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SUPERSTITIOUS NATURE OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT BOYS¹

ARTHUR JOHN TER KEURST²

No study has been published concerning the differences between delinquents and non-delinquents in respect to the acceptance of superstitions. The purpose of the present article is to present data to show what, if any, differences exist in the superstitiousness of the two groups. It is not the purpose to ascertain what bearing, if any, such differences may have upon social maladjustment. Nor do we attempt to determine the causes of these differences. The work may have some value as suggesting, from one angle, the liability of an individual's being affected by his psychologic environment.

Definition of Superstition

The popular usage of the term superstition has associated it with belief in black cats, broken mirrors, four-leaf clovers and the like. Such an interpretation may be partly correct. A superstition may be described as belonging to the fringe of our system of beliefs, chiefly in the non-scientific field. Emphasis on the scientific method, has moved these fringes into more and more remote areas.

According to the definition, a system of beliefs subject to changes brought about by the material and intellectual progress of mankind will scarcely ever be totally free from superstition. The savage or semi-barbarian, whose beliefs may seem absurd to the Western mind, may have also a few superstitions growing up with his system of belief but not exactly part of it. Likewise the sophisticated may consider as superstitious some practices and viewpoints which form an integral part of the belief of the multitude.

Rose and Lesser support the definition of a superstition as given above. Rose concludes:

We may now perhaps attempt to define superstition as the acceptance of beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community in which

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one lives.

To identify it, for example, with false belief or practice would be quite misleading. For in the first place, the field in which superstitions are generally to be found, the magico-religious, is the very one in which the standard of truth and falsehood is most subjective and fluctuating; in the second place, a custom or belief, religious or not, which is false may nevertheless be accepted at some places or times by men of enlightened intellect and conscience.

To adhere irrationally to these (false) premises after having their falsity clearly demonstrated might indeed be called superstitious.³

Lesser implies a similar interpretation to the term by defining a superstition as a "belief or practice which is isolated from a system of references."⁴ Consequently a superstition is more than a belief in certain stereotyped practices. It is faith in practices and viewpoints that are moving out of the more integrated system of beliefs.

Related Studies

Nearly all of the related studies on superstitions have defined the term as implying beliefs about black cats and the like. The studies of Conklin,⁵ Fisher,⁶ Wagner,⁷ Lundeen and Caldwell,⁸ Maller and Lundeen,⁹ and Caldwell and Lundeen,¹⁰ were chiefly about the incidence of belief in the type of superstitions described above. As suggested in the preceding section, beliefs of this type are, according to the author's opinion, so far removed from the constellation of beliefs of most people that the results of these studies were not conclusive and significant to the problem of superstitiousness.

The other group of studies that may be considered as being

³ Herbert Jennings Rose, "Superstition," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. 21, p. 577.

⁴ Alexander Lesser, "Superstition," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXVIII (November, 1931), 17-28.

⁵ E. S. Conklin, "Superstitious Beliefs and Practices Among College Students," *American Journal of Psychology*, XXX (January, 1919), 83-102.

⁶ T. R. Fisher, "The Prevalence of Superstitious Beliefs," pp. 1-51. Unpublished Master's thesis, New York University, 1926.

⁷ M. E. Wagner, "Superstitions and Their Social and Psychological Correlations Among College Students," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, II (September, 1928), 26-36.

⁸ G. E. Lundeen and O. W. Caldwell, "A Study of Unfounded Beliefs of High School Seniors," *Journal of Educational Research*, XXII (November, 1930), 257-273.

⁹ J. B. Maller and G. E. Lundeen, "Superstition and Emotional Adjustment," *Journal of Educational Research*, XXVII (April, 1934), 592-615.

¹⁰ O. W. Caldwell and G. E. Lundeen, "Further Study of Unfounded Beliefs Among Junior High School Pupils," *Teachers College Record*, XXXVI (October, 1934), 35-53.

related to the present one investigated the incidence of unfounded beliefs, chiefly misconcepts about natural science. The studies by Gilliland,¹¹ Lehman and Fenton,¹² Caldwell and Lundeen,^{13 14} and Valentine¹⁵ measured the decrease in the acceptance of unfounded beliefs by means of courses of study. The general and very obvious conclusions of these studies were that a course of instruction dealing with specific questions of the nature of unfounded or mistaken beliefs was a potent means for the correction of erroneous viewpoints.

