

Do consumers of astrological services use astrology as a method of actively seeking divine guidance? If so, what astrological services are sought for the purpose? A Pilot Study.

by Marcia Butchart

Past academic scholarship on the question of whether astrology is a divinatory practice has been mainly theoretical. Only two studies of recent vintage, by current astrological scholars, have sought to explore whether practicing astrologers themselves experience their practice as divinatory; no studies have been discovered that explore whether recipients of astrologically derived information experience it as divinatory. This current study seeks to understand the contribution of the client's motives: whether or not astrologers perceive their function as a divinatory practice, the question is whether the clients seek astrological information as a means of divination?

Introduction: The Context of the Question

This small pilot study seeks to explore whether “consumers” of astrological advice and information use these as a means of divination: of seeking divine or non-mundane guidance. It is the hypothesis of this study that astrological clients do use astrology, in many different forms, for precisely these reasons.

What is meant by divination and might astrology justifiably be considered a divinatory practice? Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker offer the following definition of divination: “the attempt to elicit from some higher power or supernatural being the answers to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding.”¹ Regarding astrology, Richard Tarnas argues that, “astrology...posits a systematic symbolic correspondence between planetary positions and the events of human existence.”² The possible link between astrology and divination is suggested first, by Barbara Tedlock, who observes that divination can “combine mechanical procedures with sudden bursts of intuition

¹ Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker, “Introduction” in *Oracles and Divination*, ed. M. Loewe and C. Blacker, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), [hereafter Loewe and Blacker, *Oracles*], p. 1

² Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), p.63.

or insight”³ and Alie Bird, who argues that, “Most, if not all, of the divinatory practices...employ some kind of intermediary device to facilitate the act of divination...Astrology has the horoscope.”⁴ This line of reasoning argues that astrology is, indeed, a method of divination since: (1) constructing the “intermediary device” is an astrologer’s “mechanical procedure” prior to interpretation and; (2) “sudden bursts of insight” are needed to facilitate that interpretation, argued by astrologer Robert Hand. “You look at the chart...all the components...and all of a sudden, bang! They come together...It’s an entirely intuitive process.”⁵

The horoscope to which Bird refers is most often a geocentrically-oriented diagram depicting the placements of our solar system’s planets plus the sun and moon in the signs of the zodiac (the tropical zodiac, which locates 0° Aries at the intersection of the celestial equator and earth’s orbit around the sun, is most commonly used by Western practitioners). The diagram is created for a specific point in time and place on earth. The astrologer interprets its symbolism for him/herself or a client, based on the concerns that led to its creation. The horoscope may also be called a birth chart when its point in time and space represents the birth of a person, a creature, a business, a nation, a building (to list some possibilities). Horoscopes are also created for events, such as trips, marriages, surgeries, commencement of courses of study, battles, ceremonies, earthquakes, accidents. A specialised branch of astrology, termed horary astrology, creates a horoscope for the moment a question is posed to an astrologer.⁶

A few authors within the astrological community have attempted academic research on whether astrologers themselves view or experience their art as divinatory. Garry Phillipson interviewed astrological professionals for their opinions—which were divided—on the topic, although he used the term “magic,” rather than “divination.”⁷ Nicholas Champion drew astrologers’ opinions on the topic from survey data included in his doctoral dissertation; when his two survey populations were combined, only 114 out of a total of 311 subjects (36.6%)

³ Barbara Tedlock, “Divination as a Way of Knowing: Embodiment, Visualisation, Narrative, and Interpretation”, *Folklore*, Vol. 112, No 2, (Oct 2001): [hereafter, Tedlock, *Folklore*], p. 195.

⁴ Alie Bird, “Astrology in Education: An Ethnography,” (PhD diss., University of Sussex, 2006), [hereafter Bird, “Astrology”], p. 89.

⁵ Robert Hand, cited in Garry Phillipson, “What is Astrology—Science or Magic?” in *Astrology in the Year Zero*, (London: Flare Publications, 2000) [hereafter Phillipson, *Year Zero*], p. 193.

⁶ Patrick Curry, “Conversing With the Stars,” in Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 148.

