“For the Greater Good” 99.8% Free and the Expendable 0.2%: Freedom Fighters and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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Introduction

COVID-19 is often described as a 'great equalizer' (Owoseje, 2020: Zakaria, 2020). A biological disease that effects all equally no matter their race, gender, sexuality, or socioeconomic class. More importantly, much of public health policy has treated COVID-19 as such. In reality, there is nothing equalizing about COVID-19. The virus quite literally has a social life, and with it the capacity to change, create, and reproduce violent structural oppression. However, it is not the virus that acts alone. Though it may be a catalyst, it is the decisions of individuals and governments that truly affects whose bodies are rendered worthy, and whose are not. In this honours thesis, I will argue that anti-mask groups and public health stand in opposition to one another at a surface level only. In fact, they share the same deep structure that makes the existence and continuity of each other possible. This shared deep structure and surface level opposition combine to create a compressed syndemic in which bodies rendered expendable are caught in a discursive terrain that labels them as a necessary loss for the 'greater good'.

This is the biosociality of COVID-19. Biosociality, as Robins (2006) states, is the experience of pain, suffering, and illness in which groups are formed via their shared experience of social restrictions or resentments of the diseased body. In this way, biosociality defines the ways in which people suffering from an affliction build their life systems and communities (p. 316). In the era of COIVD-19 communities have been formed or strengthened around a common belief about worthiness, not just to a healthy body but to larger rights and privileges rooted both in the medical and social realm. One of these communities is that of the Freedom Fighters (FF) based in western Canada. FFs are more commonly referred to as anti-maskers yet their identity and life systems are much more complex than this. FFs are anti-mask, anti-vaccine, anti-

lockdown, anti-globalism, anti-critical race theory, anti-communism, and so on. To simplify, FFs are firmly grounded in anti-liberal beliefs that reflect right wing ideologies.

The complexities of the FF identity are not easy to define and explore. It is useful to take time to set the theoretical stage before attempting to dive into the world of the FF. Firstly, it should be stated that the FF identity is made possible by systems of structural violence, colonialism and western expansion, eugenics, sexism, and white supremacy. Freedom Fighters are a product of past, present, and future in that they are deeply ingrained within history yet reimagining and recreating meaning continuously. As I will argue in chapter 1, this process of recreation situates FFs as biosocial bricoleurs. As such, through the lens of COVID-19, they constantly engage in and engulf all that is around them, reassign meaning and then build their world with what they have redefined (Levi-Strauss, 1962). This process is built foundationally upon the ideological basis of white masculine supremacy. COVID-19 has created an opportunity for them to re-articulate white supremacy and gender inequality in a time of extreme social pressures and intersecting crises.

It is crucial that I analyze the FF outside the vacuum of COVID-19. FFs are not ahistorical and it is important to contextualize their community within a timeframe that predates COVID-19. FFs structural position is made possible by the tradition of racial capitalism in Canada. In *Stolen City: Racial Capitalism and the Making of Winnipeg* Owen Toews presents the longstanding colonial tradition at the heart of development and expansionism. He states that capitalism and racism are inseparable entities in which the continuation of one means the other as well (Toews, 2012, p. 17). In other words, capitalism and racism participate in a symbiotic relation of mutualism in which both benefit from their shared spaces and connections and cyclic feedback loop. There is no linear progression in which we can interject to stop the beast in its

tracks. However, recognizing this mutualism is the first step in identifying larger consequences of racial capitalism.

Additionally, Toews provides a detailed historical background of western expansion that allows readers to understand the creation of the west. Canada's political system as a whole was founded upon idea of racial order and hierarchy. In the case of the western Canada these ideas were confounded based on the practices deployed during the era of expansion. Conquest of geography enabled a promotion of a dominant sex and a dominant race in which colonialization became a carceral experience for those unable to fit the ideal body produced by racist sexist ideologies. Indigenous peoples suffered apartheid and racial cleansing under the pretense of a natural and hierarchy. Land was stolen by enforcing social norms, treaties were violated, and any resistance was met with extreme violence (Toews, 2012).

There were also levels of acceptable whiteness that prevailed through expansion. During this time Indigenous apartheid and genocide left a gap in labour requirements necessary for the development of the west. This caused the colonialists to look back over seas for a migrant labour force that could facilitate the growth needed. White Anglo Saxon Protestants (WASP) were the ideal candidate for their job in that they represented the ideal body standard. However, this population was not enough to fill the requirements. Recruiters turned to Slavic peoples as a last resort. However, even their whiteness was not enough the grant them full access to political, economic, and social freedoms that WASPs received. This suggests a "capacity of whiteness" (Toews, 2021, p. 77). Whiteness was a necessity, but some whites were superior to others, and those that did not hold the capacity of whiteness were denied or deterred entry and land. For other racial groups entry was almost impossible. Head taxes were imposed upon Chinese men, in particular, in order to stop their immigration (after the completion of the national railroad),

exclusionary zones were implemented to maintain white purity, and those that were able to cross the border faced extremely exploitative and dangerous working conditions (Toews, 2021, p. 78). Western expansion and the colonialization of the prairies focused on creating a white colony and maintaining domination that was natural to WASPs. This naturalization was back by 'scientific' data that suggested "moral failings [that] linked racial inferiority [as] the cause of poor conditions" **(**Toews, 2012, p. 82).

This is some of the historical basis for the ideology of white supremacy in western Canada that continues to this day. It is a fallacy, and a violent one at that, that Canada does not suffer from the same systemic racism as the United States. In fact, until recently, much of Canada's history has been sanitized and filtered in form of exceptionalism (Evans, 2021, p. 516). This is relevant to several areas of racialized experiences especially those of Black and Indigenous peoples. The erasure of the fact of Black slavery in Canada has caused a "social amnesia" in which it has become "impossible to understand anti-Black policing in the current epoch" (Maynard, 2017, p. 19). This social amnesia carries into scholarship in which slavery of both Black and Indigenous peoples was made out to be "benign" (Maynard, 2017, p. 20) in comparison to the United States. The ugly history of Canada's participation in 'unsavoury' practices in effectively erased from education systems across the board. This level of exceptionalism paints a pretty picture of Canada that reduces the affect that white supremacy has had on the area.

As will become more clear, FFs are a modern embodiment of these histories of violence and oppression. They actively engage in the reproduction of racial capitalism that relegates certain populations to "sub-human" status. While FFs do not exist in a world of pure privilege, it

is important to draw these connections through time in order to properly position the consequence of FF actions in the times of COVID-19.

Methods

This research involved mixed methods of digital ethnography, interviews, and attending in person rallies. This research unfolded in two phases. The first phase was anonymous observation conducted primarily on Facebook but also followed links and comments to other social media platforms like Twitter, DLive, Instagram, Gab, and personal websites. Due to ethical restrictions, this phase involved no interactions. I did not like, comment, or interact with other users in any way. This limited my ability to analyze the discourse taking place online because I could not engage with or tease out details from participants. Digital ethnography, as a new and emerging field, relied on different methods and ideas of deception and safety of the researcher. Exchanging emojis and liking or reacting to comments is an important part of this kind of work. My inability to participate in these interactions limited connections and constructions of the online FF community.

The second phase of the project included interviews and attending rallies. Interviews were conducted over Zoom with two participants. The first, Mark Friesen is a cisgender, heterosexual, white man who was a candidate in Saskatchewan for the Peoples Party of Canada (PPC) in the 2021 federal election. He is also a prominent spokesperson in the FF movement. He often speaks at rallies, hosts town halls, and posts livestreams under the name The Grizzly Patriot. He is most active on Facebook in which he often appears as a guest speaker on other FF livestreams. My second participant was Kimmie Hovan. Hovan was also a candidate in Lethbridge for the PPC in the 2021 federal election. Hovan is a cisgender, white, heterosexual

woman. She occupies a significantly less vocal and public role in the FF movement than Friesen. Hovan's work in the movement took place mostly at a local level whereas Friesen is known across the country. However, Hovan is extremely active within her home city. She often protests against COVID-19 restrictions and was deeply involved in the organization and promotion of PPC rallies and campaigns locally.

Rallies were also an important aspect of the second phase. My research evolved closely with the condition and mandates of the pandemic. The easing of public health mandates in the summer of 2021 provided me with the opportunity to attend two rallies. FFs were hosting rallies throughout the entirety of this research period (and the pandemic itself), but it did not become safe for me to attends before vaccinations became available. Additionally, as mask mandates came down the amount of people allowed to gather increased, which expanded FF rallies into more places. Big ticket names began to travel to more locations that included the city I was located in. This meant that my research process itself was dynamic and fluctuating based on public health protocols. I felt the effects of rising cases, mandates, and lockdowns through my data collection.

On Doing the Work

Conducting this research was not an easy process. The most difficult component was coming to terms with the reality of my work. Locating myself within systems of structural violence, pain, suffering, death, hatred, and supremacy was difficult to negotiate and mediate. Seeing and hearing some of what I did caused a lot of emotional duress. On top of these experiences was the challenge of validating myself as a researcher doing work the 'correct' way.

As a cis/het woman of mixed Chinese/European ancestry I felt immense pressure to maintain my whiteness and project it as a mechanism for comfort and safety. When mandates came down and my research moved into the second phase, in which I began interacting with the FFs, I felt that I needed to present myself as white as possible. I performed my whiteness by bleaching my dark hair and being extremely particular about my choice of clothing when attending rallies and conducting interviews. This was a conflicting practice. I felt I was compromising my identity and giving into structures of assimilation, racism, and sexism by adapting my appearance. Yet, I also felt my actions were necessary to ensure my safety and ability to conduct my research. I can go through most of my life as somewhat white passing, I have faced racism, especially during the pandemic and the heightened sense of "yellow peril" (Svetlicic, 2020). However, I have lived most of my life comfortably away from openly racist spaces in which that half of me that was not white was accepted. Making the conscious choice to put myself into those situations challenged my sense of self.

Conducting research with so-called 'unsavoury populations' requires what de Coning (2021) refers to as critical empathy. Critical empathy is a methodological framework meant not to settle tensions of difficult research subjects but to acknowledge and let be the complexities and contradictions without turning ones work into "apologetics" (p. 1-3). This framework was useful in engagement with my participants. It allowed me to locate their humanity, examine their identity, while producing work that is not meant to justify actions, perpetuate violence, or playing the blame game. If has helped me become okay with the idea of sticking with the trouble and embracing my emotions not as weakness but as part of the research process. Working with difficult participants work means opening one's self up to the possibility of pain, and this pain is not a nuisance, it is anthropology.

What's to Come

In chapter 1, I will describe both the FF identity and community. As biosocial bricoleurs it is helpful to apply Scheper-Hughes and Lock's (1987) four bodies to understand how the FF is constructed. There are two components to the bricoleur, the first is the process and the second the person itself. The three bodies, individual, social, and the body politic are most useful in articulating the person. They create multi-dimensional understanding of the actuality of the FF. The mindful body will not be explicitly discussed but integrated throughout this paper as the voices of the FFs themselves. Two interview participants as well as countless comments and exchanges represent the self-articulation of the process of the body and becoming.

Once I have established the three bodies of the FFs I will turn to the complexities of the bodies in both intra and inter group relations. This will establish the praxis of embodiment. I will end chapter 1 with a discussion of the consequences of the FF movement. Particularly, I will argue that the structures of white masculine supremacy foundational to the community exacerbate the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a syndemic in which FFs help create expendable populations labelled a necessary loss for the 'greater good'.

Chapter Two will be an expansion on identity and a deeper dive into the idea of expendability. This will focus on the mobilization of contradictions that the FFs utilize to establish and justify their community. However, in order to create a more holistic image of the COVID-19 syndemic I must also discuss the effects of official public health policy and its history in eugenics. Therefore, chapter two will integrate both an analysis of public health to discuss the mobilization of contradiction at both a micro and macro level. Contradiction is a key component to structural oppression, and both FFs and public health utilize these in order to

maintain stable power relations. This analysis will construct the surface level opposition of the two groups and showcase the deep structural similarities that position the groups in such a way that traps expendable bodies.

I argue that Freedom Fighters and public health policy combine to create a syndemic unique to the COVID-19 pandemic that creates, maintains, and manages expendable bodies and populations. These bodies experience what I call a compressed syndemic. This is rooted in superficial opposing forces too busy debunking each other to realize the harm they are doing to those vulnerable and caught in the middle. Through a synergistic analysis of structures of race, gender, socio-economic class I hope to shed light on the process in which victims of compressed syndemics are created via their relation to both the FFs and governmental institutions like public health.

Chapter One: The Freedom Fighters of Western Canada

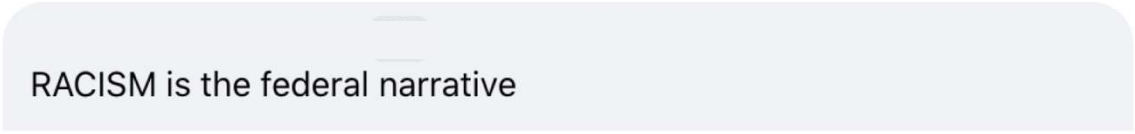


Figure 1: Comment under a livestream regarding race and white supremacy demonstrating Freedom Fighter beliefs on race.

1.0: The Freedom Fighters of Western Canada

The Freedom Fighter (FF) movement is a group of anti-globalism activists that have gained traction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anti-globalism is a international movement that "attacks (…) [the] larger ideology of globalism that allegedly promotes free trade as well as cultural and racial mixing" (Voelz, 2017, p. 522). In this sense, the FFs ideology is rooted in larger systems of privilege and collective nostalgia. Collective nostalgia refers to a "sentimental longing or wistful reflection- for [a] groups past" (Wohl et al., 2020, p. 1). In the case of FFs this collective nostalgia is rooted in racial purity and often used in defence of the group when a threat presents itself.

FFs exists both online and offline in different forms. Online, they articulate their presence through posts and livestreams across multiple platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Gab, DLive, and personal websites. Offline, they host 'freedom rallies' and 'underground townhalls'. The virtual and real-world spaces serve very different purposes for the group. Offline meetings are a gathering of community members, online seeks to recruit new members and spread the word of freedom. This freedom stands in opposition to all public health policy around COVID-19 including mask mandates, vaccines, lockdowns, and social distancing. COVID-19 is only the newest threat to the group; the group existed (in much smaller numbers)

before the pandemic. As such, there is a larger unifying ideology among members than COVID-19 alone. At the core of the FF movement is the belief that an unelected foreign entity, or 'the globalists', created the 'plandemic' to force mass populations into blind submission. This submission would allow for citizens to become divided and more easily controlled. Together, the pandemic and its social conditioning would allow agendas to be pushed through the governmental systems without citizen resistance. FFs thus vehemently oppose agendas such as sustainable development and green initiatives based on the belief that these are extensions of the globalist regime. For them a world stripped of freedom is one in which no private property exists and no individuality is permitted.

