OPERATION JADE HELM: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Operation Jade Helm: A Cultural Analysis of Public Opinion

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Postmodern sociological theory surfaced in the 1960's and has remained a dominant field of study among cultural theorists up to present day. Postmodernism serves as the basis for an examination of "collective opinions" in relation to Operation Jade Helm. This research clarifies American citizens' points of view towards their government and its proceedings, along with its inner motives. Summoning David Riesman's cultural theory from *The Lonely Crowd*, Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*, Anthony Giddens's *The Consequences of Modernity*, and Jean Baudrillard's *The Perfect Crime*, along with *America*, this paper shows how these renowned theorists and theories illuminate collective movements regarding Operation Jade Helm. I use systematic content analysis as my research method, examining news articles in order to gauge public opinion. This research explores the everyday American's opinions towards the government's motives behind the exercise, Operation Jade Helm. Operation Jade Helm has formed a lot of debate in the US from the day the exercise's plan was released to the public. Its supporters cite that the federal government is performing these exercises with the superior goal of defending US citizens from civil turmoil or urban terrorism. Nevertheless, opponents view Operation Jade Helm with mistrust and suspicion as an act of tyranny and undemocratic values. In sociology, there is a broad range of theories under the rubric of collective behavior and movements including but not limited to, riots, fads, mass hysteria, and moral panic. These topics

benefit from theoretical concepts such as David Riesman's other-directedness, Erik Erikson's concept of trust, Jean Baudrillard's writings on hyper-reality and simulacra, and Anthony Giddens's vision of modernity as a juggernaut. The significance of this study lies in its analysis of American cultural values pertaining to democracy in a changing societal world.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my closest friends and family. I want to dedicate this research to my closest friends who have provided me with invaluable support throughout this process. I also want to dedicate this research to my beloved dog Bentley, who spent countless hours by side as I completed this project. Lastly, a special appreciation to my loving parents, Gary and Danielle Richey, who have taught me all throughout life to follow my dreams. Their constant support and words of encouragement have provided me with the drive and passion to pursue whatever I set my mind to. I could not have accomplished this without all of you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Operation Jade Helm

In March of 2015, the U.S. Army announced a military exercise called Operation Jade Helm that would take place in ten of the United States between July 15 and September 15, 2015. Subsequent military announcements and media coverage about this event obfuscated rather than clarified the intent and issues surrounding this event. For example, "one of the pages in the [Army] presentation contains a map of the Southwest, where the states of Texas and Utah and several Republican counties in Southern California are labeled as 'hostile'" (Austin, 2015). Operation Jade Helm was "one of the largest training exercises in history" (Patrick, 2015). But what exactly did it entail? The military gave several conflicting accounts of the operation's goal. One version was that "the goal of the routine mission [was] to simulate U.S. Special Forces helping resistance fighters restore democracy in an imaginary country" (Patrick, 2015). The military referred to the operation as a "routine mission" at the same time that it admitted that "the size and scope of Jade Helm is unprecedented" (Austin, 2015). How can a mission be "routine" and "unprecedented" at the same time?

Another version was that the soldiers would "be practicing all of the things they do well; airborne insertions, raids, direct action missions and counter-guerilla operations" (Austin, 2015). Yet another version was that the military would be "collecting Human Intelligence, HUMINT, on population centers" such that "everything and anything is collected, learned, and dissected about citizens in a given locale" (Austin, 2015). Whereas the initial announcement made it seem

that the Army would be conducting the operation, the military announced later that it would include "additional special forces units from the Navy, Marines, and Air Force" (Broze, 2015). After Jade Helm had ended, "Army officials said the drill was conducted to provide Army Green Berets, Navy SEAL team members and other Special Operations forces with a realistic war-game experience that included military personnel playing the roles of good guys and bad guys" (Fernandez, 2015).

At first, the media assumed that the military personnel taking part in Jade Helm would be identified by wearing their military uniforms. But it was reported that the operation would include "participants in civilian dress and civilian vehicles" (Watson, 2015). Likewise, a chief deputy from the Sheriff's Office specified that the exercise would "set up cells of people and test how well they're able to move around without getting too noticed in the community," that their intentions were fixed in "testing their abilities to basically blend in with the local environment and not stand out and blow their cover" (Watson, 2015). In other words, some of the soldiers would be indistinguishable from civilians. To add to the confusion, "the Army reported that 'all troops involved will be wearing an arm band with a marking that identifies them as part of the exercise'" (Milford, 2015). This announcement contradicts the claims that some of the soldiers would be in civilian clothes. Furthermore, the exercise took place on private as well as public land.

But no one knows exactly what took place during the exercise: "One week before the Jade Helm exercise kicked off, U.S. officials announced that media journalists would not be allowed to embed with the military for the exercise, bringing the lack of transparency surrounding the

exercise back to the forefront" (Broze, 2015). Ironically, American journalists have been allowed to embed with U.S. military units and combat operations in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but were not allowed to embed and cover Operation Jade Helm within the borders of the United States.

Understandably, fear and confusion arose among the population, and the Pentagon dispatched US Army Special Operations Director of Public Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Lastoria, to calm their fears, including fears of the government engaging in martial law. Ultimately, Lastoria appealed to the public's trust of the American military, not of its government, to allay their fears. He publicly affirmed that the military has always been, and still is, fully "invested in everybody's personal rights and their privacy" (Berman, 2015). During a public meeting in Bastrop, Texas, he said:

> I would just ask everybody not to mix apples and pumpkins, ok? Let's do it that way. This institution [the military] right here has been around for over 240 years. I have transitioned in this uniform, various shades of it, under five presidents—all of it peacefully. You may have issues with the federal government. You may have issues with the administration. So be it. But this institution has been with you for over 240 years (Berman, 2015).

In consequence of expert and media sources attributing several contradictory motives to the exercise, people became suspicious and wary of the true objectives behind Jade Helm. Many citizens began to speak out against the exercise to ensure that their constitutional rights were not being, and would not be, violated. Americans faced a battle between the traditional, inner-directed beliefs and values derived from the Constitution versus the other-directed, conformist, interpretations of the media put forth by the government and the media.

In seeking to analyze this event and its consequences, I will avoid the labeling the citizens who were fearful of the operation as "conspiracy nuts." What actually occurred during Operation Jade Helm was kept secret from the public and perhaps will never be known. However, there was extensive media coverage of the event including how the military presented it to the public. My goal in this study is to analyze this media coverage in relation to sociological theory pertaining to the central issues that emerged from this coverage: public trust versus mistrust in the government and the military; the contradictions, ironies, and inconsistencies in the government as well as media accounts of the operation; the contrast between the face-to-face meetings with the public affairs officer versus the faceless, almost invisible interaction with a metaphorically ghost-like military operation that took place in secret.

The concepts in sociological theory that relate to these issues are: trust, simulacra, postmodern circulation of fictions, sincerity, and fake sincerity, among others. The theorists who wrote about these concepts that I will apply to these issues are Jean Baudrillard, Erik Erikson, Anthony Giddens, and David Riesman.

David Riesman and other-directed conformity

David Riesman began his intellectual career attending Harvard as an undergraduate and also graduated from Harvard Law School in 1913. Subsequent to becoming the first sociologist to be featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, Riesman became a professor at Harvard University in 1958. Building upon the works of prominent sociologists such as Thorstein Veblen and Sigmund Freud, he inspirationally wrote his most famous book, *The Lonely Crowd*, which remains the best-selling sociology book of all time at 1.5 million copies sold. His cultural theory describes

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persons who value inner-directed, tradition-directed, or other-directed principles, depending upon the way they channel their energy and the way they were socialized. If you were to be tradition-directed, you would be constrained by shame and have faith in elders, along with an established way of doing things. Today however, the majority of society is inner-directed or other-directed. When you are inner-directed you are controlled by guilt, while the other-directed type is inclined to feelings of anxiety. Other-directed types feel this apprehension as a consequence of confronting a Milky Way Galaxy of choices. The metaphor of Milky Way Galaxy of choices exemplifies a person encountering countless choices to pick from, ultimately making commitment more difficult. On the other side of this perspective, inner-directed types follow a metaphorical Gyroscope or the North Star, involving few choices and unproblematic commitment. The inner-directed type is associated with print culture (books, newspapers) while the other-directed type is associated with media (radio, television) and social media. Riesman claims that within society, if you are inner-directed, you contribute to production, as opposed to consumption if you were other-directed. Inner-directedness characterizes a person as a freethinking individual, while the other-directedness characterizes a conformist to others' thoughts. Riesman's cultural theory relates to civic opinion because both sides of this type-spectrum persuade people to perceive endeavors in contrasting lights. Inner-directed thinkers obtain the power to think and act for themselves and will not be easily influenced by what others believe or claim. Other-directed thinkers are more likely to conform to others, or the media's ideas and opinions, because they have lost the power of thinking for themselves.

