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FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS ON RACE AND EUGENICS

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Franklin H. Giddings can be considered one of the founding fathers of sociology in the United States. With many of his contemporaries, Giddings shared a firm commitment to eugenics, scientific racism, and race-conscious imperialism—a biologically rooted impetus that recent literature has placed at the core of the Progressive Era reform agenda, and which was particularly strong among the most sociologically inclined figures of the period. The aim of this article is to present a discussion of Giddings's views on race, immigration, eugenics, and American imperialism, and how these views evolved over time. What follows adds to our general understanding of the extent to which racial and eugenic considerations permeated American social thought during the first decades of the last century and how, in the specific case of Giddings, this influence found expression in an inherently ambiguous and often contradictory fashion.

I. INTRODUCTION

Franklin H. Giddings can be considered, along with Albion Small, William Graham Sumner, and Lester Frank Ward, as one of the founding fathers of American sociology.[1]

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[1] Franklin Henry Giddings (1855–1931) was born in Sherman, Connecticut, as the son of a prominent congregational clergyman. It is said that before entering Union College (Schenectady, NY) in 1873, he had already read the writings of Herbert Spencer, Thomas Henry Huxley, Charles Darwin, and John Tyndal. After two years he gave up further formal education because of ill health to enter the profession of teaching. After two years of teaching, he began his career as a journalist. During his eleven years as a journalist, he was connected mainly with the *Springfield Republican* (MA) and other newspapers of southwestern New England, writing for both popular and academic media. Union College granted him an AB (1888) and an AM (1889). In his early academic career Giddings was more of an economist than a sociologist. He began his

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Giddings started his academic career in 1888 at Bryn Mawr, Philadelphia, where he took Woodrow Wilson's position after he had moved to Wesleyan. In 1891 Giddings joined Columbia, temporarily replacing Richmond Mayo-Smith during the latter's leave of absence. His position was renewed on a temporary basis until 1894, when he "was appointed to what is estimated the first full professorship of sociology in America" (Odum 1951, p. 87). Giddings's sociology, which encompassed elements of economics, sociology, and psychology, is hard to place in the political spectrum of the time. On the one hand, he praised Sumner as the country's foremost sociologist but found a way to distance himself from his individualism and extreme "laissez-faire" views (Page 1969; Recchiuti 2007). Significantly, the quintessentially progressive economist Simon Patten dedicated his *Theory of Prosperity* (1902) to Giddings; Giddings, in turn, thanked Patten for his help with his *Principles of Sociology* (1896, p. vi). On the other hand, Giddings was far more conservative than most of his contemporaries. His sociology had many similarities to social gospel thought, but as Dorothy Ross (1991, p. 128) observed, Giddings "had never doubted the moral legitimacy of the capitalist market." He did, in his early economic works, advocate pro-labor measures such as profit-sharing schemes under specific conditions (Giddings 1887), but nowhere in his mature writings can one find explicit support for the kind of redistributive legislation and administrative state building that became the distinguishing mark of progressivism.

There is one aspect, however, where Giddings found himself aligned with many leading progressives of his time, and this is what most concerns us here. With people like Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons, Henry R. Seager, William Z. Ripley, just to name a few, Giddings shared a firm commitment to eugenics, scientific racism, and race-conscious imperialism—a biologically rooted impetus that Thomas Leonard (2016) has placed at the core of the Progressive Era reform agenda, and which was particularly strong among the most sociologically inclined figures of the period. In the *Principles of Sociology* (1896), for instance, Giddings described and classified races, physically and mentally, into natural hierarchies, combining biological "evidence" of racial inferiority with a focus on upward social mobility. Giddings's support of eugenics and hereditarianism was equally explicit. In this connection, suffice it to say that from 1923 to 1930 he served as a charter member of the advisory council for the American Eugenics Society. These biologically deterministic elements in Giddings's thought have received only passing attention in the literature (see, for instance, Williams 1989; Degler 1991; Wallace 1992; and Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi 2007), and even Leonard, in his acclaimed analysis of the eugenic foundations of progressivism, mentions the name of Giddings only once. The aim of this article is to fill this gap and to present a more systematic discussion of Giddings's views on race, immigration, eugenics, and American imperialism, and how these views evolved over time. What follows adds to our general understanding of the extent to which racial and eugenic considerations permeated American social thought during the first decades of the last century and how, in the specific case of Giddings, this influence found expression in an inherently ambiguous and often contradictory fashion.

activity as an member of the American Economic Association, serving as a member of its Publication Committee, together with Henry C. Adams, Frank W. Taussig, and Henry W. Farnam. He published on capital theory (1889, 1890a), and two of his papers were later included into the volume *The Modern Distributive Process* (Clark and Giddings 1888) coauthored with his friend John Bates Clark.