Method and Technique

The items in the *Check List of Beliefs* which represent the superstitions presented to our subjects measured the decrease in the acceptance of unfounded beliefs by means of courses in science. The general and very obvious conclusions of these studies were that a course of instruction dealing with specific questions of the nature of unfounded or mistaken beliefs was a potent means for the correction of erroneous viewpoints.

Method and Technique

The items in the *Check List of Beliefs* below were in the main collected from two related sources. First, many items were obtained from the literature read by certain religious groups. The chief source of items, however, was a number of people whom the author considered to be unlettered. These beliefs collected from various sources constituted a list of two hundred items. This list was submitted to seven specialists in psychology who were asked to rate each belief on a five-point scale of significance to personality adjustment. The divisions of this scale were *Very Significant*, *Significant*, *Fairly Significant*, *Little Significant* and *Insignificant*. For statistical convenience, each of these scale divisions was weighted 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0, respectively. After the items that had

¹¹ A. R. Gilliland, "A Study of the Superstitions of College Students," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, XXIV (January-March, 1930), 472-479.

¹² H. C. Lehman and N. Fenton, "Prevalence of Certain Misconceptions and Superstitions Before and After a Course in Psychology," *Education*, L (April, 1930), 485-494.

¹³ O. W. Caldwell and G. E. Lundeen, "What Can Be Done Regarding Unfounded Beliefs?" *School and Society*, XXXV (May, 1932), 780-686.

¹⁴ O. W. Caldwell and G. E. Lundeen, *An Experimental Study of Superstitions and Other Unfounded Beliefs*, pp. 1-138. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932.

¹⁵ W. L. Valentine, "Common Misconceptions of College Students," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, XX (December, 1936), 633-657.

a combined weight of 10 and below had been discarded, ninety-two items were selected to constitute the *Check List of Beliefs*. The rating of each item is presented as a part of the data in Table II. The mean rating of the items was 12.90, meaning that on an average the items in the *Check List of Beliefs* were rated as being *Fairly Significant* to the problem of personality adjustment.

Since the acceptance of all beliefs cannot be indicated by a categorical affirmative or a negative symbol, a certainty scale was employed to denote the degree of acceptance. The instructions to the subjects were "How certain are you of each item?" The five-point scale divisions were designated as *Very Certain*, *Almost Certain*, *Fairly Certain*, *Uncertain*, and *Impossible*. Examples were included to illustrate the degree of certainty to be used with each scale division. The respective examples were: "Water freezes when the temperature of the surrounding air is less than 32 degrees," "Bright children usually receive better grades in school than do dull children," "In spite of the widespread use of automobiles, trains will continue to carry passengers for some time," "Other planets, besides the Earth, are inhabited by people," and "Apples grow after they are picked from the tree." It was assumed that a subject would check those beliefs in the *Uncertain* or *Impossible* columns by which he was not influenced and also would indicate his degree of acceptance of the other beliefs by the use of the remaining three columns.

As a check on the subject's cooperation, "blinds" were employed to ascertain whether the boy read the various items. An example of a "blind" was "Snow is white." Every paper that did not have all the "blinds" checked in the *Very Certain* column was rejected.

After the *Check List of Beliefs* had been constructed, it was administered in March, 1935, to 95 delinquent boys in the School for Boys, St. Charles, Illinois, and to 78 boys in grade nine in Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois. According to the data presented in Table I, the delinquent boys as a group were a year and a half older than the non-delinquent group. No data in terms of grade levels were available with respect to the educational progress of the delinquent boys. According to the statement of the director of the school, however, nearly all of the boys were working at levels that were described as being below that of grade nine. Consequently the delinquent group may be described as a scholastically retarded group while the non-delinquents may be

TABLE I

The Chronological Ages of Ninety-Five Delinquent and Seventy-Eight Non-Delinquent Boys Who Checked the Items in the

<i>Age in Years</i>	CHECK LIST OF BELIEFS	
	<i>Delinquent Boys</i>	<i>Non-Delinquent Boys</i>
Twelve	1	—
Thirteen	3	16
Fourteen	12	35
Fifteen	15	22
Sixteen	36	4
Seventeen	23	1
Eighteen	3	—
Nineteen	2	—
Total	95	78
Mean	16.34	14.84
S. D.	1.25	.80

considered to be more or less normal with respect to age-grade attainment.

