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THE MISCONCEPTION OF CORNELIUS PACKARD RHOADS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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at

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by

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ABSTRACT

THE MISCONCEPTION OF CORNELIUS PACKARD RHOADS

Savita Sukul

The main purpose of this investigation is to determine whether or not the notorious Cornelius Packard Rhoads should be considered racist for his time period. The medical practitioners during the early 1900's did not typically censor their dialogue and actions when referring to minorities, so it will be essential to study their rhetoric in medical journals for that time period. I will also pay close attention to how Rhoads was spoken about in articles during his era versus contemporary society. The significance of contemporary bias in contemporary writing will be beneficial to note as the distinction in context may provide validity to my claim. My research methodology will include locating the context of specific operational terms present in articles and the database of medical journals so that I may understand the racial viewpoints of medical practitioners and Rhoads during this time. The significance of this study is so that we can recognize the judgements we may place on historical figures without analyzation of their past.

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Introduction/Purpose of Research

Historians and media critics have made the mistake of branding a popular medical practitioner as a racist by incorrectly analyzing his actions in accordance with the culture of their time period. However, the word “racist” was not circulated in the late 1800’s to the early 1900’s which was the time period for the doctor brought into question, Cornelius Packard Rhoads.

There have been several studies done analyzing racism during this time period but “racism” is a contemporary word. Therefore the studies are done with a specified perspective of the past. After the abolition of slavery by Abraham Lincoln in 1865, segregation still persisted. It wasn’t until 1954 that schools were desegregated. The Civil Rights Movement didn’t begin until 1955 after Rosa Parks refused to give her seat up to a white man (Segregation in the United States). There were blatant disregards for people of color from the 1800’s leading into the 1900’s in the United States. Being that this was the culture of the generation, these ideas were bound to infiltrate the medical field. However, current studies and critiques have chosen to only fixate on medical practitioners with a great influence on the American public. Cornelius Rhoads was a celebrated pathologist who was recognized for his strides in cancer research and particularly for the developments he made for the treatment of chemotherapy. Therefore, the spotlight shines bright on him which became an unfortunate consequence after his death.

Cornelius P. Rhoads was abhorrently racist in retrospect to the society we are currently living in. However, for his time he was not any more racist or

discriminatory than any other medical practitioner of that time. I will attempt to prove that during the 1890's-1920's there were professionals in the medical field that were equally if not more outspoken in their beliefs on the classification of someone of color being less of a human being than white people.

I will do so by carefully analyzing a database of medical journals from Boston between 1894-1918. I will examine the language used to describe people of color in comparison to the description of white people. I will also be conducting a study of scholarly articles written about the word "racism" and its history in American society. In addition to these sources, I will also provide a thorough deconstruction of the image of Cornelius Rhoads by doing a comparative study of how he was perceived by those of his time with how is perceived by people of the current generation.

There has not been a study such as mine that highlights the inconsistency brought upon by critics of Cornelius Rhoads by inspecting published works of other medical practitioners. The fixation of Rhoads being a racist is a contemporary spin on his particular experience in his own environment and should be further evaluated before the accusation is substantiated.

Theoretical Model

The current articles and reports of Cornelius Rhoads are guilty of contemporary bias. This theory was exemplified in a piece by Stephen Jay Gould when he critiqued the works of Edmund Halley and how his ideas were examined by researchers. “Rather, for concerns of our own, and by a traditional misreading of the history of science, we have simply passed over Halley’s own construction and imposed our preferences upon his reasoning” (Gould). Those who praised Halley for his theory that we may be able to calculate the age of planet Earth by attempting to put a time stamp on the salinity of ocean waters failed to recognize his true intention.

Scientists and scholars of Halley’s time were concerned with the pressing issue of eternity. They believed that if this was tangible that history was dead and that specific things did not hold much meaning as they were bound to be repeated in a limitless time loop that would never end. Therefore, his theory of trying to quantify the Earth’s age was untimely aimed at halting the idea of eternity. Though, scholars who have examined his work credit him for his biblical literalism as he mentions scripture in his studies. By imposing our current fixation on religion onto the works of someone in our past, we paint a different picture of what that public figure may have actually intended. Their actual fixation may have been something completely different. “We are therefore led to read Halley falsely in our light” (Gould).

History of Racism

The term racism was not coined until the start of World War II in the 1930's to describe the unethical practices of the Nazis (Fredrickson). This was shortly after Rhoads wrote his letter in Puerto Rico. There is a misconception surrounding this word as it may be used as a substitute for other discriminatory behaviors. For example, racism is to not be confused for religious intolerance or xenophobia as these show prejudice to specific beliefs and backgrounds (Fredrickson). Racism is also not a belief system that looks a certain way. There is a historical significance to the word and racism arguably started in the West and gained attraction from all parts of the world.

The word has adopted several meanings in the last 80 years which has in turn led to much inspection on historical figures of the past. The application of a contemporary word to a figure of our past can cause some confusion. The medical field has a long, fluctuating history in terms of its successes and failures. However, when speaking specifically to medical journals the language used to describe the disparity amongst those of different races has been astounding. Some groups of people are seen as inferior to others in terms of health risks (Bhopal). This leads to a hierarchy of patients in which some get treated and others don't.