It is imperative to first define what the FF identity is. The FF movement is extremely complex, dynamic, and ever changing. However, there are several characteristics and patterns that hold that defines the in and out-group. FFs like all other communities are products of social possibility, in which boundaries are made real by historical, political, economic, and cultural context. Additionally, COVID-19 has added a dimension of biological sociality (Robins, 2006) that, especially over the course of this research, is currently the most defining characteristic of the group. The biosociality of the group refers to the effect that COVID-19 has had on the process of differentializing the movement from the rest of society. As stated previously, FFs have existed before the pandemic and will continue to after, yet they have new unification and re-invigoration around the opposition to COVID-19 health protocols. This biosociality is demonstrated by the table below:

The presence of honesty and integrity is what makes a good person good.
Personal sacrifice for the greater good are expressions of the most ideal forms of integrity.
Globalism and globalists are a threat to freedom and the Canadian way of life.
COVID-19 The Great Reset by Klaus Schaawb should be read by all people in order to understand the true threat of globalism.
COVID-19 The Great Reset is a detailed plan to bring communism to Canada and end freedom.
COVID-19 and the pandemic is a not real.
The virus of COVID-19 itself is real, however it is most likely a strain of the flu rebranded.
The effects of COVID-19 are over exaggerated to scare people into submission.
COVID-19 originated in a lab in Wuhan China, Dr. Fauci was involved and aware of the virus.
COVID-19 is a man made bio-weapon.
COVID-19 is not a effective bio-weapon.
COVID-19 public health protocols that include masking, social distancing, lockdowns, and vaccinations, are harmful to the family unit and children in particular.
Masking does not prevent the virus from entering the body.
Masking is a signal of who can be controlled and who cannot.
Mask mandates are a violation of bodily autonomy.
Lockdowns are a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is flawed in that it can be waved under certain circumstances.
COVID-19 does not meet the requirement to waive the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
The COVID-19 vaccine has not been safely tested and should not be distributed to the general public.
The COVID-19 vaccine is another tool to force submission.
Vaccine mandates or passports are tools of segregation that differentiate between classes of citizens.
Lockdowns, especially those that prevent children from attending school, are unnecessary and do more damage than good.
Those that support any health policy regarding COVID-19 are uneducated and ‘asleep’. These people need to be woken up and given the right information.
Right information comes from critical thinking and conducting individual research online.
There exists ‘real’ and ‘fake’ science and we should trust ‘real’ science.
Those that are in positions of power or financially benefit from the pandemic like Dr. Fauci cannot be trusted.
The government of Canada cannot be trusted.
We are at a critical point in history.

Table 1: Beliefs and foundations of the Freedom Fighter movement.

Understanding the FF is not an easy task. However, it is helpful to apply Levi-Strauss' (1962) science of the concrete. There are two 'groups' of people discussed in Levi-Strauss' *Savage Mind,* the engineer and the bricoleur. The engineer is a craftsmen who sees in entireties and plans their process of building. In contrast, the bricoleur sees in pieces and builds with whatever is at hand, bringing in "raw materials" (Robins, 2006) assigning new meaning and using these new definitions to build their universe. COVID-19 is one of these 'raw materials' that the FF movement employs to construct their biosocial community and identity, making it a collection of bio-social bricoleurs. Bio-sociality has traditionally been about organization and production of identity around an illness or affliction (Robins, 2006), but this is not the case for the FFs. FFs organize against an illness, yet the defining characteristic of bio-sociality, unification, still holds. Bio-sociality is an all-encompassing process of identity growth and definition. It includes the social, political, medical, biological, and economic aspects of our life systems. These aspects interlock to provide a sense of self and group. They both create and are created by the bodies participating in a historical moment of illness driven divisions. The FF movement, as bio-social bricoleurs, is engaged in a constant state of reproduction and sense making. Bio-sociality is thus the process of becoming, and the bricoleur is the person within this process.

In this chapter, I will attempt to further construct a theoretical analysis of the FF identity to provide the 'pieces' that create the community of the FF. In doing so I hope it becomes clear the way in which this movement actively engages in processes of world making and how these processes interact with existing systems of structural violence. I will begin by further defining the FF focusing on the functionality of their bodies rooted in ideas of being a 'good' freedom fighter. Next I will turn to intra and inter group relations to showcases the process of becoming.

Intra-group relations provide a lean to understand the mobilization of the movement. Inter-group relations allow for the identification how they put beliefs together in new ways.

1.1: Theorizing Ideals

Like all other communities in the world there exists an ideal Freedom Fighter, both in actions and physical features. This ideal body standard can be examined from three directions, or what Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) refer to as the three bodies.: the individual body or the "lived experiences of the body-self" (p. 7); the social body as "representational uses of the body as a natural symbol with which to think about nature, society, and culture" (p. 7); and third, the body politic, which deals with the regulation, surveillance, and consequently, the acceptance of an ideal body (p. 8). To employ this framework, I first discuss what exactly a 'good' or 'proper' FF body believes, looks, and acts like.

1.1.1: Being a good Freedom Fighter

Above all else a good FF is a white, cisgender, heterosexual man. There are clear lines of gender divisions that place men's labour above all other in the movement. This division will be discussed further in additional sections of this chapter. FF leaders have heteronormative families that they desire to protect at all costs; they are family men who protect their wives and fight for their children. They understand themselves to be educated on the cause of Covid (?) from the 'correct' sources and able to identify 'false' information when it surfaces. These leaders believe in, and will defend the "values of freedom, liberty, sovereignty, justice, meritocracy, and prosperity that Canada was built on" (talking point of Mark Friesen). As an ideal, FF leaders must demonstrate the ability to see into the future and predict the 'dark turn' that Canada is

undergoing. This dark turn is based on the belief that Canada, and the 'values founded on Christianity' are in extreme danger of being destroyed is one of the primary driving factors for many FFs. Many reiterate their worries for the future of Canada and the role it will play in a progressively interconnected world. Much of this relates to fears surrounding globalism and communism which I explore in more detail. However, expressions of this fear illuminate extreme feelings of nationalism. FFs constantly declare their undying love for their nation and the disgust at 'dirty politicians' who are 'ruining our way of life'. Nationalism and the expression of these beliefs thus plays a key part in leadership and the achievement of validity within the movement. This nationalism is crucial to the systems and structures of whiteness in the movement. Leaders must embody and project their loyalty to protecting the nation and its role in allowing "people to have nice big families and live a fulfilling life" in the safety of a free country.

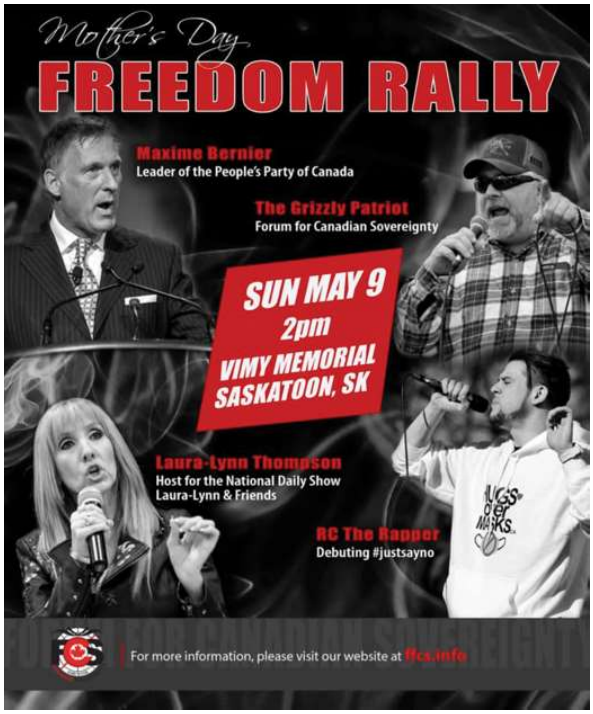


Figure 3: Freedom Rally poster featuring prominent figures demonstrating ideal leader standards.



Figure 2: Anti-mask poster posted to Facebook Group demonstrating the social body of the FF.

Through their daily activities they challenge government power over bodily autonomy for which these actions, in only the best of the best, have resulted in substantial sacrifice. There are two examples of sacrifice that showcase its necessity to attaining leadership positions. Nathan Lynchuk, a former Saskatchewan police officer, was forced to quit his job after fellow officers captured images of Lynchuk attending a children's freedom rally with his family. According to Lynchuk, this image was sent to management who then required him to take a COVID-19 test with a negative result before returning to his normal duties. Lynchuk refused on the grounds that it "violated" his "freedom of choice". Pressure to take the test led him to resign from his position as he felt the police force no longer had his best interest in mind. When this occurred, the online FF community erupted in support for Lynchuk. He was called a hero for choosing to uphold his oath to serve and protect even under immense pressure. He is described as a "stand-up guy" (livestream on Facebook, May 6, 2021) who is willing to fight for not just his family but others within the freedom movement as well. In these ways, Lynchuk embodies the ideal FF and is often invited to speak at rallies and during livestreams.

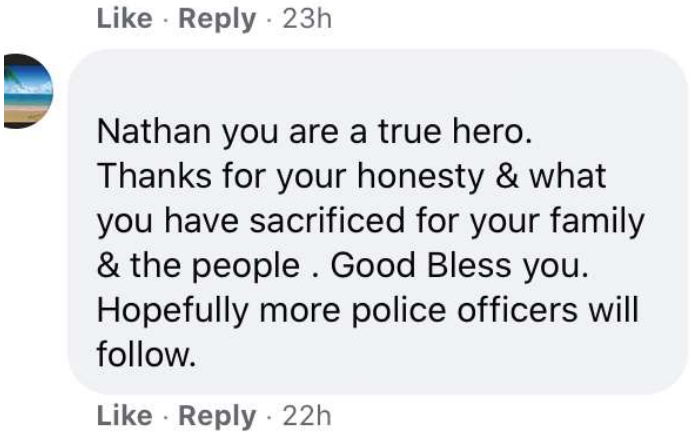


Figure 4: Comment under a livestream addressing Lynchuk's bravery

`The second example comes from Laura-Lynn Tyler Thompson. Thompson is one of the few women members who speaks at FF rallies and holds a position of relative authority. Thompson is the "former co-host for the national daily show" (Laura-Lynn TV, 2021) and author of *Relentless Redemption: For Everyone Who Has Ever Felt Discarded or Disqualified, One Woman's Inspiring Story From Devastation to Destiny!.* Thompson regularly posts to her website, discussing issues of Christian persecution, the COVID-19 hoax, and concern about the progressive state of Canada. Thompson has a long history in anti-LGTBQ2+ activism, citing her devout Christian roots. As a candidate for the PPC, Thompson dedicates much of her time to fighting a "global initiative to make the ideology of the LGBTQ well accepted and taught even in pre-school". This 'fight' against inclusive LGBTQ2+ policy resulted in her termination from the national daily show when she openly opposed the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity education (SOGI) implementation into any school system across the country. Thompson referred to gender fluidity discussions in kindergarten as "crazy" and "harmful". Since her termination, Thompson refers to her experience as being "attacked in left wing media" by "pathetic loser papers" that "called her names" and described her as hateful. Thompson often promises her viewers that she will always speak up and defend "values [of Canada] founded on Jeudeo-Christian values that give freedom to everyone".

I hope it is clear from Lynchuk and Thompson's experiences that there exists a resistance to change and state power that is perceived to destabilize systems of white supremacy and traditional Christian values of heteronormativity. Those who are willing to champion the cause of freedom and face sacrifice are idealized for their unwavering integrity and oath to protect Canada.

I would like to be explicit for a moment. The ideal FF is firmly rooted in white, patriarchal, cisgender, heterosexual supremacy. Though Thompson is a woman maintaining a relative stable position of authority, she is the exception not the rule. This movement resists all policy that promotes gender, racial, and LGBTQ2+ equality. They oppose anything that challenges their systems of privilege. This of course is more complex and nuanced but it is important to highlight in order to maintain accountability of violence and oppression the FF movement perpetuates.

Now that I have described what makes an ideal FF, I now turn to the application of Scheper-Hughes and Lock's notion of three bodies in order to articulate the process in which bodies become valued and unvalued, clean and unclean, proper and improper. This is important for understanding how the FF movement creates their bio-sociality.

1.1.2: The Three Bodies of the FF

The first body, the individual body, as Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) and Geertz (1984) argue, though the existence of an individual self as a "dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action" (Geertz, 1984, p. 126) has been established as a western specific cultural production, there still must exist at least somewhat, an independent self. This self serves as a matter of differentiation in which people may filter through their lived experiences (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987, p. 7). It is the concept of the individual body that helps frame why FFs come to the anti-globalist movement. Like Thompson and Lynchuk, many FFs had something occur in their life that caused them to feel disenfranchised. Many feel that the state no longer represents their interests and is moving in a direction that challenged the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Therefore, everything sacred and good about Canada as a nation is being attacked. In

some way or another FFs have experienced a perceived injustice that threatens their individuality. For many FFs observed in this research, this was COVID-19.

It is not so much the virus or illness itself that impacted the individual body, but the large-scale systemic awareness that the pandemic helped to uncover. COVID-19, as only one of simultaneous social crises, has created a 'perfect storm' in which structural violence and inequality was, at least for a brief period of time, pushed to the forefront of political discussions. COVID-19 alongside events like the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, and the discovery of mass graves at several former residential school locations in Canada produced a renewed attention to systemic racism and white supremacy in North America. These political moments exacerbated a sense of white fragility for those in the FF movement. White fragility, according to Robin DiAngelo, stems from centuries of protection from racial stress that "builds white expectations [of] racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress" (DiAngelo, 2001, p. 54). Combining racial stress with the onset of public health policy related to COVID-19 directly challenged systems of white privilege that destabilized FF's own sense of white superiority. Their experiences thereby mold a historical, particular, and fluid individual body that seeks to reinstate a "white racial equilibrium" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 58). The very formation of the FF movement is a collective of individual bodies that feel alienated from systems of privilege. The individual body thus flips traditional conceptions of bio-sociality on its head and organizes around the absence of the belief in the physical presence of COVID-19. The very existence of COVID-19 presents challenges to their sense of (white) self and therefore cannot exist within their world.

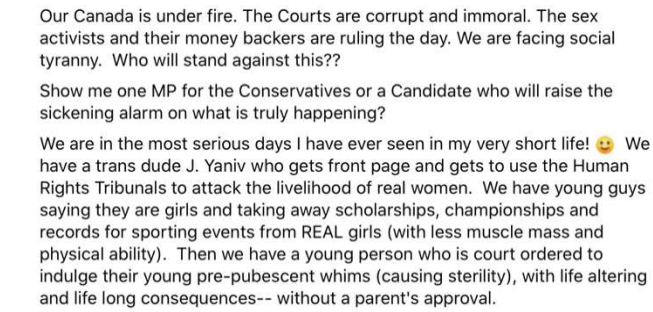


Figure 5: Post made by Laura-Lynn Tyler Thompson regarding the current state of Canadian governance representing her values of comfort.