⁷ Phillipson, *Year Zero*, pp. 182-197.

expressed belief that astrology was a form of divination.⁸ Astrology as a divinatory art was not the primary focus of Bird's doctoral dissertation, but the entirety of her Chapter Five was devoted to arguments that astrology, "patently is a divination system."⁹ [author's emphasis]. She also observed that debates on the subject remained largely theoretical;¹⁰ her observation thus underlines the relevance of a qualitative pilot study, published in 2006, by Anthony Thorley. Thorley explored the reported experiences of astrologers during the consultation itself regarding the apparent emergence of divinatory qualities, manifested particularly by altered states of consciousness and "sudden bursts of insight." His material from six in-depth interviews was broadly—although, he stresses, not conclusively—supportive of a divinatory aspect manifesting when astrologers give guidance.¹¹

But what of the experiences of those who seek guidance, rather than those who give it? This present pilot study attempts to explore the motives and mindsets of astrological "consumers." It might be argued that the astrological "consumer" is not relevant to an understanding of the presence or absence of astrology's divinatory qualities. However, a curious thread runs through significant philosophical critiques of astrology, from Cicero and Augustine through Pico della Mirandola up to the 1975 *Humanist* manifesto.¹² The authors appear to address potential astrological (or divinatory) *clients*; astrological practitioners are not addressed in the first person. Nowhere, for example, in the *Humanist's* Objections to Astrology, is there text commanding all astrological practitioners to cease and desist. Instead, the statement reads, "We, the undersigned...wish to caution the public against the unquestioning acceptance of

⁸ Nicholas Champion, "Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology," (PhD diss., University of the West of England, 2004), pp. 243-244.

⁹ Bird, "Astrology," p. 86.

¹⁰ Bird, "Astrology," p. 86.

¹¹ Anthony Thorley, "Perceptions of Divination in the Astrological Consultation: A Pilot Study," *Correlation* 24(2) (2006/2007): [hereafter, Thorley, *Correlation*], p. 28.

¹² Marcus Tullius Cicero, *de Divinatione, Book II*, trans. by W.A. Falconer, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923), http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cicero/de_Divinatione/1*.html (accessed 31 Mar 2011); Augustine, *City of God, Book V*, trans. Rev. Marcus Dod (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), <http://www.ccel.org/schaff/npnf102/iv.V.1>; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Disputations Against Divinatory Astrology*, cited in Geoffrey Cornelius, *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination*, (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer, 2003), [hereafter Cornelius, *Moment*], p. 1; "Objections to Astrology: A Statement by 186 Leading Scientists," in *Humanist*, September/October, 1975, cited in Geoffrey Cornelius, *The Moment of Astrology*, (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer, Ltd., 2003), pp. 22-23.

the predictions and advice given...by astrologers.”¹³ This suggests that the potential astrological-cum-divinatory clients are necessary partners in divination. I would, therefore, argue that exploring their attitudes could contribute to a fuller understanding of the subject.

This study thus seeks insight into the following aspects of the client’s experience: the types of life issues on which divinatory guidance is sought; methods employed to seek that guidance; whether astrological methods are among those used; which astrological methods are used; if seekers employ the method(s) themselves or consult practitioners; if divinatory methods chosen by astrologically involved consumers differ from those chosen by astrologically non-involved consumers.

Methodology

Following the recommendations of Alan Bryman on social research methodologies, a triangulated method of data collection was attempted.¹⁴ A semi-structured, written survey was combined semi-structured interviews with volunteers from among survey respondents. Written surveys were first distributed electronically to two target research groups. The first group consisted of 36 subjects presumed to be astrologically knowledgeable and involved, being chiefly drawn from the membership of a local astrological association. The second group of 22 subjects were suspected to have minimal, if any, astrological involvement. Members of both groups were on familiar terms with the researcher; as a consulting astrologer, I was moderately familiar with the extent of their involvement with astrology. A section of the survey was designed to gather data to confirm or disprove the researcher’s initial opinion of a subject’s involvement, thus permitting re-classification as necessary. Survey respondents’ confidentiality was safeguarded; all interviewees signed the Interview Release Form provided by the University of Wales, Trinity St. David.

The survey employed the term “transpersonal guidance” as an analogue for “divine guidance” and/or “divination.” This was done in hopes of eliciting any and all non-mundane methods respondents might employ to aid their, “movement from maelstrom to meaning.”¹⁵ It was feared that the term “divine” might convey an explicitly religious orientation. It was also feared that the term “divination” might baffle respondents who, with one exception, were American

¹³ Cornelius, *Moment*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, (London: Unwin Hyman, Ltd, 1988), pp. 137-140.

¹⁵ Maggie Hyde, “The Cock and the Chameleon,” in *The Imaginal Cosmos: Astrology, Divination and the Sacred*, ed. Angela Voss and Jean Hinson Lall, (Canterbury: University of Kent, 2007), p. 51.

