categorical groups.

For analyses of Census data, our primary predictor variables are *gender*, measured as male or female; *race/ethnicity*, measured with categories of white, Asian, Black, Latin American, and mixed or other; *Indigeneity* as being part of the Canada's Indigenous or not; *political* or *immigrant status*, measured as citizen or immigrant (including the four status of immigrant mention above); and *marital status*, measured as being in a relationship (i.e., married or common-law) or not being in a relationship. For intersectional analyses, we focus on categories at the intersections of these variables.

Using a series of logistic regression models with interaction terms, we examine how these measures are jointly associated with three class-based outcomes: (1) very low incomes, (2) low incomes and (3) unemployment. For the Alberta Viewpoint data, we kept the same predictors and focused the analysis on subjective social class, as our outcome variable. This variable allowed respondents to self-identify across five categories: poverty class, working class, lower middle class, middle class, and upper middle class.[4]

[4] The original survey question also provided respondents with options of "upper class" and "other" with the ability to fill-in a response. Only 5 respondents chose "upper class" and were therefore combined with the "upper middle class" responses. Respondents who chose "other" and did not provide a response were dropped from the analysis.

Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic

Our first set of pre-pandemic findings, presented in Table 1 depict clear class divides by gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, and marital status. Table 1 shows results for three sets of models predicting very low income status (Model 1), low income status (Model 2), and unemployment (Model 3). The odds of having very low incomes were 2.6 times higher for women than men, and the odds of experiencing low incomes were 3 times higher. Single or divorced people were also 1.4 times as likely to be unemployed. Indigenous people are also subject to economic hardship with odds of earning very low income being two times higher than for non-Indigenous people. Black Albertans also have odds of unemployment which are two times higher than White people. Immigrants are also approximately 1.5 times as likely as citizens to earn after-tax incomes lower than $20,000 and lower than $39,000. Table 1 shows that categorical inequality is indeed present in Alberta, likely diminishing the Alberta Advantage for many. However, such divides are much more complex, as shown in Table 2, which presents the results of interaction models.

First, examining the variation within categorical groups, married, white immigrant women are 4.5 times greater than a white married man with Canadian citizenship to earn a very low income, and married, racialized immigrant women are 4.4 times greater than a white married man with Canadian citizenship to earn a very low income. Here, immigration status appears to play a decisive role in the access of economic resources. Recent studies have shown that the incidence of low income has increased in the last decades, maintaining the low-income gap between immigrants and Canadian-born (Picot & Hou, 2019; Picot et al., 2008) and Alberta makes no exception regardless of the intensity of its international net migration.

Looking at the predictors of Model 2, the categorical configurations are almost the same. An immigrant woman is more likely to yield a low income as opposed to a Canadian-born white married man. Unemployment (Model 3) however seems to affect almost exclusively men, with slight differences with the marital status and the ethnicity. In Alberta, unmarried Canadian racialized men have 5.1 greater odds of being unemployed than married white Canadian men. If we now compare among categorical groups and the three different models, immigrant women living alone (admittedly single), either white or racialized, have clearly higher chances (6.8) of accessing limited resources (low income) followed by single white immigrant women (6.2).

Of course, it is impossible to assess which of the categories have the most influential effect statistically speaking on being lower class and poverty class, but the categorical configurations and the recurrent convergence of certain categorical characteristics (i.e., racialized, immigrant, single) offer a better idea of which people within society are more likely to experience precarity. As intersectionality scholars have long argued, it is not ethnicity or gender per se that causes or creates discrimination, but how society perceives and treats differences, and generates combined effects of sexism, racism, and nativism for instance (Collins, 2004). Put differently, difference does not imply inequality, instead, it has to do with how "differences of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexuality, citizenship and so on do have a systematic bearing on inequality" (Brubaker, 2015, 11). In a more statistical perspective, categorical variables do not explain why

people earn very low and low incomes, nor why they suffer from unemployment. They establish a mere relationship. Moreover, people with multiple category memberships also regard discrimination differently from one another. The interactive effects of social categories (gender, ethnicity, Indigeneity, immigrant and marital statuses) as studied above provide a glimpse of the many manifestations of inequality and shed a light on discrimination as potential drivers of exclusion

Overall, gender, Indigeneity and marital status are suggested to be strong predictors for the three models. That is to say, predicted positionality of class also becomes itself an object of discrimination and interacts with other axes of domination and oppression. Additionally, class locations are not always fixed. Upward mobility can be enabled and eventually prevent discrimination based on class. This is however not always true, since inherited cultural disposition and signs of social class can be difficult to erase completely and may lead to suspicions about individuals moving upwardly from one position to another (Kraus et al. 2017; Bourdieu, 1979).

