

IS LOVE WRITTEN IN THE STARS? BELIEFS IN ASTROLOGY AND MARRIAGE OUTCOMES*

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Abstract

Some beliefs, although distorted, false, or implausible, hold a grip on people, who may act according to them. We study the impact of astrological predictions on marriage outcomes. Astrology makes consistent predictions about couples' astrological compatibility, which depend on the sun signs of the two partners. We analyze the Spanish marriages and separations, divorce and nullity data over the period 2008-2016 and use Google Trend searches of astrological compatibility at the regional and year level to measure beliefs in astrology. We exploit time and regional variation in Google searches of terms related to astrological compatibility to measure how astrological beliefs shift: (i) the decision to marry for couples whose astrological signs are compatible or incompatible according to astrological predictions; (ii) the duration of marriages for the same couples. Our results show that compatible couples marry one percent more, and this is explained by beliefs in astrology: astrologically compatible couples who are more likely to know about their compatibility are two percent more likely to marry than couples who are less likely to know about it. Astrologically compatible couples are also more likely to divorce, but knowing about their compatibility after marriage decreases the incidence of divorce by 0.8 percent. However, the longer the couple has been together, the lower is the impact of knowing about their compatibility on the propensity to divorce, which becomes zero after seven years of marriage.

Keywords: Beliefs, Marriage, Divorce, Confirmation Bias, Learning

JEL Classification: J12, D83, D91

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