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II. RACE AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF KIND

In the opening pages of *The Principles of Sociology*, Giddings placed what he called "consciousness of kind" at the center of his sociological analysis. For Giddings, consciousness of kind is a collective feeling of similarity and belonging that individuals share with members of their own group. As he put it (1896, p. 18), "our conduct toward those whom we feel to be most like ourselves is instinctively and rationally different from our conduct towards others, whom we believe to be less like ourselves." Racial affinity plays an important role in the development of consciousness of kind. "Within racial lines the consciousness of kind underlies the more definite ethnical and political groupings," he asserted (p. 19), and it is "racial likeness" that binds together "men of like mental and moral qualities" (p. 371). This common feeling fosters social cohesion but can also generate conflicts stemming from innate differences among racial groups. "The white man," he wrote elsewhere (1898a, p. 4), "is glad that the men about him also are white men; and white men often entertain feelings not altogether agreeable towards groups of black men with which they are obliged to have much contact." Accordingly, Giddings held, the sense of kinship became progressively weaker as one moves beyond his own racial group. In his *Theory of Socialization* (1897, p. 17), a syllabus prepared for students of sociology, Giddings reproduced a graph showing the degrees of kinship feeling in American society as a white native born of native parents confronted other elements. The graph indicated that consciousness of kind declined sharply when white immigrants (native born of foreign parents and foreign born) were encountered, and disappeared almost entirely with differences in color.

It has been affirmed that with his notion of consciousness of kind, Giddings provided an academic "rationale for degrees of segregation of American racial and ethnic groups" (Ellis 2013, p. 62; see also Ferguson 2015, p. 161). Others have suggested that Giddings's notion of consciousness of kind "made prejudice and discrimination a part of the natural order of society" (Williams 1989, p. 25). We only partially agree with this line of interpretation. First, it should be emphasized that nowhere in his writings did Giddings advocate racial separation or express support for any form of racial discrimination. Second, Giddings's expository style is often ambiguous and inconsistent, and this makes a univocal interpretation of his views almost impossible. In the preface to the third edition of the *Principles of Sociology* (1898b, p. ix), somehow contradicting himself, he felt compelled to state that consciousness of kind is far from being "merely a biological fact" dependent on race or any hereditary attribute. This, however, was not a complete reversal of his earlier position. In the first edition of his volume, in fact, one can also find Giddings stating that race is an aggregating factor only in those primitive (or "ethnical") societies where "a real or fictitious blood-kinship is their chief social bond" (1896, p. 157). In the more advanced (or "demotic") societies, by contrast, individuals are bound together by "habitual intercourse, mutual interests, and cooperation, with little or no regard to origins or to genetic relationships" (1896, p. 157). And yet, as we have seen, in 1897 he made kinship a universal and inverse function of racial resemblance. This ambiguity surfaces even more evidently in Giddings's discussion of racial characteristics.

In the *Principles* Giddings approached the question of race in distinctly hierarchical terms.[2] Speaking of the lower races, by which he meant Asians and Native Americans,

[2] Our discussion of Giddings's views on race is indebted to Degler (1991).

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he denied that lack of opportunity was the cause of their backwardness. "They have been in existence … much longer than the European races," he wrote (1896, p. 328), and "have accomplished immeasurably less. We are, therefore, warranted in saying that they have not the same inherent abilities." When lower and higher races come into contact with each another, he insisted, "it is necessary for the higher in many ways to sustain the lower; otherwise it would be impossible for two very different races to live together." Racial differences in intelligence are hereditary and can not be reduced by education. "Unfortunately," Giddings lamented, "the same amount of educational effort does not yield equal results when applied to different stocks." Race survival is thus a direct consequence of biological superiority. "There is no evidence that the now extinct Tasmanians had the ability to rise. They were exterminated so easily that they evidentally [*sic*] had neither power of resistance nor adaptability," he explained. Native Americans are another race with little "capacity for improvement." Though "intellectually superior" to the Negro, the Indian has shown less ability to adapt himself to new conditions. The Negro, on the other hand, has been able to adapt himself thanks to his innate "plasticity." According to Giddings, however, this endurance has been the result of the Negro's social intercourse with, and subservience to, white men: "when deprived of the support of the stronger races [the Negro] still relapses into savagery. Yet, so long as the Negro is left in contact with superior whites, he readily takes the external impress of civilization, and there is reason to hope that he, unlike the Indian, will acquire a measure of the spirit of civilization" (1896, pp. 328–329).