(this concern proved correct, as will be noted in the exploration of interview content). “Supernatural,” “paranormal” and “metaphysical” were felt to imply possible connotations that might lead respondents to ignore natural omens—including the natural celestial cycles employed in astrology. “Transpersonal” was chosen in hopes that it would be familiar to both astrologically involved and uninvolved subjects. It is a term drawn from a branch of psychology to classify experiences of awareness, “which involve...connectedness with phenomena considered outside the boundaries of the ego...including...intuitive wisdom.”¹⁶ Transpersonal psychologists also accept and work with altered states of consciousness (ASC’s),¹⁷ those states of mind considered characteristic of the *mantis*, the ancient oracular receiver of wisdom “outside the boundaries of the ego.”¹⁸ “Transpersonal” also designates a type of astrology created by astrological author Dane Rudhyar, whose writings are well-known to the American astrological community. Rudhyar’s philosophy advocates the necessity for an individual’s ego to allow, “the descent of spiritual, supernal forces.”¹⁹ It was, admittedly, unknown whether astrologically uninvolved respondents might be confused by the term; the quality of that group’s survey responses proved this not to be the case.

The survey consisted of two sections. Section I requested demographic data, divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section asked for gender, birth year and number of years of involvement with astrology. The next sub-section attempted to determine the level of a respondent’s involvement with astrology, for the reason explained above. Activities used to rate depth of involvement included use of/participation in and/or creation of astrological calendars, publications, articles, books, classes, certification programmes, organisations, conferences and astrological research, as well as whether a respondent consulted astrologers and/or gave readings. A specific question asked whether respondents used astrology to manage physical and/or spiritual aspects of their lives. Respondents were also invited to list those categories of astrology of greatest interest to them.

¹⁶ Marc C. Kaspro, M.D. and Bruce W. Scotton, M.D., “A Review of Transpersonal Theory and Its Application to the Practice of Psychotherapy,” *The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research* 8:1, (Winter 1999): [hereafter, Kaspro and Scotton, “Transpersonal”], 12.

¹⁷ Kaspro and Scotton, “Transpersonal,” 17-20.

¹⁸ Dorian Greenbaum, “Rising to the Occasion,” in *The Imaginal Cosmos*, ed. Angela Voss and Jean Hinson Lall, (Canterbury: University of Kent, 2007), [hereafter, Greenbaum, “Rising”], pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of Transformation: A Multilevel Approach*, (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1994 [1980]), p. 97.

Section II requested actual data on transpersonal/divine guidance methods employed. Respondents were first asked if they ever sought guidance from “a Higher Power or The Universe” when facing life challenges. A list of life challenges was offered with an additional blank category for respondents to enter their own ideas or experiences. The eight issues chosen have presented in clients seeking the researcher’s astrological consulting services. They reflect a combination of: (a) possible subjects of divinatory/transpersonal inquiry listed by Loewe and Blacker: “future events, past disasters whose causes cannot be explained, things hidden from sight or removed in space, appropriate conduct in critical situations, including the healing of illness, determining the times and modes of religious worship, and making choices of persons for particular tasks;”²⁰ and (b) ideas drawn from astrological texts:²¹

- A. Struggling to decide on a course of action.
- B. Feeling a loss of focus or purpose.
- C. Feeling that a part or the whole of life has lost meaning.
- D. Wondering if a seemingly random event has meaning.
- E. A life-changing event happening without warning.
- F. Regaining something or someone precious that has been lost.
- G. Desire to know the outcome of an endeavour.
- H. Hoping to influence the outcome of an endeavour.

Respondents were asked to relate how they sought transpersonal/divine guidance for each issue, and to leave blank any that did not apply; the survey form provided space to extemporise as little or as much as they wished. A deliberately uncategorised list of possible transpersonal/divine guidance methods was attached for their reference. Survey instructions urged respondents not to confine themselves to the list, however; this was done in hopes of encouraging more genuine, rather than more guided, responses. Different astrological practices were scattered randomly throughout the list; this was also deliberate, in an effort not to force respondents to consider only astrological means of transpersonal/divine guidance.

Discussion: The Survey

Thirty of fifty-eight potential subjects responded to the survey. The average age was fifty-five; only one respondent was under forty. Respondents were chiefly female; only six (20%) respondents were male. Twenty-seven respondents stated they sought transpersonal/divine guidance in times of life challenge.

²⁰ Loewe and Blacker, *Oracles*, p. 189.

²¹ Nicholas Campion, *The Practical Astrologer*, (Bristol: Cinnabar Books, 1993), pp. 8-9; also William Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, Book 2: The Resolution of all manner of Questions and Demands, (Exeter: Regulus Publishing, 1985 [1647]), pp. 196-486.