The second unit of analysis is the social body, which refers to the body as a system of natural symbols and representations (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 2011). This body is where conceptions of the 'natural' disposition and social world are exchanged, negotiated, and assigned meaning. For the FFs, the social body is the site in which the effects of COVID-19 actively define the in-group. For most people during the COVID-19 pandemic the social body is defined by infection. Sickness is made out to be a threat to the social order and stability (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 2011). However, in the case of the FF movement, in which COVID-19 does not offer any real threat to one's physical health, it at most is described as a bad flu. The infection of a body for the FFs is not sufficient to draw lines of division. Therefore, the social body becomes defined by not the body as a natural entity in itself, but as a system of bodies that maintain a 'natural' order of things.

This natural order is articulate in the form of gender relations and heteronormativity. Although the movement is approximately 60:40 women to men ratio, the large majority of leaders and spokespersons are white, cis, heterosexual men. When asked why they believe this gendered division of labour occurs, both of my interview participants believed it was a product of "natural divisions". For them, sexism does not factor into deciding who leads and who does

not because it is simply a natural process. In their logic, men more instinctively gravitate to roles that require leadership skills whereas women, driven by their natural instinct to protect their children, fill in the minor but majority of positions in the movement, such as organizing rallies and engaging in social media posts to boost publicity. This naturalization of gendered roles is rooted in a form of sexism referred to as hostile sexism. Hostile sexism validates men's role of dominance by idealizing women as inherently inferior (Glick et al., 1997). This showcases a deeply ingrained hierarchal system that requires domination and subordination. These cultural constructions of biological essentialism create the social body. This social body maintains a group wide stable sense of masculine identity despite the prevalence of women.

Finally, the third body articulated by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (2011) and Douglas (1996) is that of the the body politic, namely the social controls and regulations that maintain group boundaries. When a group comes under a threat, which for the FFs is constant, a process of relational symbolism unfolds. This process is undertaken primarily online. While there are always freedom rallies hosted ate various locations in real life, the majority of those who attend these events are already established as a member of the community. Online promotion, livestreams, posts, and interactions thus act as a processual boundary. FFs signify their belonging through frames on profile pictures and publicly sharing posts of more prominent figures. They call out 'sheeple' in the comment sections of videos and other posts when an opinion other than the current dominant narrative is expressed. This self-regulation is primarily practiced by the 'underlings' of the movement; however, leaders also participate via their warnings to followers about sharing false information. This regulation and surveillance are in a constant state of flux. Everyday new ideas pop up to replace outdated ones and leaders are constantly accepting new

information into their space. On top of this, leaders themselves are dropping in and out of the movement as intra-movement conflict draw lines between 'good' and 'bad' FFs.

Everything is dependent on who a member interacts with online. This measures one's level of commitment to the group and their willingness to spread the word of freedom. Anyone who is caught not following the dominant narrative is evicted from the community through negative comments and sometimes threats. This rigid, yet relational, process of the body politic maintains group social norms and the 'natural' order of organization. If allows the FFs to signify their belonging while also regulating those already within the group into a dominant homogenous narrative about the fallacy of thee COVID-19 pandemic.

The three bodies are essential to the sense and world-making processes that FFs undergo. It is the centre of being for all that the FF movement has come to be. The three bodies are the interface of negotiation that reproduce, sustain, rebuild, change, regulate, and define simultaneously. They are the space through which truth, history, and fact come to be known and accepted. Meaning, the bodies are the most foundational unit of analysis. They create and define the bio-sociality of the group. This in turn allows for the transference of information, which becomes history, and history making becomes a way of life and a universe in itself (Haraway, 1990). In other words, FF's do not simply believe in certain ideals and values, they have created a whole life system around them; everything that exists is incorporated into this lens.

1.2: Intra-group Relations

Now that the functionality of the bodies in creating and maintaining a collective identity has been established, I can focus in on specific interactions between members in the group. Intra-group relations are the actualization of conceptions of group bio-sociality. As stated previously,

FFs flip traditional bio-sociality around. Because of this dynamic their bio-sociality encompasses other systems of interactions that maintain the group wide dynamic of opposing all progressive policy and COVID-19 public health measures. These policies are thought to have come from an unelected foreign entity to "control populations of the first-world free countries". (source of citation) This can and does include just about everything passed through governmental channels within the last ten years. Over the course of this research period there are several examples. Bills C-233, UNDRIP, C-10, C-19, C-12, and SOGI legislation are several pieces of legislation passed by the Liberal government that carry the negative connotation of the globalist agenda. Due to the scope of this project, I do not have time to focus on the specifics of each bill, however, I mention them to highlight that opposition to these bills has less to do with loyalties of political parties, and more to do with holding onto traditional values of white masculine supremacy. Globalism and the globalists are projected villains that symbolize challenges to systems of privilege. In fact, when asked what globalism means, most FFs cannot produce a definition of the term. Instead respond with an encouragement to conduct your own research and make your own conclusions outside the sphere of mainstream media (MSM).

These attempts to hold onto white male supremacy are demonstrated in several areas of intra-community interactions. I will focus on three in the following sections: gendered divisions and hierarchies, close connection with the People's Party of Canada (PPC), and expressions of white guilt and white fragility.

1.2.1: Gendered Divisions and Hierarchies

Gendered labour within the FF movement divides leadership roles from all others. Thompson is the only women observed to have spoken at freedom rallies that I observed (?) All

other leaders within the group are men. Above I highlighted Glick et al's (1997) idea of a form of sexism referred to as hostile sexism. In this article they also address a different kind of sexism referred to as benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism seeks to maintain traditional gender inequalities while maintaining a relative 'positive' attitude towards women (p.491). Though both types of sexism interact with each other, benevolent sexism is the primary form employed inside the FF community.

Although no one within the group would make the claim that the FF community is rooted in misogynistic ideologies, they are nonetheless acutely aware of, and encourage, particular kinds of gendered divisions of labour. Women's labour is only ever encouraged to critique men's absence within the movement. This is demonstrated by the following comment:



Figure 6: Comment made under livestream discussing gendered roles in the movement

Here, the reference to women's labour within the FF movement is articulated to undermine men's absence. This simultaneously critiques men, encourages women, and maintains traditional gender roles in which male labour is fundamentally more valued. The comment above was made under a livestream of two men who are FFs as they drove across Canada on their 'Freedom Tour'. In the video the men are discussing why they felt that more women had been showing up to rallies than men. The comment followed the exchange below:

> Chris: This comment says we need more men with balls. Or with parts I guess you should say.
> James: No! We need more men with balls!
> Chris: Absolutely.
> James: We need more women with balls- there is actually more women with balls then there are men with balls in this fight.
> Chris: Yeah there are more women involved with this. That is a sad thing.
> James: Cause men's balls have been removed! We got men walking around carrying f***ing purses, we got men walking around acting like women-
> Chris: Men wearing red shoes-
> James: We have leaders of parties wearing high heels down the street for gods sake! It's no surprise, right? That there are more women standing up because you know they are mama bears, they gotta take care of their kids. They see the future, and know the future doesn't look too good. So they stand up. Men where are ya? Not to say there isn't a lot of good men in this movement, because there is. But there should be a whole lot fricken more. When you are getting dragged through the grocery store by your wife because she's scared of COVID and your head is down and you're pouting because you are wearing a mask but you're still trailing your wife in a grocery store cause you gotta listen to what she says. Get a pair of nuts and tell your wife where it's at!

There is of course obvious components of this conversation that reflect hostile sexism. Indeed, the last line reasserts heteropatriarchal authority over women. Referring to 'balls' as a sign of bravery and power – a form of hegemonic masculinity - directly implicates a biological essentialism that treats social constructions of gender as inevitable due to natural differences in men and women (Bem, 1993). The conversation above is just one example of a more nuanced way women's labour is devalued and disregarded while simultaneously leaving women satisfied with their position in the group. This is not a new way of undermining women's labour. In fact, Pick Up Artists (PUA) use a similar strategy referred to as negging. Negging is the "purposeful lowering of a woman's self-esteem to increase perceived attractiveness of the man in order to achieve sexual conquest" (Green et al., 2017, p. 95). A backhanded compliment made to subvert oneself as dominant and more than that, needed. The men of the FF movement are partaking in

benevolent sexism and large scale negging that attempts to maintain a gendered hierarchy of male domination within a community the has more active female members.

There are other examples of this within the community. One of these is Kimmie Hovan. Hovan is a single mother of three girls. She owns her own very successful residential cleaning business. Hovan was also the PPC candidate for Lethbridge in the 2021 federal election. She does not describe herself as an anti-masker, anti-vaxxer, or label herself a freedom fighter. However, she is deeply involved in protest for what she calls "every ones right to choose". Hovan believes that COVID-19 health protocols violate peoples freedom of choice. Although she herself has not been vaccinated against COVID-19, she does not deter anyone from receiving a vaccine. Hovan believes that any and all health measures need to be free of governmental pressure or requirements. Hovan is depicted by others as a "good mom" who is fighting for children's freedom and parental rights to say no (Freedom Fighter rally, July 25, 2021).

Although Kimmie Hovan occupies a position of authority (in that she organizes rallies and protests) her labour is only valued because it underscores the absence of male labour of the PPC in Lethbridge. In fact, she is often used as an example that the PPC is not a sexist organization because they "have women, have people of colour, have a little bit of everyone" (cite source). Similar to how people claim they cannot be racists because they 'have a black friend', this claim attempts to reinstate a white masculine equilibrium while dismissing any accusations of biases. Hovan's position is utilized by both the FFs and the PPC to symbolize and feign fairness and respect for women. Her labour is not valued in and of itself, but for the purpose it serves in securing and justifying the movement. She is thus only ever encouraging or revered for her motherly instincts and ability to protect children, reducing her to her biological function.

The negging and various forms of sexism and heteropatriarchal power that FFs partake in seek to stabilize their sense of self and community. It maintains centuries old gender roles and hierarchies that uphold white, cis, patriarchal domination. FFs beliefs revolve around this sense of self and any state policy or program that challenges this is labelled an enemy. By policing members within the community through these gendered norms, the FF movement presents a relatively united front against these challenges.



Figure 7: Hovan protesting COVID-19 protocols

1.2.2: The Peoples Party of Canada

The Peoples Party of Canada (PPC) is a political party lead by Maxime Bernier. Bernier previously served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's cabinet. Bernier was forced to resign in 2008 when he reportedly left sensitive government documents at this then girlfriend's house. After his resignation, Bernier ran for the leadership

position of the Conservative Party of Canada. When he lost this race, he left and founded the PPC (Pannett, 2021). This is not the story one hears, however, from Bernier or his supporters. Rather, Bernier stepped down from the Conservative Party of Canada because he could no longer put up with the corruption and betrayal of the Canadian people. In the eyes of his followers, Bernier mimics dynamics of the Trump administration. Trump supporters often root his likeability and appeal in his anti-politician rhetoric and identity. They liked him because he wasn't a corrupt politician looking to line his own pockets. Trump supporters believe that Trump genuinely has American citizens' best interests at heart. Trump walks the contradictory line of alienating minority voters, reinforcing racist stereotypes, and claiming white supremacy is not a problem nor is it a quality he holds (Maskovsky, 2017). Bernier appeals to his followers in the same way. Although Bernier is considered a politician by his followers, he is considered to "have his head on straight" because he sacrificed the security of his job, so he did not have to compromise his morals.

The PPC as a whole are backed by far-right white supremacist and nationalist groups across the country (Boutilier, 2021). Although the party did not win a seat in the 2019 federal election, the PPC has gained significant supporters through their hard stance against COVID-19 protocols[1]. The PPC platform is ostensibly built upon the promise to prevent future lockdowns and ensure that vaccines and mask usage are never made mandatory. More than anything, the PPC preach the idea of 'freedom' and reiterate that every other party in the federal government is corrupt and will, if given enough time and power, strip all Canadians of their rights and freedoms.

[1] In the 2021 election the PPC gained 844,122 votes up from 294,104 in the 2019 election. Representing an 187% increase in just two years. Although they did not win a seat this is a significant – and troubling – increase in support.

This platform based on fear and fragility resonates especially with the FFs. The PPC policy and Bernier himself speak to and provide platforms to people that increasingly feel alienated from their government through marking of whiteness and liberal practices. In fact, many of the people I observed were members or voters of the PPC, including both my interview participants. Although Hovan had previously voted for the NDP, most FFs and PPC voters found their way to the new party via disdain to the changes in the Conservative Party of Canada. The PPC draws in people who have no political home, and Bernier especially, has the acute ability to say and do all the right things to 'justify' his political incorrectness that drive this political homelessness. The PPC exacerbate the emotions of the FF community for political gain. It gives a space for expression of fear over COVID-19 policy and a changing world that eliminates any challenged to dominant, hegemonic, and oppressive values.



Figure 8: Bernier speaking at a freedom rally in Lethbridge, Alberta



Figure 9: Attendees of Freedom Rally, shirt reads "ONLY sheeple and zombies wear face diapers and obey the 6' rule Kneez Down"

1.2.3: White Guilt and White Fragility

In *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,* Peggy McIntosh (1989) refers to white privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tolls, and blank checks" (p.1). One of the most profound qualities of the operations of power is that it operates best via its own erasure and is all encompassing. A structural approach (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982) frames power as existing not as a 'thing out there'. It is not something that acts upon individuals who exist outside of it but is the set of relations that bring into being those within the network. Additionally, one must consider the direction that white supremacy flows. It does not circulate equally. It benefits whiteness more than any other group. The structural and institutional inequities between whites and racialized populations is embedded within the fabric of society of North America (DiAngelo, 2011). It is this quality of embeddedness that forms structural violence. Structural violence is "the violence exerted

systematically- that is indirectly- by everyone who belongs to a certain social order" (Farmer, 2004, p. 307). FFs are only one group of many that exemplify this system of power – white supremacy - that creates violent inequalities:

> On May 25th 2020 George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin during an arrest related to a suspected counterfeit $20 bill. This was the catalyst for BLM protests across the world. The world watched as violence against protestors escalated daily. Hundreds of protesters were beaten, exposed to tear gas, shot, and injured. Many on the right describe these protests as 'riots'.
>
> On January 6th 2021 Trump supporters mounted an insurrection at the capitol of the United States of America. Five people died during the incident, including capitol police officer Brian Sicknick and four Trump supporters (Healy, 2021).
>
> On May 1st and 2nd 2021 hundreds fathered at an anti-restriction rodeo in Bowden, Alberta to protest the public health restrictions of COVID-19. The organizers of the event, which at the time violated several sections of the Public Health Act were charged and plead not guilty for inciting a gathering. No deaths or injuries occurred at the protest.
>
> On May 8th 2021 hundred gathered at the Whistle Stop Café to protest the closures of the restaurant by Alberta Health Services (AHS) for violation of health measures. No deaths or injuries occurred at the protest. Tickets were given out at the rally.
>
> On May 27th 2021 on the Tk'emlúps to Secwépemc First Nation near Kamloops B.C. a mass grave containing the boides of 215 Indigenous children was unearthed at the St. Eugene's Marieval residential school. At the time of writing (September 18 2021) more than 1,8000 bodies have since been discovered across Canadian residential schools (Globe Staff, 2021).