Ultimately, Giddings was dubious as to whether the Negro would ever become a "truly progressive type." The most capable races, in fact, "must have not only plasticity, but also strength of character to make independent advances, and without outside help to hold an advantage when it has been gained" (1896, p. 329). Only the northern and western European races have shown such capacities in modern times, he sentenced, and "England has been the most progressive nation of history, combining in a rare degree adaptability and variability with resolution and strength" (1896, p. 329). Despite claims like these, however, Giddings's discussion of race reveals the same ambivalence that we have found in his notion of consciousness of kind. After discussing at some length the intermingling of races that had originated the stocks of Europe, he concluded that the "white race of today is composite to the last degree" (1896, p. 238)—an assertion that clearly distances him from the Nordic race apologists of the time. On the same page, after having pointed out the "enormous part that the social factor must have played in human evolution," Giddings expressed confidence that "future research will demonstrate that the negro and yellow races, which evidently are destined to play an important role in future developments of the world's population are not primitive races, too simple in their biological composition to be capable of further evolution, but already highly composite races capable of progress." Interestingly, he returned to the subject two years later, in his review of Jacques Novicow's *L'Avenir de la Race Blanche* (1897). In dismissing the alleged threats to the white race of Chinese and Negro competition, Giddings elaborated:

> Just what Europe has to fear is a gigantic struggle between the antagonistic elements of the white race itself. If the war between the United States and Spain has revealed no other bit of human destiny, it has at least made this one fact perfectly clear. The so-called white race is not a race at all, but a number of races, some of which have energy, intelligence, the capacity for discipline and the ability to govern, and others of which have not. In the

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> long run the dark races will be organized, governed, disciplined, made prosperous and —within the limits of their capacity—progressive, by energetic, capable races of the whites. In the meantime, however, other white races … will attempt to share in the partition and control of Asia and Africa. The final struggle, therefore, will be, not between white and dark races, but between one group of white races and their dark-skinned subjects, on the one hand, and another group of white races and their dark-skinned subjects, on the other hand. Not to put too fine a point on it, the final struggle will be between the English-speaking peoples of the world and some other folk. When that struggle comes, let pessimists flee to the mountains; for there is reason to believe that the English-speaking people of the world are well practiced in the four arts of salvation: invention, gunnery, social discipline and constitutional government. (1898c, p. 571)

This lengthy quotation perfectly emphasizes Giddings's pervading ambiguity. In a single paragraph we find him denying race purity but asserting the primacy of English-speaking people, advocating Negro uplift but only within the limits of their innate capacity, pointing out the antagonistic elements within the white races but also presenting imperialism and the Negro's emancipation as the moral burden of the superior whites broadly conceived.

III. IMPERIALISM AND COLONIZATION

Giddings's racial concerns also play a crucial role in his discussion of imperialism and colonization. His position on these matters was first presented in a paper, emblematically titled "Imperialism?" (1898d), which had been written in the midst of the Spanish-American War over Cuba's independence. Giddings's starting point was a direct attack on those critics of the war who "are now vigorously opposing all territorial expansion" (1898d, p. 586). Against these views, Giddings affirmed that there seem to be many "reasons for believing that the war with Spain was as inevitable as any event of nature and that, at this particular stage in the development of the United States, territorial expansion is as certain as the advent of spring after winter" (p. 586). Giddings's firm beliefs on the inevitability and necessity of imperial expansion were directly linked to his racial views. His defense of America expansion combined the conventional racial paternalism of his day, which considered the uplift of the uncivilized races as a moral duty of the civilized, with a more progressive emphasis on developmental possibilities for the Western world. In defense of this position, Giddings drew upon Benjamin Kidd's *The Control of the Tropics* (1898), which admonished superior races to assume their responsibility to cultivate the riches of the "tropics."[3] According to Giddings:

> It has been abundantly demonstrated, however, that the white races can never colonize the strictly tropical portions of the world; and if the vast possibilities of the torrid zone

[3] Benjamin Kidd (1858–1916) was a British sociologist who had acquired international notoriety after the publication of his major work, *Social Evolution* (1894). As a result of the financial success of this volume, Kidd was able to devote the remainder of his life to writing and travel. When he came to the United States in 1898, he wrote a series of articles for *The Times*, which were later collected and published under the title *The Control of the Tropics.* Giddings, who had favorably reviewed *Social Evolution* for the *Political Science Quarterly* (Giddings 1894), knew Kidd personally.

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> are to be developed for the benefit of mankind, one of two alternatives must boldly and definitely be chosen. Either the tropics must be held by northern nations as plantations, to be exploited remorselessly in the old-fashioned way for the benefit of their owners, without regard to the well-being of their native populations; or they must be held as territorial possessions, to be governed firmly, in the interest both of the world at large and of their own native inhabitants, by administrative agents appointed and directed by the home governments of the northern nations. (1898d, p. 600)

It is the second of these policies, Giddings concluded, that "the conscience and the judgment of the English-speaking race will ultimately approve and adopt." He was willing to concede that "the task of governing from a distance the inferior races of mankind will be of great difficulty," but, he insisted, "it is one that must be faced and overcome, if the civilized world is not to abandon all hope of continuing its economic conquest of the natural resources of the globe" (1898d, p. 600).

