

Papers which can fuel your research project

1. Researching views on Astrology

Wuthnow, Robert. "Astrology and Marginality." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 15, no. 2 (1976): 157-68. JSTOR

The social correlates of interest and belief in astrology are examined using data from 1,000 respondents in the San Francisco Bay Area. The data show widespread openness to the claims of astrology, interest in horoscopes, and knowledge of astrological signs, although firm belief in astrology is less prevalent. Looking at the social location of commitment to astrology reveals the greatest amount of commitment is among traditionally marginal social groups, although there is also some indication it has been nourished by the so-called "counterculture." Some evidence is also presented which suggests astrology may function as a surrogate for more conventional religious commitments.

Feher, Shoshanah. "Who Looks to the Stars? Astrology and Its Constituency." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31, no. 1 (1992): 88-93. JSTOR

This paper reports the findings of an exploratory study on astrology and its constituency. To date, [1992] there have been few sociological studies of astrology, and little is known about what types of people are interested in the practice. This study's focus was on adherents of astrology who attended an astrology conference. Unlike previous research, the findings of this study show that the characteristics of these astrologers reflect those of the general population, providing a new understanding of a segment of astrology's constituency.

[Note:

You may also be interested in this additional paper by Shoshanah Feher:

Feher, Shoshanah. "Who Holds the Cards? Women and New Age Astrology." In *Perspectives on the New Age*, edited by James R Lewis and Gordon Melton, 179 - 88. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992."

Here Feher uses the same questionnaire conducted at UAC 89 from her earlier paper to respond to Wuthnow's paper "Astrology and Marginality".

Both are examples of the influence on results of different target groups as well as showing how data from a survey can have multiply uses.]

Peric, Zheljana. "The Decline of Astrology: A Symbol of Man's Disconnection with Nature, Self and the Cosmos." In *Proceedings of the 53rd Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences*. University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia 2009. (Full PDF available online from Bielefeld academic search engine – a public collections of academic and non-academic papers, so maintain a critical approach. <http://www.base-search.net/>) Checked 13 January 2022.

Abstract: Throughout history astrology has functioned symbolically to represent Man's attitude to and understanding of Nature. When Man disconnects himself from Nature, Self and the Cosmos, this disconnection is made evident through a decline or dismissal of interest in astrology. The paper argues that this disconnection makes astrology at times seem like a 'superstitious vulgarity', to use St Augustine's view of astrology. Many others over the centuries have discounted astrology in a similar manner. Yet, at other times in history, astrology has been held in high regard and recognised to be serving an important role in reconnecting Man to Nature, Self and the Cosmos. The present ecological crisis is perhaps a reflection of a psychological crisis - a sign that the modern decline of astrology has progressed too far. The paper concludes with suggestions for how the emerging interest in systems thinking might enable modern man to reconnect with astrological thinking, and therefore Nature, Self and the Cosmos.

Allum, Nick, 'What Makes Some People Think Astrology is Scientific?' (2010). Science Communication, pp. 1-26, 2010, Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1860385 [Checked 13 January 2022].

Abstract: Citizens in both North America and Europe are apt to read horoscope columns in newspapers and magazines. While some people read these casually and purely for entertainment, some believe that astrology has scientific status and can provide real insight into events and personality. Using data from a European survey, this article explores some of the reasons why some people think that astrology is scientific and how astrology is viewed in relation to other knowledge-producing practices. Three hypotheses in particular are tested. The first is that some Europeans lack the necessary scientific literacy to distinguish science from pseudoscience. The second is that people are confused about what astrology actually is. The third is derived from Adorno's work on authoritarianism and the occult and postulates that those who adhere to authoritarian values are more likely to believe in astrological claims. Support is found for all three hypotheses.

Eve, Raymond A., and Dana Dunn. 'Psychic Powers, Astrology & Creationism in the Classroom? Evidence of Pseudoscientific Beliefs among High School Biology & Life Science Teachers.' - JSTOR

Opening paragraph: Many authors and researchers have noted the popularity of pseudoscientific beliefs in the United States.^{1'2} Although pseudoscience is not a new phenomenon (it has been around at least as long as science itself [Trefil 19781], some suggest that pseudoscientific beliefs have become even more wide-spread in recent decades. The last three decades have also seen a decline in scientific literacy in the general public (Hively 1988). Unless the simultaneity of these two trends is purely coincidental-which seems highly unlikely-it may well be that understanding the mechanisms behind the origin and transmission of pseudoscientific beliefs will shed some light on the decline in scientific literacy.

Bertrand Russell – ‘On Astrologers’

<http://www.personal.kent.edu/~rmuhamma/Philosophy/RBwritings/HearstColumns/onAstrologer.htm> [Accessed 6 January 2022].

James Davidson's review of Michael Wood 'On the Road to Delphi.'

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n23/james-davidson/i-told-you-so> [Accessed 6 January 2022].

Blackmore, S. & Seebold, M. (2001). 'The Effect of Horoscopes on Women's Relationships'. *Correlation*, 19, 14 - 28. Available at <https://www.susanblackmore.uk/articles/the-effect-of-horoscopes-on-womens-relationships/> [Accessed 6 January 2022]. Also reply by James Brockbank to Blackmore and Seebold's paper.