The first notable finding was one respondent's significant addition to the life issues list: being forced to endure an ongoing stressful situation. I judged the omission of this issue an oversight since it has been a frequent reason that potential astrological clients seek my services. Survey respondents were re-contacted electronically and offered the opportunity to return additional comment on the issue; only nine of the thirty did so. Their responses are documented in the findings but cannot be accorded the same level of significance as the rest of the data since this issue was not part of the original survey.

Twenty (66.6%) of the thirty subjects reported that they used astrological methods to seek transpersonal/divine guidance. Fourteen (87.5%) of the sixteen astrologically involved subjects did so, as did seven (50%) of the fourteen non-involved subjects. Non-involved subjects used astrology for fewer life issues (see Table 1, below).

Table 1: Who Uses Astrology to Seek Guidance for What Life Issues?

LIFE ISSUE	ASTROLOGERS (16)	NON- ASTROLOGERS (14)
A. Deciding Between Courses of Action	62.5% (10)	21.4% (3)
B. Feeling Rootless, Lost, Unfocused	43.7% (7)	
C. Dealing with Meaninglessness in Life	37.5% (6)	
D. Seeking Meaning in Random Events	43.7% (7)	21.4% (3)
E. Sudden Life-Changing Events	62.5% (10)	14.2% (2)
F. Loss of Something / Someone Precious	50.0% (8)	7.1% (1)
G. Wishing Insight into Future Outcome	62.5% (10)	7.1% (1)
H. Wishing to Influence Future Outcome	50.0% (8)	7.1% (1)
Other: Ongoing Stressful Situation*	4 of 5	4 of 4

*NOTE: Out of 9 respondents on the issue of enduring a stressful situation, 5 were astrologically involved and 4 were not. Since 100% of non-involved respondents said they used astrology to help them with this issue it suggests that my own professional evaluation of its importance is valid.

The most common astrological methods chosen for purposes of transpersonal/divine guidance are shown in Table 2, below. Horary, which some astrological commentators have deemed astrology's most openly divinatory

form,²² was used in preference to other methods for only two situations: deciding between courses of action (A) and finding lost objects (F). The combination of natal with personal predictive analysis was reported as used for every issue, with a sudden life-changing event (E) being the most common situation for which it was employed. The life issue for which the widest variety of astrological methods was employed was the desire to influence a future outcome (H).

Table 2: Number of Subjects Who Used the Following Astrological Methods for Nine Life Issues

LIFE ISSUE	Personal Natal/Predictive	Horary Question	Election	Event Chart	General Mundane Cycles	Astrological Ritual	Synastry
A	1	7					
B	7						
C	3						
D	5			2			
E	8			2			
F	1	6					1
G	4	1		3		1	
H	2		4	1	1	3	
Other	3	1					

NOTE: Definitions of astrological methodologies:

- Personal Natal/Predictive refers to analysis of a birth chart and its evolving trends;
- Horary refers to a horoscope cast for the moment of asking a question;
- Elections refer to choosing astrologically benefic times to begin an enterprise;
- Event charts refer to horoscopes of occurrences such as earthquakes, accidents, movie releases, etc.

²² Patrick Curry, "Varieties of Astrological Experience" in Roy Willis and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*, (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), Chapter 6, p. 67.

- General mundane cycles refer to regular celestial phenomena such as lunar phases, eclipses, planetary movements and ingresses into zodiacal signs;
- Astrological rituals, private or public, may be celebratory or magical/theurgic in intent;
- Synastry compares horoscopes to evaluate the relationship between them, as between two people, a birth chart and subsequent event chart(s), even two unrelated charts.

Table 3, which combines the two surveyed populations, demonstrates what may be a very striking finding, given this study’s hypothesis. Survey subjects reported using astrological methods as the preferred way of seeking transpersonal/divine guidance for all but three life issues: loss of focus (B), meaninglessness (C) and regaining something/someone lost (F) (the dominant method reported for dealing with a loss involved accepting it, grieving and moving on, even amongst astrologers). Astrological methods were tied with prayer as the preferred method of seeking to influence an outcome (H). The astrologically uninvolved seekers reported a higher use of prayer and used astrology as their method of choice only for attempting to find meaning in random events (D) and enduring ongoing stressful situations (Other).

It will be seen that the numbers of practices reported are greater than the number of respondents. This is because eighteen (60%) of the thirty respondents used one or more of the additional categories of divinatory methods *in conjunction with* astrological methods for any given issue. Astrological methods, especially natal/predictive analysis, appeared to provide insight into unfolding patterns, with an additional method employed to seek specifics: “[I] Look at transit, [sic] progressions, solar arcs for general patterns, then do...shamanic journey work, tarot, meditation.” The most frequently used additional methods—each chosen by ten of the eighteen—were ASC Practices and Transpersonal Consultation.