Erik Erikson and the issue of trust

Erik Erikson established himself among quite an odd state of affairs. As a young man, he ran away from home and gave himself a new name, literally "Erik, the son of Erik." Eventually Erikson came upon Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna, who was a psychoanalyst. Following Anna's time spent with Erikson, she certified him to be a psychoanalyst as well, even though he did not graduate from college. To many people's dismay, Erikson was later gifted the opportunity to teach at Harvard. One of his most well-known successes was a framed a set of childhood stages, containing six different phases that occur during early development. Releasing this concept in his book, *Childhood and Society*, he describes the first stage as the most essential: trust versus mistrust. He claims this stage is the initial foundation for all human development. You develop trust, or don't, depending on the care you received on a daily basis. When you are young, you completely rely on your caregivers, very much shaping your personality as you progress. Erikson argues that if you achieve trust in this critical stage of life, you will fundamentally be a more trusting person for the rest of your life. In order for society to stay functional, this fundamental trust must be present in everyday human interaction.

Anthony Giddens and the juggernaut

In the beginning of Anthony Giddens's career, he served as a professor at Cambridge University. He eventually went on to serve as an advisor under Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Giddens's 'third way' political stance is a driving aspect in Blair's political approach. This stance strives to collectively synthesize right-wing and left-wing policies, which illustrates the base behind a large part of Giddens's ideas and work. Anthony Giddens is well known for his book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, which provides a new and stimulating interpretation of

the social transformations related to modernity. Not fond of the word, post-modernity, Giddens renames it as radical modernity suggesting that truth is not totally lost, but fragmented. When the truth is fragmented, you may feel you cannot find truth, but are able to identify why you feel there is no truth. This idea contrasts the original post-modern idea that there is absolutely no truth. Giddens agreed with the postmodern idea of centrifugal force, but also added the aspect of centripetal force, a force that keeps you grounded. When Giddens thought about the self he preferred to look at the postmodern *loss of self* as an opportunity or chance to select a new identity, to begin again, unsoiled. In Giddens's radical modernity concept, truth was viewed as universal and thus it can be compared to ancient Greece or Rome, such as taking actions these countries did thousands of years ago, but applying them to modern times. In post-modernity, truth is historical, or different at different time periods, such that what we did fifty years ago is not what we will do today. Giddens viewed people as powerless, but with a sense of empowerment, opposed to feeling utterly powerless. When you experience this powerlessness in post-modernity, you accept that there is no reason to ask questions since you will receive no answers. Giddens described feelings as empty, yet full, and as a result you experience fright, however, a simple truth in radical modernity is soothing. Giddens also assumed that people feel hopeless in relation to protesting, yet they may still attempt it. This is different from the postmodern idea that one cannot even attempt a protest due to an emptying of power and hope. Overall, original post-modernism outlines the end of all truth, morality, and self. Whereas Giddens's *radical modernity* argues that even though truth and self may be defeated, there is still a definite rationale to still exist.

Jean Baudrillard and postmodern simulacra

Hailed as the chief spokesman for post-modernism, French professor Jean Baudrillard built the foundation upon which postmodernism grew. Holding an incredibly pessimistic view of society, he believed that the postmodern world was nothing but rootless, circulating fictions. In other words, truth no longer exists within our realm of life. Baudrillard develops this viewpoint in is his book, *The Perfect Crime*, which claims that all truth and traditional reality have been murdered at the hands of virtual reality. This virtual reality can also be referred to as hyper-reality, a concept claiming that reality is all an illusion. In this hyper-reality, society is consumed by electronics, which ultimately diminishes the aptitude for social interaction. From this position, truth ceases to exist, because we build this 'fake' reality to divert us from the ghastly place we truly live in, ultimately only receiving contentment within counterfeit ideas or possessions. When there is no truth, there is also no story.

CHAPTER II

ANTHONY GIDDENS AND TRUST IN ABSTRACT SYSTEMS AND EXPERTS

The social scientific study of trust originated from Erik Erikson and his concept of developing trust during the earliest stage of development. Erikson claimed that an "establishment of a good initial relationship to the world of skills and tools" is essential to the internal growth of trust within an individual (Lemert 2013, p. 253). Approximately forty years later, Anthony Giddens took Erikson's concept of trust and expanded it in order to fulfill the needs a more modern society brought. Giddens does not support the idea of personal trust and alleges that society demands a more abstract trust, characterized by and centered in faceless commitments. These commitments entail holding faith in symbols or expert systems, which have greater knowledge of the subject matter than the individual personally does (Giddens 1990, p. 80). Giddens's design behind these faceless commitments goes directly against Erikson's original proposal of valuing facework commitment; A theory of gaining trust relations through social connections in circumstances of copresence. Giddens does not consider copresence a necessary factor when developing trust in another person or system, hence the term faceless. Therefore Giddens sees no need for individuals, or groups, to have any presupposed face-to-face interactions in order to put their trust in one another. However, Giddens says "disembodied mechanisms" still require "reliability in a modern culture" in order to attain trustworthiness (Giddens 1990, p. 83). He relies on *access points* to achieve this reliability. They support the ground between facework and faceless commitments, as a way of blending post-modern trust into a more modern version of trust. These access points are entities that will answer to every day citizens, termed lay-people or

collectives, questioning any issue (Giddens 1990). A doctor, the military, Congress, or even the President and so forth can stand for an access point. These people work as the experts in abstract systems: they are the symbols Giddens wants people to respect in reference to having trust in the system. According to Giddens, this method of abstract trust and faceless commitment relies greatly on the "demeanor of the system representative," claiming that the expert will exemplify such a superior sense of knowledge that the collectives will be very likely to feel reassured and confident (1990, p. 85). He supports this notion with the mere fact that they are an expert with superior knowledge, and nothing more. Collectives are supposed to have faith in knowledge produced and calculated by access points, or experts, dismissing the pre-modern sense of personally generating trust in persons amongst copresense. When collectives do this, they are strictly putting all their confidence and belief into an abstract system.

Limitations to Giddens's theory of trust in abstract systems

As we move into a more postmodern society, the world is changing at a rapid pace, causing prior foundations begin to crack. Society is evolving and becoming very complex throughout numerous dimensions and Giddens's theory of trust in abstract systems cannot support this. People tend to not trust as easily in the postmodern era because abstract systems have botched their former trust. In consequence to this, people have moved to having greater prioritization of commitments to one institution over another. Postmodernism has caused Giddens's lay people to seek trust in specific sections of the abstract system, but not the abstract system as a unified whole. This statement can be directly proven in the 2015 *Gallup* poll concerning the confidence citizens have in U.S. Institutions, where 72% have confidence in the military, 52% have confidence in TV news, and a mere 8% have confidence in Congress (Jones 2015). Congress has

fallen to rank last each year since 2010, illustrating the institution citizens have the least confidence in, while the military ranks first since 1989, except for the year of 1997 when small businesses ranked first (Jones 2015). With this little of trust in Congress, the objective of everyone trusting in the system suffers in part because of Congress's huge role in day-to-day life. If people cannot put their trust in someone who decides major decisions for their country, people tend to have a difficult time trusting anything. Taking a closer look into the Gallup poll, small businesses are trusted by 67% of Americans, and big businesses are trusted by only 21% of the country. Also, the police achieved 52% trust in 2015, while the U.S. Supreme Court only received 32% of support from citizens (Jones 2015). Gallup conducts this specific poll every year since 1973, and every year the U.S.'s confidence in nearly all key institutions "central to the U.S. society," has fallen lower and lower (Jones 2015). This accumulation of data supports the idea that society has begun to seek support and trust within specific sections of Giddens's abstract system. With only the military and small business trust ratings rising, other major institutions are losing a lot of trust. Society no longer acts as a unified front when it comes to whom they choose to trust. The idea of experts, solely, generating knowledge for people to trust in diminishes the instant an expert makes a miscalculation or contradicting statement; And people have a tendency to not continue trusting a system that has failed them before. Therefore, Giddens's theory breaks down because collectives will no longer trust an expert or system 'just because' they are told to. This is a direct implication of the abstract system, or institution generating mistrust.

