

Happiness is not only your right; it's your duty!

The New Age Spiritism of Salto Quântico

ABSTRACT

Salto Quântico is a rapidly growing religious movement based in Aracaju, Brazil. Syncretising New Age, Spiritist and Christian precepts, the group exposes followers to spiritual discourse and ideology imparted by enlightened spirit guides through leader and medium, Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado. The group encourages its followers to embrace the adage, "Happiness is not only your right; it's your duty!" This paper will draw on ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews conducted in Aracaju in 2012, and will critically consider and explore the ways in which the group encourages adherents to seek happiness in the midst of the challenges of late modern life in Brazil; namely through participation in the group's spiritual community, progressive interpretations of sexual identity and sexuality, and spiritual discourse around happiness and the combating of depression.

Keywords: Salto Quântico; Spiritism; New Age; happiness; sexuality; late modernity

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The New Age Spiritism of Salto Quântico

Salto Quântico (Quantum Leap) is a contemporary spiritual movement based in Aracaju, in the Northeast of Brazil, with a presence in other regions of Brazil's Northeast and also Connecticut in the United States. The group embraces a syncretic set of beliefs that draw on Kardecism and Christianity.¹ Led by Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado (b. 1970), Salto Quântico addresses uncertainty and dissatisfaction present in late modern Brazilian society, referring to itself as a spiritual institute of happiness with the catchphrase: "Happiness is not only your right, it's your duty!" On the Salto Quântico website (<http://www.saltoquântico.com.br>), the institute proclaims to offer:

...Spirituality, with an open, modern, practical, rational, laidback and light-hearted vision (enriched by videos and cinematic material) aimed at the solution of everyday conflicts and issues, the search for self-knowledge and happiness, with special focus on action against every type of prejudice and castration of human liberty.

The quest for happiness is presented as the ultimate goal for Salto Quântico members who are constantly exhorted to pursue and develop pathways into happiness. According to Salto Quântico teachings, happiness can be seen as a barometer that signifies if the individual is on the right spiritual path. Teixeira emphasises that "*felicidade*" (Portuguese for happiness) is borne of genuine faith. A post entitled "Realistic Happiness" on the website teaches that happiness "has nothing to do with ease, joy or continuous pleasure, but instead with the fulfillment of being, which

includes conflicts, challenges, disappointments and failures. A constant smile will destine one for the asylum.”ⁱⁱ

The notion of happiness presented here alludes to a process of adaptation and flow, not a static end towards which one should work, and could be considered close in definition to the Greek term *eudaimonia*, which views happiness as a happy and healthy state of being or human flourishing, or sociologist Hugh McKay’s notion of “wholeness” as opposed to happiness. Teixeira teaches that there are diverse and complementary ways to attain fulfillment of being: by enjoying a positive sexual life and identity, by actively participating in the group’s community life, by searching for one’s “true” or authentic self, by cultivating good mental health, and by living out one’s spirituality in everyday life. For those who are adherents of Salto Quântico, the notion that happiness is found through the prescriptions of the group’s teachings is a truth confidently asserted by its followers.

This article will draw on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Aracaju in July 2011 that consisted of semi-structured interviews and participant observation with members of Salto Quântico and Teixeira himself. It will also explore the philosophies and activities that inform members’ pursuit of happiness in the challenging context of late modern life in Brazil. In particular, the importance of participating in the Salto Quântista spiritual community will be discussed, along with the importance of reconciling one’s sexual and spiritual identity, and the cultivation of good mental health and wellbeing.

THE SPIRITUAL TEACHERS OF SALTO QUÂNTICO

Salto Quântico embraces a cosmological understanding of the world that affirms the existence of spiritual entities capable of imparting knowledge to human beings

through mediums. Notably, Salto Quântico spiritual teachings are disseminated through a community of enlightened spirits who speak through Teixeira. A broad cultural pattern in Brazil of prevailing supernaturalism, belief in communication with spirits and general acceptance of reincarnation has largely been influenced by the prevalence of Kardecism in the region, thus paving the way for groups such as Salto Quântico that perpetuate and further develop these beliefs.ⁱⁱⁱ Although Teixeira largely attributes the teachings disseminated by Salto Quântico to the spirit guides, his role as charismatic facilitator and leader of the movement is indispensable to its success. It is only through Teixeira as intermediary that the spiritual messages are disseminated, as no other member of the group has access to messages from the spirit guides.

Teixeira is the driving force behind the group, and holds the role of intermediary between the spiritual and earthly realms. He describes himself as having always had a fascination for paranormal subjects and empathy for understanding the challenges of the human condition. He lists Plato's "*Myth of the Cave*", Jungian psychology, Eastern and Western philosophies, extrasensory phenomenology, depth psychology and Kardecism^{iv} as formative influences on his beliefs. He became a Kardecist in February 1988, and writes in *Modern Responses to Greek Wisdom* (2011)^v that his first direct psychographic encounter with a spirit was in 1988 when began to write automatically in formal, old-fashioned Portuguese in a high school class. Psychographic writing is common among noted mediums in Brazil, and is considered a "proof" of the existence of spirits, who use spiritual mediums as channels through whom they can disseminate messages pertaining to matters often beyond the person's levels of understanding or education.

In 1989, Teixeira entered the School of Law at the Federal University of Sergipe, and studied until his senior year when he dropped out, choosing instead to dedicate himself exclusively to the work he had already started in the area of television, writing and public speaking, sharing spiritual teachings that spoke to the challenges of modern life and the shortcomings of institutionalized religion. Although Salto Quântico initially identified itself with Kardecism, in 2008 Teixeira chose to eschew this label, promoting Salto Quântico as an independent movement or “spirituality with or without religion” as stated on the official Salto Quântico website.

On a more personal level, Teixeira is gay and married to his partner, Wagner de Aguiar Machado. His dedication to overcoming the prejudice directed towards homosexual, bisexual and transsexual individuals colors much of the discourse and written material that characterize his seminars and blogs, which often advise on ways to reconcile the sexual and the spiritual.

Teixeira holds immense significance for the life of the group. Both female and male members of the group emphasized the importance of Teixeira’s support and guidance in the development of their spirituality and self-growth. The most engaged members of Salto Quântico (those who are in the mediumistic groups) maintain personal friendships with Teixeira, enjoy participation in Institute activities outside normal group meetings, and are often invited to receive messages and advice concerning personal problems from Eugenia, Teixeira’s main spiritual guide. Lulu, a 57-year-old retired schoolteacher, explained:

He has this tremendous capacity to liberate and redeem everyone...He says it’s Eugenia and our Lady (the Virgin Mary) who saves but we know that this redemption, this liberation begins with him. Without him, it wouldn’t be

possible; the incredible messages of spirituality come through him, the incredible changes and transformation.^{vi}

For Bellinha, a 19-year-old architecture student, in Benjamin she finds: “A mother, father, Professor, guru...Mamin (affective abbreviation for Benjamin) is an example to us all, in everything that he says and does...”^{vii} while for Cris, a 52-year-old civil servant, “Benjamin brings Our Lady and Eugenia closer to us...it is wonderful to have faith and feel that you are loved, guided and fulfilled at every step, it’s fantastic.”^{viii} Teixeira’s charisma is a critical consideration in understanding the strong social cohesion of the group and the circumstances that engendered its creation, the importance of Salto-Quântista teachings and philosophies as a challenge to existing institutionalized religious beliefs, and the expectations and obligations that unite Teixeira with his adherents.