Since the idea of someone being racist or having racist speech was not viable, racism was not an appropriate accusation to make of someone during this time. It wasn't until the strive for independence amongst minorities started to gain fruition that certain words started to take on new meanings. These words would

typically be seen as “racist” today as they refer to a period in time in which the people they are referring to were seen as inferior to other races. Language is very important when trying to determine if someone is racist or not. The way people speak to each other says a lot about how they view them as a human being or if they view them as a human being at all.

This language was acceptable for the time being but has raised concern in contemporary studies. For example, the word “nigger” is presently seen as an offensive term referring to a black person. However, there was a time when that was simply how you described a person of color. The root of this word is hate as it is meant to portray black people as being inferior. Though, it is important to note that the origins of the word “nigger” and similar variations of the word are not negative. The use of this word was for simple identification and did not gain a negative meaning until later years. The timeline of when this switch happened is unknown but by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, the word was being used as an insult (Kennedy 4-5).

Minorities of Asian descent also struggle with the language that is sometimes used to describe them. For example, the word “oriental” is outdated as it was used to describe an Asian foreigner and villainized them for their heritage (Ho, 2003). Asian Americans have worked hard to shed the negative archetypes that have been attached to their nationality. There is even an Asian Model Minority Myth that associates Asians with certain values and beliefs such as Confucianism (Ho, 2003). Ideologies such as these make it hard for minorities to distinguish themselves as individuals when the world has already created

assumptions about them based solely off of where they come from/how they look.

Simple words can hold an extraordinary amount of authority when used in certain contexts. However, context and emotion is usually an added factor. The contemporary reader coming across these words may be disturbed because the history of these words are not positive. They speak of minorities as if they are not on the same spectrum as white people. Knowing this and living in a world where minorities have worked hard to gain independence, these words become outdated and offensive. Future studies done after Cornelius Rhoads' time picked up on the derogatory connotations to certain descriptive words. This created tension and would result in these words no longer be deemed appropriate due to the strides being made for racial equality.

Contemporary Bias

Contemporary Bias can be applied to the accusation of Cornelius Rhoads being a racist. As previously discussed, “racism” is a contemporary term. So, during Rhoads’ time, it is possible that he did not intend to hurt anyone of Puerto Rican ancestry. Minorities were generally regarded as inferior to white people. So, it wasn’t a pressing concern when someone spoke about them in negative terms especially if it was coming from a white man.

In our contemporary society, there are new words to describe Rhoads including a “racist”. However, the evidence for these claims can be the same evidence used to explain why he is not a “racist” when comparing them to other practitioners of his time. It is important to recognize the ideas we put forth that may have biases attached to them.

Methodology

Operational Definitions: The following operational terms were selected to identify the language used to describe minorities in Boston medical journals in the late 1800's to the early 1900's. The words themselves are currently outdated mainly because of the way they were used throughout history. I will be paying attention to the connotation surrounding them and how they are used in comparison to white people. In addition to this I will also be researching contemporary pieces speaking about their analyzation of the treatment of minorities during the time period being studied.

Operational terms

Database: negro, oriental, filipino, porto rican, Italian, Mexican

Contemporary studies: racism, racist

Database of Boston Medical Journals

I will dissect these medical journals and create an interpretation of the data as a collective in an effort to discern how the people of this time period perceived minorities. The goal is to help the reader understand the disparity between the society Cornelius Rhoads was being brought up in and the society that is critiquing his character. This will not result in a justification for Rhoads' character but rather a researched analysis of his environment and actions. The earliest journals being examined were published in 1894. Cornelius Rhoads was born in 1898, so it would not be relevant to study journals that were published any earlier as they may not have had a significant impact on his own opinions.

The latest of the journals date from the year 1918. By this time Rhoads would have been 20 years old which is ample time for him to develop defining character traits based off of his surroundings. This time frame was also selected due to the historical events that surrounded America. This was during and shortly after the Spanish American war which resulted in hostility towards people of Spanish ancestry.

Additionally, the abolition of slavery had only happened a few decades before so people were still adjusting to the slightly improved treatment of black people. The Jim Crow laws were in full effect during this time which encouraged the segregation of white people and black people. By containing the study to a few decades, a clearer conclusion can be drawn from the years that most likely contributed to the gradual evolution of his maturity. This makes it essential to also study how Rhoads was written about during his time since he had a

successful career in his field that would help patients suffering from cancer for years to come.

Since the time period he lived through didn't acknowledge the term "racism", he will not be referred to as such in articles during his time. I will be pinpointing the verbatim used to describe the pathologist including the rhetoric used to construct scholarly articles written about him. I will then analyze the book, "How to Hide an Empire" that were written long after his death to establish the impact he currently has on those affected by his language.

Cornelius Packard “Dusty” Rhoads

Cornelius Rhoads was an American pathologist in the early to mid-1900's. In 1931 he was instructed by the Rockefeller Institute, where he worked as a trained medical practitioner, to go to Puerto Rico to study anemia. During his time there, he wrote a letter that would be critiqued and dissected decades after for its “racist” connotations.