The interaction categories discussed above can be visualized horizontally (*among* groups) and vertically (*within* groups) with their respective class locations (Figure 1). By first separating the expectable categorical configurations by gender, we examine sexism. We can then study the proportion or relative frequency of interaction effects within each ethnic identity and their class position based on the net income. First, we observe an obvious gap among men and women in terms of class location. 15.88% of men on average are socially located in the lower class whereas on average 32.73% of women are. Alternatively, 20% of men on average are present within the upper class while women reach only 8.13%. Men of all groups also benefit from a better class position when they are married, while single and married citizen women have greater chances to be in the upper middle class and upper class. Second, there is also a significant difference between Canadian-born women and immigrant women. Immigrant status for married and single women signals a strong likelihood of lower class position.

Another situation that stands out is the single Black immigrant men with a higher proportion of lower class membership (44.4%). Single immigrant women from a mixed ethnic background also represent 43.8% of the lower class belonging.

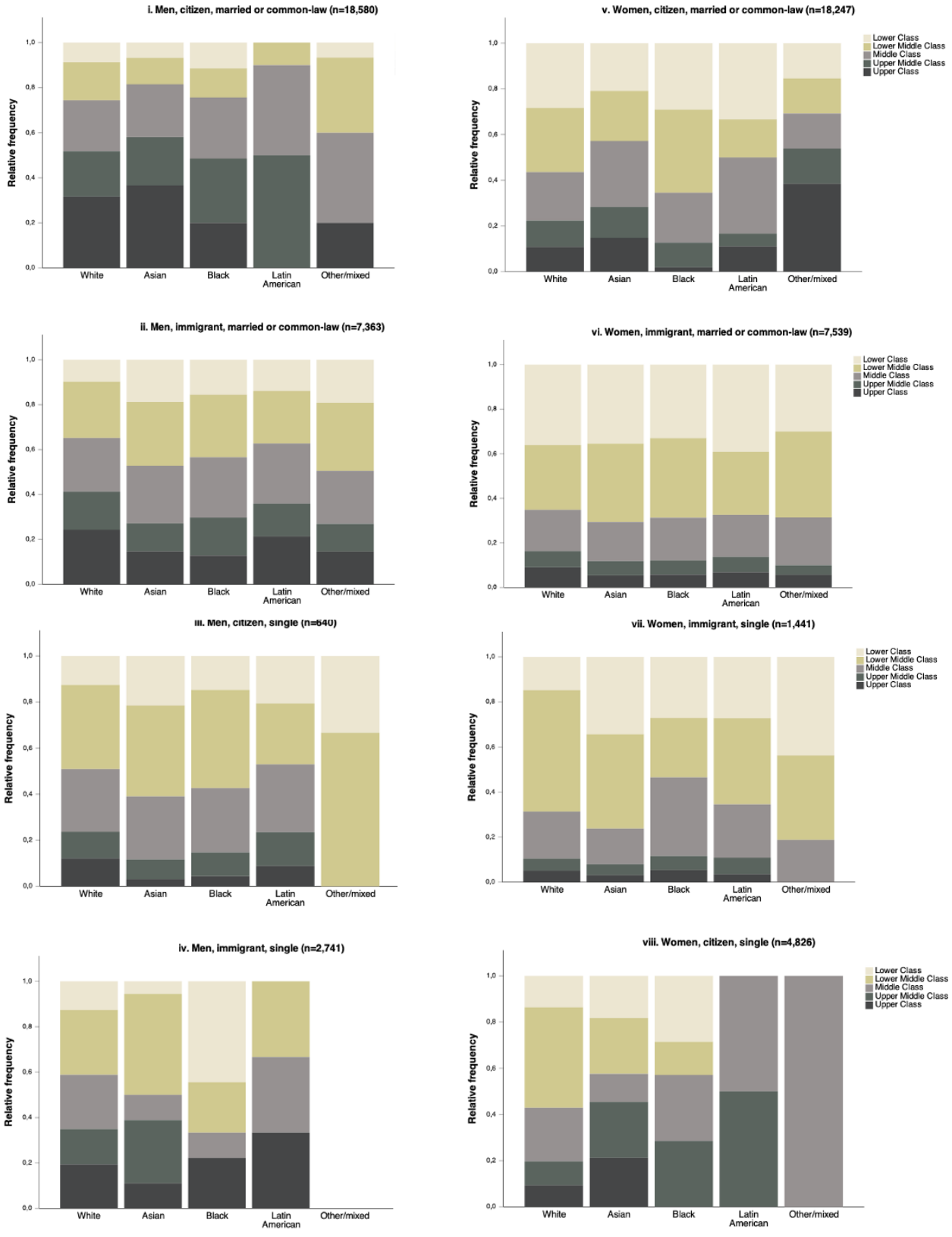
Table 1: Logistic Regression of Very Low Income, Low Income, Unemployment on Gender, Ethnicity, Indigeneity, Marital and Political Statuses for Alberta, 2016