Peter Worsley contends that charisma, at its most fundamental level, symbolizes a matter of recognition or a social contract between people. It cannot be based solely on individual personality traits or a “mystical quality” as the broader inter-relational context must be also considered: specifically, the relationship between the followers and the leader. Without the followers, the leader has no power.^{ix}

Teixeira cultivates a very strong rapport with his adherents. The compelling sense of community in the group and regular social engagements such as charitable work, weekend workshops and evening get-togethers over pizza present adherents with the opportunity to engage with each other and with Teixeira in a social and spiritual capacity. Adherents even have the opportunity to participate in spiritual pilgrimages abroad: for example, in 2012 there was a reunion with the North American component of Salto Quântico in Connecticut with a series of seminars and presentations, and in

2011 a trip to visit the uncorrupted body of Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. Soubirous is associated with the Marian apparitions near Lourdes, and is believed by the group to be an earlier incarnation of Eugenia.

Eugenia is the most esteemed of the disembodied spiritual teachers who speak through Teixeira, and is venerated by followers of the movement. In the group's spiritual pantheon, the divine spirits who are most recognized are both female: Eugenia (also referred to as the *Mestra Sabia e Bondosa*, or the wise and good teacher, and Maria Santissima, the Virgin Mary). In general, women are revered and celebrated by Teixeira and the spirit guides as a counter to having been historically diminished due to patriarchal social structures. Eugenia functions as an emissary of Maria Santissima, who is not regularly channeled by Teixeira. However, Maria Santissima is believed to make her presence known to adherents by descending from the sky in Aracaju on rare and special occasions as an immense ball of light, to which Teixeira alerts his adherents.

Teixeira incorporates^x Eugenia for the group's regular meetings and seminars. She is acclaimed by Teixeira and members as a powerful spiritual figure, who can trace her lineage of previous earthly incarnations to some of Western history's most influential and powerful women: Claudia Procula, granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus and wife of Pontius Pilate, Aspasia of Miletus, teacher of rhetoric to Socrates and lover/advisor to General Pericles, and Bernadette Soubirous. Eugenia's lineage of strong and influential female figures who resisted patriarchy symbolizes that the spiritual leadership and origins of the group has robust connections with history, classical culture, the cult of the Virgin and intellectual knowledge. Although this celebration of powerful women is not necessarily feminist in the traditional sense,

there is implicit feminism in the group's discourse in the sense that women who changed the course of history and struggled against patriarchy are celebrated.

Teixeira writes that five channels are used as a means for Eugenia to communicate with him: bodily incorporation, where Eugenia uses Teixeira's body to speak, through sight, hearing, automatic writing (psychography), and "heart-intuition" which allows Teixeira to feel her presence directly and telepathically.^{xi} He writes of his relationship with Eugenia: "I see Her, I feel Her and I hear Her, as she is part of my own nature...we are joined as two Spirits in one brain, or as She prefers to say, two brains in one mind, formed by the fusion of our psyches..."^{xii} Teixeira formalized his union with Eugenia on the day he joined with his human partner Wagner in a civil partnership, marrying Eugenia as a symbolic mystical unification of their bond.

A PROFILE OF THE GROUP

Salto Quântico attracts a diverse body of members who have the choice of engaging and participating in the group in different ways. At the most casual level of affiliation, the group has approximately 1.92 million followers on Facebook.^{xiii} Facebook followers may engage in reading and liking material posted, directly contacting helpers from the Institute with their questions, watching videos and participating in discussions. Religious meetings and activities occur almost on a daily basis, with the most significant being the popular Sunday seminar lead by Teixeira that usually attracts in excess of 400 attendees. Potential adepts are first encouraged to attend these seminars. Should they become interested in becoming more regularly involved by joining the mediums' groups, they must complete an initiation process whereby they

assiduously attend the Sunday seminars for six months, following which they are invited into the doctrinal study groups in order to familiarize themselves with both the tenets of the Institute and Spiritist literature in general. Doctrinal study sessions are a common feature in Spiritist groups across Brazil, as Spiritism places strong emphasis on reading as a means of cultivating spiritual growth. Following the satisfactory completion of these prerequisites, adepts undergo interviews with representatives of the Institute, and must make a commitment to pray daily for at least fifteen minutes.

The six month “candidacy” is completed when the individual demonstrates that they sufficiently familiar with the recommended Spiritist literature (the most esteemed works being Teixeira’s own) and are regularly attending Teixeira’s weekly seminars. Once they graduate from this period of candidacy, they are then invited to attend to the weekly mediumistic meetings where adepts practice their mediumship in pairs (with one person as a medium for disturbed disincarnate spirits that have not yet passed from this plane of existence, and the other as a clarifier, helping the spirits to confront their unresolved issues that are preventing them from moving on to the next spiritual plane). As of September 2015, there were 234 members involved in the mediums’ groups. Such meetings are often believed to help the living as well as the disincarnate, as “obsessed” spirits frequently hang around the living to attach themselves to their energy. Communication with spirit guides is a focal practice in Spiritist groups, and occurs primarily through psychography or through bodily incorporation as in African Spiritist groups Umbanda or Candomblé. Entrance into the mediumistic meetings is highly desired by adepts, as Teixeira promotes the idea that spiritual protection from accidents, death and serious illness is extended to those who regularly participate in medium’s meetings. Such an assurance is alluring to many who are acutely aware of the inflated chance of death by homicide in Brazil; with 64,000 homicide victims each

year equaling the annual death rate in the Syrian civil war. Brazil has more killings than any other nation in the world.^{xiv}

Those who are most deeply engaged in the group tend to be educated, from the middle to upper-middle socio-economic classes and largely women. Those, however, who attend the popular Sunday evening seminars open to the public, represent a diverse melange of women and men from different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and sexual orientations.

A fundamental way in which Salto Quântico disseminates its spiritual message and recruits new adherents is through its dynamic website and blog, which is meticulously maintained with regularly updated spiritual self-help messages from Teixeira's guides, new testimonies of those who have been healed or received helpful messages from the spirit world through Teixeira's mediumship, topics discussed in seminars and updates concerning Salto Quântico's television show (accessible in diverse locales throughout Latin America), programs and activities. The website also has an English counterpart for its offshoot located in Connecticut in the United States. The group engages regularly with Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and online streaming websites that convey Teixeira's Sunday evening seminars in real time. Utilization of modern technology is vital to draw in savvy religious consumers for as sociologist Nancy Ammerman observes, religion is one of the most researched subjects on the Internet, third only to pornography and commerce.^{xv} The website and television show act as an initial point of contact for new potential members, orientating them to the groups' philosophy and alerting them to the benefits of regular adherence, such as protection by Eugenia and the potential of miraculous healing.

RELIGIOSITY IN LATE MODERN BRAZIL

Stark and Finke (2000) contend that religious organisations do not exist in a vacuum and therefore cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the socio-cultural environments within which they exist. Salto Quantico is very much reflective of and responsive to the contemporary social climate in Brazil.