Table 3: Number of Subjects Using a Given Divinatory Method for Nine Life Issues

LIFE ISSUE	Astrology	Oracles	ASC Practice	Serenity Practice	Attitudinal Practice	Trans-Personal Consult	Prayer
A	13	9	6	2		10	6
B	7	7	8	6	2	5	7
C	6	2	8	4	5	3	4
D	10	4	6	1		4	4

E	12	4	5	2	3	5	4
F	9	4	6	1	11	4	3
G	11	6	2	2	3	3	5
H	8	3	4	1	6	3	8
Other	8	3	2	5	3	3	6

Categorizing the survey’s “laundry list” of transpersonal/divine guidance methods posed a challenge. A classification scheme of bidden vs. unbidden (Curry) or provoked vs. unprovoked (Rochberg) was unsuitable, as seekers of guidance are already bidding/provoking a sign.²³ Tedlock’s continuum of inductive-interpretative-intuitive practices also posed a problem due to the researcher’s unfamiliarity with that frame of reference.²⁴ Instead, a phenomenological approach reminiscent of grounded theory practices was adopted, allowing a classification system to emerge from iterative analysis of raw data, “without a rigid set of ideas that shape what he or she focuses on.”²⁵ The relevant survey section was designed to resemble a semi-structured interview; the responses themselves were analysed to guide the creation of a classification system, (one under constant revision as data accumulated). A qualitative approach to the classification of quantitatively collected data is unorthodox, but not completely without justification; Bob Dick argues, “The theory is emergent... The methods can be emergent too...any data collection methods can be used.”²⁶ The complete list of transpersonal/divine guidance methods reported by respondents under their assigned categories, along with detailed explanations of those categories comprises the Appendix.

²³ Patrick Curry, “Divination, Enchantment and Platonism,” in *The Imaginal Cosmos*, ed. Angela Voss and Jean Hinson Lall, (Canterbury: University of Kent, 2007), pp. 42-43; also Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3.

²⁴ Tedlock, *Folklore*, p. 191.

²⁵ Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p. 215.

²⁶ Bob Dick, “Grounded theory: a thumbnail sketch,” in Resource Papers in Action Research, maintained by Bob Dick, v1.07, last revised 11/06/2005, sections ‘Overview’ and ‘Data Collection’, http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html#a_gt_data.

Discussion: The Interviews

Interviews were conducted with four survey subjects. Adele (all names are pseudonyms) is a practicing professional astrological consultant and teacher. Bonnie is an aspiring professional astrological consultant. Claire is somewhat anomalous, an aspiring consultant who does not manifest deep astrological involvement as defined by the survey parameters; although enrolled in a course for professional certification and giving readings, this is the extent of her involvement. Doris is best classed as an ardent amateur who does not give consultations, teach or write but employs her knowledge in managing her life. Three of the four have been involved with astrology for more than twenty years and are deeply involved now, as defined by the survey parameters: they purchase and use astrological planners/calendars; read both online and print publications; avidly acquire and read books; attend classes, workshops and conferences; belong to local or national organizations. One is seeking, and one has attained, professional certification of some kind. Three use astrology to assist them with practical affairs, and all of them use it as a part of their spiritual lives. Finally, all are among the respondents who use additional divinatory methods in conjunction with astrology.

The interviews were informal and loosely structured, with deeper investigation of survey responses used as a starting point. Thus, each interview began with an initial exploration of different issues depending on what had been entered in the survey. To explore stated study objectives, care was taken to introduce the following topics at some point in each interview: whether interviewees viewed astrology as a divinatory art; whether they experienced “sudden bursts of insight” and their perceptions of those insights’ source(s) when seeking guidance for themselves or counselling others; whether they interpreted astrological indicators of their own issues themselves, or consulted practitioners.

None of the interviewees—all American—claimed familiarity with the concept of astrology as a form of divination. My mention of the subject appeared to constitute the first time they had been made aware of the idea. None who attended local and national conferences expressed awareness of any debate, public or private, on the topic. No one disagreed with the idea; all seemed intrigued, although no one offered further comment than, “Hmmm...interesting!”