	Model 1 Very Low Income	**Model 2 Low Income**	**Model 3 Unemployment**
Gender (*Man*)			
Woman	2.559***	3.055***	0.845***
	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.037)
Ethnicity (*White*)			
Asian	1.128***	1.231***	1.201**
	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.07)
Black	1.194**	1.044	2.107***
	(0.067)	(0.062)	(0.103)
Latin American	1.294***	0.925	1.686***
	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.133)
Mixed/Others	1.088	1.352*	1.425
	(0.158)	(0.144)	(0.276)
Indigeniety (*Non-Indigenous*)			
Indigenous	1.828***	1.557***	1.927***
	(0.603)	(0.041)	(0.074)
Political status (*Citizen*)			
Immigrant	1.442***	1.614***	1.214
	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.063)
Marital status (*Married, Common-law*)			
Single or divorced	0.600***	1.362***	1.368***
	(0.029)	(0.023)	(0.052)
Constant	0.156***	0.345***	0.071***
	(0.018)	-0.015	(0.029)
N	*61323*	*61323*	*43774*
-2 log likelihood	63307.076	78489.176	22771.705
R^2	0.075	0.120	0.012
***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05			
Standard error in parentheses			
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016			
Very low income refers to individuals with less than $20,000 after taxes. Low income refers to individuals with less than $39,000 after taxes. Unemployment includes only respondents who were in the labor force. For the sake of space and simplification, "married" also include common-law and people admittedly in a relationship.			

Table 2: Logistic Regression of Very Low Income, Low Income and Unemployment with Interaction of Categories for Alberta, 2016

	Model 1 **Very low income**	**Model 2** **Low income**	**Model 3** **Unemployment**
Interaction (*Man, white, citizen, married*)			
i. Man, racialized, citizen, married	0.807 (0.153)	0.737* (0.121)	0.837 (0.213)
ii. Man, racialized, immigrant, married	1.953*** (0.040)	2.394*** (0.033)	1.418*** (0.062)
iii. Man, racialized, immigrant, single	2.192*** (0.126)	3.965*** (0.109)	1.511* (0.213)
iv. Man, racialized, citizen, single	1.862 (0.428)	3.099*** (0.354)	5.101*** (0.480)
v. Man, white, citizen, single	1.259*** (0.057)	2.033*** (0.043)	1.867*** (0.078)
vi. Man, white, immigrant, married	1.071 (0.064)	1.547*** (0.047)	1.006 (0.102)
vii. Man, white, immigrant, single	1.277 (0.164)	2.793*** (0.119)	2.035** (0.248)
viii. Woman, white, citizen, married	2.993*** (0.027)	3.694*** (0.023)	0.888 (0.050)
ix. Woman, racialized, citizen, married	2.181*** (0.107)	2.428*** (0.0921)	1.020 (0.202)
x. Woman, racialized, immigrant, married	4.384*** (0.036)	5.899*** (0.034)	1.398*** (0.066)
xi. Woman, racialized, immigrant, single	3.740*** (0.075)	6.802*** (0.076)	1.437* (0.167)
xii. Woman, racialized, citizen, single	2.661** (0.317)	1.646* (0.097)	0.878 (0.730)
xiii. Woman, white, immigrant, single	1.382* (0.114)	6.199*** (0.091)	1.296 (0.282)
xiv. Woman, white, citizen, single	1.174*** (0.046)	3.983*** (0.034)	0.959 (0.234)
xv. Woman, white, immigrant, married	4.510*** (0.049)	4.809*** (0.047)	0.828 (0.127)
Constant	0.150*** (0.022)	0.323*** (0.017)	0.074*** (0.033)
N	*61323*	*61323*	*43774*
-2 log likelihood	63075.369	78332.002	22829.666
R^2	0.08	0.123	0.009
***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05			
Standard error in parentheses			
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016			
Very low income refers to individuals with less than $20,000 after taxes. Low income refers to individuals with less than $39,000 after taxes. Unemployment includes only respondents who were in the labor force. For the sake of space and simplification, "married" also include common-law and people admittedly in a relationship.			