The experience of late modernity in Brazil both emulates traits of late modernity seen in more developed parts of the globe; high mobility or as liquidity Zygmunt Bauman, labels it, the spectre of constant uncertainty, the view of self as a project) whilst also following its own trajectory informed by the political economy of neoliberalism. Vertiginous social inequality still exists in Brazil, separating the haves from the have nots, however, ongoing government initiatives such as the *Bolsa Familia* (Family Fund)^{xvi} have helped attenuate severe hardship, lifting 28 million from extreme poverty and allowing 36 million to enter the middle classes in the past two decades.

Late modernity has also unfolded differently in Brazil in a cultural sense. Nestor Garcia Canclini writes that Latin America has been subject to “multiple logics of development” and although the region may have been left trailing in its socio-economic and political modernity, it is exuberant in its cultural modernity.^{xvii} Indeed, one of the more exuberant examples of Brazil’s passage towards modernity has been the proliferation of new religious movements in the last three decades, noted by scholars such as Andrew Dawson (2007:3) who declares, “Brazil, with its huge diversity of religious movements, has established itself at the vanguard which has helped to re-ignite academic interest in religion”. In particular, many new religious movements in Brazil are emerging from the emerging middle classes. Lee and Ackerman (2002) write that the beneficiaries of re-enchantment and new religious

movements tend to be individuals whose identities have been sharply affected by the crisis of modernity. The experience of the bleak and often testing landscape of modernity drives such individuals to experiment with esoteric forms of religious consciousness. In the case of Brazil, this is especially apparent amongst educated liberal middle class who reject bourgeois values and seek fulfilment through other means.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAPPINESS

For Salto-Quântistas (members of Salto Quantico), seeking fulfilment is synonymous with the quest for happiness. Happiness, and how one might best procure it, is ubiquitous in the discourse of Salto Quantico, ever-present on the group's website, and in the testimonies of adherents of the group, many of whom trace personal transformation from a state of crisis/depression or anxiety to a place of happiness and meaning, such as in the case of Linda Brasil, 39, a transsexual make-up artist:

I was passing through a very difficult time, in both my sexual life and because of the death of a friend, so I met with Benjamin, and from that moment my life was transformed, because I managed to gain perspective on the disincarnation of my friend...and also I began to accept myself as well, my sexuality and my sexual identity as a transsexual.^{xviii}

Lulu also noted that the search for happiness and personal upheaval also governed her choice to come to Salto Quantico:

The group has given me happiness, a sense of purpose and life, you know? I didn't have this before... I was going through a separation...so I went (to Salto Quântico) because of the pain, right? The separation was really

difficult. I'd had a really neurotic relationship, really neurotic....I separated from him, but would then go back to him.^{xix}

This prevalence of discourse oriented towards achieving a state of happiness in Salto Quantico is very much reflective of a global cultural trend driving the need to be happy. "Happiology" and studies in positive psychology have legitimized the importance of happiness, rendering it so prominent in cultural dialogue that scholars such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Darrin McMahon question the significance placed upon the emotion, and latent meanings behind the societal preoccupation with happiness. Ehrenreich contemplates the manic recklessness and danger associated with perpetual positive thinking, whilst McMahon observes that an obsession with being happy is a luxury only made possible when everything else is taken care of, arguing that our preoccupation with happiness is strongly indicative of relative prosperity. Other critics note the pressure placed on individuals to seek happiness and feel happy conversely promotes unhappiness and inadequacy, particularly when we fall short of an ideal happiness, as well as the devaluation of sad or painful events in our lives that are not only inevitable but also adaptive.^{xx} Critical theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman and Jacques Lacan also caution that seeking happiness represents a never-ending quest, linked strongly to the late modern idea of the self as a project that is perpetually worked on.

Happiness is a fluid concept, and definitions and understandings of it are subject to socially and historically specific contexts. Whilst an Aristotelian understanding of happiness was borne of life of virtue, known as "the good life" or eudaimonia, a late modern understanding of happiness is more closely linked to the pursuit of sensory pleasures and personal gratification; tracing a shift from being good to feeling good. From a religious perspective, Larrimore argues that happiness is not a monolithic

concept across religions, nor is it necessarily even a term that is used in classical articulations of religion; he notes that Christians speak of blessedness, Halakhic Judaism refers to inward joy, Buddhists of enlightenment and mystics of ecstasy, which all encompass distinctive understandings in their own right. However, Larrimore observes that only some of these traditional practices and experiences are commensurate with modern life. Drawing on Ehrenreich, Larrimore surmises that modern conceptualisations of happiness, religious or otherwise, have been indelibly marked by capitalism, leaving individuals with no other way to understand happiness than in individualist and materialistic terms, playing out in a religious context with individuals who seek health, wealth and fertility from their religious affiliations.^{xxi}

Nonetheless, although the quest to find happiness can be aligned in some cases with narcissism or hedonism, seeking happiness in one's life can also be positive and socially constructive: happiness can serve to inspire, emphasize the positive aspects of life, enhance the quality of relationships or even focus attention on that which detracts from one's happiness and needs to be worked on.^{xxii} For the individual with a holistic outlook, happiness is not an end in and of itself, especially when it is experienced in such a way that serves both self and others.

MAKING SENSE OF HAPPINESS IN SALTO QUANTICO

As mentioned in the title and introduction (Happiness is not your right, it is your duty!) Teixeira positions happiness as a personal obligation. Adherents are consistently encouraged to see themselves as responsible for planting the seeds of happiness in their everyday lives. Kardecism in general posits individuals as accountable for their own lives and the trajectories that their lives take, as each spirit chooses the challenges and difficulties that will be encountered in life prior to earthly

incarnation for its own spiritual growth and evolution. Thus at all times, the spirit is in charge of its own life trajectory. Adherents find this notion empowering. As Carol, 19, says, “We learn that we have the most responsibility for our own lives, we cannot blame others and that the answers lie in our own conscience”^{xxiii}.

Salto Quântico stresses the belief that the individual alone is responsible for what occurs in their life. There are no victims, only agents who select the path they will take. While Kardecists believe in a just, loving and forgiving creator, they also believe that each spirit has the free will to make their own decisions, and therefore suffer, or enjoy the resultant consequences. Such a philosophy also coincides and resonates with neoliberal ideologies prevalent in contemporary society, which dictate that individuals are responsible for the choices they make and the potential consequences of those choices. Brian Heaphy outlines the expectations placed on the individual in late modern society which resonate with this perspective, indicating the intersection of Salto Quântico and neoliberal ideologies:

The weight of success and happiness rests squarely on the shoulders of the individual. Individuals must accept full responsibility for their actions, and cannot ascribe blame to others with experiencing negative consequences that can only be attributed to their own error and neglect. The growing hegemony and importance of therapeutic knowledge in explaining personal problems and helping individuals to recognise the role of their own agency and attitudes in overcoming issues also indicates the influence of psychological surveillance in the late modern period.^{xxiv}