Quantitative Differences

Although the subjects were asked to indicate their belief in the certainty of the various items by means of a five-point scale, we, for the purpose of convenience, have brought together in Table II only the points: *Very Certain*, *Almost Certain* and *Fairly Certain*. It was assumed that the subjects checking in any one of these three columns were at least fairly certain of the possibility of the belief expressed in the item. As described above, the weighted rating of each item with respect to its significance to personality adjustment is presented also in Table II.

TABLE II

The Number and Percentage of Ninety-Five Delinquent Boys and Seventy-Eight Non-Delinquent Boys Who Were at Least Fairly Certain About the Certainty of Ninety-Two Superstitions, Which Are Presented With Their Weighted Rating With Respect to Significance to Personality Adjustment

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-Delinquent</i>		<i>Rating</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
1. Conscience is a voice within you that accuses you when you have done wrong	89	93.45	69	88.32	11

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-</i> <i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Rat-</i> <i>ing</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
2. A person is often guided by an "inner" voice which no one else hears.....	82	86.10	48	62.40	16
3. Thinking unclean or filthy thoughts causes feeble-mindedness	79	82.95	36	46.80	15
4. Angels keep guard over good children.	79	82.95	33	42.24	13
5. Nature or Fate helps to bring criminals to justice	76	79.80	41	54.66	11
6. If we had enough will power, we could overcome any difficulty.....	75	78.75	45	56.41	12
7. A deceitful person cannot look directly at you	69	72.45	27	35.10	11
8. All our deeds are written by the angels in record books which will be opened on the Judgment Day.....	69	72.45	17	21.78	11
9. Sinful people suffer more accidents than good people do.....	66	69.30	16	20.48	11
10. The wrong doers will usually be unlucky	65	68.25	17	21.79	11
11. Spirits sometimes advise people by means of dreams.....	65	68.25	24	31.20	16
12. The devil is more apt to tempt you when you are alone than when you are with others	63	66.15	18	23.04	14
13. No matter what we may try, we shall fill those positions in life marked out for us	62	65.10	25	32.50	13
14. The United States has been entirely on the side of the right in every war in which she participated.....	61	64.05	16	20.80	13
15. Honest business cannot be successful where dishonest business has taken place	58	60.90	20	25.64	11
16. When a person is converted at a religious meeting, he immediately receives new habits	57	59.85	9	11.52	11
17. An "inner" voice tells you what life work you shall pursue.....	56	58.80	20	25.64	16
18. Everything the history books say is true and correct.....	56	58.80	38	48.64	12
19. The opinions of large city newspapers, like the Chicago Tribune, are usually correct	54	56.70	25	32.05	12
20. The curses of some people can come true	53	55.65	26	33.33	11
21. Cards and poker chips are instruments of the devil.....	53	55.65	13	16.64	11

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-</i> <i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Rating</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
22. The good will never lack bread.....	53	55.65	12	15.36	11
23. The devil forces you to steal or tell lies against your will.....	53	55.65	14	17.95	18
24. The person who tells lies in court after he has sworn to tell the truth will never find peace or happiness.....	52	54.60	29	37.12	11
25. The ghosts of the murdered can become visible to the murderers and remain invisible to others.....	49	51.45	16	20.48	14
26. Members of secret societies plot against non-members	49	51.45	25	32.05	12
27. People do not need to learn to love the members of their families as they need to learn to love their friends.....	48	50.40	18	23.40	12
28. Charms which the priest has blessed will bring good luck.....	47	49.35	13	16.90	11
29. Non-Christian religions do not contain a single good teaching.....	47	49.35	9	11.66	11
30. Making the sign of the cross will keep evil spirits away.....	47	49.35	12	15.37	13
31. If you stand on a high place and you think you hear someone telling you to jump down, it is the devil.....	47	49.35	7	9.18	19
32. If we could read them correctly, "signs" in Nature would foretell or predict future events as wars and famines.....	46	48.30	9	11.53	13
33. Women are by nature purer and better than men	44	46.20	12	15.36	12
34. The Jews are persecuted because at the trial of Christ they said, "His blood be upon us and our children"	44	46.20	18	23.40	15
35. Good people will have better luck with their crops than people who are not so good	43	45.26	16	20.80	12
36. An educated person can read your thoughts by merely looking at you....	43	45.26	16	20.48	13
37. Some crops, like potatoes yield more if they are planted during certain phases of the moon.....	42	44.10	20	25.60	11
38. If a person had enough faith, he could work miracles even in this day.....	42	44.10	13	16.90	11
39. Everything that the minister says from the pulpit is true.....	42	44.10	18	23.04	12
40. The white settlers were justified in taking the land away from the Indians without paying for it.....	41	43.05	9	11.52	13