Figure 1: Proportion of Ethnic Groups Across Social Classes, 2016



During the COVID-19 Pandemic

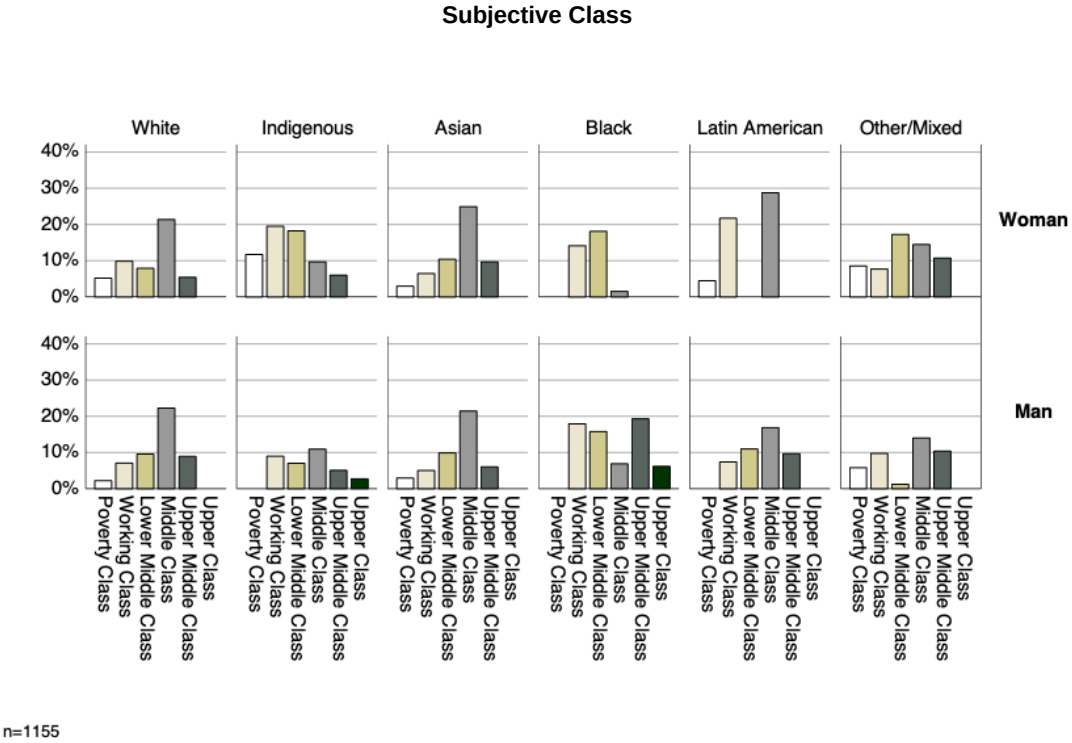
Although Canada has a reputation for being a multicultural land of equal opportunity, sociologists question these assumptions by examining structural inequalities (Godley, 2018). Some argue that inequality is on the rise, and must be explored through the intersections of gender, ethnicity, immigrant status, and social class (Jedwab & Satzewich, 2015). We introduce these intersections into our analyses to better understand the positions of those advantaged and disadvantaged in Alberta.

In the Alberta Viewpoint survey, questions about social positioning had two sides. On one hand, respondents were asked to share their perception of their social ranking. Instead of using subjective measurements such as the MacArthur scale of subjective social status (Adler et al., 2000), we directly ask the respondents where they would position themselves using commonly known social ranks (i.e., poverty class, working class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class and upper class). Thus, self-reported social class was identified as *subjective*. On the other hand, we were able to measure social ranking using the classical indicator of income, that is the *objective* social class. Income serves as a basis to compare self-perceived positionality and actual resources that are generally "operationalized in terms of wealth and income, educational attainment, and occupation" (Manstead, 2018, 272; Stephens et al., 2014).