Giddens versus Erik Erikson's concept of trust

Another inaccuracy that Giddens suggested was the idea that all people are socialized to trust in

abstract systems, due to collectives having reached differing levels of education. Hence, telling

people to have a cohesive trust within every abstract system will not settle easily since opinions

are differentiated among education levels. When society has different opinions, trust tends to

break down in certain institutions and rise in others, depending on which view the person possess

(inner-directed or other-directed). Another *Gallup* study explored how American's evaluation of

Congress related to their awareness of news media and political knowledge. The results illustrate

that the more educated a person is about Congress, the more negatively they view it, regardless

of political party (Newport et al. 2015). This study supports the idea that the more educated a

person is, the more likely they are to view something suspiciously because they tend to know

how the institution truthfully runs. These types of people usually will not just believe what they

are told to believe. This is not the same for less educated people, who seem to trust in an

institution more readily and wholly. This is exemplified in straight ticket voting. With these two

poles of collectives, Giddens fails to evaluate how different levels of education may disturb the

complete, unified trust in systems. If all people did choose to hold full trust in abstract systems,

the truth would be given to them without any public argument. But, more educated persons will

not settle for being fed a fact. They tend to search for it themselves, not believing what they are

told on a whim. Seeing the gap between education levels in relation to people's willingness to

trust, Giddens cannot classify all people as trusting in abstract systems easily because not all

people are equivalent. *Gallup* proposes this study proves that criticisms in certain institutions

"are based on a realistic assessment of what these entities are doing rather than a lack of

awareness in what they are doing," supporting the idea of education level versus trust (Newport

et al. 2015). Giddens never considered this to be an axiom in his theory of trust in abstract systems, causing a major problem in trusting as a collective, unified front.

In addition, people are not receiving the reassurance that Giddens claims is essential to developing trust in abstract systems. Even though systems do still attempt to reassure their collectives, polls progressively show that even when this occurs, people do not believe the system or its attempted reassurance statement. This is apparent when Lieutenant Colonel Mark Lastoria was sent by Operation Jade Helm to ease tensions and fears of conspiracy surrounding Operation Jade Helm. *Yahoo News* wrote that when this meeting was being held with the intention of Lastoria reassuring citizens, they "erupted in applause when he was called a liar," suggesting that there is a deep mistrust within the system and its experts (Henricks 2015). Although most media coverage focused solely on assuring the public that there is no reason to fear the military exercise, a majority of the public did not believe they should disregard their fears. The mistrust surrounding Jade Helm may also stem from governmental organizations such as the *Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee*, which works to eliminate domestic individuals who may pose a threat motivated by anti-government or racist views (Broze 2015). This committee proposes that this institution, the American government, cannot trust their citizens, and this becomes a setback when asking citizens for trust in return. People prefer to form social relationships off a mutual understanding of expectations, and this relationship cannot form when a person is asked to trust an institution that does not trust them back.

Along with this committee, the mistrust in the government could also be evidenced in the *Minerva Research Initiative*, established in 2008, whose goal is to use social science to study

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topics such as civil unrest and domestic rebellion in the U.S. (Broze 2015). The Department of Defense runs this project in hope to better understand the human domain in relation with "strategic importance to the U.S." (DOD n.d.). This includes studying better ways to handle major domestic conflict, if it were to arise. So, the human domain is being studied, most likely without approval from the subjects who are under surveillance. This leads to distrust and concern within how citizens view the government.

In postmodernism, the expert can no longer play his role within his discipline when there are numerous other experts in the same discipline, with conflicting truth claims. This leads to a loss of reliability in the expert and without this reliability, people discredit the institution, or system, leading to doubt. This could be a consequence of using multiple truths to describe one object or occurrence, ultimately discrediting Giddens's idea of the single expert opinion, or truth. Collectives typically enter a state of distrust when consulting an expert because they do not know whom to believe, this expert or that expert. This runs parallel with collectives seeking a secondhand opinion, usually moments after they leave their personal doctor's office. They no longer experience faithful trust in a singular expert, inquiring multiple opinions on a specific truth. Stemming from experts expressing contradicting truths, an array of "truths" evolves, breaking down Giddens's theory of solely trusting the system because they allegedly know the real fact.

Furthermore, Giddens's claim to rely on the demeanor of the expert also folds under postmodernism because the majority of representatives are coached in how to act, what to say, plus body language. People know that experts are trained to particularly verbalize what the

public wants to hear and are coached to do all the right things in order to gain people's trust. With society's individuals catching onto this, Giddens's idea of trusting the abstract system based on demeanor deteriorates. This is directly illustrated when Bastrop city councilor addressed Jade Helm paranoia by stating expert's "answers given are not always communicated well," which leads to people experiencing uncertainty where issues are concerned (Austin 2015). These uncertainties arise from experts holding a demeanor persons know to not be true. They know the expert is only telling them what they desire to hear, shielding the actuality, the genuine reality. The public has also become increasingly aware that experts and spokespersons engage in "talking points" and carefully scripted presentations as opposed to honest dissemination of facts.

Ultimately, a major shift can be noticed from Erikson's pre-modern framework to Giddens's modern framework. Premodern context suggests that your local community is to provide familiar milieu and trust relations while Giddens's modernism advocates abstract systems as means of stabilizing trust indefinitely (1990, pg. 102). These two are fundamentally opposite, making the switch from pre-modernism to Giddens's modernism very complicated. Giddens's demand of collectives to alter their trust from tight-knit communities to a vague, global, and abstract system is problematic and way more complex than he hypothesized. Giddens did not look at the bigger picture when theorizing how people should trust, causing this modern theory of his to fall apart. He is asking all collectives to blindly trust abstract systems, or institutions as a whole, never to suggest people may choose to seek trust in only sections of the abstract system. This sectioned trust originates from various, and numerous character differences within collectives, negating Giddens's theory that all people can have an identical form of trust. When people possess contrasting levels of reliability, reassurance, education, experiences, and so on, it interferes with

how they may trust, whom they may trust, and how much they may trust. Forming faceless trust

in institutions and people involves aspects of relativity, and Giddens's theory of trust in abstract

systems omits this fact when he labels society as one entirety.

CHAPTER III

JEAN BAUDRILLARD AND THE SIMULACRA OF TRUST

Jean Baudrillard was a significant figure within the philosophy and sociology surrounding hyper-reality and simulacra. The first of these concepts represents reality as entirely an illusion, housing models to represent the actuality, which maintain no origin or reality. Therefore hyper-reality can be described as a "play of illusions and phantasms," which in turn creates a world of representations and unpredictability (Lemert 2013, p. 360). Simulacra stands for a copy of a copy, in which there is no original, and as a result, no distinction can be made between the real and the model. The universal goal of simulacra can be defined as a "strategy of deterrence," voiding all valid truth and replacing it with duplicates (Lemert, 2013, p. 360). Simulacra are directly exemplified through myths and other implosions of meaning, otherwise explained as stories having multiple truths, none of which are authentic. Thus, truth neither has an end nor principle attached to it, leading Baudrillard to claim there is no more truth left in the world. In Baudrillard's book, *The Perfect Crime*, he claims reality has been murdered, along with truth, and the world does not know why (2008, pg. 9). In this new world of bottomless truth, simulacra and hyper-reality gain control of every aspect pertaining to society. From Baudrillard's stance, this means postmodernism represents "*rootless circulating fictions*," or endless truths, all of which deconstruct one another. Postmodern society employs command models to produce the "real" and therefore, there is no truth or original object left to be found in the world. With no truth left, every real process deteriorates and there is no more distinction between the real and imaginary, spinning the world into an orbiting reoccurrence of models (Lemert 2013). Parallel to truth being murdered in postmodernism, Baudrillard also asserted epistemology to be no more.