Therapeutic knowledge also features prominently in Salto Quântico teachings around happiness. The group devotes extensive discourse and focus to the development and

surveillance of self, combining Jungian psychology, depth psychology and the guidance of Teixeira's spiritual mentors to help the individual take full ownership over their own happiness and life. The website has headlining articles that change weekly, boasting titles such as "Be a victim or be a victor, what do you want?" teaching that in life there are only two choices, "to struggle and be determined to achieve what is possible...or yield and be dragged down by the force of circumstance."^{xxv} Eva Illouz observes that the dominant interpretation of the rise of the therapeutic self is that it is symptomatic of the severing of the individual from public and collective moral frameworks, and the general withdrawal of the individual into the private sphere.^{xxvi}

Although Salto Quântico teachings support neoliberal ideologies such as taking responsibility for one's own success and happiness, Teixeira also advocates a path to happiness that fully embraces wholeness an extensive range of human emotions and experiences as part of the process. Salto Quântico resists hetero-normative notions of happiness, upholding a vision of happiness accessible to all, regardless of one's gender, sexuality or socio-economic status. Sara Ahmed notes that prescriptions of happiness often correlate with adhering to social norms such as heterosexuality and marriage, which exclude certain subaltern groups.^{xxvii} Teixeira resists these norms and teaches that happiness should be accessible to and experienced by all, especially with respect to sexual orientation. It should be available to those in heterosexual relationships, but also to those in gay, lesbian or bisexual partnerships, and to those who engage in relationships that fall outside the boundaries of the social norm (Teixeira, for example, lives in a union with both his husband Wagner and his ex-partner).

Although the discourse of Salto Quântico is largely oriented towards teaching adherents how to cultivate happiness in their everyday lives, many followers of the

group also reported highly emotive, transformative spiritual experiences during meetings or seminars. Angela, a 46-year-old dentist and long-time adherent, explained that Eugenia and Teixeira encourage adherents to privilege their emotional side over their rational one. Undergoing experiences with a deeply emotional component was linked to the transformation of the self:

I went to the seminar, sat down, listened to the lecture and in the second part of the final prayer, I got really emotional, and cried a lot, compulsively. I knew that something had happened...what we learn here is not to valorize so much what we see, but much more, what we feel.^{xxviii}

One day I had my eyes closed, praying, and I saw Eugenia open her arms. She was immense, and when she opened her arms, they looked like wings...Her body took the form of a uterus. And inside that uterus, I saw about 1000 people...it was a vision that I don't know how to describe. A happiness, an ecstasy...for a person who is really scientific, rational, and a doctor, I felt such happiness.^{xxix}

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THE SELF AS A SPIRITUAL RESOURCE

One of the specific ways in which happiness can be arrived at in Salto Quantico is by making spiritual contact with one's most authentic self. Paul Heelas interprets the search for the authentic self as a shift from a way of being which has been contaminated by socialization, to a lifestyle that better nurtures one's authentic nature and is conducive to happiness.^{xxx}

For religions such as Salto Quântico that are informed or influenced by New Age ideology, an emphasis on finding one's true self features prominently. Salto Quântico teachings encourage the individual to seek out their true self and in so doing, to take full ownership over their own happiness and destiny. Finding one's authentic inner self enables one to experience a more fulfilling state of being. In *Modern Responses from Greek Wisdom*, a Salto Quântico teaching text, Eugenia quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson's "I must be myself" and exhorts adherents to "get to know yourself deeply...in a general sense, when people say that they want to be themselves, they are making an allusion to the values inculcated in them by the family, society or by the specific group which they belong to, be it religious, professional or political".^{xxxix} Eugenia teaches that although accessing the purest essence of self lies out of reach for humanity due to the influences present in society that unavoidably influence how humans perceive and experience the world, by getting to know oneself deeply, one is taking steps towards reaching a more fulfilling experience of this true inner state.^{xxxix}

This focus on self as a spiritual resource must also be understood in a broader social and political context: Christopher Lasch associates the increasing preoccupation with the self with the failed political project of the 1960s and 70s.^{xxxix} Disempowered to change society and the exterior world, people instead shifted their focus to the self and cultivation of happiness and improvement of the world within, a phenomenon which persists in the contemporary world.^{xxxix} A focus on self is also comforting in the context of contemporary Brazil, where persisting inequality and political unrest culminated in the massive civil "vinegar protests" of 2013, where Brazil's working class took to the streets to protest rising public transport costs (the "vinegar" refers to vinegar soaked cloths which are supposed to neutralize the effects of teargas). In early 2016 the country was rocked by further scandal and unrest with the revelation of the

Lava Jato embezzling scheme. As of April 2016 the political upheaval continues, with the public clamoring for the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff, unemployment at 5 year high of 7.5 percent^{xxxv}, and IBOPE (the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics)^{xxxvi} polls revealing that only 21 percent of citizens are still optimistic about the country's future. In the midst of such turmoil, turning inward and developing the self as a spiritual resource becomes increasingly attractive, as it is easier to direct one's attention to the development of the self, rather than focus it outward at the myriad social and political problems unsettling Brazil. Such a view is implicit in the website as there are very few politicized posts or blogs that speak to the current or previous political crises in Brazil; only those that emphasise and urge individuals to focus on the development of self.

Lee and Ackerman theorize that it is the middle classes who are most alienated and affected by the crises of modernity, and who are also most likely to embark on a "sojourn of re-enchantment".^{xxxvii} With physical and economic needs secured, or not secured, as in Brazil, many people look to fulfil "higher" needs, which resonates with the socio-economic demographic of Salto Quantico. Finding meaning and identity on one's life path and the desire to feel connected with one's occupation, sexuality, friends and family drew many adherents to the group. For followers such as Luciane, a journalist in her early thirties, her involvement with the group aided her in constructing a spiritual identity and developing a strong sense of agency and responsibility in the confusion and meaninglessness of late modernity:

I think one of the biggest challenges of life today is the emptiness that comes with all the competitiveness and materialism that our society demands... The lack of love (in society), including lack of self-respect,

leads us to disrespect others and the environment, drugs, abuses, corruption of all kinds...The lessons we learn from our Masters of Spirituality^{xxxviii} ... are challenging but they set you free to be who you truly are. Here we learn we are responsible for everything in our lives. Every experience we consider bad, we brought it on ourselves. We are not a victim of society or our families. We have all the tools to make things work and we shouldn't expect others to do it.^{xxxix}

Luciane also explained how her involvement in the group informed her life choices to help her find her true, most authentic self:

Everywhere people are looking for more meaning, connections with something higher than themselves and the world around them, deeper and more honest relationships. I guess more and more people are getting tired of a life that consists of getting a better job, a better house, making a nice trip. In the end we all long for hope of a better future for everyone and love, most of all...After joining SQ, I found my real professional vocation, I started studying what I love, made many new and better friends, got away from a bad relationship, helped my parents deal with the passing of my brother...But better than that, besides fulfilling many of my dreams, I feel much better about myself.^{xl}

For Angela, Salto Quântico helped her to make spiritual sense of the difficulty she experienced in trying to fall pregnant.

I joined Salto Quântico with a lot of faith- in the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, spiritual faith...and I was trying to get pregnant. And I'd

already done three IVF fertilisations with a really complicated treatment, and I was going to Benjamin's lectures...and then the latest fertilisation didn't work again, but I didn't feel as sad as I thought I would...because the financial and psychological effort was so draining, and so I didn't feel so devastated...Salto Quântico stimulated me to read more, read the Spiritist books of Benjamin, Chico Xavier, all the collections. I threw myself into reading for spiritual growth and knowledge.