Giddings further elaborated on these issues in his book *Democracy and Empire* (1900), where he provided a more distinct political dimension to his defense of American expansionism. There, Giddings went beyond the assertion that economic growth can be achieved only through colonial control and postulated a logical consistency between imperialist policies and the values of democracy and freedom. "Democracy and empire," he asserted (1900, p. v), "paradoxical as such a relationship seems, are really only correlative aspects of the evolution of mankind." To Giddings, Britain and the US furnish two ideal types of democratic empire. Although "both have been continually extending their territorial boundaries, absorbing outlying states or colonial possessions, and developing a complicated system of general or imperial administration … the coexistence of democracy and empire has become an approximately perfect blending" (p. 3). These modern empires were benevolent in their exercise of power, exporting democracy to their colonies and permitting diversities in different people's beliefs and religious practices. Staying with the example of the British empire, Giddings pointed out that "as long as they [the colonies] conform to the English sense of the sacredness of life, and to the English requirement of social order, England is willing to respect their local customs" (p. 4). Based on this evidence, he concluded that democratic imperialism works only if the colonies accept a "common loyalty to certain common interests and fundamental principles" (p. 8) defined by their rulers.

From there Giddings moved to the question of whether colonial expansion necessitates the preventive consent of the subject territories. He replied in the negative, arguing that democratic consensus would emerge only *a posteriori*, when those subjected to coercive power have developed the ability to express a fully rational and informed consent. Giddings's inherent paternalism becomes manifest when, in defending his position, he shifts from the analogy of a child who is critical of his parents' firmness until he becomes an adult to that of a "barbarian people" placed under colonial control:

> As a child, I may have rebelled against the authority of my father and my teachers, and have denounced their rules and their punishments as iniquitous; yet if, when I am grown and have attained the full measure of ethical consciousness, I look back upon my childhood years and, reflecting upon all their incidents, in the exercise of my own judgment decide that, after all, the government to which I was then subjected was reasonable, that it fitted me for manhood and its responsibilities,—then, obviously, I must pronounce that government just, and yield to it my rational approval…. In like

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> manner, if a barbarian people is compelled to accept the authority of a state more advanced in civilization, the test of the rightfulness or wrongfulness of this imposition of authority is to be found not at all in any assent or resistance at the moment when the government begins, but only in the degree of probability that, after full experience of what the government can do to raise the subject population to a higher plane of life, a free and rational consent will be given by those who have come to understand all that has been done. (1900, p. 263)

Quite unsurprisingly, Giddings's contention that democratic approval should be understood retrospectively attracted some criticisms. Virtually all reviewers of *Democracy and Empire* pointed out that this doctrine, if literally applied, would endow any nation with the right to occupy and administer any foreign territory on the ground of a self-ascribed superiority for the work of civilization and democratization. The reduction of democratic legitimacy to the probable consent of the governed in the future, Chicago philosopher William M. Salter (1900, p. 125; see also McGilvary 1900; Montague 1900) lamented, "would justify almost any aggression, the only limit being the inflation and assurance of the aggressing party. … It is evident," he continued, "that the thoughtful among us can get little help in the present predicament from it." British economist John A. Hobson (1902) took another line of attack. He saw Giddings, together with Kidd, as the leading apologist of the idea that "the Teutonic races, and in particular the Anglo-Saxon branches, represent the highest order of efficiency" (p. 462), and that, as such, they have the right to dominate the inferior nations as part of the struggle for the progress of humanity. Hobson's major objection to Giddings's argument for imperialism was that it failed to appreciate the importance of exchange and cooperation in the evolution of civilizations. "Direct intercommunication of persons, goods and information," he explained (1902, p. 473), is now rapidly advancing and with it the growth of that "common experience necessary to found a common life" beyond the boundaries of race and nationality. Interestingly, Hobson concluded (p. 473), while some among those who emphasize "like-mindedness and common experience" as necessary conditions for social cohesion use this line of argument in defense of existing nationalities and to oppose colonization, "others, like Professor Giddings, apply them in the advocacy of expansion and imperialism."

IV. A MODERATE HETEROGENEITY

With the publication of *Inductive Sociology* in 1901, Giddings's views on race underwent a significant change. On the one hand, he did continue to show a keen interest in racial issues. Partially drawing upon William Z. Ripley's then classic *The Races of Europe* (1899), he presented an elaborate taxonomy of ethnic groups, dividing the population into Teutonic, Celtic, Celto-Latin, Ibero-Latin, Slavonic, and Semitic components. On the other hand, Giddings now limited the discussion to the common anthropometric traits of each group, abandoning any explicit reference to superior or inferior races. Intellectual differences were seen as the consequence of different "socializing forces [that] create society" (1901, p. 70) and therefore largely independent of the racial factor. The volume contains no mention of colonization or any discussion of African Americans, except for a single passage in which the Negro is described as