Like other survey respondents, they used astrology to discern general patterns, but used other guidance methods for specifics, chiefly by meditating (Claire and Doris) consulting with spirit guides (Adele and Doris) or one’s own inner Self (Bonnie and Claire). When I asked Claire explicitly, “is the guidance perceived to be from within yourself, or your inner connection to something that’s “out there?” she paused at least ten seconds before replying. “I’m not sure I would define it as either of those...It is connecting, I guess, with a cosmic

intelligence via information I receive through my senses.” In contrast, Adele and Doris both reported a clear sense of connecting to something “out there.” The question of whether a diviner simply tunes into inner guidance or connects to something truly trans-personal would need further investigation.

“Have you ever...had that...sensation that all of a sudden something came together and you spoke something that you hadn’t planned to say?” Both Adele and Bonnie reported this. “All the time!” Bonnie replied, and added, “I feel much more comfortable with that, a lot of times, than the actual definitions and descriptions of the house placement and the planet.” Whereas Bonnie was certain that her insights derived from the chart, Adele reported a distinctly trans-personal information source when she read for others: “I am positive that the way I work with my guides is that...a client...talks to hers, hers talk to mine, mine talk to me. And then I’ll talk to her.” She admitted that information obtained in this fashion might have little connection to anything represented in the client’s chart.

None of the interviewees, however, reported this kind of effect when reading their own charts for their personal issues (nb: This question was not explicitly asked and should be explored in further research). The lack of this effect might be a contributing factor that leads them to consult other astrological professionals concerning the astrological indicators of their personal issues. Adele and Doris regularly consulted other astrologers. Adele said she needs, “a new pair of eyes...because I’m emotionally involved in my own life so...I can miss really big things.” Doris follows a careful procedure: “if I can’t figure it out, I have...other...astrologers who help me...when I have the three...and it still gives me the same answer, then I know I’m on the right path.” For both, the different perspectives increase their confidence in the astrological information. It was not clearly stated whether the additional perspective sought was that of the *mantis* (the receiver) or the *prophetēs* (the interpreter).²⁷ Possibly it is both; or possibly one pair of eyes is sought for one function, while another pair is consulted for the other (this, too, is speculation, since this question was not explicitly asked). The possible mistrust in or lack of their own astrological insight on personal issues also suggests a reason why they—and perhaps other survey respondents—employ other divinatory techniques in addition to astrology. This possibility also requires further research.

Bonnie stated that she consults other astrologers chiefly to further her own education, less and less for her own issues as her expertise grows (although she did say (echoing Doris), “I want some backup with what I think”). Only Claire did not consult other professionals for her own issues, saying, “as far as my own, oftentimes it’s pretty obvious...the Universe provides many opportunities of

²⁷ Greenbaum, “Rising,” p. 10.

affirming...what things are to be addressed.” Answers to further inquiries suggested that she is training herself to use astrology as a combination of Serenity and Attitudinal Practice: “When someone can understand from a larger context that the experience was really created earlier on...then it’s easier to...help...see the ownership; to embrace that it really is a gift...an opportunity to transform what they were holding originally...to create a different outcome.”

This raises a suggestion that may shed light on the confusion concerning astrology’s definition as a divinatory art. For seekers of transpersonal/divine guidance, astrology may not function as a single category of divinatory practice, despite the fact that its information is derived from a single source: “the immutable database of the night sky.”²⁸ For the study participants, their wide variety of astrological practices appear to function sometimes as Oracles (as with horary or event charts), sometimes as ASC Practices (particularly when reading for others), and sometimes as Serenity or Attitudinal Practices (as implied by Claire). They may even function as Transpersonal Consultation vehicles, as when Thorley’s subjects reported the experience of the chart “speaking” or that they engaged in a dialogue with it.²⁹ Further research is needed to begin to discern whether different astrological practices are best classed as different types of divinatory practices, rather than a single one

Discussion: The Researcher

This study is an example of research conducted by an “insider”, or from an “emic” perspective when, as described by Kenneth Pike, a member of a group conducts research on its own members.³⁰ I was effectively an insider twice over in the astrological community since all but one study respondent were personal acquaintances. One advantage of this circumstance was that my status as colleague and acquaintance appeared to enhance respondents’ comfort and trust levels; I inferred this both from the interviewees’ willingness to share their experiences and the frequently detailed quality of survey responses. A second was an enhanced ability to interpret survey responses and follow interviewees’ conversation, due to familiarity with the concepts and terms. A final advantage was that, seeking to honour the trust I felt had been given—I discovered, from comments made by survey respondents that seeking transpersonal/divine

²⁸ Clive Ruggles and Nicholas Saunders, “The Study of Cultural Astronomy”, in *Astronomies and Cultures*, ed. Clive Ruggles and Nicholas Saunders, (Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1993), p 9.

²⁹ Thorley, *Correlation*, pp 20-21.

