

# Penalty of Prejudice or Premium of Privilege? European Immigrant Groups in the Early Twentieth-Century United States

Robert L. Boyd 

Department of Sociology, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA  
Email: [boyd@soc.msstate.edu](mailto:boyd@soc.msstate.edu)

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## Abstract

Ethnic stratification theory and research advance two propositions: (1) The socioeconomic attainment of minority groups is reduced by majority-group prejudice; and (2) The socioeconomic attainment of the majority group, and of related groups, is increased by the cultural transmission of favorable attitudes toward such groups. Applying these propositions, the present study conducts a path analysis to examine relationships among European immigrant groups' respective national origins, home values (from the 1930 Census), and U.S. natives' social distance attitudes toward the groups (from Bogardus's 1926 survey). Estimates show that Russian Jews' median home value is reduced by seven-tenths of a standard deviation by natives' desires to avoid Jews, whereas Northern and Western European groups' median home values are increased by about one standard deviation by natives' willingness to associate with these groups' members. It follows that a penalty of prejudice (that is, a reduction in socioeconomic attainment because of unfavorable social distance scores) for minorities and a premium of privilege (that is, an improvement in socioeconomic attainment because of favorable social distance scores) for majority-related groups are complementary effects of social distance attitudes.

## Keywords

European Immigrant Groups, Socioeconomic Attainment, Social Distance Attitudes, Early Twentieth-Century U.S.

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between minority-group socioeconomic attainment and anti-minority prejudice is a fundamental concern of ethnic stratification theory and

research. Classical studies of this relationship propose two competing hypotheses that provide the foundation of current investigation. The first is that a minority-group's socioeconomic attainment is markedly reduced by anti-minority prejudice (e.g., the majority-group's belief in the inherent undesirability of the minority group in question). Such prejudice, it is argued, restricts the targeted group's advancement by motivating the majority-group to exclude the minority from workplaces, neighborhoods, and intimate associations that can promote upward mobility. A well-known formulation of this argument opines that anti-minority prejudice is the key element of a vicious circle that can perpetuate a minority-group's social and economic subordination (Myrdal, 1944).

The second hypothesis is that a minority-group's socioeconomic attainment is largely unaffected by anti-minority prejudice. This alternative hypothesis arises from a frequently-documented inconsistency between articulated beliefs and actual behavior in studies of minority-majority-group relations. Specifically, self-declared prejudice (e.g., expressed desires for social distance) is not always accompanied by affirmative discrimination against the targeted group (e.g., active exclusion or avoidance), implying that majority-group members are often prejudiced non-discriminators (Merton, 1949). Of course, the opposite relationship between prejudice and discrimination has also been observed: many majority-group members who claim to be unbiased do actively discriminate against minorities when motivated by self-interest to do so (Merton, 1949). In sum, contrary to the vicious circle argument, minority-group advancement is not necessarily limited by anti-minority prejudice because of a common disconnection between "creed" and "deed" among those in the majority group.

While the hypothesized penalty of prejudice for minority groups is of longstanding interest in ethnic stratification theory and research, recent studies also focus attention on how a majority-group's socioeconomic attainment may be enhanced by the group's promulgation of beliefs in its own members' inherent and unparalleled desirability (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Feagin & Feagin, 2003). These studies suggest that, if widely accepted, such beliefs—which derive from the majority's vigorous promotion of a group-superiority ideology (e.g., White Supremacy) to legitimize its dominance—potentially confer numerous advantages to majority-group members, including psychological rewards (e.g., bolstered self-esteem) and moral or legal justifications for group members' preferential access to material resources (e.g., securing top positions in society's asset-allocation queues). This line of critical inquiry thus hypothesizes that a majority group will enjoy unearned social and economic benefits from the cultural transmission of positive attitudes toward its members (based on, for example, unchallenged assertions of the majority group's intrinsically meritorious dominance), gaining, in essence, a premium of privilege.

The present study adds to the above discussion by exploring how the socioeconomic attainment of various European immigrant groups in the early twentieth-century United States was affected by a salient indicator of group relations: the

social distance attitudes toward these groups at the time. These attitudes—central to textbook discussions of prejudice (e.g., [Schaefer, 2004](#))—reflect the extent to which a particular ethnic group’s members are viewed by those in the majority group or the larger society as desirable candidates for close, personal contacts and intimate associations. (Measurement of socioeconomic attainment and social distance attitudes will be discussed in more detail below.)