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"instigative in disposition and convivial in character" (p. 87). This softening of Giddings's views on race was accompanied by an equally important (and closely related) shift in emphasis. At the turn of the century, notes Carrie T. Bramen (2000, p. 23), Giddings's critical focus altered from a concern about establishing social connections through sameness, or what he had termed "consciousness of kind," to a principle of heterogeneity-in-moderation to be reached through assimilation and amalgamation. It is true that in the *Principles* Giddings had already recognized the importance of "some intermingling of unlike elements and occasional inter-breeding," as checks to "physiological degeneration" (1896, p. 95), but it was only in his subsequent works that he went beyond the mere biological aspect and established an explicit nexus between population heterogeneity and progressiveness.

Giddings's first (and somehow timid) move in this direction is to be found in the statistical appendix of *Inductive Sociology* (1901), where he constructed an index number intended to serve as a proxy for the degree of homogeneity in the population. The index was based on a weighted sum of the percentages of native born of native parents, native born of foreign parents, foreign born, and "all colored" over the total population—the same classification we have encountered above. Giddings obtained this number for each state of the union and then arranged the results in three columns according to low, medium, and high index numbers. "It will be observed," he affirmed (1901, p. 289), "that the states which are distinguished for a rather pronounced 'Americanism' in politics and legislation are chiefly found, as might be expected, in the third column." The highest degrees of "progress and social leadership" are instead to be found in those states where the population is "neither perfectly homogeneous nor excessively heterogeneous"—communities that Giddings assumed to be characterized by the existence of more intellectualized social bonds as distinct from mere racial affinity. This idea of moderate heterogeneity was expanded and refined in a series of subsequent contributions. "The natural question to start with is this," wrote Giddings in *The Forum* (1903a, p. 249): "must the mental and moral heterogeneity of a people be in direct proportion to its ethnic heterogeneity?" In this connection, he admitted, there is now a "widely-diffused feeling of uneasiness lest the incoming horde of South European and East European peoples may permanently affect not only the American blood, but also American habits and ideas." Yet, against these typical late nineteenth-century preoccupations, he was confident enough to affirm that "while each new ethnic element brought into a population does undoubtedly affect the ideas, the morals, and the manners of a composite people, mental heterogeneity does not in all cases … increase in any mathematical proportion to the ethnic variety."

Giddings was then ready to go a step further—not only that heterogeneity does not represent a threat to "mental" cohesion, but, if kept within limits, it can foster the ideals of American democracy. "A population can be democratic only if it is composed of elements sufficiently like-minded to agree upon a general scheme of social order," he stated (1904, p. 1702). However, a democratic community allows full individual expression only if "its units are in minor respects so unlike that they can by no means agree upon an elaborate plan for the detailed regulation of individual life." This led him to assert that "somewhere between excessive heterogeneity and complete homogeneity will be found that precise composition of a people which ensures progress and is yet compatible with personal freedom and a liberal social organization" (1903a, p. 253). This search for an optimum balance between extreme variety and oppressive uniformity

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in population distances Giddings from many of his nativist contemporaries. Whereas progressives like John R. Commons (1907) or Henry Pratt Fairchild (1911) believed that because immigrants came from authoritarian countries, they lacked an appreciation of democratic principles, Giddings always remained optimistic about the possibility of immigrants' absorption into the dominant culture and their acceptance of American ideals.[4] He made this point crystal clear in a paper, emblematically titled "The American People" (1903b), from which we quote at some length:

> When, however, a people though composed of varied ethnic elements, and highly differentiated in respect of mental and practical qualities, is yet homogeneous on the whole,—that is to say, when it presents more points of resemblance than of difference, it is capable of being organized by other influences than personal power. It may be responsive to great ideals, and, if so, it is able in a democratic spirit to create an extensive and complex organization, and to carry out in a true spirit of national cooperation great policies of public welfare. In this truth we have the real key to the explanation of American achievement. Composite as they are in blood, various as they are in mental qualities, interested as they are, as individuals, as local groups, and even as great geographical sections, in the most varied pursuits, beliefs, and purposes, the American people from whatsoever nationalities descended, and of whatsoever confession, are men and women who have been inspired by the greatest ideals that could create and mould a nation. Differing as they may in all other respects, they are alike in this, that they have been chosen, selected from the nations of the earth by their responsiveness, beyond the responsiveness of their kindred, to the ideals of freedom. (p. 298)