There are clear differences in the treatment of white versus racialized populations in North America and across the world. Structural violence creates these inequalities via the production of a universal human that is white, cisgender, and heterosexual. Those who find themselves outside the qualifications of 'full' human status face unequal treatment at nearly every place in their life. Although no person is oppressed by these structures in the same way at every moment of their

lives, as oppression is a relational assemblage of identity categories which is dynamic and changing (Puar, 2011), there is no greater display of the structural violence of white supremacy than the differing responses by police forces to protests. FFs, whose demographic is nearly completely made up of white people, are allowed to gather in the hundreds in violation of public health ordered to protest the 'infringement' of their freedoms. White Trump supporters can storm the capitol in protest of what they call a 'rigged' election. Both these forms of protest resulted in relatively minimal injury or death. In contrast, a BLM protest is faced with extreme brutality. FFs can host children's freedom rallies and face tickets instead of guns. In contrast, the colonial legacy of Canada continues to disregard the cultural genocide of Indigenous people and the thousands of children that lost their lives in residential schools. Power and structural violence produce the possibility of such horrifying asymmetric violence and oppression.

Out of power and structural violence comes white guilt and fragility. This is an essential quality of the FF identity (though for them it is unrecognizable). Though they claim to value fairness, equality, and freedom they perpetuate racism in nearly everything they do. This produces unconscious feelings of guilt that reflect fragility within the movement. In a livestream on June 2nd 2021, after the discovery of the mass graves of the Tk'emlúps to Secwépemc First Nation, Friesen expressed his thoughts about the unfolding situation.

> "We have been told that they have uncovered a mass grave site near Kamloops. 215 children discovered in a grave. And yes a horrible, its genocidal, its homicidal, it's insane, it's an atrocity and I am sure if we did that at similar residential schools across the country we would find similar atrocities that had taken place. So my heart thoughts prayers go out to the families that were affected by this. It's crazy. And as a country we have to admit it, recognize that it happened. However, do not for a second allow the government, allow Trudeau, allow any of the public virtue signallers to blame you. You or I did not commit these atrocities. You or I did not commit this offence. (…) But the government committed these offences along with the Catholic

> Church they are responsible we are not responsible do not allow them to make us feel responsible do not allow their guilt to be transferred to us and our guilt. (…) Because right infront of our face, right now happening in real time people have spent the last year ridiculing, shaming, dismissing people like myself, like you folks, for criticizing, questioning and holding responsible the government for what they have done to our lives, our livelihoods, our childhoods, our businesses, our schools, our sports teams, and everything that is attached to all of these measures that have been taken that they have yet been able to justify. And when we try to hold the government responsible, when we try force the government to show us their evidence, when we try to get the government to justify their actions while they destroy more lives then the illness itself has. The greater population stifles that. They shame us they ridicule us (…) How is it possible for you folks that have done this to us, to sit there and signal your virtue against what the government did to Kamloops and probably across the country? How is it possible that you are able to disconnect yourself from reality? To signal your virtue for something that happened decades ago and blame it on us and then completely turn around 180 degrees, and ignore the exact same thing. And actually defend the government."

"Do not for a second allow the government, allow Trudeau, all any of the public virtue signallers to blame you. You or I did not commit these atrocities." This quote demonstrates Friesen's rejection of a wide unifying category of whiteness or white privilege and a representation of how the majority of white settler Canadians take no responsibility for the discovery of these mass graves, it is something that happened in the past. For Friesen, and many other FFs, the whiteness and power that the Canadian government holds is not a category shared by them. Of course, this it to an extent true. Many FFs do not feel privileged in a society that now marks the historically unmarked category of whiteness. On top of this, the power that the government is able to exert does not reflect the power within their own lives. FFs are joining a long list of people that feel progressively alienated from their government. For Friesen and the FF movement this has created an ideology in which no category of whiteness can prevail across boundaries of socio-economic differences. Therefore, Friesen articulates his own and the whiteness of the FF

movement as incomparable to the systems of whiteness that the government is built upon. Additionally, the governments failures and genocide towards Indigenous peoples in what is currently called Canada is not something that can be attributed to Eurocentrism and racism as a whole but the responsibility of 'this thing out there'. For FFs there can be no possibility of white privilege because they themselves are not in a position that equates them with the power to make decisions about the fate of people's lives.

This is a common theme in negotiations of white privilege and racial comfort. In Robert Livingston's book *The Conversation: How Speaking the Truth About Racism Can Radically Transform Individuals and Organizations*, Livingston (2021) refers to a group of men who cannot understand the operations of white privilege because they themselves do not feel especially fortunate or wealthy. One of the men Livingston worked with makes the claim that white privilege does not benefit him because he isn't having tea with the queen to which Livingston replies "not having the benefit of attending tea with the queen is not the same as having the burden of harassment and violence of police" (p. 49). Though any attempt to homogenize a white experience of life is harmful and counterproductive, it is still important to highlight that white privilege is a fundamental part of the FF movement. It is not about the effect whiteness has on the individual, but the way whiteness has brought into meaning and been built upon the structures, systems, and institutions, that make up our society; in other words, white supremacy. The FF bio-sociality is directly embedded within these systems that allow for the very movement to exist. Their whiteness offers them protection from direct violence and the benefit of ignorance.

I suspect that someone like Friesen would never admit to possessing the quality of white privilege, yet it manifests in his actions. In his plea to resist feelings of guilt, he is

subconsciously displacing his own racial guilt onto the government. Comparing victims of residential schools to the experience of FFs, Friesen simultaneously articulates and negotiates his emotional freedom from race and racialized violence. Negotiations like these are common characteristics of the FF movement. Demands on the self and the group require constant justification. Without these, the FF movement would not be functional in its critique of public health and governmental COVID-19 policies. It is a process of differentiation that is necessary to maintain a stable sense of self and articulate their own negative emotions about the current state of the Canadian government.

I would like to take the time to address the complexities of whiteness and the idea of a capacity of whiteness discussed earlier. The geography of whiteness showcases how racial "landscapes do no merely reflect racial patterns, but are a fundamental component of processes of racialization" (Bonds and Inwood, 2015, p. 717). When we apply this to the idea of whiteness among several groups in western Canada, it is possible to see heterogeneity of conceptions of power and privilege based on the presence, absence, or extent of racially restricted spaces. In this way, whiteness, like all other social relations, needs to be understood not as a homogenized experience but a historical and context specific embodiment. Though it is undeniable that FFs participate in systems white privilege and their actions perpetuate white supremacist structures of violence, they cannot be said to be entirely rooted within the same space as far right extremist groups in terms of malicious intent or action[2].Yes, many FFs are these white supremacists, and yes there are people within the movement who argue that they are not racists. This is not to say that either is more or less harmful than the other as they both reproduce the idea of a universal natural body who is coded white. What I hope to get across here is that whiteness and white

[2] It should also be noted that all white people benefit in some way from white supremacy. The 'radical left' the 'alt right', no matter what side of the political spectrum you may land on, white supremacy and privilege benefits all white people no matter their actions or intentions.

supremacy within the FF movement is both a whole and its assembled parts, and neither a whole nor its parts simultaneously.

There are clear distinctions that should be drawn between white privilege and white supremacy as demonstrated by Bonds and Inword (2015).

> "The naturalization and invisibility of white racial identities and white skin privilege is made possible through the structures and logics of white supremacy. If privilege and racism are the symptoms, white supremacy is the disease. Theorized this way, white supremacy is the *defining logic* of both racism and privilege as they are culturally and materially produced. Moreover, the analytic of white supremacy underscores the historic, material production of white racial domination" (pp. 719-720).

FFs and far right white supremacist groups, while they represent and contain many of the same individuals, are still different articulations of the 'disease' of white supremacy. Just as we are able to differentiate the symptom from the disease, we must be able to notice the parts of a whole and the whole of its parts simultaneously. This means we must trouble whiteness. I use trouble to articulate the idea of theoretical messiness. There is no one way to go about defining or analyzing whiteness. It is also not easy to explain how something can be a whole and its parts and neither. Our linguistic practices simply do not allow for such paradox to exist. Yet, discussions of whiteness and other racial categories require this. What I have found useful for sticking with the trouble is the application of assemblage theory. Assemblage theory (Puar, 2011) allows for contradictions and paradox to exists within one body system. It accounts for relation effects of identity and for post-structural dynamics fluidity. When we apply this to FFs we can see that heterogeneity exists even in one person.

Friesen is an example of this dynamic. To outsiders, Friesen, may look like a white supremacist. On Canada day 2021 Friesen along with many other FFs travelled to Ottawa to

protest at the legislative building and celebrate what they called “Dominion Day”. After the discovery of the mass grave on Tk’emlúps to Secwépemc First Nation people across Canada announced they would not be celebrating Canada day in that it should no longer be appropriate to celebrate the genocide of Indigenous people. People like Friesen perceived this as an act equivalent to treason. FFs labelled those who refused to celebrate Canada day as ‘ungrateful traitors’ who were not appreciative of all the freedoms they are granted by living in Canada. Friesen live-streamed the Canada day freedom march across a bridge connecting Ontario to Quebec. This livestream received the most backlash observed in the research. Though moderators deleted and filtered some comments as I watched live I identified several comments that said something similar to the following:

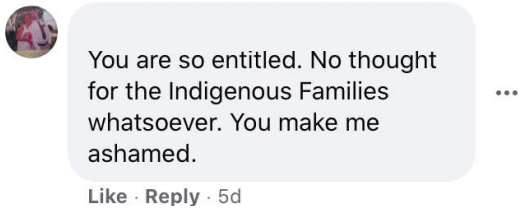


Figure 10: Comment under livestream of Friesen's Canada Day march

For others Friesen is a hero among a ‘swamp’ of corrupt politicians and globalists, who embodies the ideal, devoted father and husband who wishes to keep Canada safe. These relations and dynamics are just one person in the movement. It would be nearly impossible to articulate the full extent of complexity for the whole movement

Therefore, in order to understand the FF movement, I must come to terms with the fact that there is no absolute way to define their whiteness in relation to other larger worldwide or even countrywide structures of racial inequality. FFs are a product of circumstance just as much as anyone else. For the majority of the people within this movement their fears about governmental

control over bodily autonomy is very real to them. For example, parents are genuinely concerned about their children's safety. We must keep in mind that people and politicians, like Bernier, that have the ear of FFs, continually reiterate narratives of fear, false information, and paranoias. When someone you trust is telling you that you are in danger, despite the systems of privilege assembled to create your circumstance and your position, the narrative creates real feelings of fear. So as scholars we must be able to stick with the trouble, allow the mess to be a mess, but locate how these systems reverberate violence and impact those that cannot be an ideal body.

FF's unquestionably engage in harmful activities (as I write on September 15th 2021 a protest is occurring in front of a hospital in Vancouver. At least one ambulance is being blocked from entering the building). However, we must be cautious. Disregarding the humanity of people that we may disagree with, in exchange for clean lines of identity and definition, greatly effects our ability to effectively engage with and challenge issues in our world. But we must address their whiteness as a system and process if we are ever to make positive change.

For all of history, especially in the West, whiteness has been the unmarked category of existence. However, the pandemic, along with other intersecting crises, have produced a circumstance in which whiteness is now become marked. This marking is nothing compared to the treatment of BIPOC in a white dominated culture. The experiences of violence at the hands of police officers, the daily occurrences of micro and macro aggressions in the lives of BIPOC, these are much larger, more serious kinds of marking rooted in racism. Though my project and the people I worked with are embedded within whiteness, I cannot make any attempt to argue that the marking of white persons is similar or as harmful as the genocide, culture destruction, systemic racism that marks "others". Focusing on whiteness as a relational category risks reproducing these very same plagues. Having said that, I must focus on whiteness as it is a major

part of this project. However, I hope that this discussion does not whiten racial discourses, but provides a stepping stone to destabilizing white supremacy and undermining the structures reproducing pain and suffering.

I again turn to Friesen as an example of walking the line of troubling whiteness. Friesen, in his livestream about the mass graves discussed above, articulates his white guilt and manages it by constructing residential schools as a historical artefact. The last residential school, which was located in Saskatchewan, closed in 1996 (Union of Ontario Indians, 2013). Friesen was thus 25 years old when the school closed. Even if the closing of the last residential school marked the end of cultural genocide and violence against Indigenous people in Canada (which of course it did not), Friesen still would have be old enough to recognize and participate in the normalizing of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. Friesen's livestream is an articulation of new social pressures that mark his whiteness as visible. He feels the need to justify actions and displace guilt because he knows the colour of his skin will carry blame for the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The marking of whiteness is not a bad thing. It is not a new form of racism as some I observed in my study would like to argue. It allows us to begin to trouble whiteness and destabilize the institutionalized violence that has served white supremacy for centuries.

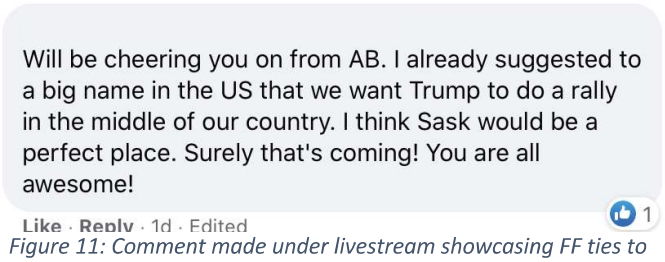


Figure 11: Comment made under livestream showcasing FF ties to Trumpism and collective nostalgia.

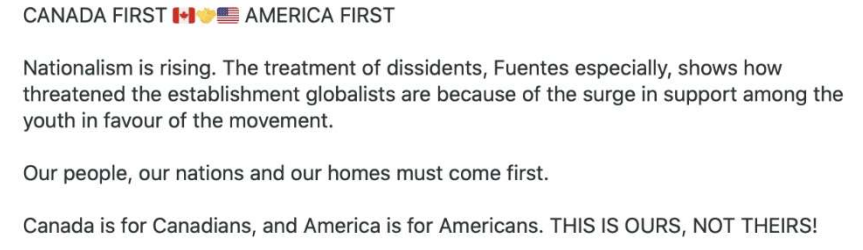


Figure 12: Post made to Gab regarding the state of Canadian and American Nationalism expressing the 'threat' of the new marking of white bodies.

1.2.4: Globalism and Communism

Globalization, globalism, and communism are the very concepts that FFs organize against. Globalism is loosely defined as "the broad-scale changes and transformations that have resulted from the impact of industrialization and the emergence of an interconnected global economy" (Scupin and DeCorse, 2012, p. 433). There is of course more to this, Petrus (2016) elaborates on the idea of globalists and the global agenda. Those who "are believed to be orchestrating and driving the globalisation agenda, are called globalists. [This] would include the heads of various multinational corporations, politicians, military and government officials, academics and even, as some believe, religious leaders" (p. 100). FFs constitute the critics of globalism, in which they believe that the "end goal of this process is the elimination of national and cultural autonomy, the global homogenisation of the world's population and the creation of a one world government or, as they would call it, a one world dictatorship" (p. 101). FFs believe that globalism and agendas like sustainable development will destroy the free and just Canadian way of life[3]. They closely associate the 'globalists' with large international groups like the United Nations and World Health Organization and encourage followers to ignore policy that comes through these international channels.