Sociological interest in European immigrant groups’ socioeconomic attainment is rooted in historical scholarship on how immigrants from Southern, Central, and Eastern (SCE) Europe fared in the U.S., socially and economically, particularly in comparison to their counterparts from Northern and Western (NW) Europe ([Borjas, 1994](#); [Lieberson, 1980](#)). The literature reveals that, during the early twentieth century, SCE European immigrant groups (e.g., Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews) routinely met with prejudice stemming from nativism, xenophobia, and social Darwinism, whereas NW European immigrant groups (e.g., English, Irish, and Germans) usually encountered more auspicious receptions because of their shared sociocultural heritages with the U.S. majority group—native-born Whites, most of whom at the time were of NW European ancestry ([Parrillo, 2019](#)). Not surprisingly, the literature shows that SCE European immigrants were typically seen by native-born Americans as substantially less desirable than NW European immigrants as potential spouses, relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, citizens, or even visitors to the nation. These social distance attitudes, famously documented by the scores reported from a 1926 national survey of U.S.-born college students ([Bogardus, 1928](#)), were part of a well-defined boundary that separated SCE European ancestry persons from NW European ancestry persons in nearly all spheres of public and private life in the early twentieth-century U.S. ([Fox & Guglielmo, 2012](#)).

## 2. Research Questions

Was the socioeconomic attainment of SCE European immigrant groups hampered by natives’ unfavorable social distance attitudes toward these groups? It is easy to assume that the answer is “yes.” Ethnic queuing theory asserts that the operation of majority-group prejudice in economic markets tends to relegate the least-favored (i.e., lowest ranking) minority groups to the bottom-most positions in these markets ([Lieberson, 1980](#)). Hence, the theory predicts, in line with the classic vicious circle argument, that SCE European immigrant groups’ socioeconomic attainment was reduced, perhaps significantly, by U.S. natives’ desires for social distance from these groups in the early twentieth century.

But there are reasons for suspecting that this penalty of prejudice was relatively small. In addition to the likelihood that many early twentieth-century U.S. natives were prejudiced non-discriminators ([LaPiere, 1934](#)), it is possible that U.S. natives’ social distance attitudes toward SCE European immigrants were more salient apropos of primary-group relations (e.g., friendship and marriage) than of secondary-group inclusion (e.g., access to workplaces and neighborhoods),

particularly after the era of immigration restrictions. The 1917 literacy requirement increased the selectivity of immigration, and the 1921 and 1924 National Origin Quotas reduced the volume of immigration, especially from SCE Europe, thereby softening natives' perceptions that SCE European immigrants were economically, politically, or culturally threatening to American society (Parrillo, 2019). There is a chance, then, that by the 1930s, SCE European immigrants were gaining access to workplaces, neighborhoods, and other settings that were springboards for socioeconomic attainment (Roediger, 2005), even though the immigrants continued to be excluded from friendships and marriages with U.S. natives. Most notable in this regard is the remarkable upward mobility of Russian Jewish immigrants and their descendants in the early twentieth-century U.S. This mobility was achieved despite the group's lack of substantial primary structural assimilation and marital assimilation at the time (Lieberson & Waters, 1988) and virulent anti-Semitism that excluded Jewish ancestry persons from many elite schools, neighborhoods, and voluntary associations (Higham, 2002; Lieberson, 1980). SCE European immigrant groups' socioeconomic attainment in the early twentieth-century U.S. may, therefore, have been modestly, though not markedly, reduced by U.S. natives' desires for social distance from these groups.

Related to the above question is a parallel query: Was the socioeconomic attainment of NW European immigrant groups aided by U.S. natives' relatively favorable social distance attitudes toward these groups? Again, it is easy to assume that the answer is "yes." Ethnic queuing theory implies that the most advantageous positions in economic markets are reserved for the majority group and for those groups most closely related, both culturally and biologically, to that group—in other words, the highest-ranking groups. Further, such groups, owing to their close ties to the majority group, may profit from the latter's ideological or pseudoscientific rationalizations for its own special treatment. For instance, in the early twentieth-century U.S., collective privileges of White Supremacy ideology—an ideology broadcasted throughout American society by official socialization agents—no doubt helped those NW European ancestry groups that were relatively peripheral to the White majority (e.g., Germans and Scandinavians) as well as those that formed the core of this majority, namely, the English, Scots, and Irish (Feagin & Feagin, 2003). It follows that queuing theory predicts, in accord with critical perspectives on ethnic inequality, that NW European immigrant groups' socioeconomic attainment was assisted by U.S. natives' willingness to socially and economically associate with these groups' members, both intimately and otherwise, as revealed by the relatively low social distance attitude scores of these groups (Bogardus, 1928) and other indicators, notably, intermarriage (Lieberson & Waters, 1988).