With society lacking true knowledge, there ceases to be a way for anyone to distinguish the original from the simulacra, or replica. Every truth is now deconstructed or torn apart, illustrating the impossibility of finding real truth in the world. With never ending deconstruction, decentering, and implosion of meaning, society has little to no chance of rebuilding a stable, realistic world.

Baudrillard (2008) argued that society would never achieve the equivalent of the world's accidental destruction, by the act of deconstructing. So, by the act of deconstructing truth, along with constructing simulacra and hyper-reality, truth will forever be missing from the world. In other words, these actions are more regressive than constructive. For that reason, Baudrillard declared there would be no purpose in attempting to fix this loss of truth, since we have deconstructed beyond a point of return (Baudrillard 2008). Postmodern reality produces one big illusion, with absolutely no meaning or originality. Everything is now a copy of a copy or, a "product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere" (Lemert 2013, p. 358). With no atmosphere, everything becomes infinite and replaceable, including the truth. Baudrillard's postmodern truth is now simply an "irresolvable relationship between thought and reality" (2008:96). A relationship, that ultimately thrives off of simulacra.

Although there may be no real truth left in the world, people still attempt to gain a sense of truth from finding reality in illusions. This would be to say, "the real world is no more real than Disneyland," claiming the world to be just as hyperreal as the theme park, if not more (Lemert 2013, p. 339). By this Baudrillard is implying America is the real fantasy, filled with objects

such as astro turf or photoshop, items that produce simulacra, along with a heightened sense of hyper-reality.

Persons may believe they find truth in the "minutely detailed perceptions of the simulacrum," or from the opinions in which media outlets express. Baudrillard (2008) claimed this virtual reality took part in truth being murdered. Agreeing with him, Chomsky and Herman claim the media only serves as propaganda, on behalf of "powerful societal interests" (2002, p. 12). They are pointing out that where people may believe they find truth in the media, they may also find no truth due to government and corporate influence. Furthermore, in *Manufacturing Consent*, they state that powerful entities only press agendas and principles that they wish to advance. These "underlying power sources that own the media," control, finance, shape, and constrain media policy greatly (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.12). For that reason, the media typically do not produce and air their own news; they only report what they are told to by superiors. This loss of realism in media causes certainty to vanish, illustrating that there is no more real truth. Making matters even worse, media outlets have different sources and characteristics of influence, leading to many different versions of the story or report. When there are countless explanations and viewpoints on one event or story, the actual truth becomes jumbled and lost. Consequently, it becomes too difficult for society to know which story is true and which is not, leading to a loss of trust in media sources.

 People may still choose to follow their media source, but they usually are only receiving a simulacra of the actual reality. These simulacra lead down a continuous path of duplicates, where there is no true meaning to anything. So, with an absence of knowledge in society, we are only

led to believe what is a copy of the actual truth; This truth encompasses spins and talking points on reality, all of which decenter the actualities. Directly resulting from countless claims on one topic, people no longer identify with who, or what, they should accept as true. If persons were to personally go search for truth and make a claim, others would instantly deconstruct it, emphasizing the endless circulation of models.

If the entirety of truth has been murdered as Baudrillard claims, trust ultimately disappears too. Persons can no longer trust because there is no original truth or meaning to anything, only carbon copies of the truth exist. By having what Riesman called the "Milky Way Galaxy of choices" regarding truths, a person intrinsically loses faith in trusting anything. The results are widespread apathy and paralysis with regard to commitment.

Another major shift occurring from modernism to postmodernism is the connotation behind symbols. Before postmodernism symbols held fixed meanings, while in present day symbols have evolved to carry an array of meanings. With multiple meanings behind a single symbol, the symbol has no true significance. This is not the way symbols were always viewed, and Baudrillard's argument of no truth explains why symbols have attributed numerous, complex meanings. In postmodernism, symbols lose their fixed meanings and end up being attributed among several implications.

Operation Jade Helm produced a logo, or symbol, to represent the military operation; On this logo there is a wooden shoe, a sword, and two arrows. The words "Master the Human Domain" rest upon the bottom of the figure. At first glance it is difficult to recognize the wooden shoe, or

clog, that appears in the middle of the logo. This wooden shoe appears to be what is called a French *Sabot*. The word *Sabot* originated around the 12th century, combining the words "*Savate* (from the Arabic *Sabbat* for *shoe*) and bot (feminization of *boot*)" ("About French Wooden Clogs" 2012). Throughout history, this wooden shoe, the *Sabot*, has been given numerous symbolic meanings. *Sabot* is the root for the word sabotage, defined as "any undermining of a cause," or to "disable, vandalize, cripple" ("Sabotage" 2016). During the industrial era these shoes were worn by the working class, which sometimes led to riots concerning their labor, where they would throw their shoes into machinery in hopes of it breaking ("Direct Action and Sabotage" 2011). This action could be seen as a form of sabotage, against higher classes and tough production and labor conditions. This meaning was among the first to represent the wooden *Sabot* shoe. In the mid 1900's, Maurice Lambert was imprisoned by Germany in a concentration camp; she enlightened people of another use for these Sabot shoes. Lambert addressed the day Americans arrived to save citizens in the camps saying, "our only weapons were our wooden-soled shoes," they were ultimately used by us to "stamp and [strike]" the Germans to a brutal death the day of rescue ("Mauthausen Liberation" 2008). This exposes a more brutal importance behind these wooden shoes, one of defense and attack.

An additional association to the wooden *Sabot* shoe is that it is being the base word for saboteur. A saboteur's main purpose is to engage in sabotage, or to intentionally destroy something with ulterior, nefarious motives ("Saboteur" 2015). A saboteur act can even simply be a sibling purposefully setting you up for disaster. In 1945, William Donovan, head of the Coordinator of Information, now known as the Office of Strategic Services, gathered a force of saboteurs to gain secrets and worldwide intelligence. Donovan was appointed to this position by President

Roosevelt before World War II, and by the end of the war Donovan assembled an army of

"10,000 spies, saboteurs, commandos, propagandists and research analysts" to perform his

mission (Waller 2015). Therefore, saboteurs were used to weaken enemy confidence by

invading their covert intelligence and sabotaging it.

Another interesting meaning of "sabot" pertaining to the military directly is, a "metal ring at the

base of a projectile that makes the projectile conform to the rifling grooves of a gun" ("Sabot"

2016). A noteworthy aspect of this definition is to force an object to conform to something it is

not. This conformity illustrates reasons behind why sabots were used for destruction.

Interestingly, classical sociologist Thorstein Veblen discussed a diverse range of meanings

pertaining to the words sabotage and sabot:

> Sabotage is a derivative of 'sabot,' which is French for a wooden shoe. It means going
> slow; with a dragging, clumsy movement, such as that manner of footgear may be
> expected to bring on. So it has come to describe any maneuver of slowing down,
> inefficiency, bungling, obstruction. In American usage the word is very often taken to
> mean a forcible obstruction, destructive tactics, industrial frightfulness, incendiarism and
> high explosives, although that is plainly not its first meaning nor its common meaning.
> Nor is that its ordinary meaning as the word is used among those who have advocated a
> recourse to sabotage as a means of enforcing an argument about wages of the conditions
> of work. The ordinary meaning of the word is better defined by an expression which has
> latterly come into usage among the I.W.W., "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency" –
> although that phrase does not cover all that is rightly to be included under this technical
> term (in Mestrovic 2003, p. 85).

