

I began the research project, “Divine, Scientific, and Phrenological: A Study of American Religion and Phrenology in the Nineteenth Century” in 2012 during my senior seminar class “Gender, Technology, and the Body,” taught by Dr. Carla Bittel. The course studied the growth of technology in the United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, specifically observing its ability to manifest gender roles as well as reinforce racial boundaries and hierarchy. The course also stressed technology’s ability to distribute authority to the user, producer, and often times the consumer of the technology. For my research project, I sought to understand the deep American fixation on understanding the human body in terms of divine purpose. The research and sources I used explored this notion through the lens of the nineteenth-century pseudo-science of phrenology.

The research I gathered for this paper was specifically on the topic of religion and phrenology. My purpose for this research project was to attain a greater understanding for religious Americans attraction to phrenology in the nineteenth century. I discovered throughout the research a unique American fascination with the idea of controlling and mastering the human body through the process of technology, science, and religion. The research further examined how the science of phrenology not only created a pseudo communication link between humans and their innate characteristics, but also how it shaped gender roles in society as well as hierarchy of race. The spiritual and religious populace of the nineteenth century used phrenology to better understand their own divine characteristics granted to them by God, as well as, used the science to further establish a *natural* and *divine* racial and gender hierarchy.

The research found for this project utilized Loyola Marymount’s Special Collections Library, Internet databases, as well as secondary sources. Because the research focused on a multitude of areas including phrenology, religion, gender, race, and American principles during the nineteenth century, I sought to use a variety of sources from different areas. LMU’s special collections was a pivotal cornerstone for my research where I spent time sifting through various phrenological works such as Orson Squire Fowler’s *Creative and Sexual Science* and George Combe’s *A System of Phrenology*. These works served as my guidelines toward understanding the scientific and philosophical beliefs behind phrenology. Fowler’s *Creative and Sexual Science* was one of the first sources to claim phrenology’s sexual laws as divine while the Combe source used phrenology to claim superiority racial and sexual superiority through *scientific* means. From here, I sought out other sources from the collections including Dr. Livingstone’s *Perilous Adventures* to understand how a religious man of medicine would comprehend race, gender, and phrenology. While investigating this text I discovered one sole, specific account where he notes the science phrenology, which supported my argument that phrenology impacted the scientific and religious communities reinforcing social and racial stereotypes and hierarchy of the day.

I also utilized LMU’s database collection to attain a greater number of primary sources. One specific database that was especially useful was the American Antiquarian Society which included Pliny E. Chase’s letters to his sister, Lucy Chase, and Emily H. Gillespie’s diary helped me understand the personal and direct outcome of phrenology on

religious Americans during the nineteenth century. One of the first major advances in my research came at the aid of Dr. Bittel through the recommendation of the Pliny E. Chase letters. During my research of this source I began to find somewhat of a breakthrough in understanding the impacts phrenology had on the average religious American. The first-person accounts of phrenology and its implications on understanding the body and God's divine blueprint through the study of phrenology offered me a glimpse of how the science was being interpreted by Americans during this time. This, in addition to newspaper ads, publications, and lectures from keynote speakers, such as Lydia F. Fowler, wife of O.S. Fowler, served as tools toward understanding how Americans utilized the science to create gender roles and boundaries. Further, they help me analyze how phrenology was to being advertised, promoted, and interpreted through a religious and spiritual context.

Finally, the paper utilized contemporary sources from historians who have studied America's religious and scientific journey throughout the nineteenth century. Loyola's library offered books such as John L. Modern's *Secularism in Antebellum America* and Christopher G. White's article "Minds Intensely Unsettled," which created a framework toward understanding how phrenology and religion have produced in interesting chapter in America's religious history. The scope of this research helped explain the theoretical and philosophical propositions of phrenology on religious concepts like the "soul," faith, and divine purpose.

The research demonstrates the insecure interpersonal relationship between religion and science, as well as attempts to better understand how some sought to unite these two areas of study to unilaterally support social accepted gender roles, racial hierarchy, and divine design through technology. My conclusions for this study found that phrenology had become a tool of both science and technology for religious Americans, and could be used as a method for understanding their own unique innate abilities, reassure differences and superiorities of race and gender, as well as comprehend the divine nature of God in science and humanity.