Yet, the benefits of such a premium of (White) privilege may be more apparent than real. As suggested earlier, the often-observed discrepancy between expressed beliefs and actual behavior in ethnic relations implies that social distance attitudes may be poor predictors of socioeconomic outcomes. It is possible, too, that U.S. natives' comparatively favorable social distance attitudes toward NW European

immigrant groups were more indicative of natives' openness to including these groups in friendship and kinship circles than of a commitment to the idea that such groups, due to their White-majority membership, are entitled to preferential treatment in economic markets. The socioeconomic attainment of NW European immigrant groups may thus have been unaffected by natives' relatively positive social distance attitudes toward these groups in the early twentieth-century U.S.

In addressing the above questions, the present study will contend that there is a reciprocal relationship between (a) an immigrant group's socioeconomic attainment and (b) natives' social distance attitudes toward that group—that is, an immigrant group's socioeconomic attainment is affected by natives' social distance attitudes toward that group and, vice versa, natives' social distance attitudes toward a group are affected by the group's socioeconomic attainment. This contention emerges from the theory that the total prejudice against a minority group is frequently the sum of racial/ethnic prejudice and social class prejudice. The theory suggests that “a majority group's desire for social distance from a minority group stems partly from majority-group members' wishes to avoid those persons who are perceived to be of low socioeconomic status, regardless of such persons' race/ethnicity” (Boyd, 2021: p. 562, citing Blalock, 1967: p. 199).

Consistent with this theory, it is likely that U.S. natives' desires for social distance from SCE European ancestry groups in the early twentieth century (revealed in the 1926 Bogardus survey) were heavily influenced by popular views, formulated in the 1910s, before the aforesaid immigration restrictions, that SCE European immigrants were of lower socioeconomic status than NW European immigrants (Boyd, 2021). For example, U.S. natives' perceptions of Russian Jews, and of Jewish ancestry persons, in general, appear to have arisen largely from stereotypes formed at the time when well-meaning social reformers, such as Jacob Riis, documented how destitute Russian Jewish immigrants arrived in the U.S. *en masse* and settled into urban tenement neighborhoods that many natives saw as reminiscent of Eastern European ghettos (Boyd, 2021, citing Chudacoff & Smith, 2005: pp. 126-133). Conversely, the theory also implies, U.S. natives' more favorable social distance attitudes toward NW European ancestry groups may have resulted from perceptions that such groups, which were culturally and biologically related to many U.S. natives, were relatively high in socioeconomic status.

The effect of minority-groups' socioeconomic attainment on the majority's social distance attitudes toward those groups has been analyzed in the studies cited above. However, the opposite relationship—that is, the effect of the majority group's social distance attitudes on minority groups' socioeconomic attainment—has yet to be investigated. The present study, accordingly, fills a conspicuous gap in research on socioeconomic attainment and social distance attitudes.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Measurement of Variables**

In the analysis to follow, European immigrant groups' socioeconomic

attainment in the early twentieth-century U.S. is measured by the groups' respective median nonfarm, owned-home values in 1930. These values, for nonfarm homes owned by White families with a foreign-born household head, were collated by Lieberson and Waters (1988: pp. 140-141) from Census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1933) and were analyzed by these scholars as surrogate measures of European immigrant groups' respective income levels. Observing that income data for foreign-born household heads were not tabulated by country of birth in the Census until 1950, Lieberson and Waters (1988) indicate that 1930 owned-home values for these heads are one of the earliest measures of European immigrants' socioeconomic attainment in the twentieth century U.S. Following the rationale of Lieberson and Waters (1988), the present study analyzes home values because they are the best available measures of a group's socioeconomic attainment in the aforesaid Census data. Home values are also highly appropriate for the present study because they reflect asset accumulation through home ownership, the most common wealth-building method in American society. The year 1930 is appropriate, too, because it is the decennial census year that is closest to the data collection time-point of the present study's measure of U.S. natives' social distance attitudes.

