

10 UFOS, UFOLOGISTS, AND DIGITAL MEDIA IN BRAZIL

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Introduction

The social sciences have been resistant to study the collectives formed through the relation with unidentified flying objects (UFOs) and extraterrestrials (ETs) because, as Pierre Lagrange argues, the claims of these groups have very frequently been reduced to a “psychological phenomena ignored by reason,”¹ and this justified the refusal to treat them as more than a community of believers.

This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of UFO collectives by rejecting the use of the concept of belief as an analytical frame in favor of an ethnographic approach and to attend to their process of construction, be it in digital platforms or “away from keyboard.”²

In the first section, I will present an outline of the anthropological critique of the heuristic capacity of the concept of “belief” to interpret not only UFO collectives but also any kind of human experience. The second section explores three processes of constructing ufology that, when combined, translate the order of the supernatural into the realm of the “ultra-natural”—that is, it describes how ufology transforms “alleged beliefs” into ET-related data.

An “ultra-natural”³ reality animated by beings with whom ufologists maintain various relations of different kinds. The final section suggests that digital technologies and press publications do more than represent previous positions of the UFO collective: they are constitutive of ufology and contribute to what I term a “pragmatic of secrecy.”⁴ This concept aims to capture the process by which ufology reproduces itself by constantly releasing secret information, such as declassified documents, interviews with military

BELIEVING IN BITS

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