By comparing those two measures of class, we observed discrepancies between perceived and actual social class among lower middle class and upper class respondents (Figure 2). This discrepancy is often referred to as status inconsistency (Sosnaud et al., 2013) or status maximization (Oware, 2008). This discrepancy is also gender based. For instance, women's social class identity may be primarily determined by the social standing of their husband while few others may identify their class independently (Sobel et al., 2004, 38). In other words, when it comes to self-identification, men's social position tends to matter more, most of the time. Self-perceived class positions also tend to vary among non-white groups as well (Rubin et al., 2014).

The overall picture of the survey shows that the majority of the respondents are actually middle class and their subjective position oscillates between the lower and the upper ends of the middle class. Then, if we examine the gender and minority categories, we have a more heterogeneous picture. When we compared self-reported class location with social class based on income, certain gaps appear among gender and minorities. Beginning with objective social class, proportionally speaking, we find more men in the upper class than women. Conversely, we find a higher proportion of women among the poverty class. This could occur because men tend to exaggerate their self-perceived position within the upper middle class as opposed to women who underestimated it.

Figure 2: Subjective and Objective Class Across Gender, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity, 2021



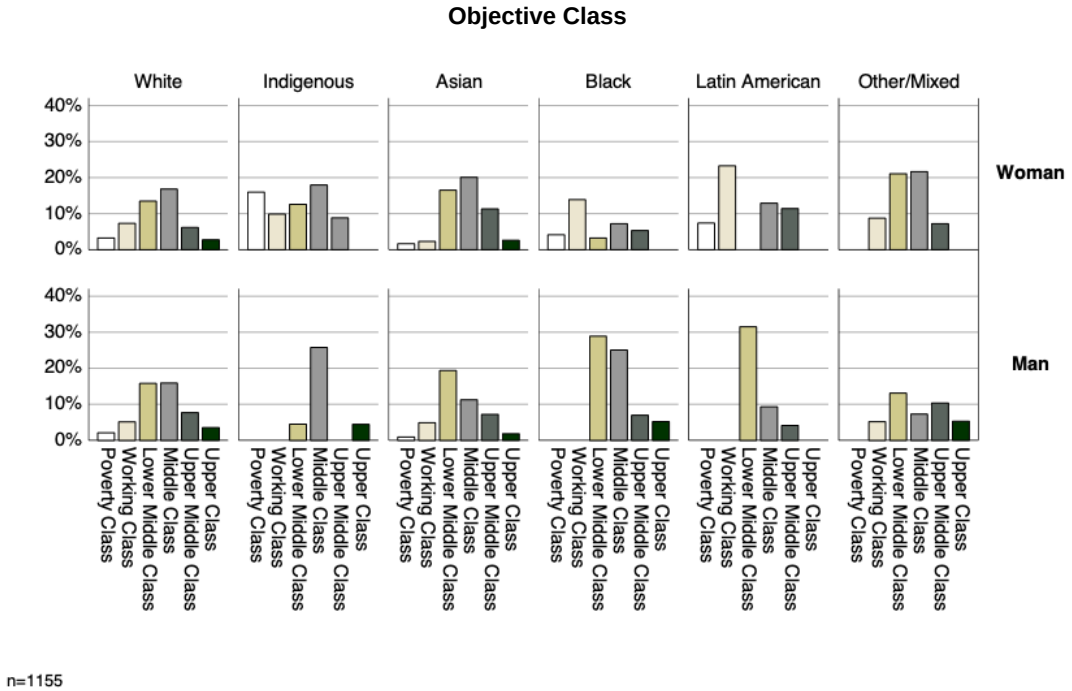
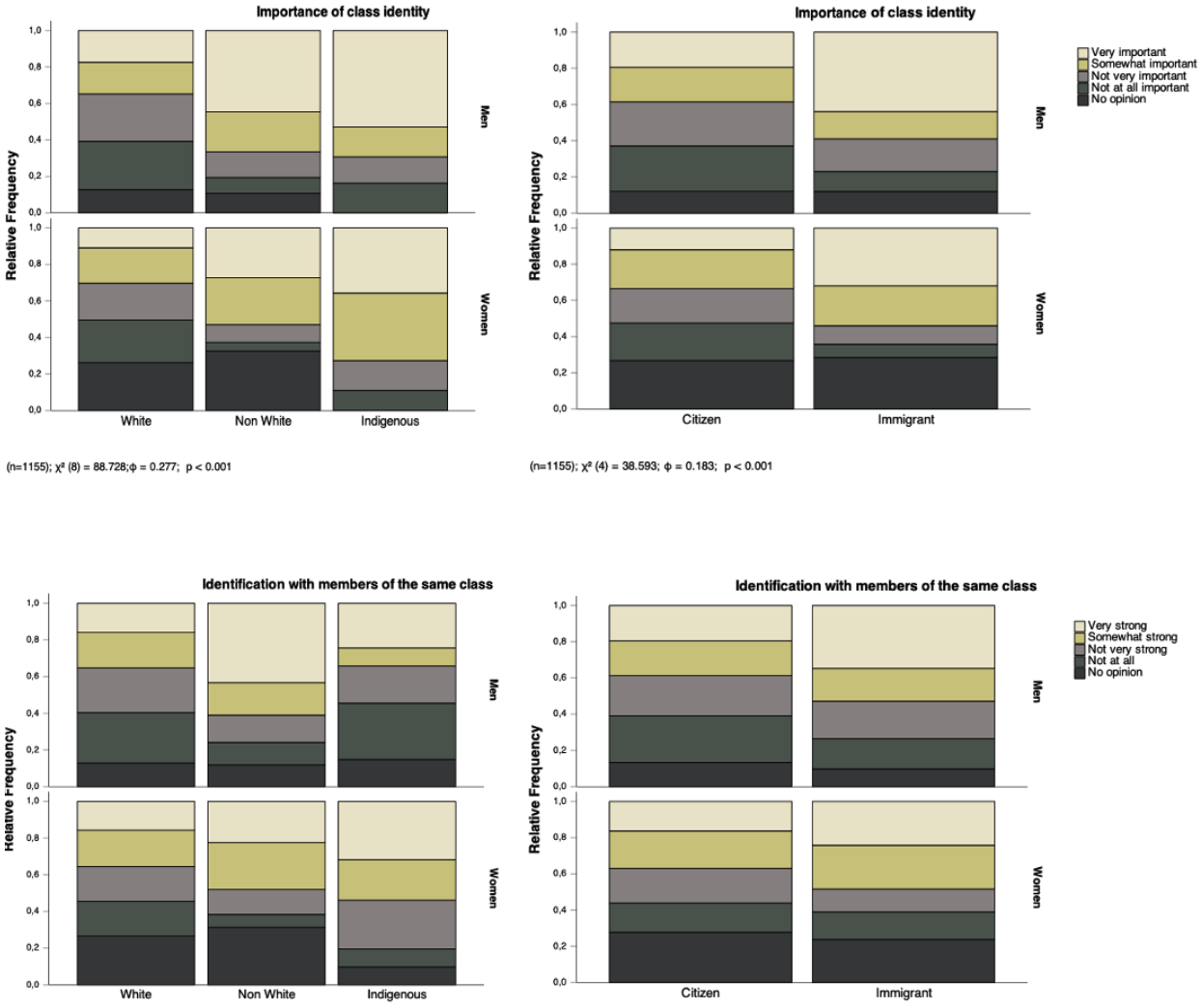


Figure 3: Class Identity and Class Solidarity Across Social Categories, 2021



Alternatively, Black, Indigenous, and Latin American men overstated their presence among the working class. If we examine the intra-group variations of objective class, we observe very few distinctions, but a fair concentration around the middle class and a slight concentration among the upper class. Black and Latin American women are far more present within the working class where most of the women are middle class. The socially tolerated devaluation of women's work in general and the view that men's work is more valuable may have influenced the subjective class gap (Shaked et al., 2016).

