



Exam Superstitions

Elizabeth Khusid, Kyle Rosen, Magdalena Raska, Jamir Pleitez,
Paul Cane, & Miranda Greig



Introduction

Cultural Context

Dartmouth College students represent a unique subgroup within the context of the global group of collegiate students. They share:

- a fierce drive to excel academically
- a common Liberal Arts curriculum and ambitious career aspirations

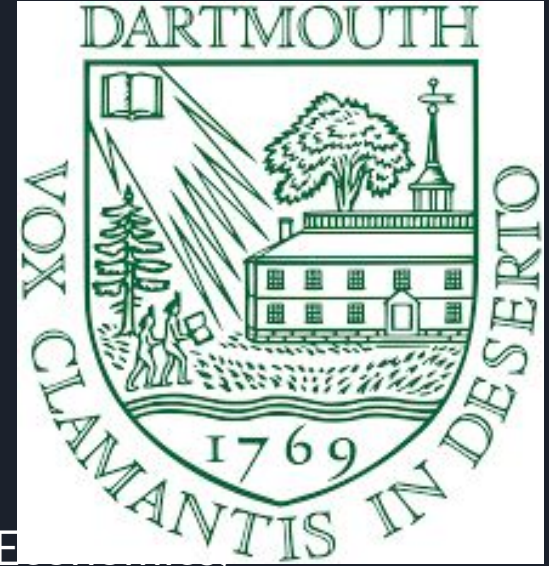
Students must cope with an increasing pressure to be top of their class and maintain particular grades in addition to maintaining a myriad of extracurricular activities

Social Context

- Most students hear superstitions from peers and begin to copy them; if successful, they spread these superstitions to other students and so on
- Similar to the Theory of Diffusion

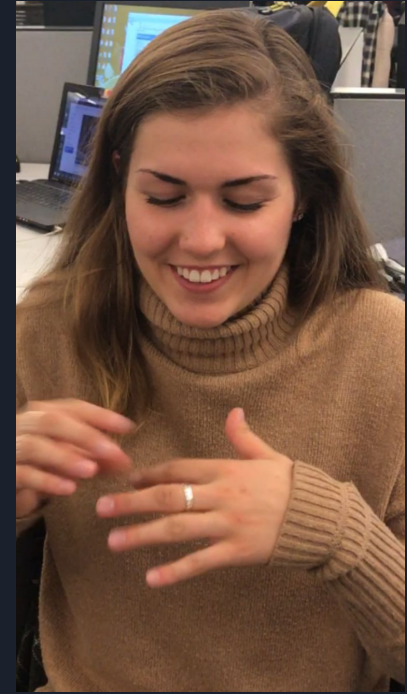
Basic Demographics

- Diverse folklore
 - Dartmouth College undergraduates
 - '17s-21s
 - 19 participants
 - Variety of majors
 - Biology, History, Cognitive Science, Economics, Government, Linguistics, Math, Neuroscience, Psychology, Spanish, etc.
 - Athletes



Physical Charms

- Tangible objects used or worn to either ward off evil or bring good luck
- Some students use physical charms as a source of luck (analogous to placebo effect)
- Illustrates a modern form of contagious magic
- Examples
 - Lucky writing materials
 - Lucky clothing
 - Lucky jewelry



ADIDAS TRACKSUIT

- Stas Van Genderen
 - Dartmouth 2021
 - Cape Coral, Florida
 - Economics Major
- Adidas Track Suit
 - Always wears a tracksuit for an exam
 - Neon shoes
 - Sweatsuit
 - Cannot perform without it



THE LUCKY PENCIL

- Katherine Cane
 - Dartmouth 2021
 - Orinda, California
 - Mathematics Major
- The Lucky Pencil
 - Same pencil over the past 3 years
 - Cannot succeed without it

Three people shared this superstition



Ritualistic Actions

- Some students follow repetitive actions before an exam to ensure success
- Many of our examples reflect modern manifestations of homeopathic magic
- Examples
 - Listen to the same song while studying
 - Meditation
 - Yoga
 - Dieting
 - Exercise



Wearing Hair in Braids for Each Exam

- Anonymous
 - Dartmouth College 2019
 - Boston, Massachusetts
 - Biology and Classics Double Major
 - Pre-Med, aspiring OB/GYN
- Wears hair in braids for every exam
 - Helps her concentrate more on each question so her hair is not in her face serving as a distraction



Three people shared this superstition

Bathroom Meditation

- Kenna van Steyn
 - Dartmouth 2021
 - Lafayette, California
 - Neuroscience Major
- Bathroom meditation
 - Always stops in bathroom before exam
 - Deep breaths
 - Tall stance
 - Builds confidence and strength

Four people shared this superstition



Fast Lane

- Jamir Pleitez
 - Pasadena, California
 - March 28, 1997
 - History and Anthropology Major
- Listening to Fast Lane
 - Fast lane by Eminem
 - Listens to song 3 days before exam
 - Started freshman year of high school
 - Helps to relax and focus

* This was considered a variation of the meditation ritual*





Conclusion

Overview of Consistencies: Generally students' superstitions relate to relaxing them before an exam or trying to boost their confidence while taking the exam.

Contagious Magic: The contagious principle of magic states that a connection between two objects is constant even if the objects are no longer together. Examples of contagious magic in exam superstitions can be seen in rituals such as keeping lucky pencils. That pencil was once associated with a good grade and even though the student isn't taking the same test she did well on with that pencil, she still believes she will do better with it than without it.

Homeopathic Magic: The homeopathic principle of magic states that like produces like. So, when students exercise before an exam because they think performing athletically will also reflect how well they perform academically.

Social Context: Most students interviewed began relying on superstitions in college. They heard about these superstitions from other peers and either copied them exactly or created variations. If successful, these superstitions/rituals were further spread to other students. This cycle of spreading reflects the Theory of Diffusion.