That measure, alluded to above, is from Bogardus's national survey of the social distance attitudes of 1,725 U.S.-born college students in 1926, the vast majority of whom were Whites of NW European ancestry. The measure is the social distance score that Bogardus calculated for a broad variety of racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. population (Bogardus, 1968). This 1926 measure is used because it is from the survey year that is closest in time to 1930. Specifically, it is the survey respondents' average relationship choice for a member of a particular group on a one-to-seven-point social distance scale in which 1 = spouse/kin, 2 = friend, 3 = neighbor, 4 = coworker, 5 = fellow U.S. citizen, 6 = visitor only to the U.S., and 7 = would exclude from the U.S. Perhaps the best-known operationalization of U.S. natives' social distance attitudes, this measure has been discussed extensively in research articles (e.g., Boyd, 2021; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005) and textbooks (e.g., Parrillo, 2019; Schaefer, 2004) on racial/ethnic relations. It is well to note, however, that the respondents in Bogardus's survey were from the upper socioeconomic levels of U.S. society and, therefore, the social distance scores of the survey reflect attitudes of the American elite rather than those of the general population and, for this reason, the scores can only be cautiously generalized to U.S. society as a whole.

### 3.2. Sample Data

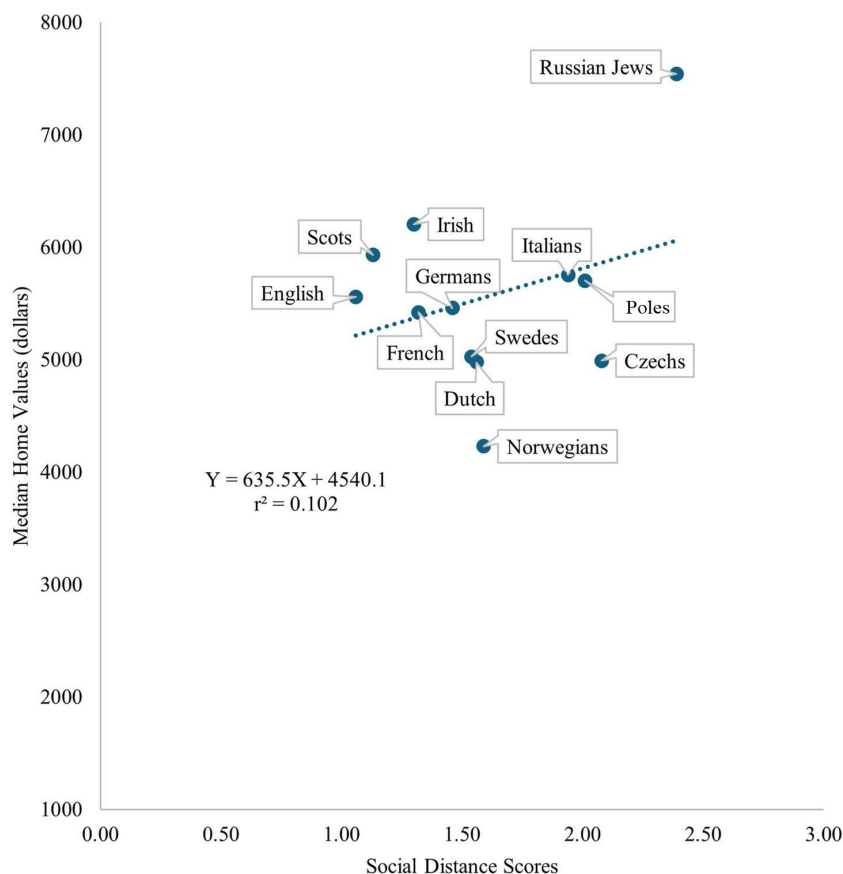
The NW and SCE European immigrant groups examined are from the main sending regions of the Great Immigration Stream from Europe to the U.S., which peaked in 1910 (Borjas, 1994). The NW European immigrant groups are those from the British Isles—namely, the English, Scots, and Irish—and Germany, as well as other groups that, according to historical research (Feagin & Feagin, 2003),