For Lulu, Salto Quântico's teaching helped move her from a static and apathetic state of spirituality which she was experiencing as a lapsed Catholic, to a state of evolving happiness fuelled by the yearning to know and understand herself better. This path of increased self-understanding led her to leave a destructive relationship, improve her relationship with her teenaged son and give up her heavy smoking habit. She expounded:

In my opinion, the greatest challenge is for us to overcome our shadow. We have to search for self-knowledge, self-esteem, because my self-esteem was very low, you have to shed light on your own being...you have to get to know those parts of yourself that you don't want to admit you have, and realise it's part of being human. My education and background taught me I had to be a perfect human being, a perfect mother, you know? Like a saint! And we internalise this from a very young age, and we blame ourselves a lot...I had a very materialistic life, because my former religion didn't show me this other side. Salto Quântico is different. You know that you have a purpose here. You have to make an effort, to improve yourself^{xli}.

Lulu's narrative demonstrates that work is required to overcome what Heelas refers to as "the stagnant self" (which refers to the idea of the self as fixed and in need of transformation): the adherent must engage in cognitive work and emotional work, exercising self-responsibility.^{xlii} The quest for holism and the path of self-discovery and fulfillment calls for self-discipline and awareness of one's state of being. For Luciane, her involvement in the group helped her to identify the life choices that would benefit her most and positively affect those around her, and ultimately lead to a state of happiness and certainty. The search to find greater meaning in life and to undergo positive personal transformation is a task that requires commitment. This flow between the spiritual and the mundane, whereby one's everyday secular life benefits from their spiritual engagement is very much experienced by many members of Salto Quântico. For Heelas, this is not a lightweight matter indicative of hedonistic gratification or utilitarian individualism. Holistic spiritualities such as Salto Quântico offer adherents the chance to have meaningful experiences and offer spiritual teachings that significantly influence the quality of their lives.

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION FROM A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

At the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, Salto Quântico also deeply engages with the prevalence of depression and mental illness in contemporary Brazilian society. Among many Spiritist religions there is believed to be an indisputable connection between the spiritual world and mental illness. Kardecism, for example, identifies mental illness as being symptomatic of spiritual disturbances that may stem from several causes: undeveloped mediumship making one more prone to psychic/spiritual intrusions,^{xliii} confusing past life recollections, or most prominently, the negative effects of obsessive spirits, whereby patients are troubled by earthbound

spirits who evoke unhealthy behaviour in spiritually weakened individuals, encouraging alcohol and drug addiction.^{xliv} Such spirits influence the person's thoughts and diminish their willpower by repeating negative thoughts, which the individual comes to believe are their own.

An acknowledgement of the role of the spiritual self as basic to the overall health and wellbeing of the individual is discussed at length within *Salto Quântico*. Eugenia explains that depression is a detrimental by-product of modernity that at its deepest level is fundamentally a spiritual problem.^{xlv} Depression stems from the severe frustration of the spirit, caused by the rejection of the spiritual fulfilment and expansion of self. According to Teixeira, many try to deal with this spiritual lack by finding solace in addiction, distractions and futile interests. However, the only effective treatment for depression is a dedicated and sustained search for one's authentic inner self, which can be cultivated by daily contact with God through meditation, prayer and charitable service.^{xlvi} Angela expressed it thus: "It's inside ourselves, not in our external bodies, that the most significant cures happen...not the salvation of our physical body, but in our spirit."^{xlvii} The healing of the inner self is directly linked to the nurturing and maintenance of a relationship with God.

Eugenia additionally cautions that depression can originate from the chronic repression of intense rage that is often first expressed as depression and subsequently flows into manifesting as illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis and cancer.^{xlviii} This resonates with many New Age texts and teachings that align illness with ill-managed or repressed emotion. The human being is seen as vulnerable to the injurious effects of earthly pleasures, vices and detrimental behaviours such as prejudice and ego. Unconscious adherence to damaging mental patterns and addictions can impact the individual's physical or mental health, once again underlining the need for

development of the spiritual self to evade illnesses stemming from damaging behaviours or emotional states.

Whilst Salto Quântico does not reject biomedical practices outright, it does recommend using them judiciously. Eugenia teaches that the efficacy of psychotropic medications and treatments cannot be wholly successful without taking the spirit into consideration.

With all respect to the work of psychiatry and the innumerable schools of psychology on Earth, severe depression will never be eradicated in an enduring or profound way, without referring back to issues of a spiritual nature, and religion.^{xlix}

The entwining of mental and spiritual health is exemplified in the case of Lulu, who traced her trajectory of depression back to a lack of true spiritual engagement.

After I separated (from my husband), I had depression, and I began having private consultations with Benjamin...and one time, he asked Eugenia about a treatment for me.^l Eugenia responded that what was necessary was spiritual growth, because she perceived that I didn't have spiritual devotion...because I hadn't been a devoted Catholic, I didn't have that conviction.^{li}

For Ana Cristina, a 47-year-old emergency doctor deeply involved with Salto Quântico, her depression was linked to a lack of understanding of the spiritual world. Ana had been haunted by visions and voices throughout her life, leading her to feel isolated, different to others, and psychologically unstable.

I used to have these crises. I began university, and the crises got worse, and my sister was worried. “My God, Ana is different, she tells me things, she tells me things”... I was tormented. Everything was lacking, I felt lost...I used to hear and see visions, for me, it was normal, but for others of course it wasn't. So I thought, I'm going to have to find a psychiatrist, because this is wrong.^{lii}

Ana began seeing a psychiatrist, and was put on various courses of antidepressants for ten years, to little effect. The psychiatrist then recommended she increase her medication, which left her despairing as she felt strongly against a move to stronger drugs. Dependency on psychotropic medication is prevalent in Brazil, especially among the middle to upper classes and women. A 2013 study carried out in Rio de Janeiro over 2007-2008 demonstrated that the use of psychotropic drug use is gendered, with 6.55 percent of the population depending on drugs, increasing to 9.13 percent among women.^{liii}

For Ana, the limitations of conventional psychiatric treatment were considerations of which she was acutely aware. Leaving the psychiatrist's office, she recalled that her sister had called her attention earlier the Salto Quântico television program, and spontaneously decided to go to Teixeira's seminar which had been advertised for that afternoon.

I arrived, sat down, and felt really depressed. And Benjamin started to talk and talk, he talked for around 15-20 minutes...and then I thought, “Where is my depression? Where has the depression gone?” The lack of energy, the fatigue, the body pains...all disappeared. And at that exact moment,

Benjamin said, “Depression is a lack of God!” He said it as if he had perceived me and understood me.^{liv}

Soon after attending this first seminar, Teixeira invited her to have private consultations with him, advising her to supplement the medical treatment she was receiving with spiritual work, encouraging her to leave the psychiatrist and medication when she felt ready. He diagnosed the source of Ana’s visions and voices as being caused by her undeveloped mediumship. Ana related that since developing her mediumship and becoming more attuned to the spiritual world, she no longer experiences depression nor takes any type of medication.

THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

For all the members who participated in this study, the robust sense of community gained through their involvement in SQ constituted one of the most appealing and joyful elements of membership. Although many iterated various reasons of personal crisis or upheaval that attracted them to the group initially, upon resolution or address of their issues, most remained involved because of the sense of belonging they encountered. Friendships among members crossed age, gender, sexuality and socio-economic lines. Often informants alluded to other members of the group as their family, as expressed by members such as Bellinha who explained, “In Salto Quântico, we have wonderful friends, brothers and sisters, mothers who are always at our side” or Cristiane, a middle-aged consultant, who added that, “The fraternity is, without doubt, another enormous benefit of participating in Salto Quântico”.^{lv} Luciane said:

I haven’t felt the need of looking anyplace else (for a religious group). It feels like home, I feel like I’ve found my group here, in every way. In Salto Quântico there are so many different activities throughout the week. ... It is

a spirituality that makes me more connected with the world around me... in Salto Quântico I have found such special friends, people that I can really talk to because we have similar views on life.^{lvi}

Angela pointed out that the close bonds shared between members are because many shared past life relationships or friendships.

I went there...and he (Benjamin) opened his arms, and said, “Welcome!” And it was like we already knew each other! Like I recognized him from the street; but I’d never seen his program, never read any of his material, only I knew him somehow, though I’d never had contact with him before. In February 2006, Benjamin asked me to join with the group of mediums and that was it. I feel that it’s really here (with Salto Quântico) that my heart belongs...the best part of Salto Quântico, apart from our Professor himself, is the family. You have the chance to know, to feel...never alone, in whatever moment, be it happy, sad, difficult...this, I think, is the best part of Salto Quântico.^{lvii}

Research indicates that religious services and activities often unite people with common religious beliefs or similar social and political values, and this ideological homogeneity provides fertile ground for close friendships to develop.^{lviii} The Harvard Grant study, a 75-year longitudinal investigation into what constitutes a fulfilling life, argues that strong relationships and connections with others are one of the most consistent predictors of happiness.^{lix} Adherents of religious communities with close-knit congregations enjoy larger and denser networks of friendship and greater social support, in the forms of informational aid (referral to external support groups or

services), socio-emotional support (confiding and companionship) and instrumental aid (money, goods).^{lx} In addition, Ellison and George argue that participation in religious communities not only increases the quantity of non-kin ties, but also the quality of interpersonal relationships.^{lxi} This is because relationships with others within the spiritual community may be experienced as more satisfying or fulfilling than those outside the church, as they are mutually reinforcing because of the shared values and worldviews. Individuals can gain affirmation that their perceptions and behavior are correct from their cohorts.^{lxii} In addition, those from shared religious communities can often help each other place life experiences into broader contexts of meaning.^{lxiii}

Aside from the strong bonds between fully integrated adherents, the group reaches out to create bonds with civil society and the local community in Aracaju as well. Salto Quântico, like many Spiritist groups, places immense importance on the practice of charity, embracing and enforcing Christian morality. Furthermore, many Spiritists believe that charitable service to others is to the benefit of the individual as well, by helping them to gain a more elevated incarnation in their next life.^{lxiv} Spiritist morality is the link that bonds Salto Quântico to wider Brazilian society. In Eugenia's teachings, she recommends that one of the best ways to gain proximity to knowing one's true self "is to grow in your spirit, by exercising it through love, charity, service and the giving of yourself for the good of someone else."^{lxv}

The charity most commonly practiced within the group is charitable aid, particularly in the form of services offered to a lower socio-economic neighborhood. Salto Quântico has an outreach centre located in the *favela* of Santa Maria in Aracaju, where a variety of different social aid is carried out: on Saturdays there is Bible study and meals are distributed, on Sundays there is free dental and medical attention given to those in

need, along with reiki, educational and biblical study groups for children, workshops for mothers and mothers-to-be, snacks and soup distributed to the hungry, and classes for children and young people including choir, music, ballet, craft making, and English classes. It is a vibrant place in a poor and peripheral community that endeavors to educate and empower children and mothers. Many volunteers give their time in the weekend to assist at the centre, especially those trained in medicine and dentistry, and they see their work as a living testament to the fact that Salto Quântico takes a proactive, socially conscientious role in its community. Once a year the group stages a variety show with individuals from Santa Maria, in honour of Maria Santíssima, which is a highlight for many members and children from the outreach centre.

POSITIVE SPIRITUAL SEXUAL DISCOURSE

Although Salto Quântista discourse engages with a diverse range of topics pertinent to late modern life and wellbeing, many of the group's teachings are oriented to finding fulfillment through the reconciliation of earthly desires with the spiritual being. Teixeira and his spirit guides propose that sexuality is a vital element of personhood and wellbeing, permeating and affecting one's happiness, emotions in general, thoughts and actions. Teixeira argues that sexuality strongly influences self-understanding and one's way of being in the world, and also bears impact on the individual's appropriation of attitudes and characteristics that have been defined as masculine and feminine, their affectional orientation towards others of the same or opposite sex, and attitudes around bodies and those of others. According to Salto-Quantista beliefs, gay relationships are revolutionary due to the fact that they challenge the anti-pleasure ethos diffused by more conservative forms of Christianity. Salto Quântico affirms a positive "incarnational" sexual theology that asserts the

goodness, sacredness and importance of sexual pleasure and sexual self-affirmation. For Salto Quântistas, the body is divine, not pollutive.

The group endeavors to establish new and progressive ways of understanding and making sense of embodied matters, reinforcing that the body can be reunited with the spirit, enjoyed and celebrated, but within reason: in an article available on the website entitled *Sex and Sublime Sex*, Eugenia advises the reader that although the act of sex and its significance celebrated, it must be enjoyed in a balanced manner that privileges its spiritual dimension.^{lxvi} Teachings place significant focus on a re-imagining of sexuality, resisting typical religious silence around controversial sexual issues. Themes openly discussed and critiqued in seminars and study groups include denunciation of sexual abstinence before marriage, gay marriage, homosexuality, only gender binaries, the necessity of the right to divorce, sadomasochism, promiscuity, lust, dealing with break-ups, infidelity and masturbation.