All of these definitions may seem puzzling to citizens in relation to Operation Jade Helm, such

as why the military used this symbol on the Jade Helm logo. It is not clear if the Sabot on the

military operation logo is symbolizing and forecasting the intentional sabotage, defense, offense,

or vandalism that is to come. Citizens are puzzled and perplexed which of these definitions the

military intended to illustrate upon making the Jade Helm logo. The implication of the wooden

Sabot shoe is not clear, nor is the message that Operation Jade Helm attempted to convey by

their logo. This confusion is a significant axiom in which postmodernism society produced.

Just as Baudrillard had argued that truth is lost in an infinite cycle of fictions, symbolism also has

gone astray. The effects of postmodernism insinuate a symbol that no longer conveys one single,

fixed meaning. Symbols now reside in a Milky Way Galaxy of indefinite connotations.

Figure 1. *Operation Jade Helm Logo.*

(Source: The Jade Helm Logo 2015).

CHAPTER IV

RIESMAN AND THE MANIPULATION OF THE MASSES THROUGH FAKE SINCERITY

David Riesman was a Harvard sociologist, best known for his best-selling book, *The Lonely Crowd.* It is interesting to note that he was appointed by the President of Harvard University as a professor, over the objections from the sociology department. His colleagues objected to him because his book was so popular, and because he was the first sociologist to be featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, which is not viewed to be especially academic. Riesman's most important insight is that modern societies are changing from tradition-directed, to inner-directed, and to other-directed in terms of social character. The tradition-directed type does not question government or policy, and in fact, pays little to no attention to politics. The inner-directed types however, are governed by a metaphorical gyroscope that consists of rigidly held political and other values. Finally, the other-directed type represents the contemporary person, someone who is a conformist and unsure about making any commitments to any person, thing, or idea. For this reason, the other directed type can be easily manipulated by inner-directed politicians, authority figures, and social media.

The cover of Riesman's book features a flock of sheep. The sheep symbolism represents contemporary, other-directed types who follow the whims of the crowd, and act only to please other around them. These other-directed social types tend to conform to whatever social status appears to be sincere and popular at the time, because they are incapable of maintaining rigid and sincere individual opinion. According to Riesman's book, the other-directed sheep are

characterized as generating mostly conformist, passive, and apathetic behavior. A wide circle of influences – especially the information and social media – more prominently guides other-directed people, compared to the tight-knit, familial influence in which the inner-directed is socialized. The other-directed types effortlessly accept what others say as genuine and sincere. The ability to trust their own individual thoughts is absent so they rely on *appearances* of sincerity from others to *persuade* themselves of what is true. For example, Riesman wrote, "just because such a premium is put on sincerity, a premium is put on faking it" (Riesman 1950, p. 196). Therefore making it more difficult to distinguish real sincerity from fake sincerity.

Inner-directed people, on the other hand, are more likely to personally differentiate between appearances and reality. Inner-directed types resist postmodern hyper-reality and simulacra, terms representing fakeness, in which the other-directed effortlessly pursue. Riesman portrays the inner-directed types as being personally, passionately, and sincerely for, as well as against, political issues such as slavery versus abolitionism, being for or against abortion, and all other political views. With regard to my project, this means that inner-directed types would have very strong and clear feelings about Jade Helm and the governmental actions related to this operation. Whereas, the other-directed type will be easily manipulated into being for or against Operation Jade Helm, or any other political issue, depending upon the directions suggested by authority figures, information and social media.

Postmodern theorists never gave thought to simulacra and hyper-reality producing something that is more than what meets the eye. For example, Baudrillard depicts the social world as a sea of rootless, circulating fictions with no rhyme or reason, and as not orchestrated by any authority

or media. Riesman, on the other hand, believes that there was a definite reason behind this cultural shift to other-directedness. It is a deliberate play on the emotions of the other-directed, by the inner-directed. Riesman is more concerned with the manipulation factor that resides in hyper reality, as opposed to the postmodern view of unsystematic simulacra. This exploitation stems from fake sincerity, which "implies the capability to manipulate one's self as well as others," and the person who practices this fake sincerity "comes to believe his or her own "lies"" (Mestrovic 2008, p. 31). When a person comes to believe their own lies, it becomes hard to distinguish between what is truly sincere and what is counterfeit. Simulacra and hyper-reality created a world in which people generate trust upon a forged basis, a basis given to them through manipulation and fake sincerity.

Americans place tremendous value on sincerity and more times than not, they will follow what appears to be sincere, regardless if it actually is. This becomes an issue when authoritative figures use this value in order to blindly manipulate other-directed masses. Riesman argues that the tradition-directed rely upon oral transmission of information and culture. Furthermore, he claims that the inner-directed rely upon on their written word such as newspapers, magazines, and books, to learn and to share information. However, the other-directed come to rely upon information and social media more than oral traditions or the printed word, to gather information and form their opinions.

According to Riesman, the culture of the written word allows for reflection, criticism, and analysis of information found in print media. However, the culture of the screen image – iPad, internet, iPhone, etc. – prohibits such analysis, reflection, and criticism. The screen image

instead allows for almost instantaneous manipulation of the other-directed masses, leaving no time for critical thinking. With regard to my project, this trend is exemplified by the numerous press conferences given by the government on behalf of Operation Jade Helm, which are then transmitted onto various screen images, including *Yahoo News*. It is important to note that today's young people especially do not read printed newspapers, but instead gather their news from their screen technology and peers.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

In general, the data supports my theoretical assumptions. As predicted by my analysis of Erikson and Giddens, 78% of the articles expressed distrust in the government, however 59% cited trust in the military. Therefore, despite the overall mistrust in the government, in keeping with opinion polls, the American people trust the military more than any other government institution. This is the strongest finding in my research and it exemplifies the apprehension to having trust in an abstract system as a whole, particularly with the government being the most salient issue.

Rasmussen Reports conducted surveys in 2015 that exemplify this concern of trust. One survey found that the confidence in the U.S. military is now at an all-time high, with 73% of U.S. voters believing the United States have the best military in the world ("Voters Still," 2015). Another *Rasmussen* survey in 2015 found that 62%, nearly two-out-three Americans believe there is too much government power and too little individual freedom, with only 10% thinking the opposite ("62% Say Government"). These findings reflect how Americans would rather put their trust in their military than their government, again highlighting a major fault in the system.

This fault surfaces yet again when Didymus (2015) reports that a poll conducted by *YouGov* found that 70% of Americans believe members of the U.S. military "want what is best for the country," whereas 71% of Americans believe members of Congress want only "what is best for themselves."

My strongest finding is augmented even further through a study published by the *Institute of Politics* at Harvard University entitled "Trust in Institutions and Political Process" (2015). Their study found:

> Compared to one year ago, the level of trust that young Americans between 18- and 29-years old have in most American institutions tested in our survey has dissipated compared even to last year's historically low numbers. For example, in the last 12 months, trust in the President has decreased from 39 percent to 32 percent, the U.S. military has decreased from 54 percent to 47 percent (the first time below a majority) and the Supreme Court from 40 to 36 percent (2015).

The significance in these findings are that young Americans between ages of 18 and 29 are the new generation that is being socialized and this shows that they are becoming even less trustful than their parents. This means that the predictions made by my analysis of Giddens and Erikson are more ominous for future generations than for present day Americans. Social life is becoming a juggernaut of distrust.

This study by Harvard also found that overall trust in the media is very low, dropping from 17% in February of 2010, to a mere 11% in April of 2014 (2015). A finding from the analysis of my data shows that 56% of the Jade Helm news articles apply simulacra of some form in their report. This directly illustrates that a *representation* of the truth is more likely to be reported by the media than the authentic, honest truth. These statistics support my argument that the media engages in simulacra more than in honest truth, and that young people are slowly becoming aware of this "strategy of deterrence" (Lemert 2013, p. 360)

Furthermore, the study "Trust in Institutions and Political Process" found that:

> Since 2010, there has been a consistent six-point increase in those who agree with the statement that "elected officials seem to be motivated by selfish reasons," more than three-in-five (62%) now agree with this; and a similar six-point increase with agreement that "political involvement rarely has any tangible results (23% in 2010, 29% in 2014)" (2015).