formed the core of the White racial category in early U.S. society. These other NW European immigrant groups include the Dutch, French, and Scandinavians (specifically, Norwegians and Swedes). The SCE European immigrant groups are those from the principal sending regions of the Great Immigration Stream, namely, Italians, Poles, and Russians (Parrillo, 2019). Note that, at this time, the overwhelming majority of Russian immigrants, and U.S.-born persons of Russian ancestry, were Jewish (Rosenthal, 1975), so it is standard practice to refer to such persons as Russian Jews (Liebersson & Waters, 1988: pp. 10-11). Along with Italy, Poland, and Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a major SCE European sending region of the Great Immigrant Stream. Bogardus's data do not include social distance scores for Austrians or Hungarians. Yet, they do include a social distance score for Czechs and, therefore, since Czechs were an important ancestry group in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they are included in the sample. The N = 12 European immigrant groups in the sample comprise all of the groups in Liebersson and Water's (1988: p. 141) study for which social distance scores are available from Bogardus's 1926 survey.

**Figure 1** below displays a scatterplot of the median home values and social distance scores of the above groups. The data support the proposition that socioeconomic outcomes are poorly predicted by expressed attitudes because of a "creed-deed" discrepancy. Specifically, the data show that the groups' median home values and social distance scores are unrelated. Indeed, the bivariate regression's slope is, counterintuitively, positive and not significant. There is no evidence, then, of a penalty of prejudice or a premium of privilege in these data.

As expected, the scatterplot indicates that Russian Jewish immigrants are an "outlier," that is, a case with extreme values. Russian Jewish immigrants have by far the highest median home value, reflecting the group's extraordinary upward mobility discussed earlier. These immigrants have the highest social distance score, too, reflecting, no doubt, pervasive anti-Semitism in early twentieth-century American society, which was also discussed. Since these extreme values could unduly influence the results, Russian Jewish immigrants' outlier status will be taken into account in the analysis below.

The scatterplot further reveals that Italian immigrants' and Polish immigrants' respective median home values are higher than the corresponding values of several NW European immigrant groups, all of which have conspicuously lower social distance scores than do these SCE European immigrant groups. This pattern may seem paradoxical or even contradictory of the conventional wisdom; yet, it aligns with the notion that, in the post-immigration-restriction era, SCE European immigrant groups began to noticeably rise in the nation's stratification system, perhaps because of the immigrants' increased selectivity and/or U.S. natives' decreased anxieties about immigration's impact on American society. Yet, SCE European immigrant groups' high social distance scores indicate that members of these groups continued to be seen by many natives as unsuitable for intimate social relationships.



**Figure 1.** European immigrant groups' 1930 median home values and 1926 social distance scores.

### 3.3. Path Model and Estimation

The foregoing literature review suggests a model of the relationships among European immigrant groups' respective national origins (in SCE or NW Europe), socioeconomic attainment, and U.S. natives' social distance attitudes toward these groups. This model, in **Figure 2** below, has two sets of pathways in which a European immigrant group's origin (a) is associated with the group's median home value both directly and indirectly through the group's social distance score and (b) is associated with the group's social distance score both directly and indirectly through the group's median home value.

The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations for estimating this model with the data from **Figure 1** are:

$$H = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 S + \beta_2 N + \beta_3 R + u \quad (1)$$

and

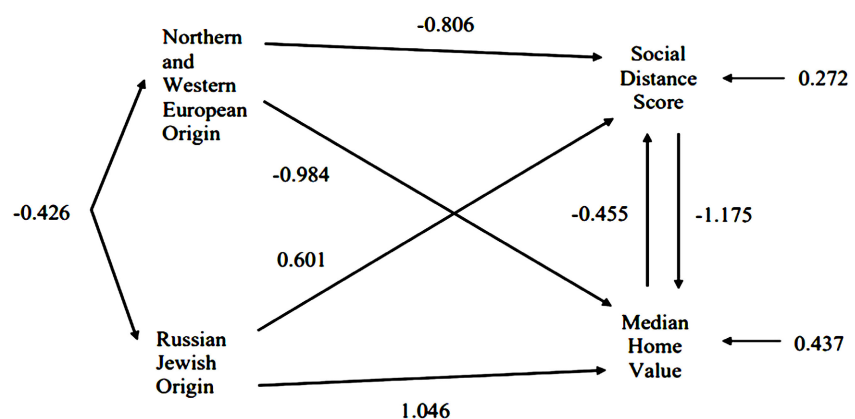
$$S = \alpha_2 + \beta_4 H + \beta_5 N + \beta_6 R + v, \quad (2)$$