³⁰ Kenneth L. Pike, “Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed. Russell McCutcheon, (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 28.

guidance is a sensitive topic—made me strive to be a meticulous and careful reporter.

The disadvantage of being “doubly emic” with all one’s research subjects is the limitation (in addition to the smallness of the sample size) of the applicability of the findings to a broader population. In order to repeat this type of study with a broader—and unfamiliar—population, my interviewing skills would need improvement; being already on personal terms with the study’s four interviewees made it easier for them to understand me, as much as it made it easier for me to understand them.

Conclusion

This study’s hypothesis—that astrological “consumers” use astrology for divinatory purposes—appears to be supported by this small, preliminary study. Surveys successfully gathered information on reported methods of seeking transpersonal/divine guidance and revealed that a variety of astrological techniques were chief among the methods used, although less so by astrologically uninvolved subjects. Further, it was seen that multiple ways of seeking transpersonal/divine guidance were employed in conjunction with astrology. Confirming this phenomenon and exploring its causes in more depth are worthy of further study. The preliminary data suggest that further research is also needed to understand the reasons a professional astrologer consults other professionals, especially for astrologically derived information. Finally, the question of astrology’s inclusion in many different classifications of divination—for which a new classification scheme of transpersonal guidance/divinatory practices was devised that must be subjected to revision and refinement—needs further examination.

Thus, for all the information this preliminary pilot study has uncovered, new avenues of inquiry have been suggested that will need to be explored to fully understand the contribution of the client to the divinatory enterprise.

APPENDIX 1: SEEKING TRANSPERSONAL GUIDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I: ABOUT YOU

GENDER:	BIRTH YEAR:	YEARS OF INVOLVEMENT w/ASTROLOGY:	WSAA MEMBER?
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WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT WITH ASTROLOGY?

Enter "Y" next to any that apply to you; leave blank any that *don't* apply to you.

CALENDARS/PLANNERS?	Read:	Write/Publish:
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MAGAZINES/NEWSLETTERS?	Read:	Write/Publish:
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WEBSITES/BLOGS?	Comment/Post:	Write/Manage:
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BOOKS?	Read:	Write/Publish:
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LECTURES/WORKSHOPS?	Attend:	Teach:
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REGULAR CLASS SERIES?	Attend:	Teach:
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CERTIFICATION/DIPLOMA ?	Working on:	Attained:
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CONSULT AN ASTROLOGER?	Occasionally:	Regularly:
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GIVE ASTROLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS?	For Free:	For Pay:
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ORGANIZATIONS?	Member:	Officer:
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CONFERENCES?	Attend:	Present at:
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USE ASTROLOGY TO MANAGE LIFE ACTIVITIES?	Practical:	Spiritual:
--	------------	------------

DO RESEARCH?	Practical:	Academic/Statistical:
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OTHER:

WHAT TYPES OF ASTROLOGY ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST TO YOU?

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PART II: SEEKING TRANSPERSONAL GUIDANCE

When life challenges occur we may seek help. When they do, do you ever ask for guidance in some way from a Higher Power / The Universe? Yes: _____ No: _____

**IF YOU ANSWERED “YES”, HOW DO YOU MOST USUALLY SEEK THAT GUIDANCE WHEN:
[See Attachment 1 for ideas, if you like. However, I’m most interested in what you do.]**

You have to decide between different courses of action?

You feel rootless, unfocused or lost?

Life seems meaningless (either in part or in general)?

You wonder if a so-called random event(s) has special meaning?

A life-changing event occurs without warning?

You lose something/someone precious that you want to regain?

You wish you had a better idea of the outcome of an important endeavor?

You want to influence the outcome of an endeavor?

Other: _____

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO GRANT ME THE FAVOR OF AN ANONYMOUS, FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW? IF YOU WOULD, PLEASE FILL IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION. I WILL CONTACT YOU IF I NEED TO, TO ARRANGE A CONVENIENT DAY AND TIME. [YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.]

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE / SKYPE NAME: _____

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX 2: Categorisation of Divinatory Methods

I use the term 'Oracles' for methods of symbol interpretation that contain the element of randomness described by Greene. These might involve formally organised symbol systems, such as Tarot or I Ching, or personal, idiosyncratic systems such as might occur from dream revelation or bibliomancy.