Communism, like sustainable development and globalism, are used by the FFs as a discursive signifier. Their conceptions of communism are very far from what was written in the Communist Manifesto and what most would refer to as Marxism. FFs use communism as a signal of "the enemy", broadly defined. Anti-communism has a long history across the world, as is often used to unify or justify group actions, acceptance, or rejection. During the cold war era Cuban refugees seeking asylum to the United States "universally held an anti-communist stance

[3] It should be noted that the terms globalization, sustainable development, and green initiatives can, and are used interchangeably within the FF movement.

and [therefore] some claim to whiteness" (Current, 2008). This anti-communist ideology labelled them as 'good immigrants' and allowed them entrance into the United States. Anti-communism is less about the actualized social and economic systems and more about unifying around a common enemy. This ideology provides a nexus of group organization.

Both globalism and communism cannot ever be truly defined by FFs. As bio-social bricoleurs they do not need a coherent definition. They only need group wide acceptance of a specified set of symbols. FFs organize much of their collective sense of identity around the symbolic representations of the concepts. During my interviews I received two responses that reflect this dynamic. When I ask Friesen what sustainable development meant he replied the following:

> "The easiest way I can explain it to people is, you know, if you've read the Communist Manifesto, that's essentially what sustainable development is, in a much broader sense and a much bigger, sort of fuller presentation. But it's essentially, it reads the same way. It means the same thing. If you look at the 17 goals. It's essentially controlling every aspect of your life, from not just a national perspective, but from a global governance perspective, where you have now an unelected foreign entity that's creating policy that our governments have agreed to, and implementing in our nation."

When asked to elaborate more on the communist manifesto, Friesen encourages me to read it myself and draw my own conclusions. When Hovan was asked the same question her response was:

> "sustainable, sustainable development from what my understanding is, is the the control of production, what is available, what is produced. And it's, you, as a producer don't have that right to decide where it goes and how it's how it shipped? It's, it's just, it's more of an- it's another a way to control in, I guess, the, the masses".

Friesen and Hovan are not the only people observed in this study to provide this answer. Many people both online and offline refer to these concepts in no specificity whatsoever. Communism

and globalism are not necessary entirely concrete things. They are 'things out there' that hold liminal characteristics of concreteness yet are completely fluid. It is both something used by the bricolage and something that is beyond them. Globalization and communism in the context of COVID-19 are thus foundational to the group's bio-sociality and biological citizenship. They unify and define the group even through the contradictions of COVID-19.

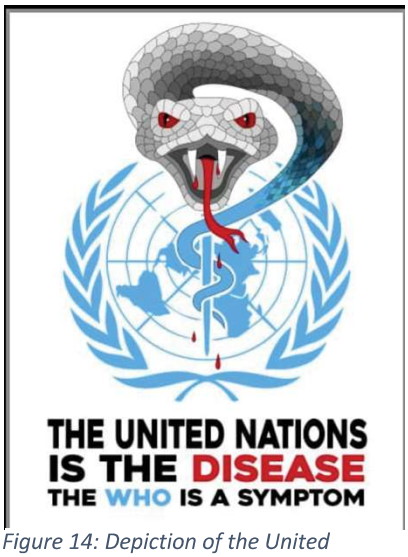


Figure 14: Depiction of the United Nations and World Health Organization as enemies of freedom.

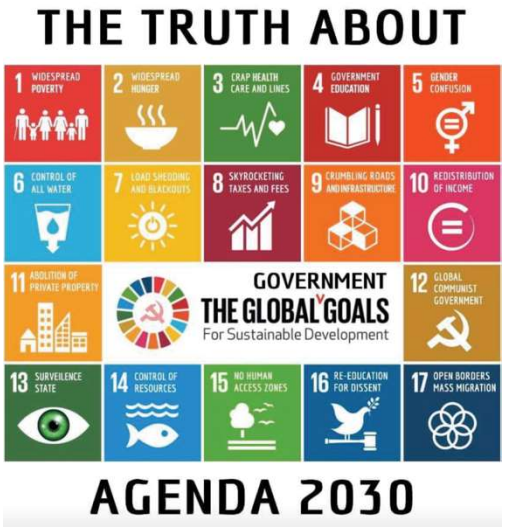


Figure 15: Agenda 2030, or what the FFs refer to as 'The Great Reset'.

1.2.5: The Contradiction of Capitalism

Capitalism can be reasoned to be a main driving factor in many critiques the FFs have of governments, corporations, and globalism. However, they label themselves as a pro-capitalist group. For example, their opposition to lockdowns in favor of keeping the economy 'open' is a performance of capitalism in which the person becomes alienated from their labour. Their strong roots within anti-communist discourse dictates their cultural milieu in which capitalism, as the created opposite, is the saving grace and supplier of the nostalgic 'American Dream' that cements beliefs about the direction of the economy.

FFs opposition to lockdown is a key factor in their contradictory view of capitalism and subsequent structures that have developed from it. FFs are strong backers of mom-and-pop shops and other small businesses. In late May 2021 the Whistle Stop Cafe in Mirror, Alberta was shut down by Alberta Health Services (AHS) for not complying to the provincial guidelines for restaurants. The Whistle Stop Cafe remained open and served customers despite mandates requiring restaurants to become takeout only. AHS physically locked the doors of the Whistle Stop Cafe preventing the owner from opening and serving. The owner was served tickets, warnings, and was found guilty of contempt in court (Graveland, 2021). The café became a symbolic representation for the FF movement, hosting a freedom rally and gaining immense support online. Hundreds of people described the owner as brave, applauding his efforts to continue to serve his community. The owner was a staple in the FF discourse for months. FFs conceived the forced shutdown of the Café as an extension of the Globalist agenda in which private property was beginning to be removed from the people's hands. FFs pointed to corporations like Wal-Mart and Amazon, which were allowed to continue in their normal activities, and wondered why small businesses were the ones being closed.

The prioritization of large corporations over small businesses is a product of capitalism, yet FFs continue to claim they are pro-capitalism. The symbolic representation of unfamiliar economic systems and operational structures are too strong for FFs to identify the way they participate in their own critiques. It is true that COVID-19 has allowed business like Wal-Mart and Amazon to grow at astronomical rates, it has allowed them to further abuse their labour force, and has asked workers to compromise their health with little to no support. But, the contradiction of capitalism continues to operate as part of the biosocial bricolage in maintaining a sense of collectivity.

1.3: Inter-Group Relations

The second component of the FF movement is inter-group relations. This is the interactions with the outside world in which FFs perform their identity and filter outside information in, assigning new meaning and bringing it into their universe. This is the job of the bricoleur. To engulf what is around them and construct new meaning that identifies and builds the biological citizenship of the FF. Biological citizenship differs from bio-sociality in that it represents "new forms of public participation and involvement in the political and public domain. [In which] the focus is on the extension of rights, emergence of new possibilities or participation, and the empowerment of the individual" (Heinemann, 2016). In Petryna's (2003) book *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens After Chernobyl* she defines biological citizenship as the direct relationship between citizens and the state. For FFs, their biological citizenship is established through their active rallies against public health policy in which they fight for their right to freedom. Their bio-sociality constitutes their biological citizenship and all other systems that operate within their lives. Everything that circulates in the greater world must pass through the filter of the both thee FFs biological citizenship and bio-sociality.

There are several areas that FFs draw on during this process of filtering. The first is public health policy relating to COVID-19. This includes masks, vaccines, lockdowns, and alternative treatments. For the sake of conciseness, I will focus on the two most prevalent examples: masks and alternative treatments. I can then turn to conceptions of globalism and communism that are at the core of the movement. I will end this section with a discussion on the consequence and effects that the FF's actions have on those who have not adopted bio-

citizenship or sociality of Freedom Fighters. I will utilize the theory of syndemics (Singer and Clair, 2003: Frumkin, 2002) here to articulate the harmful repercussions of the FF movement.

1.3.1: The Public Health of COVID-19

At the beginning of the pandemic the World Health Organization (WHO) advised against the usage of face masks in the general population. Health officials felt that masks would provide a false sense of security (Taylor and Asumndson, 2021). Though this stance quickly changed, the damage had been done to the mask's reputation. This official recommendation by the WHO has created a common narrative about the ineffectiveness of masks. Common in the FF movement now is the belief that face masks do not work because the COVID-19 virus is too small and passes through the mask. FFs promote this narrative to justify much of their actions.

In a study conducted by He et al. (2021) they reported six reasons for the opposition to the face mask. In an analysis of tweets between January to October 2020 the following justifications were discovered. 1) Physical discomfort or negative effect, which made up 30.6% of tweets observed, 2) lack of effectiveness, 27.4%, 3) unnecessary or inappropriate for certain people under certain circumstances, 17%, 4) political beliefs 12.2%, 5) lack of mask wearing culture, 9.6%, 6) COVID-19 was not a serious threat 3.2% (p. 5). The FFs utilize all size depending on their circumstances or goals in an ever-changing narrative about COVID-19. During the beginning of this research, FFs believed that COVID-19 was simply a flu rebranded. They claimed that the numbers of positive tests were false positives, citing PCR failure as the source. Towards the end of my research period, as the healthcare system in western (?) Canada began to collapse, FFs began to acknowledge the seriousness of COVID-19 in order to critique the governments neglect of people. In between these two time periods were a series of

punctuated equilibriums in which the narrative around COVID-19 changed almost weekly. Though these contradictory and changing views are in a constant state of flux, one narrative is still consistently maintained and can co-exist with narratives that are in direct conflict: COVID-19 is a biological weapon meant to control the masses into submission. For FFs, face masks and COVID-19 have become a direct challenge to freedom.

This process and pattern of sense making holds through other aspects of healthcare relating to COVID-19. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic president, Donald Trump tweeted about two 'miracle drugs' that could cure COVID-19. Ivermectin, a drug used primarily to "treat or prevent parasites in animals" and sometimes "approved at very specific doses to treat some parasitic worm" in humans ("Why", 2021). The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not approve the use of Ivermectin to treat COVID-19 and it has been proven to be dangerous even deadly. The second so-called 'miracle drug' hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) is traditionally used to treat malaria and lupus. Although at one point HCQ was tested for its usefulness in treating COIVD-19 is has since had its emergency use revoked by the FDA ("FDA", 2021). Early in the pandemic both drugs were encouraged among those who felt COVID-19 was a government invention to track and control citizens. In fact, most FFs refuse official treatment and preventative measures, like vaccines, for fear it contains something that may be used by the government for various ulterior motives. The explosion of this narrative into the FF movement is known as "magnetgate". Hundreds of videos surfaced of people placing magnets to their vaccination sites in which the magnet supposedly "attached to the chip" in someone's arm. Many FFs expressed the fear that those who had been vaccinated were now implanted with a chip that constantly surveilled the persons whereabouts. This narrative greatly deterred people from receiving a vaccine.

Ivermectin and HCQ have since become the treatment of choice for the FFs. Thompson claims regularly on her livestreams that she takes HCQ for her lupus and that the government is purposefully avoiding in order to decrease the population. In a video posted to her website on June 11, 2021, Thompson plays a video of Dan Bongino encouraging the use of HCQ. Bongino is a right-wing political commentator and host of the Bongino Show on Westwood One. The following is an exert from his video and Thompson's response.

> DB: As someone said on social media and I saw 'hey listen us conservatives are going to need a whole bunch of new conspiracy theories because all of our old conspiracy theories are now coming true'. One of the 'conspiracy theories' was the crazy idea that god forbid hydroxychloroquine a commercially available drug that has been around forever with a relatively safe profile. That by the way we have a lot of experience with in this household because my wife takes it. She has lupus. She's okay she let me tell you that, she's been taking it forever. My wife has had no problems. (…). The drug does have relatively decent safety profile it's been used for a long time. But because this Trump Tweet happened a long time ago about hydroxychloroquine the media is totally uninterested in facts anymore. Divorced from reality, and I cannot encourage you enough to ignore these total clowns (…). Well because the media is stacked with absolutely ideological losers with no respect or dignity for their own profession who can't figure out journalism if it kicked them in their collective asses. The media saw Trump supporting hydroxychloroquine but all of the sudden said 'well if Trump supports it we have to be against it'. Well what does the science say? Doesn't matter, they didn't give a damn about the science.
>
> LT: Exactly so, Surgisphere was the Lancet, they put the study forward that the Surgisphere had done this testing. And has put out that hydroxychloroquine was dangerous. So what happens? All of these doctors start going what?! Because they know that is a bunch of non-sense to say it in a very godly Christian way. And so they began studying it and they were like no wait. And they looked through all the testing and all that and they cried foul. Next thing you know Surgisphere poof disappeared (…) It was proven that that testing and their data was completely faulty. Did you hear about that repeatedly out in public? No. All you know even to today is that real doctors that will still tell me that 'oh no hydroxychloroquine, you know its

deadly'. And I'm like do you have any lupus patients? Do you subscribe (prescribe) hydroxychloroquine to them? Because I've been on it for sixteen years and nobody ever said it was dangerous. No not one person. And we have heard account after account. Ivermectin how about that? How about that Dr. Cory in the states literally saying please do not do this to me. You are silencing me from using a drug that we know works for people that are dying! And I cannot sit there and watch people die as the medical, tyrannical, crazy people tell everybody that they can't use it.



Figure 16: Tweets by Donald Trump regarding alternative treatments for COVID-19

The reference to Trump's tweets showcases the collective nostalgia of the group. The process of the bricoleur is built upon historical foundations that create conditions of conceivability and possibility. Specifically, FFs engage in homogeneity-focused nostalgia which "stem[s] from a belief (measured and manipulated) that the ingroup is losing connection to its cultural and ethnic roots and subsequent longing for a past when there was greater adherence to ingroup norms and values" (Wohl et al., 2020, p. 2). Trump represents a time when white supremacy was not challenged, and white fragility not an experience of everyday life. This allows for thee group to remain rooted in conceived 'better days' that give the group a goal to move towards. It is these better days that have produced the white universal subject that FFs embody and encourage.

Thompson's reasoning of 'because this works for me it must work for all' is foundationally a product of her whiteness and the operational factor of a universal body. The constant subliminal message of whiteness carrying the most legitimate and valid form of humanness instills an unconscious belief that their experience is that of others. Both Bongino and Thompson's familiarity with HCQ thus dictates much of their perspective of judgements on 'proper' treatments for COVID-19.