The letter was intended to be a private correspondence with a Boston colleague but was instead circulated by a lab assistant who found the letter on his desk. Among those in circulation was Pedro Albizu Campos who publicized the letter through newspapers, the League of Nations and so forth. The letter wrote, “Porto Ricans are beyond doubt the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate and thievish race of men ever inhabiting this sphere. What the island needs is not public health work but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the population. I have done my best to further the process of extermination by killing off eight and transplanting cancer into several more.”

The letter was deemed a joke and would not tarnish Rhoads' reputation during his lifetime. Rhoads left the Rockefeller Institute in 1939 and went on to become the Director of Memorial Hospital and soon the Director of Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. During World War II, Rhoads served as Chief of the Medical Division of the Chemical Warfare Service in the Army Medical Corps and was awarded the Legion of Merit. In 1949, Rhoads appeared on the cover of *Time* for his progressive strides in cancer research. In 1979, the AACR created the Cornelius P. Rhoads award which would be given to researchers who

excelled in cancer research. This was renamed after the letter resurfaced in 2003 (Rosenthal).

Database Analysis

My study analyzes quotes from medical journals with the objective of justifying the behavior and language of Cornelius Rhoads by comparing the language of other medical practitioners during his time. I searched the words from the operational terms listed in the methodology section and highlighted several passages that spoke of minorities in terms that we would deem racist in contemporary society. I will conduct a selective analysis that is representational of racism during this time being viewed as customary due to the societal views of minorities during the early 1900's.

I have broken up the quotes to constitute different categories. The entirety of the database suggests my claim that the language around minorities was littered with a disrespectful nature that suggested inferiority for each individual race in comparison to the white race. However, to better understand the specificity of the key words and the overall message, I have separated the database of 45 into three categories that highlight publicized beliefs about minority races.

The first category refers to the incapability of minority races to survive due to their intelligence and hygiene. There are 19 quotes out of the 45 that support this claim¹. The second category consists of medical "facts" about minorities that justify experimentation and generalized statements of specific races. This category contains 9 out of the 45 quotes². Finally, the last category assigns

¹ See Appendix Green Highlighted Section

² See Appendix Yellow Highlighted Section

negative physical, mental and behavioral characteristics to specific races. The remaining 17 quotes out of the 45 fall into this category³.

The incapability of minority races to survive due to their intelligence and hygiene

Minorities did not have the same rights as white people in the early 1900's. They were portrayed differently in professional writing. Medical journals from Boston dated during this time used words such as "negroes" and "orientals" when referring to specific races. In their reference to minorities, they often counted their significantly unremarkable intellectual capacity as a reason for the continuous gradual demise of their race. It was common for minorities to be spoken as being inferior to white people as it was presented as a statement which was given validation through "facts". The rationality of these "facts" would not be called into question until years later. In comparison to their white counterparts, the medical diagnosis for their intellectual depression was attributed to the size of their brains.

*The negro brain is decidedly smaller, while the nerves originating in it are much heavier than in the case of the white.....the greater weight the speaker attributes to the presence of white blood.*⁴

Rather than presenting opinions on black people, this is presented as a fact. The intelligence of black people cannot adequately compare to that of white people and it is not seen as an opinion. Based on the facts printed for the public, the brain of a black person is significantly smaller. If it is larger than usual then it

³ See Appendix Blue Highlighted Section

⁴ See Appendix row 12

must be because that person has some trace of white blood in their familial line. Due to this, we should not expect much from this race as they are not capable of carrying out impactful lives due to their scientific genetic makeup that creates this lack of potential.

Another factor to the incompetence of black people was their recent freedom from slavery. After the emancipation proclamation in 1863, black people were freed from slavery. However, they were not freed from the prejudices that would ensue well into the 20th century. The degradation they endured from being someone else's property was replaced by the degradation of their dignity. There were several political systems that gained attraction during the 1800's to the early 1900's. Conservatism was a system that benefited from negro inferiority and worked to promote this as a fact. Radicalism which reached its peak between 1897-1907 expected the "demise of the Negro in America." There was "no place for the Negro in the future American society, and, moreover, that his disappearance was imminent" (Williamson, 6-7).

In the minds of white people, black people did not have much relevance so they were often disregarded especially when it came to matters concerning respect. Williamson notes the mentality of people played a large role in the development of these systems (6-7). The mentality of white people followed that they had superiority over black people due to their past. It would probably be impossible for them to adjust to such a drastic change in environment so the inference was made that they would not last long in American society.

He said that the negro race was undergoing serious decay as a result of change in environment since their emancipation from slavery.⁵

The word “decay” implies rot and deterioration which seems to be the direction the black race was inherently heading towards. The language used in public medical journals is what was fed to the citizens of America during this time. The dehumanization of races such as these is what created the superiority complex that was adopted by the white people of America. Articles such as these are credited to the normalized behavior of segregation amongst races for almost a century after the emancipation. Rather than this proclamation being used as a platform for black people to gain rights and a voice in their society, it actually emphasized the disparity between black people and white people. It was a reminder that they would always be different and instigated different societal attitudes. The attitude that took fruition encouraged white people to never forget their roots as owners and as leaders of the other races in America.