These findings again suggest a radical decrease in overall trust for government and public officials, reflected in both my data and my analysis of social theory, in relation to collective behavior movements.

This distrust in elected officials is clearly relevant in the 2016 Presidential Campaign, with Donald Trump leading the polls despite the cynicism he receives from all angles. The citizens of America trust this Presidential candidate simply because he has never been an elected official and therefore in America's eyes, he has yet to succumb to the corruptness of politics. Trump has constantly led the polls since the race begun which exemplifies how collectives will trust a figure merely on the fact that he has never been an elected official, naturally surpassing the stigma of being motivated by selfish reasons.

Even more, in an interview with *Breitbart*, Trump announced that he believes "frank dialogue and personal commitment is by far the best approach" for a President to have (Yiannopoulos 2015). On stage, Trump verbalizes his intentions of cohesiveness by using the word "we" while speaking to the public. Saying "we will.." opposed to "I will.." illustrates an objective of reincorporating the American people's opinion and voice in constitutional decisions. This further supports my claim asserting that people will instinctually trust face-to-face relationships opposed to faceless ones, as theorized by the pre-modern Erik Erikson. Trump taking a personal approach

to the American people while having a *tell it like it is* demeanor may be what is abundantly fueling "the Trump juggernaut" ("All in with Chris Hayes").

Another remarkable stance on the 2016 campaign is that majority of voters stand by Trump despite every media outlet pinning him as egotistical and malevolent. This could amount to people becoming more aware of the simulacra, or *spin*, placed on today's news and media. Also, Trump has verbally specified to the public, several times, that the media tends to be dishonest and inaccurate. Therefore, Trump's un-political, straightforward, and interactive approach to the people may significantly correlate to his high poll numbers. Furthermore, this increases the domino effect of a postmodern loss of trust in news and media, due to a supposed lack of truth.

My findings are that 56% of the news articles relating to Operation Jade Helm do not make any truth claims, and this represents my argument of truth being absent among societal affairs. This finding is in line with a *Gallup* poll taken in 2014 entitled "Trust in Mass Media Returns to All-Time Low," and it found that "Americans confidence in the media's ability to report "the news fully, accurately, and fairly" has returned to its previous all-time low of 40%" (McCarthy). My collected data may show why trust in mass media has declined greatly, seeing as some form of media bias was present in 69% of the articles relating to Operation Jade Helm. Trust in media being at an all-time low confirms that the American people are growing more aware of the influence, or spin, that mass media may have on the news, or story, they report.

My data shows that only 25% of the news articles showed trust in the government, falling in line with recent research showing that "since 2007, the share [of Americans] saying they can trust the

government always or most of the time has not surpassed 30%" ("Public Trust," 2015). In fact,

this study conducted by the *Pew Research Center* in 2015 entitled "Public Trust in Government:

1958-2015," found that "only 19% of Americans today say they can trust the government in

Washington to do what is right 'just about always' (3%) or 'most of the time' (16%)".

According to this study:

> When the National Election Study began asking about trust in the government in 1958, about three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing almost always or most of the time. Trust in the government began eroding during the 1960s, amid the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the declined continued in the 1970s with the Watergate scandal and worsening economic struggles. Confidence in government recovered in the mid-1980s before falling again in the mid-1990s. But as the economy grew in the late 1990s so did confidence in government. Public trust reached a three-decade high shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but declines quickly thereafter. Since 2007, the share saying they can trust the government always or most of the time has not surpassed 30% ("Public Trust," 2015).

It is interesting that trust in the government dropped dramatically from 75% in the 1950's to 19%

under the Obama administration. The only high points for trust in America during this time

period are the Reagan administration, along with the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Otherwise,

the drop is independent of generations: Millennial, Generation X, Boomer, Silent, Greatest. As

seen below, all of these generations exemplify the exact same patterns in levels of distrust in the

government:

Figure 2. *Government Trust Through Generations*.

% who trust the govt in Washington always or most of the time
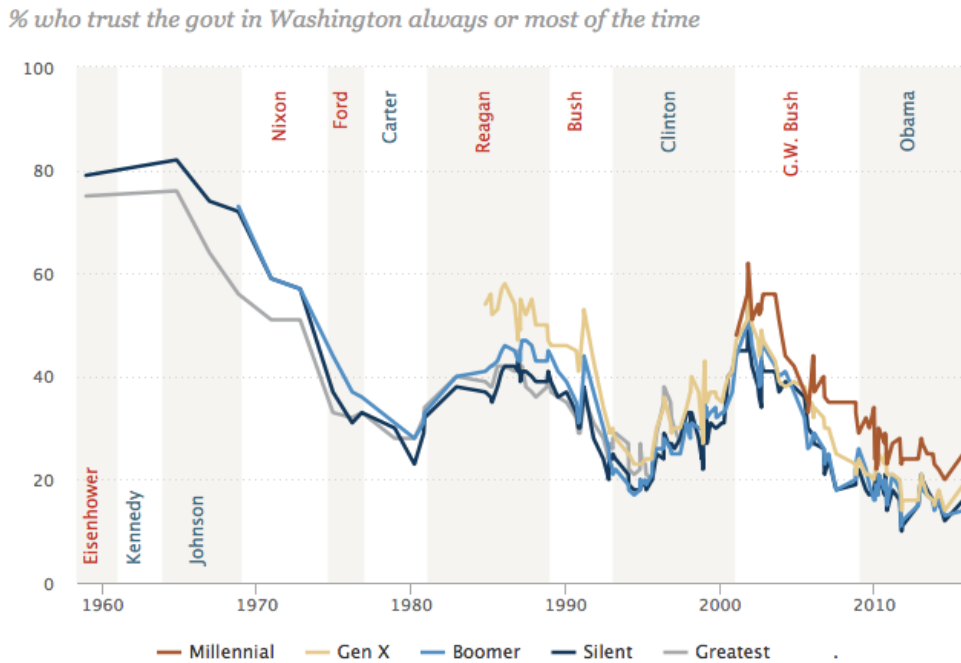
(“Public Trust in Government: 1958-2015,” 2015).

Furthermore, this study by the *Pew Research Center* found that:

> Historically, there have been modest differences between generational groups in trust in
> government. The trend in these views over time follows a similar pattern across
> generations. Millennials (now ages 18-34) hold slightly more trust in the federal
> government today than the older generations. The same was true of Gen Xers in the early
> 1990s (when many Xers were in their twenties) relative to Boomers and Silents, but these
> generational differences diminished over time. The Boomer and Silent generations also
> had slightly different attitudes on government trust in the 1970s and 1980s, but for both
> Boomers and Silents there was a steep drop in trust during the 1970s (“Public Trust,”
> 2015).

This ultimately suggests that the issue of mistrust is deep rooted and fundamental, not the result

of different socialization practices among generations, as Riesman had assumed. Using David

Riesman's terminology from *The Lonely Crowd*, the data shows that the inner directed, the so

called “Greatest generation,” who were socialized to always trust the government as part of their

inner gyroscopes, are just as mistrustful of the government today as their "Millennial generation" counterparts. The millennial generation as a whole has been socialized to adopt a Milky Way galaxy of choices, and the values behind it lie wholly divergent from values within an inner-directed gyroscope. This suggests that the inner Gyroscope has crumbled. Riesman argued for the inner directed types (which includes the greatest generation), claiming that once the gyroscope is implanted, it remains intact for the lifetime of the individual, but this data proves otherwise.

My findings are that 74% of the news articles relating to Operation Jade Helm cite a government authority. This runs parallel to Giddens's theory claiming that superior knowledge from "*access points*," or experts, is likely to make collectives feel reassured and confident in the system. But, my argument, as well as my data, show the exact opposite trend: out of the 53% of news articles citing public opinion, 71% of them express negativity or distrust concerning Operation Jade Helm. These statistics support my theory that people will retract their confidence and belief in experts due to former miscalculations, or contradicting statements, blatantly proven by the 1960s (Vietnam War) and 1970s (Watergate Scandal).