HCQ, Ivermectin, masks vaccines and all public health protocols represent more than simply treatments or preventative measures; they are a tool of the bio-social bricoleur. They enter through the relations with the outside world and assigned new meaning that is relevant and productive for the FFs. For those outside the movement, COVID-19 health protocols are, at worst, an inconvenience whereas FFs, who have built a world in which COVID-19 is not a threat, see masks as simply unnecessary. They do not see their actions as selfish or harmful because there are better ways to eliminate COVID-19 that do not challenge their systems of comfort or privilege. Instead, the way to eliminate COVID-19 lies in challenging the governmental regime that created COVID-19 in the first place. They interpret the severity of COVID-19 completely differently than those that do not share a common biological citizenship.



Figure 17: Post made to encourage FFs to make their own conclusions about COVID-19 treatments.

1.4: Freedom Fighters and Syndemics

I hope it is now evident the way in which the FF identity functions at both a public and private level. The FF identity itself is an assemblage of relational categories of discursive organization. The four bodies of the FF operate as a mechanism in which meaning is assigned and redefined as they enter the atmosphere of the FF community. However, it is important to highlight how this process of identity affects those that do not belong to the FF community and are not served by public health policy simultaneously. In this section I will combine what I have established about the FF identity with syndemics, structural violence and the creation of expendable bodies to articulate the consequences of the FFs, that exacerbate oppressive and violent structures that COVID-19 has pulled the curtain back upon.

Syndemics, in its most basic sense, refers to two or more epidemics interacting synergistically, meaning the effects of epidemics do not just interact but worsen each other. This increases the suffering and burden of disease within a given population (Frumkin, 2002). Syndemics frames disease as an explanatory model (Good, 1994) in which the focus is not on connection but enhanced infection (Singer and Clair, 2003). However, when we expand syndemic theory we see that structural violence and social conditions contribute to this disease burden in profound and deadly ways (Farmer, 1999). For example, Singer (1996) explored thee HIV epidemic in North America and the role that broader political, social, and socio-economic systems had on marginalized communities who were unequally suffering from HIV. Singer found that the disease burden of a population is as much a social condition as it is a medical one. Those in low economic communities, whose poor health was a product of racism and colonialization, were much more likely to contract HIV, but more than this, were more likely to

be suffering from other conditions at the same time. Syndemics is not about solely disease interaction and concentration but about integration (Gravlee, 2020). This is clear through the core tenets of syndemics:

> "1. large-scale, political-economic forces, which play out over generations, result in deep-seated social, economic, and power inequities;
> 2. these inequities shape the distribution of risks and resources for health, resulting in the social and spatial clustering of epidemic diseases (disease concentration); and
> 3. some overlapping epidemics have synergistic effects due to (a) biological interactions between disease states or (b) interactions between biological processes and the social, economic, and power inequities that shape the distribution of health to begin with (disease interaction)" (Gravlee 2020 p. 2).

In the case of COVID-19 and the FF movement I would like to add a fourth layer to this:

> 4. Social movements and communities, like the FFs, who oppose public health policy and refuse to participate in health measures exacerbate further the experience of syndemics and suffering via their opposition. Further, their inability to recognize the deep structures of white, heteronormative, masculinity reproduces social and physical harm. These groups represent a counter movement to public health which compresses expendable populations in such a way that their bodies are attacked from multiple directions.

The FF community reproduces systems of white privilege that allow for prevailing social conditions to wreak havoc on vulnerable communities. FFs make sense of these social conditions by naturalization and essentializing them, therefore defining any challenges as unable to impact their sense of self or community. This process fundamentally makes synergistic suffering a continued experience of the everyday life[4].

It is possible to see these actions in much of what the FFs do. By utilizing 'science', data, and statistics to justify refusal of compliance to health mandates they reiterate the expendability of bodies that hegemony is founded upon. This 'take on for the team' mentality is exactly the

[4] It is important to note that it cannot be said that the FFs are the only group that exacerbates the synergistic experiences of disease and disease burden, much of the problem comes from public health policy itself.

ideology that justifies social injustice. Rhetoric about the greater good means that real bodies are stripped of their status and become sub-human. Whether this sub-human quality is assigned to bodies via their inability to work, their race, their sexuality, or their gender they are still shunned from protection and the right to live healthy lives.

Both inter and intra group relations of the FFs are violent whether they are rooted in malicious intent or not. In fact, most FFs do not set out to purposefully put other's lives at risk. The vast majority are not in a position to understand their privilege nor begin to challenge their ways of knowing. Their constructed world and process of meaning making does not leave room to being recognizing inequalities in which they benefit. While there are leaders, like Bernier, who feel off the violence of the pandemics for political gain, most FFs do not understand that their truth is partial, incomplete, and not universal. The justification of their actions are expressions of their different universe. It is hard for many to accept that movements born out of whiteness, privilege, and right-wing beliefs cand and are still very much acts of socially grounded rebellion. We must remember that this movement is legitimate and complex. In doing so we can piece apart the consequences of syndemics and groups like the FFs. We have the potential to ask more of public health systems through these movements. Though their values and beliefs are grounded in white masculine supremacy FFs are good at articulating the weaknesses of governmental rule.

We are now left with an opportunity. The FF movement and public health policy compress so-called expendable populations between a rock and a hard place. Yet, through an exploration of the FF movement, it is possible to ask questions about whose health is 'public' and how does this public become defined? In the following chapter I will explore these questions.



Figure 20: Photos of young FF captured with several prominent figures.

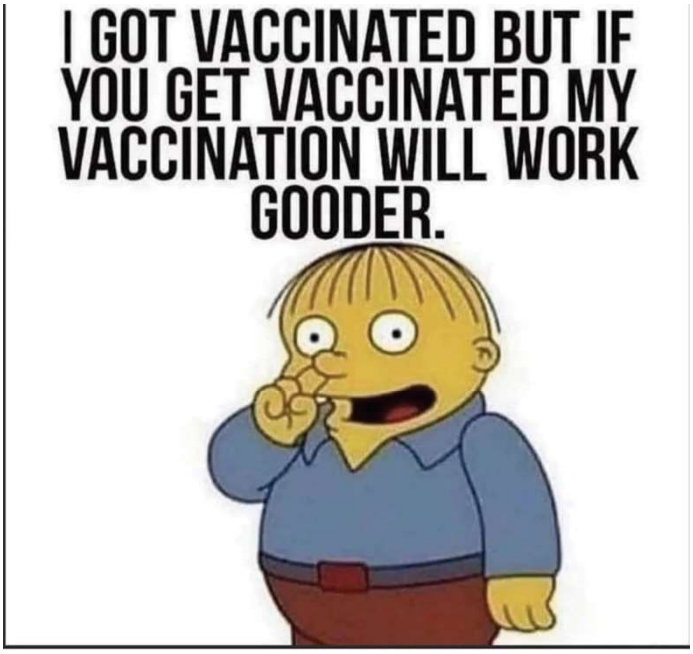


Figure 21: Meme posted in comments of a livestream addressing vaccinations.

Chapter 2: The Contradictions of COVID-19

2.1: The Spheres of Communicability of Contradictions

The FFs demonstrate an acute ability to occupy positions of contradictory discourses, mobilizing one piece or another in order to prove a point, justify a position or action, and reinforce their sense of self. This is a defining feature of the FF communicability. Communicability, as defined by Briggs (2005), refers to the productive capacity of notions of communication (p. 270). These spheres become boundaries in which power and authority is key to moving between spaces of difference. These spaces of difference, whether they be defined by race, disease, or power, are bound by hierarchal notions of knowledge production and truth (Briggs, 2005). The sphere in which FFs occupy is drastically different when compared to the official sphere public health officers, scientists, and other governmental officials. These spheres are fundamentally temporary and positional. Temporary in that spheres present currently are dictated by the historical moment of the COVID-19 pandemic, and positional in that its defining structures that create the individual are based on one's systems of relations to the outside world. This is how I seek to use Briggs's idea of communicability, to establish the simultaneous permanence and temporality, concreteness and fluidity, to articulate the quality of contradiction and its relations to systems of identity. Discursive practices and the communication/creation of knowledge is fundamental to the science of the concrete and the bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1962). It defines all that one is, all the one is not, and all that one can be. It is how we go about building our worlds. I will utilize the sphere of the FF to demonstrate what I mean.

2.2: Microcosmic Contradictions

The FF sphere of communicability is defined by contradiction. FFs produce a relatively stable identity through communication of these contradictions. The belief and core values of the group are in direct conflict and in no way could their position be maintained if it weren't for the capacity to mobilize these contradictions willingly and purposefully. In other words, the process of the FF bricolage is made possible by social positionality and relatively steady assembled traits in which contradiction is allowed to exist.

The vast majority (I say vast specifically here because I cannot make the claim that there are only white people in the movement and I can also not say there are a significant amount of minorities within the movement) of FFs are white, or at least white passing. This ensures a systemic stability to at least the rational portion of their identity. This of course does not mean that all FFs are wealthy or living in comfort. Many FFs found their way to the movement through their socio-economic alienation. However, their whiteness opens up the very opportunity for them to mobilize contradictory discourses without challenging their entire sense of self.

There are several examples for this throughout the movement. One of these is their use of statistics to justify their disregard for mask usage and COIVD-19 vaccinations. When attending a rally of tuning into a livestream you will always hear the following: *why do I need to wear a mask on my face if the virus has a 99.9999% survivability and a 99.9997% chance recoverability?* Though worldwide the average death rate sits at about 0.0206% (John's Hopkins, 2021), it is important to emphasize that statistics do not tell the full story. Statistics homogenize the infection and death rates of COVID-19. They do not capture the unequal affect the virus has had on different countries, racial backgrounds, and age groups. This homogenization of data

leads groups like the FFs to regurgitate a seemingly harmless narrative in which the 0.0206% is deemed an expendable population.

If the entire population of Canada were infected, approximately 37.39 million (Stats Canada, accessed September 10, 2021) at a death rate of just 0.0206% means that 774,354 people would still lose their lives. This is not an insignificant amount, especially when the total cases worldwide sits at 224 million (as of September 10, 2021). Additionally, this does not account for the disproportionately affected communities of racial minorities, low socio-economic class, and elderly populations. COVID-19 has a social life, and it attacks those that have been systematically oppressed and forgotten.

The FFs often argue that thee 0.0206% of deaths related to COVID-19 are a necessary sacrifice for the rest of the world to go on living their life with no restrictions and full access to their freedom. However, when asked why they distrust the government, they often point to failures of care towards the elderly population in nursing and retirement homes. FFs believe that the government purposefully released COVID-19 in order to reduce the financial burden of populations no longer capable of working. This is contradictory to their 'for the greater good' narrative reiterated when they use statistics. The elderly population that they feel have been disregarded takes up a large portion of that 0.0206%. This is the ideological construction of the FF biological citizenship. The FF biological citizenship is "specific biological presuppositions (…) (that) shape conceptions of what it means to be a citizen, and underpin(ed) distinctions between actual, potential, troublesome, and impossible citizens**"** (Rose and Novas, 2007, p. 440**).** In other words, FFs argue for rights and duties of the government to protect its citizens, only in so far that it does not interfere with their community boundaries. By identifying and publicly using contradiction to justify these boundaries, FFs demonstrate and label themselves as having

the capacity to occupy their specific sphere of communicability. This signifies to others their biological citizenship and defining themselves as the in-group.

Another area which FFs regularly express contradiction is children. Many FFs believe and articulate their belief in QAnon. QAnon is an internet conspiracy theory in which Donald Trump is thought to be working to bring down a "satanic cabal of pedophiles and cannibals" (Moskalenko and McCauley, 2021, p. 142) that control the world. This cabal regularly engages in sexual trafficking of children and Trump, as one of the only ones that are fighting it, is the last real hope for the world. Among QAnon are also theories about the origin of COVID-19 itself. Though this narrative changes often, for most FFs COVID-19 is a man-made disease purposefully released in order to control the population of the world so that an unelected foreign government can take control of the world. In the United States, Dr. Fauci is often implicated as being responsible for the creation of the virus, and local health authorities and politicians like Chief Medical Officer of Health Deena Hinshaw and Premier Jason Kenney are described as cogs in the machine of globalism. More than this, FFs believe that COVID-19 has a manmade virus threatens children's right to a stable and free childhood. Children are forced to wear masks and are taught to be obedient so that in the future they won't or can't question the role and rule of the state.

Nearly all FFs claim that children are the key to a free future and feel that COVID-19 is supposed to eliminate this. Yet, their actions do not show the same level of concern that they speak of. Operation 1009 is a Facebook group dedicated to protecting and fighting for the right of children. On the surface, this is a reasonable cause. However, Operation 1009 is so ingrained in conspiracy that they don't address real concerns of protecting vulnerable children. Those that they seek to protect are coded white and of the 'first world'. Kids worthy of protection are those

living with their own families and communities. The FFs perform this selective guarding through Children's Freedom rallies and through signs that read "UNMASK OUR CHILDREN". Yet, when the mass graves were discovered in several residential schools across Canada FFs articulated their sorrow and grief for the children lost only to draw attention to their movement and their children. The children who lost their lives to the Canadian residential school system do not occupy the same level of importance as those that Operation 1009 seeks to protect. Those children did not hold a sufficient capacity for whiteness that would ensure their loss is meaningful in the eyes of the FF movement. They are a historical artefact, a stark warning about the need to fight COVID-19 policy to protect the safety of the kids alive today. They, like the elderly population are a necessary loss to encourage members to join the movement.

Any comparison between the white experience during COVID-19 and the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada is violent, diminishing, and atrocious. Speaking about one's concern for children and then justifying a that same position with conceptions of bodily expendability is a measure to stabilize the FF identity. The communicability of these contradictions is foundationally a sense making process (Briggs, 2005). The selective action and mobilization of statistics and other reductive 'data' allows FF to maintain their frame and social matrix, while simultaneously criticizing and putting at risk those who do not share a biological citizenship. These contradictions, specific to this sphere, are necessary for the FF to operate as a biosocial bricoleur. It is part of world building. IF the contradictions were absent, FFs foundations would crumble under the social pressures of COIVD-19 and other intersecting crises.



Figure 23: Post made to the Operation 1009 Facebook page representing distrust and conspiracy around 'elite' interests. .

2.3: Macrocosmic Contradictions

If we expand our lens outwards, it is evident that contradictions are a much larger theme that transcends boundaries of spheres of space and difference. The most important contradiction to highlight is found within the intricacy of the FF opposition to public health and COVID-19 mandates. This is a surface level opposition only. When we look deeper into the structures and tools of social maintenance it is clear that the two groups actually have a lot in common. Both are founded within the same structures of white masculine supremacy. This is the circumstance that creates compression syndemics. Two groups that simultaneously oppose each other and reproduce the same systemic racism, sexism, ableism, as well as other forms of marginalized people in Canada. The pandemic has drawn the curtain back upon the social inequalities that occur across Canada. It has shown more people that we have a major problem. We live in, and many of us benefit from, a system built on the graves of those deemed less important or crucial to the functioning of Canada. In this subsection I will begin by outlining the historical precedent of the public health care system and its root in eugenics. This will feed into a comparison of the two groups to showcase both the tools and structures common among public health and the FF movement. I will conclude with a discussion on the importance of recognizing the similarities in addressing larger issues of structural violence[5].