where  $H$  is a group's median home value,  $S$  is a group's social distance score,  $N$  is a binary variable that equals 1 if the group's origin is NW European (else 0),  $R$  is a binary variable that equals 1 for Russian Jewish origin (else 0), and  $u$  and  $v$  are the equations' respective error terms. The non-Russian SCE European origin

groups are the reference category. The binary variable for Russian Jewish origin is somewhat simplistic because it considers only Russian origin, whereas Jewish immigrants to the U.S. arrived from many different regions. However, based on the rationale of [Lieberson and Waters \(1988\)](#), (citing [Rosenthal, 1975](#)), discussed earlier, Russian origin provides the most reliable measure of Jewish ancestry for the study period. Note, too, that the binary variable for Russian Jewish origin also takes account of the outlying values identified in the scatterplot above. The focus on Russian Jewish immigrants is informative because of that group's exceptional socioeconomic achievement. While it would be desirable to examine other specific European immigrant groups that were also prominent in the early twentieth-century U.S. (e.g., Italians), the relatively small number of cases for estimation ( $N = 12$ ) requires parsimonious model specifications and, hence, only one specific group can be represented in the above equations.

#### 4. Results

The path model derived from the estimated equations (see [Table 1](#)) is shown in [Figure 2](#). All path coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.05 level in two-tailed tests.



**Figure 2.** Path model of European immigrant groups' respective national origins, median home values, and social distance scores.

##### 4.1. Penalty of Prejudice

A penalty of prejudice against Russian Jews is evidenced by the path coefficients in [Figure 2](#). Russian Jewish origin's direct association with median home value ( $1.046$ ) indicates that Russian Jews' median home value is about one standard deviation higher than that of other SCE European immigrant groups and slightly over two standard deviations higher than that of the NW European immigrant groups ( $1.046 - -0.984 = 2.030$ ). But this association is substantially moderated by the indirect association of Russian Jewish origin with median home value through social distance score. This indirect association ( $0.601 \times -1.175 = -0.706$ ) reduces the total association (i.e., direct plus indirect association) of Russian Jewish origin with median home value quite severely ( $1.046 + -0.706 = 0.340$ )—by

approximately seven-tenths of a standard deviation. Consistent with the vicious circle argument and ethnic queuing theory, the estimates suggest that Russian Jewish immigrants' impressive socioeconomic attainment in the early twentieth-century U.S. was, nonetheless, hampered by natives' highly unfavorable social distance attitudes toward Jewish ancestry persons.

But U.S. natives' aversion to associating with Russian Jews was also ameliorated by the latter group's socioeconomic achievement, according to the path coefficients. Russian Jewish origin's direct association with social distance score (0.601) shows that Russian Jews' social distance score is six-tenths of a standard deviation higher than that of other SCE European immigrant groups and nearly one-and-a-half standard deviations higher than that of the NW European immigrant groups ( $0.601 - -0.806 = 1.407$ ). Yet, the indirect association of Russian Jewish origin with social distance score through median home value ( $1.046 \times -0.455 = -0.476$ ) decreases the total association of Russian Jewish origin with social distance score ( $0.601 + -0.476 = 0.125$ ) by close to half a standard deviation. This nontrivial reduction tallies with the assertion that the overall prejudice against a minority group is partly due to social class prejudice and is modified by the group's socioeconomic achievement. These estimates are in line with the idea that U.S. natives' perceptions of Russian Jews, and of persons of Jewish ancestry, in general, were influenced by social-class-based stereotypes that developed at a time when most Russian Jewish immigrants arrived in the U.S. financially destitute and lived in crowded urban tenement neighborhoods.

**Table 1.** OLS regressions: European immigrant groups' national origins, social distance scores (1926), and median home values (1930).

Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	Median home value	Social distance score
Social distance score	-2338.885*	----
	[-1.175]	----
	(-3.032)	----
Median home value	----	-0.0002*
	----	[-0.455]
	----	(-3.032)
Northern and Western European origin	-1627.886*	-0.670***
	[-0.984]	[-0.806]
	(-2.862)	(-7.541)
Russian Jewish origin	2949.776***	0.851**
	[1.046]	[0.601]
	(5.231)	(3.933)
Intercept	10183.159	3.263
R-squared	0.809	0.926
F-ratio	11.299	33.419
P-value of F-ratio	0.003	0.0001

Notes: slope coefficients are unstandardized (metric); standardized slope coefficients (Betas) are in brackets; t-ratios are in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed tests)