The “change in environment” mentioned in this quote is pointing to black people no longer being property. Their functionality is called into question as they are seen as not being able to adjust to a life where they are not told what to do as if they do not have the capabilities to think for themselves. The medical journals are littered with assumptions that black people are inferior to white people not only because of social status but because of assumed medical facts. As a result, they become a cultural pariah due to their inability to withstand their environment in a way that their racial counterparts can.

⁵ See Appendix row 2

*Whatever the cause, the figures seem to indicate, as might be expected, that the negro is not wholly able to compete with white races for survival, especially under the strenuous conditions of modern environment.*⁶

This quote indicates that this theory has been tested by saying “the figures seem to indicate”. By using words such as these, the people reading will readily trust the tests to be factual even if they don’t know the specificities of the experimentation. This again eludes to the notion that black people are not able to adapt to the changed conditions of not being enslaved and will therefore not be able to survive. In addition to this, black people are referred to as “the” negro whereas white people are simply referred to as “white races”.

By adding a “the” before describing a race of people, the result is a dehumanization of the group. The diction promotes the objectification of the race. In general, you usually don’t refer to people as “the”, you would refer to an animal with “the” before you categorize them. For example, in speech people may refer to “the cat” or “the dog” but never “the human” unless there is a motive in characterizing that specific group of people as being not as human as the rest of us. The dehumanization of minority races goes hand in hand with the sully of races through defamation. The way in which people of color are spoken of has a lot to do with the prejudices that heightened over the years.

“Dr. McFarland: “The densely ignorant and filthy people of the island of Porto Rico, with no knowledge of hygiene or personal care of themselves, living in a place reputed to be extremely dangerous because of tetanus, were

⁶ See Appendix row 34

vaccinated by the united States authorities after the occupation of that territory, and out of some eight hundred and sixty thousand vaccinations three cases of tetanus, two of which are very doubtful occurred.”⁷

The language used in this description is almost identical to that of Cornelius Rhoads. Puerto Ricans, along with the other races were simply not at the same social status of white people. Due to this, there were many pre-conceived notions of them and their capabilities.

Cornelius Rhoads wrote a letter that was not meant to be seen by anyone. It was a “joke” between two colleagues. However, it was publicized and later critiqued for its content. Dr. McFarland on the other hand made these comments about Puerto Ricans and it was published in medical journals for the public to read without any condemnation. The negative connotation added when speaking of minority races as inferior to white races was not acknowledged until much later. Speech such as that above was not out of the ordinary and was usually not questioned for its morality. This is the prime example of the lack of respect for minorities on a large scale as any text that is meant to be published must go through several people before its publication. No one stopped this from going to print.

Texts such as these are the ones that have likely influenced Cornelius Rhoads and his views on minorities, specifically Puerto Ricans. By constantly being bombarded with the notion that foreign countries do not live up to the standards and practices of a country such as America, it is no wonder that

⁷ See Appendix row 22

people do not think much of those who are native. If the environment you grow up in portrays Puerto Ricans to be filthy and ignorant then it will not be out of the ordinary for you to speak of them in this manner. Since this behavior was not berated by the United States, there would have been no reason for Cornelius Rhoads to think that his words would be damning. It is only after much analyzation and years of progressive strides in the fight for equality amongst races that we have come to realize the impact Rhoads' words had and continues to have on Puerto Rican people.

Medical “facts” about minorities that justify experimentation and generalized statements of specific races

Black people and other minority races were believed to not be susceptible to pain. This gave way for a slew of experimentation being done on minorities as test subjects. This is the second category. Below are a few examples of how medical journals have generalized races so that they can use them to their advantage.

They told me the Chinaman was an excellent subject for operation, not liable to shock and rarely attacked by septic conditions.⁸

Being that the “Chinaman” was not liable to shock would justify medical practitioners to conduct experiments on them. It is scientifically proven in this quote that they will most likely not feel pain or be attacked by septic conditions. In fact, this was a practice that was being undertaken for years. In fact, the “father of gynecology” Dr. J. Marion Sims used to conduct experiments on enslaved

⁸ See Appendix row 28

African American women. He would conduct several tests on the same women with no anesthetics. There would even be other doctors observing the surgeries as he did them. When the surgeries were done on white women, they were unable to withstand the pain and so they did not proceed with the operation (Ojanuga, 1993).

When white people expressed their pain and discomfort during procedures, they were heard and attended to with respect. However, when people of color did the same they were not taken seriously. Dr. Sims was conducting his experiments before the proclamation had been established but this history is still relevant as it bled into the 1900's when minorities were taken into hospitals for experimentation as they were believed to not have the same pain tolerance as white people. They were also believed to not be susceptible to the same infections white people were such as septic conditions or septic shock.

This was the environment Cornelius Rhoads was brought up in. He was notoriously known for the letter he wrote about Puerto Ricans and his abhorrent depiction of them. He called them lazy, dirty and thievish. Although this is currently seen as racist, it may not have been as far off from how people during that time viewed Puerto Ricans even in the medical field. As for other people of Spanish decent, they were not given much mercy as well. Assumptions were made and delivered to the public as a truth that left no room for doubt.

*Mexicans are extremely intolerant to pain.*⁹

⁹ See Appendix row 30

This statement is given without much justification. It is followed by a short explanation of how a Mexican may respond to a possible illness.