Giddings (1903b, pp. 298–299) concluded by affirming that the "American spirit" will eventually overcome all racial differences and will "enlighten and convert the most unpromising foreign-born citizen who now votes in ignorance, but who will one day vote in wisdom." Yet, in the light of Giddings's ambiguity noted above, this unconditional faith in the possibilities of assimilation should be taken *cum grano salis.* Though less explicitly than in his previous works, Giddings maintained a hierarchical view of races, continuing to privilege northern Europeans over other ethnic groups. Racial amalgamation, he warned (1903a, p. 254), "could not be carried to the extent of blending white, black, and yellow bloods, ideas, and moral standards without creating a people and a polity almost totally unlike what we now delight to call American." "Unless the inflow of Latin and Slavic peoples into the United States … should be out of all proportion," he reiterated (in Report of the Eighth Annual Meeting 1904, p. 282), "the American people must remain essentially English in blood, mental qualities, character and institutions." And again: "we are injecting Italians, Hungarians, and Slavs; but these can not possibly submerge the Celtic-Teutonic blood already here" (in *Literary Digest*, "Are We a People?," 1908, p. 38). Giddings (Report of the Eighth Annual Meeting 1904, p. 282) did not hesitate to proclaim that "many of our immigrants now are physically and mentally inferior," but he just advocated the "exclusion of undesirable persons without barring any nationality as such." However, he specified, this policy

[4] It should be noted, however, that albeit deeply concerned about the social and economic impact of the so-called new immigration from southern and eastern Europe, Commons believed that almost all of these groups (as long as they are white) could gradually become Americanized. See Fiorito and Orsi (2016) for a discussion.

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applies only to immigration from Europe: "dilution of the American blood by other color races, as for example, the Chinese, is highly undesirable, and should not be contemplated."

V. EUGENICS

Giddings's pervading ambivalence emerges even more clearly in the use he made of eugenic arguments. His first discussion of population in explicit qualitative terms appears in an early essay on "Malthusianism and Working Women" (1890b), where he dealt with the demographic effects of urbanization. Giddings saw city life under modern industrial conditions as degenerative. This view coincided with the aim of many Progressive Era reformers to restore America to its rural, peasant past. "The mercantile, manufacturing, and professional men of the present day are for the most part from country stock," he noted (1890b, p. 86), while "very few of them from an urban ancestry." The reason is that "no stock can survive for unlimited generations under the conditions of city life." In an urban environment, he clarified (p. 87), the price of success is a "nervous strain" that only the strongest and keenest can endure: "of the defeated, numbered by thousands, those that are shattered in nerve fill up the insane asylums and the morgues; the wicked seek careers of vice and crime; the honest drift into the ranks of the industrious wages class." The situation is aggravated by the fact that "the well-to-do class of the cities does not over-multiply." Not only it marries late, but "its few children start in life with impaired vitality." The working class, on the other hand, multiplies beyond the demand of the labor market, and this overflow joins the ranks of the unemployed. Giddings continued:

> In these facts we have the one true key to all our social problems. It is in the highest degree desirable that the better part of the country population should be maintained in over multiplying vigor, so that, generation after generation, it may feed the cities—and in the cities the great enterprises, the professions, sciences and arts—with fresh vitality and power. It is equally desirable that the birth-rate of the poorer half of the urban working population should be greatly reduced, for it is perfectly certain that this half is composed, for the most part, of the doubly unsuccessful in the social struggle, and that its vitality is so near the point of exhaustion that it falls an easy victim to inebriety and every lower form of vice. If social evils are to be not palliated, but in a measure prevented, the increase of the wages class must be kept well within the social demand for labor. (1890b, p. 87)

Rather than proposing specific eugenic measures to check the proliferation of the lower classes, Giddings ended with a note of optimism. For every woman of the "cultivated classes" who is renouncing motherhood to receive a college education, there are many more among the working classes who are postponing marriage owing to the opportunities now open to them for self-support. "The burdens of maternity coming only when they are ready to assume them," Giddings (1890b, p. 89) wrote, so that "their families can no longer be large in the old-fashioned sense of the word."

Writing three years later, Giddings (1893) added a further ingredient to his eugenic rhetoric. Recent immigration has caused numerous social problems, he argued, but nowhere were its effects more noticeable than in the field of industry. Like many of his

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contemporaries (see Leonard 2016 for a survey of the literature), Giddings held that the "new" wave of immigrants flooding to the United States from southern and eastern Europe had caused "a displacement of men of a relatively high standard of life by cheaper men of a lower standard" (p. 156). Despite the generalized growth of factories, the pace of industrial evolution has slowed in certain industries, and this displacement is now taking place "more rapidly than the better men can find places in industries requiring relatively intelligent labor." In Giddings's words:

> Economists who have contended that high wages mean a low cost of labor, and those who have affirmed the contrary, are alike half right and half wrong. They have been observing different classes of industries. Under a perfectly uniform, self-regulating circulation of labor, the versatile man, of the high standard of life, would displace the cheaper man in one class of industries, and the duller, cheaper man would displace higher-priced labor in the other class. Under normal progress the major displacement would be of inferior by superior men. But unless economic evolution, creating new wants and varying demands, and reorganizing industry to supply them, is going on more rapidly than the growth of social unrest, or of those political policies that so often force vast hordes of destitute people into migrations that have no definite destination, as in the case of the Russian Jews, there may be a cruel and ruinous substitution of the lower for the higher grade of workman, prematurely and far beyond normal limits. It would not be unfortunate that the Irishman should displace the native American, that the French Canadian should in turn displace the Irishman, and that finally the Hungarian or the Pole should displace the French Canadian, if the men of the higher standard of life could immediately step into industries of a higher grade. But when this is not possible, when they can live only by sinking to the level of their more brutal competitors, it is an evil of great magnitude. (1893, pp. 157–158)

Making reservation wages a function of eugenic quality, Giddings (1893, p. 158) could conclude that "under such circumstances the intense competition of the struggle for success … piles up in the community a frightful wreckage of physical and moral degeneration." Accordingly, he urged society to assume regulation, by specific labor legislation, of those industries in which "free competition displaces the better man by the inferior" (p. 163).

At the turn of the century, alongside the softening of his racial views noted above, Giddings somehow tried to dissociate himself from the more extreme eugenists of the time. This is best shown by his criticism of G. Archdall Reid's strong version of hereditarianism. Reid, a Scottish physician and a staunch supporter of eugenic sterilization, believed that philanthropic social reform presented a particularly grave threat because it sought to improve environmental conditions and care for the ill or mentally challenged, and thus kept these so-called unfit individuals alive and even allowed them to reproduce. Changing social conditions and increasing philanthropy, Reid stated in a short article published in the *Independent* (1906), would only increase the numbers of defectives in society, preventing natural selection from doing its function.[5] According

[5] As Reid put it in a salient passage: "By carefully and continuously breeding from individuals which display favorable spontaneous variations breeders improve their domesticated animals. This process is known as artificial selection. When Nature exercises the choice it is termed natural selection. In no recorded instance have breeders succeeded in permanently improving their varieties by merely altering the environment in which they exist. In itself this is strong evidence that the great mass of variations are spontaneous. But Nature supplies even stronger evidence" (1906, p. 379).

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to Giddings (1906, p. 384), Reid's contention that "philanthropy must result in race deterioration" does not take into consideration those "modes of social pressure" through which the environment can enforce the working of natural selection. Specifically, Giddings referred to the benefic effects on the quality of population of universal education and a generalized raising of the standard of living. Education, he stated, "is putting a terrific strain upon the nervous systems of children, and especially of girls and young women," and its consequences on birth rates are already before our eyes. In a similar way, a higher standard of living, calling forth a more intense economic activity, "destroys the nervously unstable, and gives a free field to the sufficiently resistant, whose progeny will inherit the higher civilization" (1906, p. 384).

A more explicit recognition of environmental influences is to be found in Giddings's introduction to the fourth edition of Robert Dugdale's (1920) famous examination of the Jukes family. Dugdale had studied the lineage of a rural family known for its degeneracy to whom he gave the fictitious name of Jukes. He traced the family origin to a colonial-era character named Max. Generations of Max's descendants remained in relative isolation and mostly propagated themselves through endogamous marriage. Dugdale eventually identified 1,200 of Max's descendants, among whom he found numerous cases of crime, pauperism, illegitimacy, feeblemindedness, disease, sexual promiscuity, and prostitution. In his introduction Giddings lamented that the work of Dugdale had been misinterpreted to be a demonstration of hereditary degeneracy. "Far from believing that heredity is fatal," Giddings wrote (in Dugdale 1920, p. iv), "Mr. Dugdale was profoundly convinced that 'environment' can be relied on to modify, and ultimately to eradicate even such deep-rooted and widespreading growths of vice and crime as the 'Jukes' group exemplified." Giddings also expressed concern that "since Mr. Dugdale's studies came to a too early end the whole subject of heredity has undergone re-examination at the hands of biologists." In particular, he insisted, after August Weismann's energetic assault on the doctrine of acquired characters:

> No scientific man of good standing would now venture to affirm that we know enough about human heredity to justify the social reformer in basing any very radical practical program of social reform upon biological conclusions. … The factor of "heredity," whatever it may be, and whether great or small, always has the coefficient, "environment," and if bad personal antecedents are reinforced by neglect, indecent domestic arrangements, isolation from the disturbing and stimulating influences of a vigorous civilization, and, above all, if evil example is forced upon the child from his earliest infancy, the product will inevitably be an extraordinary high percentage of pauperism, vice, and crime. (pp. iv–v)