Creating a religious doctrine anchored in both Christianity and Spiritism that legitimates and embraces homosexuality and challenges prejudiced or outdated modes thinking is an ever-present focus of Teixeira's teachings. As James Nelson points out, gay Christians have long been pushed away from Christian churches and forced to find a sense of community in gay bars, baths and ghettos, while others opt for heterosexual marriage as they find little space open to them in civil society.^{lxvii} Salto Quântico attempts to create an inclusive, supportive spiritual community for both homosexual and heterosexual individuals. Although various religions (particularly Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda) in Brazil are "gay-friendly" and accepting of LGBT members in their spiritual communities, Salto

Quântico is “gay positive”, making a point of not merely accepting LGBT individuals, but encouraging dialogue that speaks to their experiences and the issues they face. The seminars, website and blog maintain a strong focus on matters of homosexuality and homophobia, combining social commentary and excerpts from local newspapers regarding gay pride parades of which Teixeira is an ardent supporter, video testimonies from Teixeira and adherents, autobiographical material of Teixeira’s experiences growing up gay, articles concerning Teixeira’s civil union with his partner Wagner, and statements received from Eugenia and from other spirit guides who speak through Teixeira in support of the naturalness and divinity of homosexuality. Indeed, in *Sex and Sublime Sex*, Eugenia argues for a re-imagining of sex and its meaning:

Sexual desire...aside from being a physical impulse to re-create the body, expresses an irresistible way of exchanging energies from spirit to spirit, on a very deep level. It is not by chance... that sexual desire extends itself beyond the periods of female fertility and beyond periods of desired pregnancy. Sexual exchanges between people of the same sex, which confirm this thesis, entirely incomprehensible from a reproductive point of view, characterize...at least 10 percent of human populations on the Earth.^{lxviii}

Many LGBT persons occupy a liminal position in society partly because of their deviant sexuality, but also due to the intensity of their spiritual and human experiences. This liminality is also brought about because non-heteronormative expressions of sexuality are situated in-between and beyond mainstream sexual identifications.^{lxix} In Salto Quântico, the fostering of an inclusive community for both

LGBT and heterosexual individuals is actively promoted. Salto Quântistas refer to themselves as “brothers and sisters in humanity”. For LGBT many members (and heterosexual members alike) the sense of community and belonging gained through adherence to the group was deeply gratifying and a cause for celebration. The intense focus Teixeira places on cultivating a gay positive spiritual environment has supported many adherents in arriving at a state of self-acceptance and understanding, resulting in the reconciliation of their spiritual and sexual selves.

Anderson, a 37-year-old civil servant, shared that the way Salto Quântico invigorated adherents to embrace their sexuality was liberating:

Salto Quântico Institute teaches us to leave behind this pattern of being a victim and above all, brings us what Christ promised: the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Kingdom of God, overcoming prejudice, bringing us happiness... It is reconciliation in my case...because I saw myself from a religious viewpoint as someone who could not be seen well in the eyes of God because I was homosexual. But thanks to Salto Quântico, the studies, the way of understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it brings us the light of spirituality, and of science.^{lxx}

For Iris, 30, an English teacher who first came to terms with her bisexuality in her early twenties, the spiritual education received in Salto Quântico helped her to not only overcome her internalized prejudice, but to make sense of her sexual orientation which she little understood:

I had no idea what bisexuality was, nor even the concept of sexuality! Through Salto Quântico, through Benjamin's lectures, the seminars, the classes, I began to think, "Oh my God! It's possible to be bisexual, to be in a homosexual relationship, to have sex, and be spiritual at the same time!"^{lxxi}

André, a 33-year-old nurse said:

After Salto Quântico...everything got better, I flourished. I really see reconciliation between my sexuality and the religiosity of Salto Quântico. I see sexuality and religiosity as completely natural elements of the human being.^{lxxii}

As evident in these testimonies, the support and spiritual teachings of SQ were instrumental in further enabling adherents to lead more fulfilled and joyful lives as sexual and spiritual beings.

CONCLUSION

Salto Quântico represents a unique New Age movement in the fertile religious landscape of Brazil. Although the quest for happiness is a leitmotif that colors many new religious movements, the particular way in which happiness is understood and pursued within this group is distinctive. With spiritual teachings that exhort adherents to live more fulfilling lives, Salto Quântico discourse emphasizes the need to know oneself and embrace diverse and possibly socially divergent elements of one's personhood to reach a fulfilled and happy state of being.

There are a range of theories and positions that argue how happiness can best be approximated which have been explored in this paper. Whilst more contemporary (and some would argue capitalist) understandings of happiness often underline individualistic and materialistic goals as important, other readings emphasise service to others and virtue, connection with others and strong relationships, and a deep understanding of the self as crucial. Salto Quântico curiously aligns itself with diverse points of the spectrum. Whilst many are initially allured to the group by individualistic and materialistic motivations, most noted what kept them returning or participating more regularly in group activities was happiness derived from other things: from the sense of community or fellowship or the discovery of an authentic and fulfilling state of being. This demonstrates a sense of evolution in how happiness was understood and experienced by members.

The pursuit of happiness has been critiqued as being potentially limiting, aligned with narcissism and neoliberalism, and exclusionary. Whilst some of these critiques ring true in the case of Salto Quântico, resonating strongly in the group's motto of "Happiness is not only your right; it's your duty!" for the most part, the vision of happiness propagated by Teixeira and his spirit guides is one that encourages adherents to wholeheartedly enjoy vital aspects of their humanity: the ability to engage in sexual pleasure without guilt, to delve into themselves to become better acquainted with who they are and what they desire in life, and to be spiritually equipped to confront depression and overcome it.

Of notable importance is the fact that Salto Quântico provides adherents with a spiritual model of happiness that is compatible with the exigencies of late modern life

and even neoliberalism: by taking responsibility for oneself and the choices one makes in the pursuit of the good life, adherents feel empowered. Although the reflection of neoliberal ideologies in contemporary spiritual modalities is seen by some as insidious and an inclination in need of critique, it is clear that for Salto Quântico adherents the adoption of a position of agency and self-responsibility that is spiritually informed and helps in navigating the waters of late modernity is immensely useful. The “this-worldly” orientation of Salto Quântico bestows adepts with the ability to experience a sense of fulfillment and human flourishing, even in the midst of a Brazil which is at present beset by unrest and instability.

ENDNOTES

ⁱKardecism, or Spiritism, as it is sometimes referred to in Brazil, has more adherents than any other nation in the world. Spiritists identify themselves as Christian, taking the *Gospel According to Spiritism* by Allan Kardec (Brasilia: International Spiritist Council, 2008, 1st ed. 1864) as their primary text, and believe Jesus to be the most prominent and influential example of a highly enlightened spirit to have ever incarnated on the Earth. From the knowledge disseminated by enlightened disincarnated spirits through mediums and *The Spirits' Book* psychographed by Allan Kardec (Brasilia: International Spiritist Council 2010, 1st ed. 1857) along with other Spiritist texts, Spiritists learn about the earthly plane, the plurality and hierarchy of spiritual worlds, what happens after death, morality and ethics. From an eschatological perspective, Spiritists believe in the law of karma and reincarnation, the existence of a spiritual body (perispirit) and the universal spiritual evolution of mankind. Human beings must pass through multiple spiritual worlds and incarnations as part of their spiritual evolution in order to reach a state of spiritual purification and perfection.

ⁱⁱ Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, "Felicidade Realista." *Salto Quântico Institute*. November 3, 2013, accessed April 15, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.saltoquantico.com.br/2013/11/03/felicidade-realista/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Andrew Dawson, *New Era, New Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and David Hess, *Spirits and Scientists : Ideology, Spiritism, and Brazilian Culture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

^{iv} Kardecism is more informally and generally referred to as Spiritism in Brazil. Spiritism in a Brazilian context refers to Spiritist thought as developed by Allan Kardec.

^v Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, *Respostas Moderna da Sabia Grega: Dialogos com o Espirito Eugenia*. (Aracaju: Editora Triunfo, 2011)

^{vi} Interview with Lulu, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{vii} Members of Salto Quântico often refer to Benjamin affectionately as Mamin.

^{viii} Interview with Cristiane, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{ix} Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Company of “Cargo” Cults in Melanesia* (London. MacGibbon and Kee, 1968).