Verily, a doctor in Mexican mining practice needs a godly supply of placebos. If a Mexican coughs once in the morning he is at the hospital door as soon as it opens with a woeful story; if he coughs again that afternoon he is sure he is going to die and is back at the hospital with a pitiful tale of heartrending pains, etc., and the prescription has got to be changed.¹⁰

From these statements, a Mexican person can be perceived as someone who woefully exaggerates their circumstances to the point where they should not be trusted. This little explanation serves as a warning for future medical practitioners who may be burdened with having a Mexican patient as they can evidently be a handful. This can be clearly deciphered as an opinion in our contemporary analyzation, but during the time of publication it was presented as a fact. Even if people were able to distinguish the lack of validity in this claim, it would still create a massive misunderstanding of the Mexican people.

The suggestion of being supplied with placebos for the diagnosis for Mexican patients implies that they are delusional. Their lack of rationality will lead them to believe that something is wrong with them when there is actually nothing wrong at all. This is not the only instance in which minorities are perceived as being crazy. It was not uncommon for people of color to be spoken of as possessing traits of insanity. However, the United States also does not shy away from attaching this characteristic to other immigrants. They did not speak well of

¹⁰ See Appendix 33

those who came to the United States from foreign countries. They were also not treated with respect.

Assigning negative physical, mental and behavioral characteristics to specific races

The excitability of the southern Italian and the Hebrew are well known. It is easy to excite in them almost maniacal action.¹¹

This is the third category. The “maniacal action” that is brought on by Italians and Hebrews is not something that would be taken lightly by society. This statement says that it is very easy to excite these groups of people which means that they do not possess good temperament. Rhoads specifically calls out Puerto Ricans in his letter but he also mentions Italians. He says that the Puerto Ricans are worse than the Italians which implies that there is something disgraceful about the Italians as well. Italian people faced some challenges in America.

The Italians were seen as criminals due to their involvement in the Mafia, especially since this crime was brought to America (Rose 37). There was a lot of Mafia crime in New York, which was where Rhoads lived for some time. By portraying Italians as maniacs, it is no wonder people did not have respect for them in America. Another way medical journals from America would decrease the level of respect for certain groups of people was their negative classification of them when speaking to their physical characteristics.

¹¹ See Appendix row 38

*The graceful rather light-skinned mulatto, weighing 180 pounds and standing 5 ft. 10 in., had grown to be a giant negro, with almost superhuman strength and monstrous appetite for lust and blood.*¹²

A “mulatto” as referred to in this quote is someone of both black and white descent. It seems as though there are two descriptions being drawn from this person and both descriptions are attributes that are tied to either the black or white background of the person. This person is first perceived as “graceful” which would most likely be attribute to the part of their background that has white ancestry. However, the description goes on to say that they have grown to be a “giant negro”.

The way this is phrased again promotes the dehumanization of a black person. This person has “superhuman strength” which implies that they are stronger than everyone else which can be a good thing. However, the rest of the statement suggests otherwise. The “negro” uses his strength to feed his “monstrous appetite for lust and blood”. This person is being described as an animal. The animal’s only intent or motive for living appears to be a sexual appetite and violence. These two characteristics are not admiral traits for someone to possess. These qualities create for the people reading a judgment that will permeate into the actions and behaviors they have towards black people. This increases the likability that they will not view black people as part of their society. These distinctions are capitalized in other journals.

¹² See Appendix row 15

*In almost all cases, we have fixed the race of the child by the birthplace of its parents....for by "American" we mean essentially persons who have been in this country a sufficient number of generations to acquire the average standard of life as manifested in the way they care for their children.*¹³

By not recognizing someone born in America as an American this led to the increased hostility of people who may appear foreign. It takes a continuous timeline of your familial line before you to be considered a citizen of your own country. However, since this was the 1900's there wouldn't be generations of families born in the United States with a foreign ancestry. Black people were brought over to America as slaves so their ancestors are from Africa, the West Indies and other areas heavily populated with potential slave labor. Spanish people were not migrating in large groups in the early 1900's to America as the Spanish American war created some aggression towards them.

Almost every other race when compared to white people has a reason for not having a sustainable chain of generations of families being born in America. So the root of this statement isolates certain groups of people from being recognized as true citizens of their country. This then results in them not being able to benefit from the rights granted to the residents of America as they are not looked at with equal importance.

¹³ See Appendix row 19

Cornelius P. Rhoads Then vs. Now

Depending on who you ask, Cornelius Rhoads has left a variety of impressions on different groups of people. During his career as a pathologist, he was sent to Puerto Rico in the 1930's to study anemia and hookworm disease. When asked to describe Rhoads, one of his Puerto Rican colleagues said that he had "hawk-like eyes that burn bright blue through round steel-framed spectacles" (Immerwahr 143). "Hawk-like eyes" usually is not a term of endearment. The Puerto Ricans got a different vibe from Rhoads than the Americans did.

After the letter circulated, Puerto Ricans became skeptical of experiments and Americans in general. There was talk of the county's overpopulation becoming a problem and they began to worry that incidents such as these was a means to an end. They took the letter very seriously and it gave Rhoads a bad reputation in the country and eventually led to be a motivation for the fight for independence from the Puerto Rican government. However, Rhoads' homeland did not regard the letter with as much severity as the Puerto Ricans did.