2.3.1: Public Health and Eugenics

As Paul Lombardo (2019) suggests there are many connections between the modern form of public health and eugenics. They are closely linked by history and ideology. Leaders in both

[5] I have already addressed the history of colonialism, western expansion, and white supremacy in Canada, this information is relevant to what is discussed in this section.

fields shared the same three ideas: prevention, efficiency, and progress (p. 2). These concepts represent the epistemological basis of bio-medicine and its dealings in social problems via the regulation of bodies. Eugenics attempts to control reproductive rights by forced sterilization, deterrence of breeding of the 'unfit', and encouragement of breeding by the 'fit' (McLauren, 1990). Eugenics, now a taboo term and practice, renders certain bodies as useless and death as inevitable (Lombardo, 2019). However, public health does not necessarily do much different. Public health prioritizes the collective over the individual and subsequently creates vulnerability in demographics that are racialized and of lower socio-economic status. It codes a general population that is "white, middle-class, and heterosexual" (Kinsman p. 1). Eugenics and public health both operate via the premise that there are those worthy of living and reproducing and those that are not.

When we look closer at the history of eugenics in Canada, the connection between it and public health becomes even more glaring. Canadian eugenic projects had many key figures. For example, Helen MacMurchy one of the most active in the first third of the twentieth century, pushed problematic beliefs about heredity and public health's role in protecting society (MacLaruen, 1990). MacMurchy believed that diseases reproduced and passed down by 'mental defective' women produced paupers and criminals. She advocated for sterilization to deal with the burden of the mental deficient and the threats that diseases posed to a healthy Canada (McLauren, 1990). In the discipline of eugenics, social concerns had medical solutions and this meant controlling reproduction.

What is left out of the official reports of Canadian eugenicists is the effect that racialization had on diagnosing mental defectiveness. There is never a direct statement that race was a factor in the deciding who was a 'mental defective'. However, Canada, as a colony with a

rich history of white supremacy, produced racialized divisions that were fundamental to these decisions. MacMurchy and other eugenicists regarded those living in poverty as having 'done it to themselves'. Making their genetics inferior and only capable of reproducing poverty. The demographic of the 'deficient' was overwhelmingly racialized populations. (what is your citation for this?)

Public health carries a similar tradition. "The expansive reach of public health law is justified by the government's 'policy power', the inherent authority to adopt laws to protect health, welfare, and morals" (Lombardo, 2019, p. 4). That is, medicine is the area in which government regulates bodily autonomy. The importance of heredity to the health of a nation continues to be a primary function of public health. However, more than this, COVID-19 has shown that public health is not equally accessible to all people. 'Public' is specific and does not belong to or include everyone. Gary Kinsman (2020) highlights several areas of COVID-19 policy that show a lack of attention and care for those that exist at intersections of social violence and oppression. The health initiatives of COVID-19: wash your hands, social distance, and stay home all reflect an assumption of a general social equality that has equal access to all resources. Washing your hands is not possible when one does not have access to clean water. Social distancing except for those who are 'essential workers' prioritizes capital accumulation over bodies of workers in malls, retail, and the fast-food industry. Staying home does not work for the homelessness and put domestic violence victims at increased risk, effectively eliminating their social ties to safe spaces (Kinsmen, 2020, p. 3). The assumption of equal access to safe and clean spaces justifies public health cutting corners.

When we take the perspective that Kinsman provides it is clear how public health has ignored the social life of COVID-19 and consequently perpetuates the shared ideology of

expendability in public health and eugenics. The disregard for elderly populations in nursing homes during the pandemic showcases the capitalist belief of labour and ability to work. Canada, as a white settler capitalist nation-state, carries the idea when one can no longer work they no longer serve a purpose to society and become a burden on the infrastructure of Canada. These people's lives were not prioritized over the maintenance of the economy. Even those that could provide labour but do not occupy a high enough economic position were put at risk. Young workers who could not afford or were not offered time off during the pandemic were forced into their jobs and required to interact with the public. Capitalism and public health literally required risk and death in order to serve the elite and corporations that dominate our world. Social distancing was only possible to those that could afford time away from work and had the safe space to do so[6].

FFs are extremely adept at expressing the faults in the public health care system. Though they do not always articulate their concerns in the most effective manner to appeal to those outside their movement, they still have what they consider to be legitimate concerns (opposition to and critiques of public health policy are always followed up by harmful rhetoric about anything from LGBTQ2+ rights to COVID-19 health measures, meaning their legitimate claims are undercut by regressive violent beliefs). On June 9th, 2021, Thompson posted a video to her website entitled "William Ray and Eugenics". Ray, a Canadian film maker based in British Columbia was brought onto Thompson's show to discuss his work and research on eugenics.

[6] It should be highlighted that public health is not simply eugenics rebranded or that public health does not serve a purpose. Instead, this section seeks to highlight that the ideology of public health shared with eugenics is inherently harmful. It does not account for difference in race, status, gender, and sexuality. It serves the ideal body of white, middle-class, masculine. Now, this is not a criticism of all public health policy. Mask mandates and vaccines have been proven to provide safety. There has to be measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the assumption that public health benefits all people equally dangerously creates populations that are expendable similarly to the way eugenics has. In both ideologies there are necessary losses of real people that are inevitable. Complacency is a dangerous precedent. We need to ask more of the systems that operate in our country.

Ray and Thompson discussed the role of 'mainstream media' and social media in the perpetuation of dominant narratives meant to quash any opposing ideas. This turned into a conversation on the relationship between eugenics and public health. Ray highlighted the way public health officers were often the ones to recommend and perform sterilization on women deemed not suitable for reproduction. Of course, this information about public health was used to establish distrust in COVID-19 health mandates and measures and to encourage people to join the movement. Although, the conversation quickly turned to harmful critiques of 'progressive movements' concluding LGBTQ2A+ rights, pronoun education, the existence of white privilege, and identity politics, Ray and Thompson presented a strong critique of public health's roots in eugenics.

Despite the extremely problematic ideas presented in the latter part of the video, Ray and Thompson are aware of the historical context of public health and its participation in the production of expendable bodies. There are many other areas in which FFs feel public health has failed to serve everyone. As mentioned above FFs feel very passionately about the loss of life in the elderly population and nursing homes. They are hyper critical of the disregard for protection of this portion of the population and is one of the main talking points used throughout the research period. FFs also have expressed on several occasions that home is not something safe for everyone. On a livestream, Friesen highlighted the rise in domestic violence and deaths since lockdown measures were first implemented. He also touches on access to resources for people with addictions or other mental health concerns and the deaths that are understood to be occurring from isolation.

More than anything else, FFs view of corporations and the 'elite' are extremely compelling. FFs constantly express their disgust with the accumulation of wealth and capital of

corporations like Amazon and the producers of COVID-19 vaccines. FFs point to an article published by *The New York Times* in which Pfizer, the manufacturer of the COMIRATY mRNA vaccine, planned to profit off its production. The article states that the "vaccine brought in $3.5 billion in revenue in the first three months of this year, nearly a quarter of its total revenue" and that it "would translate into roughly $900 million in pretax vaccine profits in the first quarter" (Robbins and Goodman, 2021)**.** FFs encourage their followers and other 'sleepy Canadians' to think about how one company could possibly make that much money when many people across the world have found themselves out of work and reliant on government grants to make ends meet. It is true that large corporation have benefitted while the rest of the world suffers, and this is an important point FFs make.

However, FFs often miss the intersectional factors of racism, classism, sexism homophobia, and transphobia. And more often than not their critiques reiterate violent beliefs and ideologies that perpetuate white masculine privilege. For example, FFs often claim that vaccine passports are equal to segregation and an attempt to create 'two classes of citizens' in which one has more rights than the other. They also often refer to police officers who give out tickets and participate in the arrest of pastors who refused to close their churches during the height of lockdown as 'Nazis'. Their legitimate concerns get lost in the rhetoric of conspiracy and conflation. Causing outsiders to reject any and all discourse that is produced by the FF movement.

2.4: Comparing Two Worlds

This section seeks to present evidence for the deep structural connections that link public health and the FF movement. There are several areas worthy of discussion, however, due

to conciseness I will only focus on one. This is the promotion, exchange, and validity of information and evidence. This will utilize Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model in an attempt to showcase the perpetuation of structural violence through the dissemination and subjectivity of fact during the COVID-19 pandemic. The propaganda model will allow visualization of the deep structural shared between the two groups. The conception that the relationship between FFs and the government is purely oppositional is false. FFs and the Canadian government both oppose and support each other simultaneously, and this fact should not be ignored.

2.4.1: The Propaganda Model and COVID-19

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* Herman and Chomsky (1988) discuss the propaganda model. This states that hegemonic structures require propaganda in order to maintain stability. Power in the hands of the state means "monopolistic control of the media" (p. 1). This control passes through the five filters of mass media.

> "Filters fall under the following headings: (I) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary source of income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and the 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media; (5) 'anti-communism' as a national religion and control mechanism." (p. 2)

In tangent with these filters is the persistence of false narratives of the existence of objectivity in the media and in other sites of information exchange. Those who work in media that pass along information believe they possess objectivity that produces fact not opinion. However, these 'facts' are pieces of social or political agendas. The agendas of media have become so ingrained

and inherent that they only look like objectivity (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, p. 3). The filters combined with the narrative of objectivity produce a system of information generation and exchange that fundamentally serves elite interests.

The mainstream media (MSM) of the past and present utilize the five filter to maintain a sense of control over the entire industry. Taxes, other expenses, and limitation of ownership dictate and maintain dominance of specific news providers, funding from advertisement is limited to those that can attract consumer spending and often is not available or attainable to smaller or radical media firms, and powerful sources use their status to control the flow of information to perpetuate a favourable outcome. MSM thus projects a dominant ideology into the mind of viewers. However, it is not just MSM that produces propaganda. FFs also participate in virtually the same practices when producing and disseminating their 'facts' and news. Meaning, the processes of knowledge production between the two groups is founded upon the same ideological constructions of how to go about becoming and unifying people around a cause: monopoly and control of the production of truth.

2.4.1.(a): The First Filter

The first filter relates to the price of media and information production. The powerful elite control media and reduce 'radical' media by encouraging and implementing taxes, operating costs, and directly controlling the ownership of media firms (p. 3). This creates a hierarchy in the media. Top tier media, or the media giants, control and "defines news agendas and supplies much of the national and international news to the lower tiers of the media and thus for the general public" (p. 4-5). This hierarchy, motivated by profits produced by the government, corporations, and advertisers creates specific 'newsworthy' content that is then reproduced by lower tiers.

Media giants monopolize the field, and this is an essential part of the way people create, justify, and protect their sense of self and community.

FFs are unique in the way they participate in this filter in that they maintain an ingroup hierarchy specific to their channels of knowledge production. They are widely considered bottom tier in terms of conceived legitimacy, funding, and reach. However, this does not prevent them from streamlining a single (yet ever changing) narrative that serves the same role of defining the self by those that consume content. The hierarchy of the first filter is of a much smaller scale than MSM's, but is just as affective at regulation, contests, and negotiations of identity. This hierarchy is expressed in the strict maintenance and idealization of leaders. Despite what the FFs claim about their movement being open to everyone, their strict leadership standards suggest a highly constrained and specific criteria for becoming a prominent figure within the movement. As discussed in chapter 1, only white, cisgender, heterosexual men are able to occupy the true definition of a leader. Any other person that fills leadership roles never reach the same level of status or admiration simply because 'naturally' they do not hold the capacity of a full-fledged leader. This puts a significant amount of power in the hands of full status leaders, allowing them to choose which information to present or dismiss. This fundamentally affects those below them in the movement and consequently the narrative adopted by the masses. By limiting the number of people who are able to produce narrative, (however temporary or contradictory) to those that can embody the idealizations of the movement they unify their followers. This keeps FFs informed and provides an anchor for their personal identities.

2.4.1.(b): The Second Filter

It is no secret the role that advertising plays in MSM. Advertising provides income to media firms, and thus controls access to information and diversity within the media. Appeal to consumers becomes a primary focus of MSM, and more than this, MSM becomes susceptible to corporation compliance. Media sources must appeal and present information that promotes advertisement interest. Those that cannot produce this interest are doomed to fail (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The pandemic is not an exception to the power of advertising. Though the pandemic did shutdown much of our lives it played a key role in increasing online traffic for shopping. Promotions for curb-side service at grocery stores, restaurants, and retail stores has become a huge business. Online shopping spiked, especially through expedited shipping corporation like Amazon, whose net income increased "38% to $386 billion, a yearly increase of over $100 billion" (Kohan, 2021). It is beyond the scope of this project to address the media direct role in increasing profits for corporations, but it is undeniable that advertisement in the media had a significant effect.

For the FF movement, advertising plays a huge role in the maintenance of political campaigns, support of small business, and self-promotion. Though many often promote local small businesses or businesses that allow entrance without face masks or vaccinations, the majority of their advertisement comes in the form of branded products advertised during their livestreams. FFs sell and promote anything from BBQ sauce to coffee branded with prominent figures faces and names. Additionally, FFs will ask for donations to cover political campaigns, bail, legal fees, self-help books or to help grow the movement in general. Freedom fighting is a big business. The promotion of products and requests for donations are present in nearly every livestream.



Figure 24: Examples of advertisements made during a livestream.

2.4.1.(c): The Third Filter

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a relatively singular narrative has been produced and reproduced. This reflects the ability for MSM to turn information into fact and cement social differences in doing so. Wash your hands, stay at home, wear a mask, get the vaccine. This narrative, although may not be to everyone, holds the quality of propaganda from the position of

the FF. Repeated rhetoric over and over, constant rotation of the world's foremost experts. The experience and labelling of information as propaganda is highly relation and specific. What is propaganda to one is not propaganda to another. The narrative dominant in MSM is positioned against the FF community. Therefore, representing a set of actions and ideologies that are attempting to negatively impact the world of the FF. Though some aspects of this dominant narrative have changed since the beginning of the pandemic, generally, the message is the same: trust the experts and trust your government.

However, for the FF the experts represent what they refer to as the 'elite agenda'. Anti-elite discourse is a commonly woven through FF interactions and performances. FFs distrust for 'academics' is often articulated through their expression of the idea of research. Research and science, as briefly discussed in chapter 1, has become a symbolic representation of positionality and accessibility. The terms have been coopted, causing a quality of ambiguity. For FFs research conducted on Google, Facebook, and other social media sites is as, if not more, valid as 'elite research' conducted by those they deem 'soldiers of the globalists'. It is easy to reduce this to bias confirmation, however, for FFs this is about more than the data collected, it is an articulation of their feelings of alienation. Many FFs do not occupy a socio-economic status high enough to allow them access to formal post-secondary education systems. To say they are uneducated it reductive. Instead, their education should be framed as positionally through social pressures, access, and systems of whiteness. In an interview conducted by Thompson a holocaust survivor argued that there are "very serious parallels between then and now" (referring to the Nazi regime pre-World War II and COVID-19 in Canada) and that "the less educated trust common sense and get what is happening, but most academics at universities are completely in the fog". This interview demonstrates the deep distrust for academic work, research, and people as their spheres

of communicability do not overlap with the FFs. In other words, there is not direct or healthy dialogue or exchange of information because the space between these two spheres is too large.