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-</i> <i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Rat- ing</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
41. Trying to be very happy 'will keep away bad luck.....	41	43.05	12	15.38	12
42. If someone feels that someone is present when no one is visible angels are near	39	40.95	8	10.58	17
43. If we had the right kind of eyes, we could see evil spirits who are trying to lead us astray.....	38	39.85	8	10.24	14
44. Socialists are not as patriotic as democrats or republicans.....	37	38.95	12	15.36	13
45. Mankind is bad and sinful by nature..	36	37.80	19	24.32	15
46. Making fun of a dead neighbor will result in bad luck.....	36	37.80	10	13.20	11
47. Wars cannot be prevented because the spirit of the times seems to force people to war	36	37.80	20	25.64	11
48. Refusing to take the first job you can get will prevent you from getting another job for a long time.....	35	36.75	11	14.30	11
49. Some people can predict future events by means of cards or tea-leaves.....	35	36.75	12	15.36	12
50. Mothers do not need to learn how to care for their children because Nature teaches them how to care for their children	34	35.70	21	26.66	18
51. If one has too much laughter and fun, he will have misfortune.....	34	35.70	5	6.40	14
52. The devil can cause animals to work mischief	33	34.65	13	16.64	13
53. If a person feels that his sins are forgiven, he can do no wrong.....	32	33.60	4	5.28	17
54. After man sinned, Nature was cursed and refused to produce as much food as formerly	31	32.55	11	14.10	14
55. An insane person is possessed by the devil	31	32.55	11	14.10	17
56. The look on the face of a dying person can tell us the state of his future life..	30	31.50	6	7.69	11
57. We can tell our future by the lines in our hands	30	31.50	9	11.52	11
58. Crop failures and panics are caused by the sins of the people.....	30	31.50	13	16.64	14
59. Persons who can hypnotize are servants of the devil.....	29	30.45	10	12.80	15

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-</i> <i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Rat- ing</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
60. One's fortunes are more or less determined by the star under which he is born; so we can learn our future by studying the stars.....	28	29.40	7	9.10	11
61. The good and bright children frequently die young.....	27	28.35	10	12.82	11
62. If your doctor gives you medicine and you do not believe it will help you, then it won't help you.....	27	28.35	12	15.84	11
63. If you believe that a law is unfair, you need not obey it.....	25	26.25	2	2.56	11
64. A marriage performed in Lent will be unlucky	25	26.25	6	7.68	12
65. Some people have the power to bring bad luck to undertaking with which they may be connected although they do not intend to do so.....	25	26.25	9	11.70	13
66. Many airplane and bus wrecks occur because some of the travelers are wicked	24	25.20	8	10.24	12
67. The ghosts of people whom you have wronged will continue to torment you in life and death.....	23	24.15	2	2.60	18
68. When good children have difficulty with their lessons, they are guided by angels	22	23.10	8	10.40	15
69. This depression is an indication that the world will soon come to an end...	21	22.05	3	3.84	14
70. The ability or power of one person can be given to another by the laying on of hands or by giving articles of clothing.	21	22.05	1	1.28	15
71. When things go wrong in your work, it is a sign others are plotting against you	21	22.05	6	7.92	22
72. The Jews are trying to gain control of this country by plotting together and favoring their own people.....	21	22.05	9	11.88	12
73. Refusing to raise as much food as it is possible to raise will cause crop failures	20	21.00	6	7.92	11
74. Going to church every Sunday will offset "shady" business practices during the week	20	21.00	15	19.50	15
75. If a mysterious knocking is heard at night and no one is visible, death will follow shortly	19	19.95	3	3.84	12