The Washington Post reported it to be a "jocular letter" and that it was exaggerated by the Puerto Ricans. *Time* printed the letter but omitted the most disturbing sentences and deemed the letter to be a parody. It went on to praise Rhoads' trip as something that would probably be recognized as benefiting the populace there. Rhoads was never tried or fired from the Rockefeller Institute and was even made director of Sloan-Kettering in 1940 which was shortly after the letter's circulation (Immerwahr 149-150).

During World War II, Rhoads was appointed the Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service's medical division in the army. It was during this time that he began to conduct chemical experiments on humans. In one of his tests, which was carried out on the island of San Jose, two third of the "participants" were of Spanish decent but the majority of them could not understand the English instructions. The accessibility of the Puerto Ricans were very easy which is why it was advantageous for him to exploit them. He won the Legion of Merit award for this work which was recognized as an advancement in chemical warfare (Immerwahr 150-151).

The constant recognition from his country makes it hard to distinguish if Rhoads was at fault for his actions or if the country was at fault for not reprimanding him and putting a stop to it. The United States worked hard to downplay the actions of Cornelius Rhoads while Puerto Rico used his actions as ammunition for attack. The rights of those outside of the United States clearly did not mean much to the American government otherwise, this medical practitioner would have faced consequences for his words. However, the issue was forgotten about and would only resurface in later years when the independence movements of minorities started to stick. Until then, his opinions on the people of Puerto Rico were not given much thought. This begs the question of if Rhoads was racist for his time period or if he was just a medical practitioner who was mimicking the speech of doctors during that time. There is no doubt that he was inhumane, but racist for his time may be a stretch.

He appeared on the cover of *Time* in 1949 and the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) created the Cornelius P. Rhoads Memorial Award annually to upcoming medical practitioners who succeeded in cancer research. The award was retracted after news of the letter resurfaced. People in America along with the donor who funded the award were unaware of the notoriety Rhoads had in Puerto Rico (Immerwahr 152). People in the medical field were clearly protected by the government and the general public when it came to issues such as this. The magazines that published the letter could have included everything that he said but chose to leave it out. The question is why? After taking a look at the medical journals and how they spoke of minorities, it wouldn't be far reaching to say that the language of doctors in this era was overlooked. This could be because they are working to cure diseases and because of this were able to get a pass on their immoral behavior. It could also be because the degradation of minorities were not seen as a pressing issue during this time.

On August 13, 1959 Cornelius Rhoads passed away. The Sloan-Kettering Institute described him as one of the "principal pioneers" for cancer research in response to the news (Heller, 1960). Presently, on the website for the Sloan-Kettering Institute it says little about Rhoads other than the fact that he was the first director. I reached out to them and they declined my request for databases or any information on Cornelius Rhoads. He is no longer listed as a "pioneer" but is rather only mentioned in passing.

The retraction of this award happened in 2002. This was the start of the American people recognizing someone who was a "pioneer" of his time to be a

“racist”. Even the author of the book, *How to Hide an Empire* describes Rhoads as “villainy” (Immerwahr 144). He goes on to mention that the United States government had sustained a second letter that Rhoads had written which was apparently “worse than the first”. He implies that a government that destroys incriminating evidence should not be trusted (Immerwahr 146).

The people in the 1940’s probably took little interest in the fact that there was a second letter that continued to berate the people of Puerto Rico. However, the people in the 21st century seem to be more intrigued. This is partly because Rhoads’ words hold more weight in our society than the societies in our past. It took 40 years after his passing for people to uncover his truth and add meaning to it. This added meaning comes from years of oppression and uprisings in which minorities finally have a voice to speak up against the injustices they have endured. Even if they were able to speak in the mid 1900’s, the difference is that now people listen.

Conclusion

After carefully analyzing the written word and practices of medical practitioners during the time period of Cornelius Packard Rhoads, it is apparent that there are large disparities in context when compared to our languages and practices today. Bearing this in mind, it does not seem plausible to label Rhoads with a term that gained its relevance during the period of the generation after him. It is very possible that the terms Rhoads used to describe minorities were adopted from medical journals or from the spoken word of white people.

The database I used contains numerous examples of minorities being spoken of in derogatory terms without there being any repercussions. This was simply because behavior such as this was not shameful or “racist”, rather it was normal. Rhoads’ mainland had little to say about the letter he wrote disparaging Puerto Ricans and Italians because there was already a stigma placed on minorities. The database has examples of the mental instability of minorities which resulted in them being looked at as “easily excitable”. So, when Rhoads came back to America it wouldn’t be abnormal for the citizens to believe that the statements he made were blown out of proportion by the Puerto Ricans.

In my hypothesis, I sought to seek out if Cornelius Rhoads was a racist for his time period or if he possessed the same traits of the medical practitioners of that era. Speaking to Cornelius Rhoads’ character, I think that he had racist tendencies but that he himself did not conduct experiments for the joy of making minorities suffer. It appears that he was very passionate about his craft and would do anything and exploit anyone to get the information that he needed in

order to further his developments in cancer research. That being said, I think that Rhoads was inhumane, a little deranged and lacking of a moral compass, but I do not think that he was a racist. I think that in retrospect, if a man like Cornelius Rhoads existed in America today he would be racist. However, that is solely based off of the current progressive environment he would be living in. The environment Rhoads was living in did not acknowledge his behavior to be as seriously disturbed as it would today. Therefore, the analyzation of his character is biased to our contemporary society.