'ASC Practices' are ways of deliberately stimulating Altered States of Consciousness (ASC)—to become a *mantis*—such as scrying (water- mirror-crystal- or candle-gazing), meditation or chanting. The reported methods were striking for their gentleness; no one reported the use of toxic, mind-altering substances or physical ordeals such as fasting, violent exercise or the sweat lodge. I chose to create a separate category entitled 'Serenity Practices' that seemed to involve ways to attain a calm, centered state of normal waking consciousness, rather than an altered state. Physical means—walking, yoga or breath work—were reported, as were mental techniques—journaling, artistic/literature contemplation. As with the ASC Practices, the methods chosen were gentle, as opposed to punishing.

'Attitudinal Practices' refer to mental/emotional disciplines undertaken to alter perspective, and perhaps, in the process, affect the outcome of a situation; examples include visualizations, affirmations, "intention work". Practicing a trusting or accepting inner stance is included under this category; those who do this are not looking for a 'sign'; rather, they are (a) trusting that guidance is present without a sign or (b) striving to view the situation itself as the sign. Thus, these activities may not qualify as truly divinatory. Still, for those who said they use them, they are employed as a way of interacting with the transpersonal/divine.

I separated 'Transpersonal Consultation' from 'Prayer' based on the attitude expressed by a respondent. Did (s)he approach a guru, Deity, guardian angel, "spirit guide", psychic, "higher self" as a potentially empowered co-creator ('whether I feel I've got an answer depends on how well I pay attention.') or as a powerless supplicant ('I always end with "not my will, but Thine be done."')? Included in this category are non-verbal dowsing methods that allow seekers to obtain answers to questions via physical responses: the swing of a pendulum, the sudden weakness in a particular muscle.

SOME METHODS OF SEEKING TRANSPERSONAL GUIDANCE

Past Life Reading or Regression	Sacrificial Offering
Visiting a Beloved or Sacred Site	Tea Leaf Reading
I Ching	Horary Astrology Question
Tarot or Other Cards	Kinesiology (Muscle Testing)
Rune Casting	Scrying, i.e., Mirror, Water or
Crystal Gazing	
Shamanic Journeying	Astrological Karmic Analysis
Meditation	Vision Questing
Séance	Palmistry
Natal Horoscope Analysis	Physical Privation Ritual, i.e.,
	Sweat Lodge, Fasting
Channeling, Channeled Information	Private Ritual Practice
Dowsing	Consciousness-Altering
	Substance
Rebirthing or Holotropic Breathwork	Ouija Board
Psychic Reading	Evolutionary Astrological
	Analysis
Dream Work	Chanting, Drumming
Trance Dancing	Spirit Guides
Formal Religious Ceremony	Coin Toss
Astrologically Timed Ritual or Ceremony, either personal or collective	
Direct Prayer to a Deity, Patron Saint, Guardian Angel, Archangel, Higher Self, Aumakua	
Predictive Astrological Analysis, i.e., Transits, Progressions, Directions, Solar Returns	
Bibliomancy, i.e., letting a sacred / special text fall open and reading the first lines seen	
Religious or Spiritual Counsellor, i.e., Priest, Guru, Other Spiritual Teacher	

SEEKING TRANSPERSONAL GUIDANCE

Astrological Practice:	Natal Chart
Analysis	<u>Personal Predictive</u>
	Analysis
	<u>Horary</u>
	Chart
	<u>Electional</u>
Chart	Chart
	<u>Event</u>
Chart	Chart
	<u>Mundane Cycle</u>
Analysis	Analysis
	<u>Astrologically Timed</u>
Ritual	Ritual
	<u>Synastry</u>
Other Oracles:	I
Ching	<u>Tarot/Other</u>
	Cards
	<u>Bibliomancy</u>
	<u>Stay Alert For</u>
Sign	Sign
	<u>Dream</u>
Work	Work
	<u>Palmistry</u>
	<u>Numerology</u>
Consciousness Altering Practice:	Chanting/Drumming/
Dancing	
	<u>Shamanic</u>
	Journeying

Meditation _____

Scrying _____

Candle _____

Lighting _____

Serenity Practice: _____

Site _____

Visit Beloved/Sacred _____

Walking/ _____

Yoga _____

Journalling/Creative _____

Writing _____

Artistic _____

Creation _____

Artistic/Literature _____

Contemplation _____

Attitudinal Practice: _____

Wait _____

Trust & _____

Visualization/Affirmation/Intention _____

Work _____

“Let _____

Go” _____

Positive _____

Focus _____

Transpersonal Consultation: _____

Counsellor _____

Religious/Spiritual _____

Channelling/Psychic _____

Reading _____

Kinesiology/Dowsing/ _____

Pendulum _____

“Inner Self”/Inner _____

Wisdom _____

Higher _____

Self _____

Spirit _____

Guides _____

Prayer: _____

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