It should be noted, however, that Giddings's concessions to the role of environment in shaping heredity in no way implied a repudiation of an inherently hierarchical view of human nature—neither did his criticism of the more incautious versions of hereditarianism lead him to a rejection of eugenics. In this connection, Giddings's public remarks on what came to be known as the "Baby Bollinger" case are particularly enlightening. On November 12, 1915, Harry J. Haiselden, the chief surgeon at the German-American Hospital in Chicago, announced to the newspapers that he had refused to operate to correct deformities in an infant born to Anna and Allen Bollinger, knowing that this decision would lead to the baby's

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death.[6] Haiselden's refusal rested entirely on the grounds that the child was born with deformities and that he would have gone through life as a defective. The whole case led to a heated debate in the national press, and Giddings raised his voice in support of Haiselden. "If the facts are as reported," Giddings harshly declared to the *New York Times* (*New York Times*, "Defective Baby Dies as Decreed," 1915), "the child should be permitted to die. If more such children had been permitted to die, there would be fewer molasses-minded men and women in the community who object to letting such children die." Before any decision as to the elimination of a defective baby, he reiterated a few months later in the *Independent* (*Independent*, "Was the Doctor Right?, 1916, p. 23), "there should be a legal and careful determination of the kind and degree of incapacity." While "the idiotic child should mercifully be allowed to die, … the child with a good brain, however crippled, should be saved." Giddings went back on the argument a few years later, and this time within a broader eugenic perspective. "The production of the defective can be stopped only by putting an end to their reproduction," he sentenced in an editorial in the *Independent* (1919, p. 357), which gained the approval of a leading eugenist, Harry H. Laughlin (1921). According to Giddings (1919, p. 357), however, "the eugenic policy should not be applied at first to the deformed, the deranged and the criminal, as such. The reproduction of the feebleminded should be stopped first; and that measure would probably make others unnecessary."

VI. CONCLUSIONS

That eugenic and racist arguments were a common part of Progressive Era social science is now entirely beyond dispute. Over the last two decades or so, a growing body of literature has investigated how biologically deterministic arguments permeated turn-of-the-last-century debates over immigration and provided justification for specific measures such as minimum wage laws and laws restricting the hours of work for women. So, one may ask, what makes Giddings worthy of a specific study? The case of Giddings, we feel confident to answer, is significant in that it embodies in many respects all the ambiguities and contradictions that were typical of those years. Progressive Era racism and eugenics cut across the traditional ideological spectrum and its proponents often differed so markedly among them, in content, style, and emphasis, as to make any interpretation along a one-dimensional axis virtually impossible. Giddings perfectly epitomizes this historiographic difficulty. More specifically, Giddings's ongoing ambivalence about race and eugenics is a measure of two distinct tensions in Progressive Era thinking. The first, as Leonard (2016) ably points out, refers to the vision of the poor, the marginalized, and the unfit, who were simultaneously conceived as victims deserving uplift and as threats requiring restraint. Giddings, we have seen, favored an environmentalist approach to eugenics, which promoted environmental reform to the extent that it enforced natural selection. "Of all ways of improving the human breed," he wrote (1906, p. 384), "probably the least revolting is to increase the exterminating pressure of education and economic progress." Yet, only a few years later, he publicly supported

[6] Pernick (1996) provides an insightful and well-documented reconstruction of the Bollinger case.

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(apparently, without considering it "revolting") Haiselden's refusal of life-saving surgery for a "defective" baby on strictly eugenic grounds. This ambiguity continued throughout his entire life. "The diminution of economic misery," Giddings (1924, p. 158) wrote in his last major work, "requires the cooperation of private effort with legislation." While insurance and old-age pensions have proven their value, he concluded, "eugenics and birth control are in a controversial stage." The second tension stems from the coexistence, within the several streams of the Progressive Era reform movement, of a nostalgic, even reactionary, element that looked with suspicion at the then rapid process of industrialization, with a more genuinely progressive component, which found expression in a continuous effort at rationalizing and promoting the dynamics of modernization. In his early works Giddings warned against the dysgenic effects of urbanization and unregulated competition among industrial workers—preoccupations consistent with the classical republican ideals that only farming could furnish the requisite propertied independence and morals. In his later works, he abandoned his concerns about urbanization and became far more explicit in the denial of the common stereotype of Anglo-Saxons as the archetypal Americans. Giddings advocated a middle-ground version of the melting pot—"smelting," in his own jargon (*Literary Digest* 1908, p. 37)—and located the path to social progress somewhere in-between oppressive homogeneity and disaggregating heterogeneity. Yet, as we have documented, he could not completely break with his previous racial anxieties. Giddings's notion of moderate heterogeneity still reserved priority to the Anglo-Saxon race. In this connection, he did not hesitate to affirm in 1912 that "the enfranchisement of the Negro was a great mistake" (*New York Times* 1912). He considered the granting of political rights as "a hindrance rather than a help to the negro," and he predicted that a great "race war" would come when the Negro reached a plane where he could back up his demand for equality. Evidently, Giddings's "smelting" pot excluded people of color.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests exist.

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