Limitations

Sloan Kettering Institute Denied Access to Rhoads' Information

I researched the Sloan Kettering Institute and looked through the information they had on their website. They did not have much information about Cornelius Rhoads other than a few lines about him becoming director. I e-mailed and called the institute to see if I could get access to any files about him or speak with someone who knew a little bit more about his history. Unfortunately, they told me that they could not provide me with any additional information about Rhoads and to refer to the website for details.

Rockefeller Institute Visit

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to visit the Rockefeller Institute. I was hoping to get some additional information on Rhoads as he worked there for a significant period of time. Unfortunately, the pandemic has resulted in a stay at home order which kept me from visiting. The online resources offered little information to Rhoads and was hard to navigate.

Implications for Future Research

The conclusions drawn from this research can lead to a further discussion on the study of the medical field. The language used in current medical documents most likely do not contain negative connotations to minorities as it did before. However, it would be interesting to research when the switch in language occurred. By studying independent movements of minorities during the mid-1900's there may be an event or a series of events that may have sparked the shift in language.

There are also several questions that were raised by this study. One of the most prominent questions would probably be about the content of the second letter Rhoads wrote to his colleague that was presumably "worse than the first". This could re-open the question of if he is racist or not, as his words may actually be more damning than what he wrote in the first letter. There is also the question of how racism has changed throughout time. The word "racist" is a contemporary term but we still apply it to historical events and figures. An investigative comparison on the means of "racism" in our past to "racism" in our future may shed light on the values our society has adopted over the years.

In regards to Cornelius Rhoads, there can be studies done that aim to examine the specifications of his research that led to the advancements he made in chemotherapy. By delving into his experimentation, one may uncover the methods to his madness. Due to the limited resources I had, I was unable to locate his files and documents but maybe someone with more access can conduct a more intricate analysis on the mind of Cornelius Rhoads.

