

IDENTITY OF A MODERN ASTROLOGER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A RUSSIAN SPEAKING SAMPLE

Framework project on the topic of the dissertation

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The relevance of the topic

- The intensive growth of various types of alternative spirituality and new religious movements after *perestroika* from the 1990s . Astrology is one of the most prominent phenomena.
- There are over two dozen independent schools, which differ significantly in methodology, philosophical attitudes and practice.
- Compared to other esotericists, astrologers actively defend their right to conduct professional practice in the social field.
- Astrologers are noticeably involved in the sphere of economic relations.



Research Questions

Q1) What features are characteristic of the biographies of modern Russian astrologers?

Q2) How do the biographical narratives of astrologers reflect what is happening in society? The influence of the social environment on the practice of astrology.

Q3) How does the process of legitimizing the activities and position of a professional astrologer proceed? What kind of difficulties does he/she face? If so, what consequences does this have for them and what adaptation strategies are used to overcome difficulties?



Theoretical framework

- P. Berger and T. Luckmann (1966) “Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge ”
 - J.Bruner (1991) “The Narrative Construction of Reality”
 - J.Bruner (2004) “Life as Narrative”
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- K. Dilanian (2021) Astrology in the late USSR and post-perestroika Russia (on the example of the activities of four astrologers)
 - D. Khoroshilov, D.Mashkov (2022) Research on magic in modern society through the prism of biography (using the example of narrative analysis life history).



Research methodology

The methodology of this study is based on a qualitative anthropological interpretation of data obtained using qualitative ethnographic methods.

- Narrative Oriented Inquiry, NOI (Hiles, Čermák, Chrz, 2008) is a qualitative method of analysis focused on exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences through storytelling. In the context of studying the biographies of contemporary astrologers, this approach offers valuable tools for analyzing their identities, professional trajectories, and sociocultural self-representations.

Social Construction of Reality

P. Berger and T. Luckmann

General categories

- Symbolic universes
- Significant others
- Socialization, identification, internalization
- Self - objective/subjective
- Language
- Legitimation
- Roles
- Merchants of ideas

The Narrative Construction of Reality

J. Bruner

Specification of categories

- Narrative as cultural product
- Story in some way references reality (although not directly)
- Story can be classified as a genre
- Characters within a narrative have *beliefs, desires, theories, values*
- How one ought to act (normativeness)

Life as Narrative

J. Bruner

Narrative Oriented Inquiry (NOI)

Hiles, Čermák, Chrz

IDENTITY



The unit of analysis is a biographical narrative

Through a semi-structured interview in person or online (1 hour or more), a narrative will be obtained from the respondent that reflects his biography as a professional. The first part is devoted to the question of how the respondent became an astrologer. It is important here what the respondent himself says (spontaneous narrative). At the second stage, additional questions will be asked that reveal various details that relate to values, desires, beliefs, details of social professional life (directed narrative).



The unit of analysis is a biographical narrative

The audio recordings of these interviews will be transcribed into text form, where topics will be highlighted along with the amount of time spent on them. Next, the specified themes will be coded for further processing – NOI, Atlas.ti*

* how the storyteller organizes their biography over time, which *turning points* they identify, how they describe personal transformations, and how astrology becomes integrated into their life story. Special attention is paid to narrative positions, or the roles the narrator occupies in their story.



I anticipate that the topics that astrologers will cover during interviews will fall into one of the following categories:

- **The family in which the respondent was raised and its characteristics (social, economic, cultural), including attitude towards esoteric disciplines;**
- **Experience of the first encounter with astrology and contact with the carriers of this knowledge;**
- **Education, its general level (secondary, higher) and focus;**
- **Work experience and way of earning money;**
- **Position in society and status of a person in connection with his astrological practice. Difficulties and dilemmas that a person faces in society.**



The sample

consists of 12-20 professionally practicing Russian-speaking astrologers* in Russia and other countries.**

*** someone who has completed training in one of the astrological schools, courses, or has independently studied this subject for at least a year with the help of books and/or educational videos and then began his own professional practice.**

**** Georgia, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria and Sweden**



Research ethics

My position as a researcher is grounded in the principles of cultural relativism, scientific agnosticism, and the ethnographic study of esoteric practice.

Russian anthropologists and ethnologists often refer to the Russian translation of the *American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics* (Yarskaya-Smirnova, 2000)*

* Supplementary to these are the EK NSS (2017), EK SASA (2013), *Code of Ethics of Social and Cultural Anthropology of Ilia State University* (2020)...



Ethical questions and dilemmas

- Informed consent
- Negative consequences for astrologers' reputation, career, or personal life
- Honoring a participant's wish for anonymity
- Description a subjective spiritual experience without reducing it to “delusion” or “illusion”
- Responsible storage of ethnographic materials



The current status of the research project

Thank you for attantion!

PLÁN [OBNOVY]



cestovná
mapa k lepšiemu
Slovensku