Bauer and Durant, 'Belief in Astrology: a social psychological analysis' - (Culture and Cosmos).

Darrellyn Gunzburg, 'How do astrologers read charts?' PDF on RCC Moodle.

ABSTRACT: This paper is focused on how meaning is drawn from a natal horoscope based on interviews with contemporary western astrologers who work with natal horoscopes. Some authors of astrological texts suggest that the activity of reading a natal horoscope for a client evokes mystery or the divine. Many astrologers think that reading a chart is a ritual. This paper proposes a different approach, that of creativity, and suggests that reading a natal horoscope is a secular creative endeavour. A glossary of astrological terms is included at the end of the paper.

Margaret Hamilton, (2001). 'Who believes in astrology? Effect of favourableness of astrologically derived personality descriptions on acceptance of astrology'. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 31, 895-902.

<http://astropants.com/Hami01.pdf> [Accessed 6 January 2022].

Note that Hamilton uses a statistical approach. You are not expected to do this, but her paper can give you some ideas.

2. Researching views on different cosmologies

T. L. Brink. "Inconsistency of Belief among Roman Catholic Girls: Concerning Religion, Astrology, Reincarnation." *Review of Religious Research* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 82-85. JSTOR.

Abstract: The religious attitudes of 227 junior and senior students at a Catholic girls high school are examined. Students who expressed a belief in astrology did not report religious attitudes which differed significantly from the other students. Those who expressed belief in reincarnation manifested only slight differences in attitudes. Students expressing a belief in astrology were more likely to express a belief in reincarnation. These results were held to be

inconsistent with cognitive theories which stress the importance of attitude consistency. The author presents a functional perspective. Although these attitudes are structurally incompatible with each other, they serve similar functions for some adolescent girls: the provision of security in the face of confusion and uncertainty.

Tony Walter and Helen Waterhouse. "A Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England." JSTOR.

Abstract: Survey data indicate a substantial minority of westerners who have no attachment to Eastern or New Age religion but who nevertheless believe in reincarnation. This paper summarizes the findings of a small intensive interview study of a group of English people who take seriously the possibility of reincarnation: 1) Many of them hold reincarnation alongside Christian belief; 2) Most are less than dogmatic about their belief; 3) Some entertain the possibility of reincarnation because of experience (first or second hand), for others reincarnation solves intellectual problems, e.g., concerning theodicy; 4) They see bodily incarnations in the context of long-term spiritual progress, and they value spirit over body; 5) Their belief in reincarnation has rather little effect on the rest of their lives. It is concluded that rising belief in reincarnation heralds neither a spiritual nor a moral revolution, but fits easily into the privatized religion that characterizes contemporary western societies, and England in particular.

Case and Phillipson – 'The Hidden Lineage of Modern Management Science: Astrology, Alchemy and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator File'. [Available at http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/5/5-2-phillipson_case_myers_briggs.pdf]

Abstract: Beneath the surface of some significant contemporary management practices there exists evidence of pre-modern cosmology. The influence of astrological and alchemical ideas on organisational conduct has not, however, attracted very much serious social-scientific attention to date. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is described and reasons discussed for considering it to be a prime example of the underpinning of the modern by the pre-modern. C.G.Jung's role as mediator between pre-modern and modern is considered, with some investigation devoted to the four function-types and two attitude-types which he propounded, their origins in earlier symbolism, and their influence on subsequent psychological theory and practice. An astro-genealogical account of the development of the MBTI is offered, taking into account its debt to Renaissance and earlier forms of thinking and symbolism. In conclusion, a warning note is sounded: the modern need to place psychology on an entirely scientific footing can manifest as a dogmatic, belief-driven revisionism that produces a fragmentary, potentially alienating, view of the individual.

Edmund Conklin – 'Superstitious belief among college students' (1919) – JSTOR. Conklin raises the question of the existence of superstition within early 20th century western society. This is reflective of people living in alternative cosmologies.

Available from other online sources

Dambrun, Michael, 'Belief in Paranormal Determinism as a Source of Prejudice Towards Disadvantaged Groups: "The Dark Side of Stars"', *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 2004, Vol. 32 no 1, pp. 627-636. Available at <https://www.bpi.edu/ourpages/auto/2018/11/21/34549320/astrology%20and%20prejudic.pdf> [Accessed 6 January 2022].

Reinhard Mussik – 'Contemporary Online Solstice Celebrations at Prehistoric Sites', Culture and Cosmos: <http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/abstracts/22-Mussik.php>

Abstract

The sun, moon, stars and planets have been worshipped in many cultures in different historical periods. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in the German region of Upper Lusatia some people were caught 'red-handed' by their parish priest praying to the sun at rock formations at sunrise and sunset. At the summer solstice 2012 a group of hobbyist archaeoastronomers established an Internet interconnection between similar rock formations in the same region. All the rock formations involved were mooted to have been sacred sites of a prehistoric sun cult. Could this phenomenon be a revival of a long-forgotten cult? This article explores the motivation of the organisers of and participants in the virtual interconnections at the summer solstice 2014. Surprisingly, these people were mainly interested in archaeoastronomy and local history, not in New Age spiritual ideas. Furthermore, they felt connected to an assumed pan-European sun cult which could have been ubiquitous at a time when borders between European countries did not exist.