Appendix

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
131	1894	116	He said that the negro race was undergoing serious decay, as a result of change of environment since their emancipation from slavery.
131	1894	116	In his experience, cranio-tables was rare in the negro; and as negroes have less susceptible nervous systems than whites, they were less liable to nervous affections.
131	1894	301	Beware of his mistakes, or they may find some day that they have caused the flat nose of a full-blooded negro to grow upon some young blonde lady who might cause them to be mulcted in enormous damage in consequence of so disastrous a blunder.
131	1894	627	I fear the good doctor was a little close with his servants but he was a pious man, and many is the hymn which finds its way into the pages of his book.
145	1901	508	The sick Filipino is apt to be like the Semitic patient, so common in our clinics. He does not bear pain with fortitude, and is always sure that his end is rapidly approaching.
145	1901	44	Not infrequently it has been stated that the negro is relatively immune from malaria infections, and sometimes that he is absolutely so.
145	1901	508	The average Filipino is fastidiously neat about his person and his clothing, but is quite the reverse about his house and surroundings.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
153	1905	134	The instances of the disease among the whites was comparatively small, but among the natives it ran rife, owing to their lack of hygiene precautions and the favorable temperatre conditions.
156	1907	420	Uremia in Porto Rico is not uncommon, but is rarely seen by physician and is confused by the jibaros with "nervous attacks" of all kinds, particularly with the very common hysteria major.
156	1907	858	These negroes were naturally destitute, shiftless and, in great measure, incapable of caring for themselves.
156	1907	21	The Negro brain is decidedly smaller, while the nerves originating in it are much heavier than in the case of the white.
156	1907	21-22	The average weight of the brain of the American negro is greater than that of other negroes. This greater weight the speaker attributes to the presence of white blood.
156	1907	432	She is all the more pained by the perversity of her feelings, as she gets affected in the presence of persons whom she would expect least to arouse in her such "abominable" feelings: a priest will excite them and even a negro.
156	1907	3	The graceful rather light-skinned mulatto, weighing 180 pounds and standing 5 ft. 10 in., had grown to be a giant negro, with almost superhuman strength and monstrous appetite for lust and blood.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
163 issue 1	1910	173	The reason why the Egyptians are so small is because he put vitriol into them a thousand years ago, and it is all described in the inscriptions. He has the shoulders of an Egyptian, the head of a Napoleon or an Italian, and his limbs are French.
162 issue 1	1910	9	Dr. H.G. Perry, of Greensboro, Ala., said that in more than 10 cases of uncinariasis of which he had record, there was only one mulatto, and not a single pure blooded negro.
162 issue 1	1910	13	Brooks reports a case of bookworm disease from his service at the City Hospital, New York. The patient was an Irish-American, born in Philadelphia. He contracted the disease in New York state from Italian associates.
162 issue 1	1910	199	In almost all cases, we have fixed the race of the child by the birthplace of its parents....for by "American" we mean essentially persons who have been in this country a sufficient number of generations to acquire the average standard of life as manifested in the way they care for their children.
141	1899	295	The conditions are so bad in the steam cars that I dread to take a journey at this season of the year owing to the infernal heat and foul atmosphere, being usually under the control of negro porters, who are notorious for their love of heat and bad air.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
139	1898	11	The facts that although the penis is much larger than in the white men, the testicles do not hang so low, the veins receive better mechanical support, and the negro leads a more lascivious life.
146	1902	640	Dr. McFarland: "The densely ignorant and filthy people of the island of Porto Rico, with no knowledge of hygiene or personal care of themselves, living in a place reputed to be extremely dangerous because of tetanus, were vaccinated by the united States authorities after the occupation of that territory, and out of some eight hundred and sixty thousand vaccinations three cases of tetanus, two of which are very doubtful occurred.
150 issue 1	1904	133	Since emancipation Dr. Dewey asserts that various dissipations, vices, bad habits, irregular living, indolence, privation, etc., have led to the weakening of the negro constitution, and therefore to a natural development of disease, such as insanity and consumption.
150 issue 1	1904	133	We are nevertheless much interested in Dr. Dewey's point of view and are glad to make the correction which he suggests regarding the prevalence of insanity in the negro population.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
152	1905	611	From their painstaking investigation they conclude that the disease known as "anemia" in Porto Rico is a symptom of some definite pathologic entity, or a consequence of some aberration of physiologic processes, caused by improper diet, unhygienic surroundings, etc.
155	1906	233	He believed that the disease would eventually settle the whole race question. Any preventive work would depend upon the intelligence of the negro and unless that could be raised little could be accomplished.
155	1906	232	The great of the disease in the negro race, he believed, was due to two factors, ignorance and poverty. They were too poor to live in proper quarters and too ignorant to take care of themselves.
156 issue 1	1907	285	They told me the Chinaman was an excellent subject for operation, not liable to shock and rarely attacked by septic conditions.
158 issue 1	1908	391	Our negro population is fast being decimated by such factors peculiar to civilizations as syphilis, alcoholism, and especially tuberculosis - factors which, it seems, were utterly foreign to the soil to which that kindly and unfortunate people were indigenous.
158 issue 1	1908	43	Mexicans are extremely intolerant to pain.
158 issue 1	1908	43	A Mexican always wants his wound dressed daily and will invent any kind of story to have it done.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
158 issue 1	1908	44	It must be remembered that the intelligent Mexican of education differs very little from his American neighbor
158 issue 1	1908	43	Verily, a doctor in Mexican mining practice needs a godly supply of placebos. If a Mexican coughs once in the morning he is at the hospital door as soon as it opens with a woeful story; if he coughs again that afternoon he is sure he is going to die and is back at the hospital with a pitiful tale of heartrending pains, etc., and the prescription has got to be changed.
165 issue 1	1911	144	Whatever the cause, the figures seem to indicate, as might be expected, that the negro is not wholly able to compete with white races for survival, especially under the strenuous conditions of modern environment.
168 (jan-june)	1913	431	In the low-lying coast lands of South America, neither the mixed breed of Indian and white, nor the pure white, can live; but the negro can, and he has taken possession of the coast lands, pushing the white people back. The same thing threatens us; but we can remove a part of the threat, if we can remove the prime cause of negro supremacy.
168 (jan-june)	1913	431	It is by the right of inheritance that the negro can stand the malarial climate.
170 (jan-june)	1914	284	Oddly enough then, her humanitarians are now realizing the ravages of alcohol among the Italian people and the necessity of a vigorous campaign against this evil.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
170 (jan-june)	1914	645	The excitability of the southern Italian and the Hebrew are well known. It is easy to excite in them almost maniacal action.
172 (jan-june)	1915	519	Thus, a pure African negro, is herbivorous, and the Anglo-Saxon often carnivorous.
172 (jan-june)	1915	505	The wretched men - French, Italian and Austrian - were gathered in rough commissary wagons and carried to the small city, which itself soon became one great hospital.
175	1916	37	The African, the Indian, the Mexican can endure and withstand the desiccation of the desert wind and water because the Nature has endowed them with greasy skins, but the caucasian whose lot is cast in these climes is not to be envied.
179	1918	763	The Chinese coolie, than whom no being performs more physical work, is a "seed-eating oriental"
136	1897	257	Engleman says that Indian women have Indian babies very easily, but have hard labors when they bear half-breeds on account of the relatively larger heads of the half-white offspring.
136	1897	211	In Salem, the girls from whom the accusations emanated had been having hypnotic séances from a West Indian slave, who was herself practically insane. They passed them into such a condition that they were accused of witchcraft, and were tried under such circumstances as to impress them powerfully by suggestion.

Volume	Year	Page	Quote
136	1897	539	If we fully realize that the negro came out of the darkness of Egypt and was brought face to face with a civilization - with its education, knowledge and inventions; its advanced sanitation; its innumerable arts, sciences and manufactures; its multiplicity of industries and employments; its burning life-struggles; and its proneness to vices and excesses of all sorts - it cannot surprise anyone that in many instances he is unequal to the task of adjusting himself to these, and falls a prey to disease.
136	1897	539	In his ignorances of the laws of his being, the functions of citizenship, and the responsibilities and duties which freedom imposed, demands were made upon the negro which his intellectual parts were unable to discharge.

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