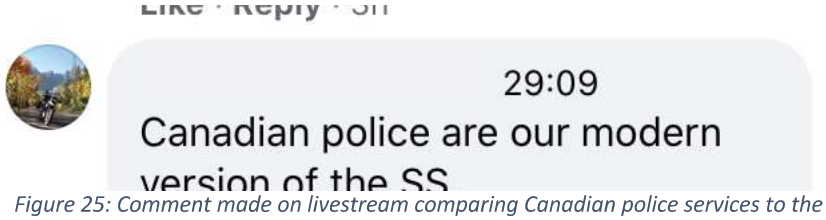


Figure 25: Comment made on livestream comparing Canadian police services to the Nazi Germany.

A comparison between the Holocaust and the COVID-19 pandemic is extremely harmful. However, the expression of this comparison showcases a complete rejection of academic authority. This is crucial to the third filter of the FFs. The experts of the academic and MSM world occupy a position inaccessible to FFs, and it is this inaccessibility that cements the idea that the experts serve an ulterior agenda that threatens their way of life.

However, FFs employ a similar tool in their production of information and knowledge. FFs use and amplify the voices of doctors, nurses, and others who both share their beliefs and occupy the inaccessible sphere. In several livestreams two Canadian doctors were featured in their plea to refuse vaccinations, especially for children. Dr. Francis Christian, the primary doctor cited and featured in livestreams argue that vaccines violated informed consent and presented extreme risk to medical procedure and safety. Dr. Christian, who identified himself as "generally very pro-vax" went on to say that the vaccines are necessary only in elderly populations. Requiring children to take them was not just unnecessary but wrong. This narrative found its way into the most arguments against vaccinations and continues to be used months after Dr. Christian first produced it. Though the contradiction of distrusting one academic for

another is difficult for FFs to reconcile, their trust in experts like Dr. Christian is closely linked to values of honesty, integrity, and personal sacrifice.

Both groups use expert advice as a means to the circulation and legitimation of information. This process of legitimation validates identities and justifies actions. Both groups use this filter to reproduce specific/subjective normal and acceptable behaviour. Experts are at the beginning of the supply chain of validity, and the contest of the two groups of experts is an unfolding process.

2.4.1.(d): The Fourth Filter

Flak is described as the "negative responses to media statement[s] or program[s]" (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 26). Flak produces pressure to correct or adjust actions and meanings and is often costly to media outlets depending on the severity of the incident. Receiving flak can damage a media outlets ability to attract advertisers, and therefore, generate profit. Additionally, flak production does not always come from consumers. Competitive media firms, elite people, and corporations also produce it. This means that the ability to produce meaningful and serious flak is directly tied to power (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 26). This flak controls who can and cannot produce constant content and restricts media freedoms to the extent in which it serves the powerful and wealthy.

FFs mobilize flak in maintaining the stability of the movement and keeping their members focused on the task of fighting for freedom. Flak, for FFs, comes in two forms. The first is their discipline of their leaders and prominent figures when they may step out of line. Despite the contradictory manner of their sociality, it is possible to cross group boundaries. Prominent figures are exposed to loose, yet constant, surveillance of their activities to ensure the

movement remains unified. The second form comes in their description and language about specific media outlets, specifically, CNN, CBC, and Global News.

Towards the end of my research period a significant crack within the movement appeared. Christopher Soccoccia, better known as Chris Sky, came under fire for his "temper tantrum" at the Canada day 2021 Freedom Rally. Sky, who has garnered one of the largest followings among the leaders in thee movement, was originally denied a slot to speak at the rally. When Sky arrived at the rally, expecting to speak, he was only given a limited time slot. Sky, angry with his treatment, reacted poorly. Many people were disappointed in his actions. FFs described him as having "too big of an ego" or "in the fight for the profit not the freedom". His image in the public eye drastically decreased as people began to articulate their disdain for his lack of integrity and honor. This was not the only time Sky had come under fire. Sky's book *Just Say No,* which he describes as "fifty pages of condensed knowledge and power", was often not delivered or shipped when ordered online. In fact, I myself ordered the book. After three weeks and several emails I cancelled my order. This type of flak monitors members via character traits that violate the core bio-sociality of the FF movement: integrity and bravery.

The second form of flak used by the movement is in their descriptions and distrust for MSM, specifically, CNN, CBC, and Global News. FFs believe that these media channels are directly linked to the globalist agenda and that any media produced by them is propaganda. Much of this distrust comes from the critical nature of these channels in Trump and the 2020 presidential election. As discussed in chapter 1, FFs collective nostalgia for 'better times' are represented by Trump and his administration. Therefore, any media outlet that questions Trump's actions or has declared Biden the current president of the United States, is automatically labelled as untrustworthy and serving an agenda. Furthermore, the tension between left- and right-wing

media adds another layer. Fox News often spotlights alternative treatments like Ivermectin and HCQ and tends to question the very existence of COVID-19. These alternative narratives cement FF ideas and conceptions about COVID-19, establishing apprehension to any news outlets that do not reflect a similar narrative. This makes them reliant of Fox News as their primary source of information.

The forms of flak above all seek to regulate and maintain narrative and categories of identity. Though FFs and MSM both utilize flak in different ways, the overall premise of policing and solidifying boundaries is the same.

2.4.1.(e): The Fifth Filter

The fifth filter of the propaganda model is anti-communism as a unifying system of opposition. Anti-communism is an extremely strong frame that attempts to instill fear of the 'unknown other' in order to create ties within the community. By identifying and assigning meaning to the other one creates the collective self. This filter differs from the others in that both MSM and the FF movement mobilize this in a very similar fashion. During the COVID-19 pandemic especially, anti-communism equates anti-China, and this has fueled Asian hate throughout the pandemic.

Preventing the spread of the virus has become preventing the spread of "communist China" and their "regime against freedom" (quotes from a FF livestream). The idea that COVID-19 originated in Wuhan China, be it as a zoonotic disease, or as FFs believe, a man-made one, creates negative images of Asian peoples across the world. The obsession around a 'cause' of COVID-19, especially during the early stages of the pandemic, created extreme circumstance of othering in which a history of distrust and anti-communist narratives were proved correct. This

justified and caused a startling rise in anti-Asian hate crimes. Asian hate is, sadly, not new nor unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. There exists a long history of violence suggesting "social entrenchment of [a] xenophobic mindset" (Gover, 2020, p. 650). This ranges from immigration and establishment of China towns in both the US and Canada, to the formation of internment camps that saw the imprisonment of as many as 24,000 Japanese Canadians (Roy, 2020). Though there may not be direct links to anti-communism within all occurrences of Asian hate, it is necessary to locate them within larger systems of opposition to understand the connections between anti narratives. The fifth filer creates possibility and spaces in which Asian hate can operate. These spaces and the threshold of acceptability have been expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4.1.(f): Putting the Filters Together

The propaganda model is only one way lens in which we can observe the similarities between the movements. Although they may go about specifics in different ways, the government and its associated institutions, as well as the FFs both actively engage in the same tactics to produce, reproduce, and articulate not just information but knowledge systems as well. Though both groups would like to lay claim to purely oppositional positionalities, the reality is that they are both made possible and make possible the same structures of violence and oppression; both participate in the creation and maintenance of each other. Public health creates the possibility of the biosocial bricoleur to exist. It provides the 'things' that they use and redefine to create their universe and truth. FFs, through their vocalization, protests, and rallies create divisions that allow public health policy to go without larger systemic critique. Though

many go about embodying the pandemic differently than FFs, not noticing the inherent connection between the two systems dooms us to miss opportunities for action and agency.

2.4.3: Deep Structure

These groups rely heavily on the same deep structures in order to exist and maintain stability. These structures include white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and sexism. These structures breath life into possibility and constitute the idea of a universal body or a 'public' health. Just as there is no such thing as a universal body, there is also no such thing as a public health because health services serve unequally. Both are brought into existence via propaganda, power, and oppression. States become "primary definers" (Briggs, 2005, p. 282) of normality in which communicability becomes not simply a means of transmitting knowledge, but a foundation for 'truth'. This truth is expected to be widely accepted and adopted into everyday life. However, FFs who perpetuate and represent the very universals that public health creates, fight against these truths because of their surface level experiences of social stress and marking. By paying more attention to what the bricolage creates instead of what they use to build means we miss a crucial connection: that opposition and sameness are not mutually exclusive but dialectal. The similarities of deep structure represent inconspicuous overlapping spheres of communicability in which processes of power relations and capacities to produce knowledge are reinforce, normalized, and weaponized. Once these processes are undertaken and become unquestioned expendable bodies are produced. These expendable bodies are destroyed, disregarded, and cast away. Real people have become a necessary loss for the 'greater good'. Out survival of COVID-19 is built upon the graves of those compressed into not just a pandemic, but a syndemic.

Conclusion

Jan 27 2020, Canada gets its first case
Feb 20 2020, Canada has its first case in which the person did not recently visit China
March 8 2020, Canada reports its first death
March 11 2020, WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic. Canada reports over 100 Cases
April 15 2020, Canadian death toll surpasses 1,000
April 23 2020, Canadian death toll surpasses 2,000
April 28 2020, Canada hits 50,000 cases
March 12 2020, Death toll surpasses 5,000
June 18 2020, Canada records more than 100,000
October 19 2020, Canada passes 200,000 cases
November 16 2020, Canada passes 300,000 cases
December 6 2020, Canada surpasses 400,000 cases
December 20 2020, Canada surpasses 500,000 cases
December 28 2020, Canada surpasses 15,000 COVID-19 related deaths
January 16 2021, Canada surpasses 700,000 cases since its first case just under a year ago.

Table 2: Total deaths and cases of COVID-19 in Canada from January 2020 to January 2021. Global News, 2021. https://globalnews.ca/news/7597228/covid-canada-timeline/

Alberta and Saskatchewan, on September 20th 2021 and September 28th 2021 respectively, rolled out their vaccine mandate program commonly referred to as the 'vaccine passport' or 'vax pass'. This mandate made it necessary to have both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to enter restaurants, entertainment venues like casinos and nightclubs, and indoor fitness

centres. This reinvigorated the FF movement, and as of November 1st 2021, is the primary talking point of the FF community.

Although vaccinations had been a main concern for the movement since they became available in Canada to the general population on December 14th 2021, the vaccine passport represents an entirely new and all-consuming threat to their movement. This threat has been utilized as a tool of the theoretical and ideological framework of the bio-social bricolage. It is used to articulate anti-communist rhetoric, encourage resistance, and call for revolution across Canada. The passport like all that I have discussed previously is not perceived as an avenue of defeat, it is redefined to create meaningful work and discourse within the movement. Many FFs, including Friesen, have taken up legal action in the form of a class action lawsuit with the goal of banning vaccine mandates permanently. New prominent figures and role models are emerging as athletes and celebrities refuse to get vaccinated. The defence of freedom has exploded across all platforms and the movement continues to gain followers.

Although the vaccine passport is relatively new, much of the same patterns and tools are being used to represent the threat to the movement. FFs are still utilizing graphs and authoritative wording to promote their form of research and definition of science, they are still focused on the imminent threat of the globalists and communists, and they continue to utilize terminology and slogans form other areas of social justice like reproductive rights and racial justice. Many posts regarding vaccine passports utilize the hashtag #EndDiscrimination, #MyBodyMyChoice, and #FreedomOfChoice, claiming that passports are creating ‘two classes of citizens’ and with it assigning the title of segregation.

FFs are preforming their beliefs and ideologies of resistance in mostly the same ways just in synch with more current events and mandates. This means that their movement, and

therefore, their bio-sociality is in a constant state of becoming. They are adjusting to new measures and changes, adapting their universe, and molding their truth through the communicability of contradiction and fear. This is the evolution of the body politic. As new social regulations and controls are implemented around them, FFs find new and creative ways to stabilize their identity and maintain their movements capacity for mobilization. Social movement, in the face of the vaccine passport, is made possible by the adaptability of the body politic in its ability to maintain a solid group. As vaccine passports locked FFs out of movies, restaurants, gyms, and other entertainment spaces, the body politic has become especially important to signify ones belonging to the movement. If they are to be locked out of spaces it must be clear to those around them that they are doing it for a cause bigger than themselves, they are sacrificing something just as those they idealize have.

Yet, despite these changes one thing stays constant. The social body, as a means to maintain the heteropatriarchal 'natural order of things' has not wavered nor been transformed. It still remains a natural, unadulterated, pure, free, and white body. All social relations that come out from this nexus are employed to encourage and establish continuity of the FF ideal social body.

On the other side, public health and the government are also doing much of the same. The continuation of measures like wash your hands, stay at home when you are sick, and socially distance, continue to ignore the heterogeneity and capacity for all people to follow these rules without additional support. Statistics Canada makes certain information more accessible than others. The demographic breakdown of COVID-19 on the Statistics Canada page is primarily broken down by age group, other information about race and socio-economic class are harder to find. The inability to acknowledge the failures to protect and address difference fundamentally

erases the experiences and effects of white supremacy, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism. It reduces COVID-19 to a biological pandemic, instead of addressing the synergistic suffering taking place. Public health has defined all people as a singular standard human who has equal access to all resources. Through their policies public health continues to perpetuate violence against any person who cannot occupy the standard threshold.

The feud between the two groups has continued to damage those caught in the middle. FFs constant rhetoric of the 'tyrannical government' that is 'ushering in communism through vaccine passports' and the governments constant disregard to hear criticism (no matter the direction it comes from) and implement change, both normalize the behaviour of and embrace white supremacy as a structural foundation. This acceptance of the ideological basis of whiteness only compounds the experiences of people who exist at a state of vulnerability to the synergetic exposure of COVID-19 and other violence. FFs and public health, through their simultaneous existence and surface level opposition, validate each other and ensure the continuity of oppression and compression of expendable bodies.

In this paper I have presented the argument that Freedom Fighters and public health operate via the same deep structures that creates expendable bodies and confirms a narrative of 'for the greater good'. The two groups go about performing and articulating their beliefs in very different ways. FFs, as bio-social bricoleurs, occupy unique spheres of communicability and engage in the process of meaning making in which difference is created whereas the Canadian government and public health utilize dominance and corporational agendas to sustain a political structure of elite interests that benefit little of the population. Despite these differences, both 'sides' legitimize and reinforce each other's existence via a shared deep structure. Noticing this link is foundational to challenging and destabilizing structural violence that damages and

destroys the lives of those that cannot occupy the ideal body of the white, cisgender, heterosexual man. The FFs believe that "we" are at a critical point in history. This is true. COVID-19 has presented us with the opportunity to address social justice issues head on. It has uncovered the systemic inequality that prevails nation and worldwide. By properly locating ourselves and movements like the FFs within these institutional inequalities, we may begin to unravel the violence and the politics of life, death, and suffering.

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