Intragroup and intergroup examinations are often the favored strategies to better grasp inequality differentials among groups and within them (Leicht, 2008). For instance, the income of a specific group might be low compared to the general population, but high within the group (Ostrove et al., 2000). As mentioned earlier, our research focuses on determinants of social position as well as self-perceived position. The Alberta Viewpoint survey measured subjective sense of belongingness to social class by gauging the importance of class identity and class solidarity. Our results suggest that men, whether immigrants or citizens, white or Indigenous, married or single, attach more importance to class identity in general compared to women (Figure 3). Now, focusing only on ethnicity, Indigeneity, and immigrant status across genders, the expectations of gender roles expectation can explain that distinctive appraisal of social position. Overconfidence may also be associated with a manifestation of masculinity in relation to social status (Liu et al., 2016; Pyke, 1996). Men tend to perceive social status as important when defining their position within a hierarchical system. However, other studies suggest that, between power and status, men lean towards the prior, and women towards the latter (Hays, 2013), but none of them are mutually exclusive. Additionally, in democratic societies, social class and by extension incomes and occupations, is the predominant, if not, the only way to establish social status. According to our survey, male Albertans are likely to pay more attention to the class they belong to. However, they will strongly and somewhat strongly identify with members of their class (solidarity and class consciousness) as much as women do. Consequently, we can argue that class identity represents a strong social marker and differs greatly among genders.

Ethnicity and indigeneity may also moderate class belongingness, especially among men. Non-White respondents consider class identity very important (17%) and important (40.2%) where more than a half of Non-White (51.6%) and Indigenous (52.6%) women consider their class identity important. Across the relative frequencies of identity and solidarity, racialized men tend to attach more importance to their social class identity and to solidarity, as opposed to White men. Immigrants, both men (45%) and women (59%) also emphasize the importance of their class identity whereas citizens may experience a certain detachment to their class identity. The pattern is similar when it comes to expressing solidarity with other members. Immigrants experienced social hierarchy before coming to Canada and must navigate the new society by strategizing their social position, even performing class expectation in order to create their new class identity (Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018). For this reason, social class acquires a symbolic and an economic significance for them (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Despite the statistically significant relationship and moderate association between categories as shown by the chi-squares and phi coefficients, the

relatively small size of our sample leads us to remain cautious in our analyses at the risk of unnecessary speculation. A larger sample size would allow us to reinforce our findings. Nevertheless, the survey provides for the first time, actual knowledge on the distinct class experience among gender and minorities and remains an insightful snapshot of the socioeconomic context of the pandemic.

Conclusion

After seven years of economic slowdown in the energy sector, during the summer of 2022, Alberta received windfall royalties, leading to a record-breaking revenue. Nothing is certain about how such a jackpot might be enough to curb inequalities. Recently, despite rising oil prices, prosperity still awaits in Alberta. Meanwhile, the province scores the highest rate of food insecurity in the country (Tarasuk et al. 2022), an increasing trend confirmed by *Food Banks Canada*. With the recession on the horizon, an opioid crisis sweeping across the province, rising homelessness in Calgary and Edmonton, and other major social issues, Alberta's inequalities are symptomatic of a historically economic culture and dependence on volatile markets.

We began this paper with the question: Does an Alberta Advantage exist? Perhaps this question should be rephrased as: For whom does an Alberta Advantage exist? Our results indicate that such an advantage is likely tied to certain status characteristics. We also show that dimensions of social class are intertwined with ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, and marital status. We have tested models using cumulative effects of social categorical determinants in order to provide a better understanding of how inequalities are structured across society.

Although quantitative modeling using interaction effects is necessary, we are aware that it also has certain limitations (Misra et *al.*, 2020, 21, Cole, 2009, 178). Because interaction provides an approximation, it must be completed with other analytical strategies. Intersectionality is not per se a cumulative system of sociodemographic factors, but a paradigm (Holman et al., 2021, 17). For this reason, overlapping axes of oppression and domination cannot be entirely captured quantitatively. Moreover, even though statistics treat categories such as gender, ethnicity, immigrant status as "independent" variables, we know that those characteristics are not intrinsic to individuals and groups. That is true when measuring the level of experienced discrimination where the personal threshold may vary given the cultural background, along with the social position, and so on.

The difference between perceived social class and actual social class also provides insights on how people gauge their own position and mobility, and how categorical determinants may affect their response. Additionally, the objective lower middle class may be different for a White man and a Black man, as well for an Asian woman and an Indigenous man. Nonetheless, statistics provide valuable information that may be completed with conceptual thinking. In further research, we might analyze and compare categorical inequalities among provinces and have a broader picture of inequalities in the country.

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