<i>Item</i>	<i>Delinquent</i>		<i>Non-</i>		<i>Rat- ing</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Delinquent No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
76. If you dream that you will have bad luck, you will have good luck; if you dream that you will have good luck, bad luck will follow.....19	19.95		3	3.84	12
77. The ghosts of the wicked often return to visit the scenes of their wickedness.19	19.95		6	7.68	15
78. A person who cannot look a cat in the eye is guilty of a wrong.....18	18.90		2	2.60	11
79. The ghosts of evil men cannot find peace so they wander around at night.18	18.90		2	2.60	11
80. A falling star indicates the death of a famous person16	16.80		3	3.96	11
81. People can gain advice about the future by attending spiritualistic meetings where they can talk with the spirits of the dead.....16	16.80		2	2.56	15
82. When you dream of the death of a living person he will die in the near future14	14.70		3	3.84	11
83. People should be in bed during the early hours of the morning because at that time evil spirits roam around....13	13.65		0	0.00	13
84. If you use a certain pen or pencil in an examination and get a good grade, it is necessary to use the same pen or pencil in every examination to get a good grade12	12.60		0	0.00	11
85. If you receive a chain letter and do not send it on, you will have bad luck.12	12.60		5	6.40	11
86. If a bird flies into your house, a death will follow within a year.....12	12.60		1	1.30	11
87. People can get an answer to a question by opening the Bible at any place. The first passage that is read will be the answer to the question.....11	11.55		3	3.90	15
88. Whatever a fortune-teller says to you will come true.....11	11.55		0	0.00	12
89. Joining a church different from the one your parents attend greatly affects your chances of going to heaven.....10	10.50		5	6.40	12
90. Any disease can be cured by believing you are not sick.....10	10.50		4	5.12	13
91. If you put a garment on wrong-side out in the morning you should leave it that way or you will have bad luck.... 7	7.35		0	0.00	11

Item	Delinquent		Non-Delinquent		Rating
	No.	%	No.	%	
92. If you cross your fingers after telling lies, the lie will not count against you.	3	3.15	2	2.56	15
Mean	38	39.40	14	17.75	
S. D.	18	21.00	11	14.80	

Without a doubt the delinquent boys were more superstitious than the non-delinquent group. The mean percentages of acceptance, being 39.40 per cent and 17.75 per cent for the delinquent and non-delinquent group respectively, indicated that the delinquent boys were fairly certain of twice the number of beliefs that were held by the non-delinquent group. Consequently, it may be concluded that a significant quantitative difference existed between the superstitiousness of the two groups of boys.

The assertion that beliefs about stereotypes, about black cats and the like were generally known but not practiced seemed to be justified by the experience with the *Check List of Beliefs*. It may be noted that the beliefs involving the crossing of fingers, the wearing of garments, and the like were accepted by relatively few subjects. On the other hand, beliefs concerning the animistic role of Nature, evil spirits, and the like were accepted by a relatively large percentage of subjects. Results like these justified the previous observation that a new interpretation of the term superstition was necessary.

Qualitative Differences Between the Superstitiousness of Delinquent and Non-Delinquent Boys

In the preceding section it was pointed out that a wide quantitative difference existed between delinquent and non-delinquent boys in the acceptance of superstitions. The question arises whether or not qualitative differences also existed. In other words, as there was a difference in the number of superstitions accepted, was there also a difference in kind?

A very convenient technique for determining these differences in kind was by examination of Table II. By rearranging the percentages in the column headed *Non-Delinquent* in a decreasing order of acceptance, as was done in the other column, the differences in kind can become evident. The arbitrary standard of a difference in rank of twenty was used to indicate qualitative differ-

ences. For example, if among the delinquent group a belief ranked tenth and among the non-delinquent group thirtieth, a qualitative difference was assumed. By the use of this method, the following beliefs ranged significantly higher among the delinquent group than the non-delinquent group:

1. Sinful people suffer more accidents than good people do.
2. The devil is more apt to tempt you when you are alone than when you are with others.
3. The United States was entirely on the side of the right in every war in which she participated.
4. When a person is converted at a religious meeting, he immediately receives new habits.
5. Making the sign of the cross will keep evil spirits away.
6. Cards and poker chips are instruments of the devil.
7. Charms which the priest has blessed will bring good luck.
8. If you stand on a high place and you think you hear someone telling you to jump down, it is the devil.
9. Refusing to take the first job you can get will prevent you from getting another job for a long time.
10. Non-Christian religions do not contain a single good teaching.
11. The white settlers were justified in taking away the land from the Indians without paying for it.
12. If we had the right kind of eyes, we could see evil spirits who are trying to lead us astray.
13. An insane person is possessed by the devil.
14. If you believe that a law is unfair, you need not obey it.