Additionally, Giddens's theory claiming that the demeanor of a system representative is sufficient enough to gain trust breaks down in light of the manifest distrust shown throughout my data. Despite high-ranking officials confidently and consistently reassuring the public that there is no reason to fear Operation Jade Helm, the public still feared, and some even retaliated. In fact, Texas's Governor, Greg Abbot, supported and encouraged citizens to sign up for the State

Guard in case there was an ulterior motive behind the military operation (Biddle 2015). It is clear societal trust no longer lies in the hands of experts, like it once did.

Further exemplifying the exceeding mistrust in experts is the Texas Senator and 2016 Republican presidential candidate, Ted Cruz, notifying *Bloomberg* that he had personally contacted the Pentagon to "inquire about [Jade Helm]" ("Jade Helm' Military Exercise Causing Political Firestorm in Texas, Western States" 2015). And that despite the Pentagon's reassurances, "he understands resident's concerns – and backs Abbott's actions." It is interesting to note that Senator Cruz is also a front runner in the 2016 Presidential election, along with Donald Trump, winning the 2016 Iowa Caucus for the Republicans.

A study published by *Edelman* in 2015 called, "Trust in Institutions Drops to Level of Great Recession," undoubtedly illustrates the global breakdown concerning trust in experts. Their findings show that:

> The decline in trust in the CEO as a credible spokesperson continued for the third consecutive year, with trust levels now at 31 percent in developed markets. Globally, CEOs (43 percent) and government officials (38 percent) continue to be the least credible sources, lagging far behind academic or industry experts (70 percent) and a person like yourself (63 percent). In the developing world, CEO credibility trends thirty points higher at 61 percent (Bush 2015).

These findings support my analysis deeming that trusting in the abstract system wholly is not rational. It is inevitable for trust to be sought throughout different institutions within the system. It is not reasonable to anticipate trust in every institution when society faces a battle against simulacrum, mass media, and experts decentering and distorting the honest truth everyday. All of these concepts ultimately guide individuals towards whom, or what, they trust.

Society may start relying on unexpected sources to gather and analyze what is the truth, and who is to be trusted. Very recently, *Edelman* conducted a survey revealing that:

> Media as an institution is distrusted by 60 percent of countries and for the first time, online search engines are now a more trusted source for general news and information (64 percent) than traditional media (62 percent) (Bush 2015).

Both discoveries from this study clearly illustrate that the system is no longer whole, with its people seeking reassurance and guidance from varying institutions. This deviation of trust could in part be due to majority of institutions within the system – the President, Congress, and mass media – increasingly infringing upon America's founding principles. These shelved constitutional values were acknowledged in a few news articles relating to Operation Jade Helm:

> In his farewell address on January 17, 1961, President Eisenhower warned the nation about a future threat to its liberty from the military-industrial complex. "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes (Starmann 2015).

> But it's paranoia that reflects a quintessentially American concern about the risks of a standing army - one that goes back to James Madison, and is tied to the origins of the Second Amendment. For Madison, the worry about a standing army wasn't minor. A standing army was understood to pose an existential threat to a self-governing republic. The paradigm case was Rome, which had devolved from a republic into an unfree empire ruled by Caesars precisely because generals used the army to coerce the city into obedience. Madison cited Rome at the constitutional convention in the course of asserting that "the means of defense against foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home (Feldman 2015).

How can collectives be projected to trust in a system that repeatedly, and ever so more blatantly, does not trust or respect collectives' values in return? Each time the system persistently deconstructs the respected values of its' people, the juggernaut of distrust gains momentum, and who knows when, or if, it will come to a halt.

A *Gallup* poll from 2013 reported, "majority of Americans (52%) say they have little to no confidence in Congress," although surprisingly "about half (46%) of Americans, though, say they approve of the job the representative from their own congressional district is doing." This confirms people are increasingly seeking trust within smaller segments of the system, segments more probable to support them personally. This relates back to the Newport et al. (2015) study which claims that Americans' opinions concerning political parties are "heavily influenced by their antipathy toward Congress, not just their feelings toward a particular party." Therefore, Congress's actions alone seem to be diminishing overall trust and esteem for individual political parties. With the constant breakdown of firm values, many collectives no longer feel secure at the hands of the whole system. They now seek security from sections, or institutions that are most likely to stand firm on their individual morals amidst the distorted system.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Operation Jade Helm took place in an era of seismic, long-term changes in American society having to do with trust in government, public institutions, and mass media. Public opinion regarding the military exercise Operation Jade Helm is in line with trends captured by opinion polls, namely trust in the government, presidency, judiciary, and legislature, has been declining rapidly over the past half century. Despite government public relations efforts to prop up trust in Operation Jade Helm, media coverage of this event reflected, clarified, and increased the widespread lack of trust documented by opinion polls. The one notable exception to this trend is that the American public tends to trust their military despite the fact that they do not trust their government.

In *The Lonely Crowd,* Riesman had predicted that American society was changing from inner-directed to other-directed social types. The inner-directed types were socialized by parents and authority figures to trust authority in general and the government in particular. The other-directed were socialized more by the information media and peers than by parents and authority figures. But my research shows that the general decline in trust among Americans includes the generation of the inner-directed types. In addition, Riesman never addressed the issue whether other-directed types would trust in media and peers. My research suggests that longitudinal trust in news media had declined simultaneously with the decline in trust of the government and its institutions. Future research could focus on the role of social media (which did not exist in

Riesman's time) in the trust of the government. If Americans no longer trust the government or information media, whom or what do they trust?

Similarly, Erik Erikson theorized that trust was the foundation stone for all subsequent psycho-social development (such as autonomy, industriousness, intimacy, generativity, integrity). According to Erikson, trust was established in infancy by caretakers, and would result in a trusting attitude for the rest of one's life. Data from public opinion polls shows otherwise. Trust in the government has declined steadily over the past half-century across all age groups and political leanings. Again, further research needs to be done into what persons roles, ideas, or institutions Americans trust despite this general and widespread erosion of trust in public institutions.

Finally, theorist Anthony Giddens theorized that the personal trust described by Erikson would be successfully replaced by an abstract trust in faceless institutions. This prediction, too, is not supported by my research. It seems that persons pick and choose from which institutions they will trust more than others, with the most trust saved for the military and the least expressed for Congress. Further research could clarify particular influences on how an individual decides to trust some institutions more than others.

In general, my findings on the lack of trust concerning Operation Jade Helm are in line with the palpable and documented lack of trust in the current era. Donald Trump's ascendancy in the current Presidential campaign are based on the fact documented in opinion polls that Americans are seeking a complete outsider to lead them in politics; They do not trust politicians anymore

due to their supposed lack of veracity. Similarly, public opinion on the recent wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan has soured: Americans no longer believe those wars were justified and no longer trust the reasons given for entering those wars.

An excerpt from John Stuart Mill's notorious writing, *Utilitarianism*, impeccably encompasses this prominent trust issue amongst the current American culture:

> The cultivation in ourselves of a sensitive feeling on the subject of veracity, is one of the most useful, and the enfeeblement of that feeling one of the most hurtful. Even unintentional, deviation from truth, does that much towards weakening the trustworthiness of human assertion, which is not only the principal support of all present social well-being, but the insufficiency of which does more than any one thing that can be named to keep back civilization, virtue, everything on which human happiness on the largest scale depends (Mill 1906, pg. 33).

Public trust in government and other dominant institutions is at an all-time low, illuminated not only by opinion polls but also the aura encompassing the 2016 Presidential campaign. This analysis stresses major issues across America's establishing values; Public confidence and information authenticity is diminishing at great speeds. The American culture has shifted into a paradigm of hyper-reality, where associated simulacra is coaxing an unfavorable influence upon public opinion and trust. Operation Jade Helm only further encourages this idea through its associated news articles and authority, or expert, appearances.