^x Incorporation is frequently used in Brazilian Spiritism to refer to the process of channelling a spirit. It refers to the corporeality of the process, whereby the medium does not merely channel the spirit but rather, allows them use of their body, often evidenced by a change of voice and posture.

^{xi} Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, *Respostas Modernas da Sabia Grega: Dialogos com o Espirito Eugenia* (Aracaju: Editora Triunfo, 2011).

^{xii} Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, *Respostas Modernas*, 21-22.

^{xiii} As seen on Teixeira’s Facebook page on May 16th, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/benjamin.teixeiradeaguiar?fref=ts>

^{xiv} Mary Papenfuss, “Brazil’s astonishing murder tally matches Syrian war death toll,” *International Business Times*, last modified May 23, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/brazils-astonishing-murder-tally-matches-syrian-war-death-toll-1502621>

^{xv} Nancy Ammerman, “Introduction” in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy Ammerman (Oxford: New York, 2007), 4.

^{xvi} The *Bolsa Familia* is a social initiative which awards cash benefits to mothers who ensure their children attend school and receive healthcare and immunisation.

^{xvii} Nestor Garcia Canclini cited in Vivian Schelling (ed.) *Through the Kaleidoscope: the Experience of Modernity in Latin America*, (Verso: London, 2000), 9.

^{xviii} Interview with Linda, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{xix} Interview with Lulu, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{xx} Carolyn Gregoire, "How happiness became a cultural obsession," *The Huffington Post*, last modified April 8, 2014,

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/20/happiness-self-help_n_4979780.html

^{xxi} Mark Larrimore, "Religion and the Promise of Happiness," *Social Research*, 77:2 (2010): 578.

^{xxii} Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, (Malden: Blackwell, 2008).PAGE

^{xxiii} Interview with Carol, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{xxiv} Brian Heaphy, *Late Modernity and Social Change: Reconstructing Social and Personal Life*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).PAGE

^{xxv} Benjamin Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, "Sua Escolha," *Salto Quântico Institute*, 22 July, 2002, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.saltoquantico.com.br/2002/07/23/sua-escolha/>

^{xxvi} Eva Illouz, "Who will care for the caretaker's daughter? Toward a sociology of happiness in the era of reflexive modernity," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 14(1997):31-66.

^{xxvii} Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

^{xxviii} Interview with Angela, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{xxix} Interview with Ana, August 2012, Aracaju.

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- ^{xxx} Heelas, *The New Age Movement*.PAGE
- ^{xxxⁱ} Teixeira, *Respostas Modernas*,103-104.
- ^{xxxⁱⁱ} Teixeira, *Respostas Modernas*, 103-104.
- ^{xxxⁱⁱⁱ} Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism : American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. (1st ed.). (New York: Norton, 1978).PAGE
- ^{xxx^{iv}} Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*.
- ^{xxx^v} IBGE (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). Last modified 26 September, 2015
- ftp://ftp.ibge.gov.br/Trabalho_e_Rendimento/Pesquisa_Mensal_de_Emprego/fasciculo_indicadores_ibge/2015/pme_201507pubCompleta.pdf
- ^{xxx^{vi}} Daniel Bramatti, José Roberto de Toledo, Rodrigo Burgarelli “Brasileiros Batem Recorde de Pessimismo em Relação ao Futuro do País”. *Blog do Estadão Dados*, accessed 20 September 2015. URL NEEDED
- ^{xxx^{vii}} Raymond Lee and Susan Ellen Ackerman, *The Challenge of Religion After Modernity : Beyond Disenchantment*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).
- ^{xxx^{viii}} “Masters of Spirituality refers to Teixeira and his spirit guides: Eugenia, and the other spirits that he incorporates such as Matheus Anacleto and Roberto Daniel.
- ^{xxx^{ix}} Interview with Luciane, July 2012, Aracaju.
- ^{xl} Interview with Luciane, July 2012, Aracaju.
- ^{xli} Interview with Lulu, August 2012, Aracaju.
- ^{xlii} Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life*, 155.
- ^{xliii} Psychiatric patients who report seeing visions or hearing voices are believed in many cases to not be suffering from hallucinations, but to in fact be mediums who are unaware of their abilities of heightened psychic perception. In Afro-Brazilian religions, undeveloped

mediumship rendering the individual more prone to psychic intrusions is a commonly accepted idea.

^{xliv} Emma Bragdon, *Spiritism and Mental Health*, (London: Singing Dragon, 2013).

^{xlv} Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, *Respostas Modernas*, 238.

^{xlvi} Teixeira de Aguiar Machado, *Respostas Modernas*, 238.

^{xlvii} Interview with Angela, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{xlviii} Eugenia cited in Teixeira, *Respostas Modernas*, 237.

^{xlix} Eugenia cited in Teixeira, *Respostas Modernas*, 237.

^l In the earlier years of Salto Quântico, Teixeira offered adherents private consultations.

^{li} Interview with Lulu, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{lii} Interview with Ana, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{liii} Maria Quintana, Sergio Andreoli, Fernanda Moreira, Wagner Ribeiro, Marcelo Feijo, Rodrigo Bressan, Evandro Coutinho Jair Mari, “Epidemiology of Psychotropic Drug Use in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Gaps in Mental Illness Treatments.” *PLoS ONE*, 8(2013), e62270. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0062270

^{liv} Interview with Ana, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{lv} Interview with Bellinha, August 2012, Aracaju.

^{lvi} Interview with Luciane, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{lvii} Interview with Angela, July 2012, Aracaju.

^{lviii} Lesley Clarke, Leonard Beeghley & John K. Cochran, “Religiosity, Social Class, and Alcohol Use: An Application of Reference Group Theory” *Sociological Perspectives*, 33(1990): 201–218.

^{lix} Harvard grant study COMPLETE

^{lx} Suzanne Ortega, Robert Crutchfield & William Rushing, “Race Differences in Elderly Personal Well-Being Friendship, Family, and Church,” *Research on Aging*, 5(1983): 101–118. doi:10.1177/0164027583005001006

^{lxi} Christopher Ellison & Linda George, “Religious Involvement, Social Ties, and Social Support in a South-eastern Community,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33(1994):46–61. doi:10.2307/1386636

^{lxii} Ellison and George, “Religious Involvement,” 49.

^{lxiii} Ellison and George, “Religious Involvement,” 49.

^{lxiv} Hess, *Spirits and Scientists*, PAGE

^{lxv} Eugenia cited in Teixeira, *Respostas Modernas*, 107

^{lxvi} Eugenia, “Sexo e Sexo Sublime” *Salto Quântico Institute*, 17 April 2006. Retrieved 3 July, 2014, <http://www.saltoquantico.com.br/2006/04/17/sexo-e-sexo-sublime/>

^{lxvii} James B. Nelson, *Embodiment : An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House 1978.)

^{lxviii} Eugenia, “Sexo e Sexo Sublime”.

^{lxix} Claudio Bardella, “Queer Spirituality” *Social Compass*, 48 (2001):133.

^{lxx} Interview with Anderson December 2012, Aracaju.

^{lxxi} Interview with Iris December 2012, Aracaju.

^{lxxii} Interview with Andre December 2012, Aracaju.