By the use of the same technique, the non-delinquent boys ranked significantly higher than the delinquent boys the following beliefs:

1. The curses of some people come true.
2. Members of secret societies plot against non-members.
3. Everything the history books say is true and correct.
4. Mankind is bad and sinful by nature.
5. Mothers do not need to learn how to care for their children because Nature teaches them how.
6. Wars cannot be prevented because the spirit of the times seems to force people to war.
7. Crop failures and panics are caused by the sins of the people.

8. If the doctor gives you medicine and you do not believe it will help you, then it won't help you.

9. Going to church every Sunday will offset "shady" business practices during the week.

With the exception of the superstitions listed above, which constituted twenty-five per cent of the total number submitted, no significant qualitative differences were found. The delinquent boys differed from the non-delinquent ones by accepting more readily those beliefs that involve evil spirits and techniques for obtaining protection from them. It was obviously unknown whether or not this difference was caused by the type of religious training to which the delinquents may have been subjected or whether or not it was symptomatic of the cultural environments in which these boys were reared. Another point of interest was that the delinquents ranked significantly higher than the other group those superstitions that involve the right of property and obedience to law. The poverty-stricken environment of the delinquent group was rather well reflected in the belief concerning job-getting. Undoubtedly the depression years among poverty-stricken groups made job-getting such a difficult task that the boys from such a culture were very susceptible to a superstition concerning the ability or opportunity to obtain employment.

Every one of the superstitions ranked significantly higher by the non-delinquent boys were accepted by a higher percentage of delinquent boys than by the non-delinquents. If this observation is kept in mind, it may be said that the non-delinquent group did not differ as much from the other group in the acceptance of certain social observations about secret societies, wars, medicine, church-going, motherhood, and depressions as in the acceptance of the other superstitions. In conclusion, it may be stated that few qualitative differences existed between the two groups. The chief difference that did exist, however, was that the delinquents were more apt to accept those beliefs about evil spirits and how to guard against them.

Differences Between the Individual Score on the CHECK LIST OF BELIEFS Among Delinquent and Non-Delinquent Boys

Another technique for the presentation of the differences between the two groups of boys studied was the comparison of the individual scores of the two groups. For the purposes of statistical

convenience the responses in the columns *Very Certain*, *Almost Certain*, *Fairly Certain*, *Uncertain* and *Impossible* were weighted 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 respectively. Additional of the weighted scores for the five columns resulted in the total score for each individual. The scores were tabulated in Table III.

TABLE III
*The Scores of Ninety-Five Delinquent Boys and
 Seventy-Eight Non-Delinquent Boys on*

THE CHECK LIST OF BELIEFS

Scores	Delinquent	Non-Delinquent
300-	1	—
275-299	1	—
250-274	1	—
225-249	3	—
200-224	5	—
175-199	15	1
150-174	20	1
125-149	21	3
100-124	15	7
75-99	8	12
50-74	8	31
25-49	1	15
0-24	—	8
Total	95	78
Mean	149.25	66.50
S. D.	46.00	24.75

The use of the individual scores on the *Check List of Beliefs* agreed with the mean percentage of acceptance, presented in a preceding section, that the delinquent boys had accepted twice as many superstitions as the non-delinquent boys.

The technique used to determine the reliability of the difference was the one described by Garrett. The $\frac{D}{\text{S.D. diff.}}$ was calculated to be 16.96. Garrett concludes:

It is customary to take a $\frac{D}{\text{S.D. diff.}}$ of 3 as indicative of complete reliability, since -3 S.D. includes practically all of the cases in the $\frac{D}{\text{S.D. diff.}}$

"distribution of differences" below the mean. A _____ greater than
S.D. diff.

3 is to be taken as indicating just so much added responsibility.¹⁶

A result of 16.96 indicated that the quantitative differences between delinquents and non-delinquents was statistically reliable.

Conclusion

Although a brief study such as this obviously cannot determine whether the greater degree of superstitiousness found among the delinquent boys had any bearing on their social maladjustment, it was emphasized that a significant quantitative difference existed between delinquent and non-delinquent boys in the acceptance of superstitious beliefs. The differences in the kind of superstitions accepted were rather insignificant in comparison with the differences in the degree of acceptance as found among the two groups. Since such wide differences were found, it is suggested that further study be made of superstitious beliefs as defined in the present article.

¹⁶ Henry E. Garrett, *Statistics in Psychology and Education*, p. 133. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926.