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Figure A1. *Bastrop, Texas residents protesting Operation Jade Helm*
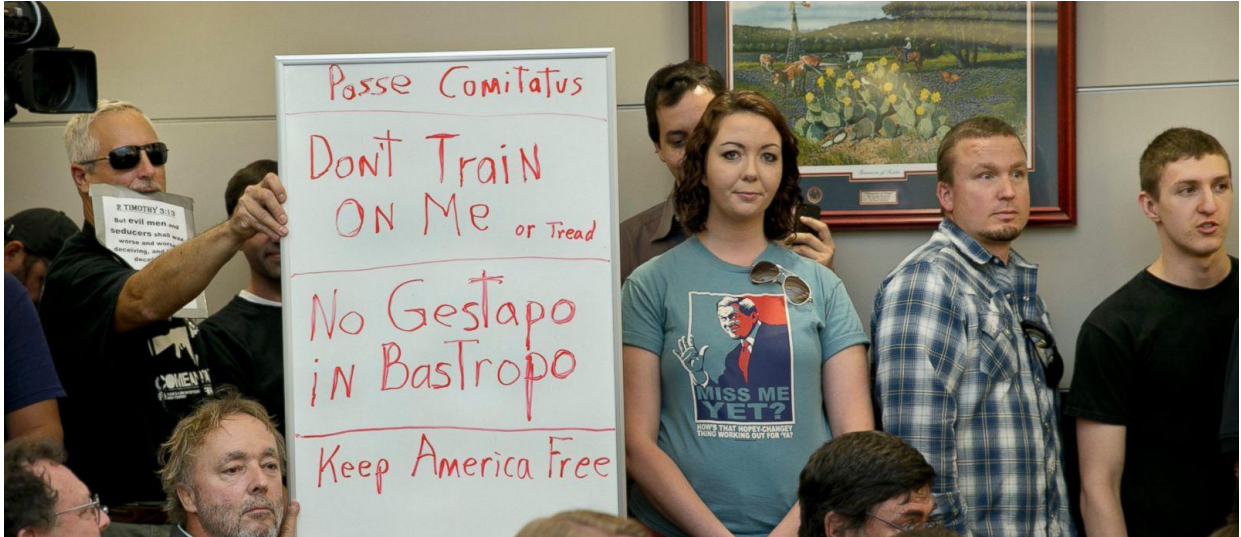
(Watson, 2015).

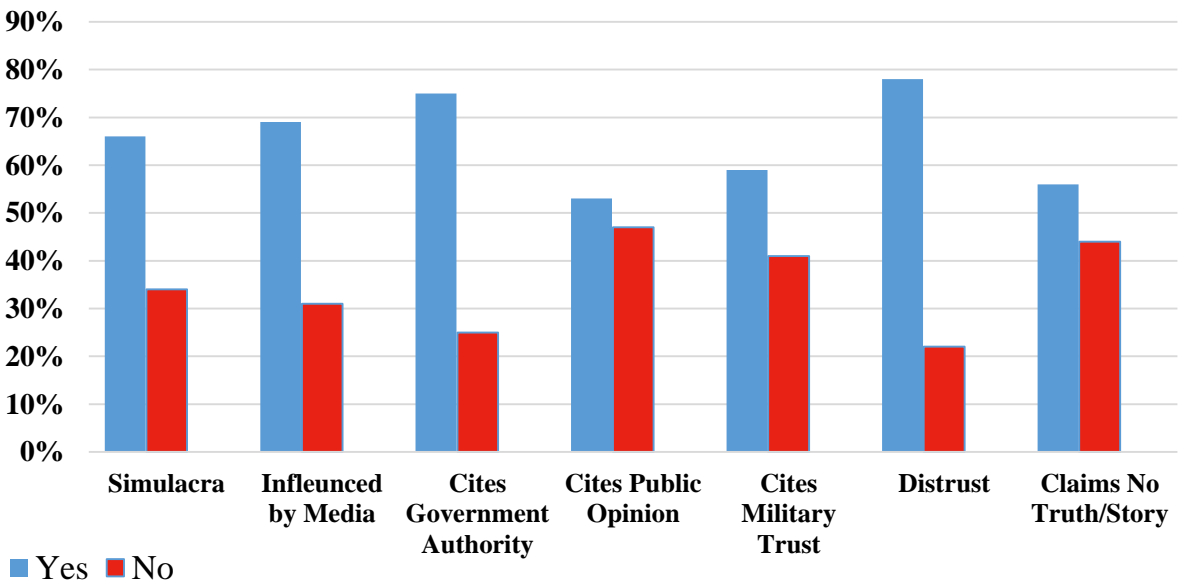Figure A2. *Overview of content in Operation Jade Helm news articles*

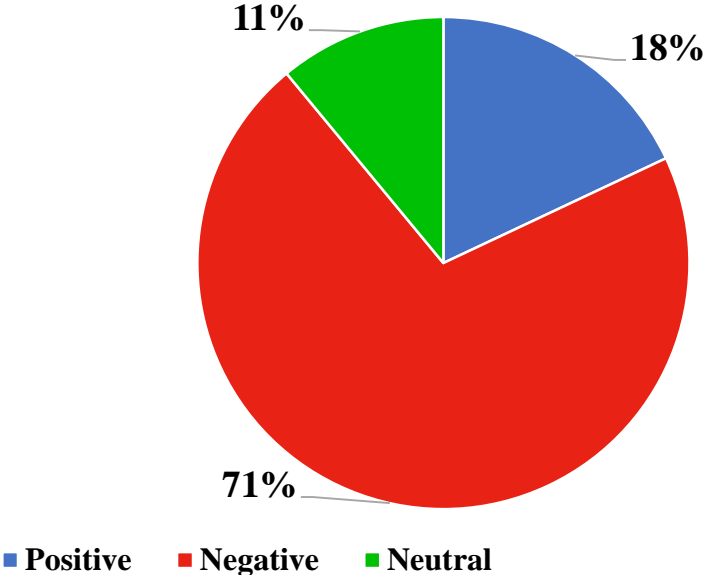Figure A3. *Public opinion in Operation Jade Helm news's articles*

11% **18%**

71%

■ **Positive** ■ **Negative** ■ **Neutral**

Figure A4. *Inner-Directedness / Other-Directness in Operation Jade Helm news's articles*

6%

16% **47%**

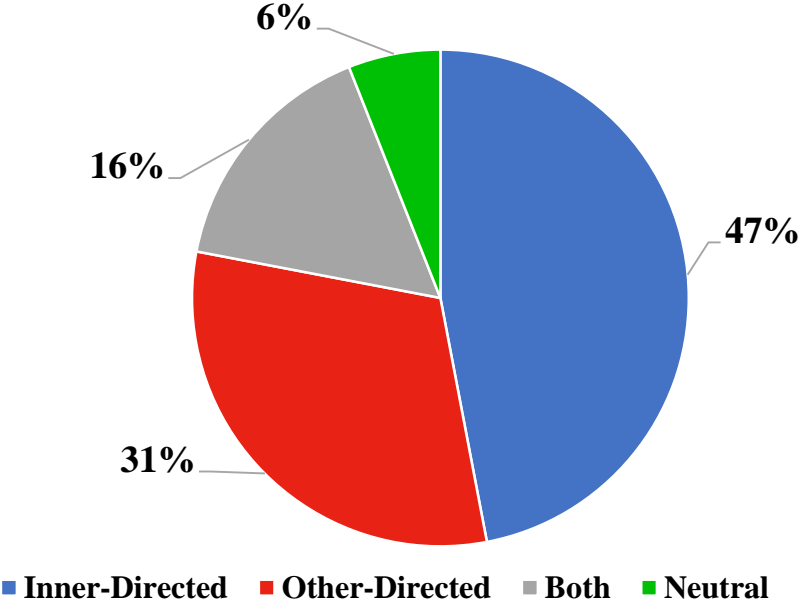**31%**

■ **Inner-Directed** ■ **Other-Directed** ■ **Both** ■ **Neutral**

Figure A4. *Positioning of Operation Jade Helm news's articles*