## 4.2. Premium of Privilege

A premium of privilege for NW European immigrant groups is demonstrated by **Figure 2**'s path coefficients. NW European origin's direct association with median home value ( $-0.984$ ) implies that NW European immigrant groups' median home value is nearly one standard deviation lower than that of non-Russian SCE European immigrant groups. However, this association is almost completely wiped out by the indirect association of NW European origin with median home value through social distance score. The indirect association of nearly one standard deviation ( $-0.806 \times -1.175 = 0.947$ ) reduces the total association of NW European origin with median home value to substantive insignificance ( $-0.984 + 0.947 = -0.037$ ), erasing nearly all of the median home value difference between NW European immigrant groups and non-Russian SCE European immigrant groups and practically cutting in half the two standard deviation median home value difference between NW European immigrant groups and Russian Jews. In agreement with critical perspectives on minority-majority inequality and with ethnic queuing theory, the estimates infer that NW European immigrants' socioeconomic attainment in the early twentieth-century U.S. was aided by natives' favorable social distance attitudes toward groups that were squarely within the nation's White majority.

This privilege, though, was tempered by social class prejudice, the path coefficients reveal. NW European immigrant groups' total association with social distance score is increased by close to half a standard deviation by the indirect association of NW European origin with social distance score through median home value ( $-0.984 \times -0.455 = 0.448$ ; thus, direct plus indirect:  $-0.806 + 0.448 = -0.358$ ). These estimates indicate that privilege was unequally enjoyed by the various NW European immigrant groups, suggesting that in the early twentieth-century U.S., a group's inclusion in the White majority, while definitely advantageous, did not by itself confer the full benefits prescribed by the White Supremacy ideology. Perhaps the most notable of these benefits was acceptance into the majority group's intimate social circles, which were, potentially, gateways to uppermost positions in society's asset allocation queues. Access to such benefits among the NW European immigrant groups was evidently stratified by social class prejudice, the intensity of which corresponded to the groups' respective socioeconomic attainment levels.

## 5. Conclusion

Applying theoretical propositions from the ethnic stratification literature, the present study analyzed relationships among European immigrant groups' respective national origins, median owned-home values, and U.S. natives' social distance attitudes toward these groups in the early twentieth century. The study extends the longstanding sociological and historical interests in European immigrant groups' socioeconomic attainment in American society at a time when there were salient social distinctions between persons from NW Europe, who were culturally and

biologically related to the native-White majority, and persons from SCE Europe, who were targets for prejudice emanating from nativism, xenophobia, and social Darwinism and, therefore, widely regarded by the majority as unsuitable for intimate relationships. Answers to the study's research questions are affirmative and lead to several conclusions about the consequences of both prejudice and privilege for European immigrant groups in the early twentieth-century U.S.

First, SCE European immigrant groups' socioeconomic attainment was hampered by a sizeable penalty of prejudice due to U.S. natives' unfavorable social distance attitudes toward these groups, and this penalty was much larger than previous studies have suggested. This conclusion aligns with the conventional wisdom of past research (e.g., [Lieberson, 1980](#)). To be sure, SCE European immigrants and their descendants did advance in the nation's social class hierarchy and were ultimately incorporated into the White majority, even while maintaining unique sociocultural heritages ([Glazer & Moynihan, 1963](#)). These developments might be interpreted as evidentiary support for claims that the severity of prejudice's penalty for these groups was relatively modest, owing to increased immigrant selectivity and/or an easing of natives' anxieties about SCE Europeans in the post-immigration-restriction era. But contrary to such claims, the results show that SCE European immigrant groups' low entry position in the White majority's ranking of minority groups—that is, society's ethnic queue—was a profound short-run disadvantage for the groups' socioeconomic attainment. In all probability, it was a long-term disadvantage as well, given homeownership's central role in wealth accumulation. The robust penalty of prejudice suffered by Russian Jewish immigrants is a notable case in point because of the group's remarkable socioeconomic attainment in the early twentieth-century U.S.

It remains for future research to locate the specific setting(s)—for example, workplaces, neighborhoods, or friendships—in which U.S. natives' desires to evade SCE Europeans were most relevant to the penalty of prejudice. It is fair to surmise that the operation of the White majority's prejudice in economic markets (e.g., labor, housing, or consumer markets) was a proximate cause of the negative effect. Regarding the dependent variable, median owned-home value, it is likely that White natives' wishes to increase their social distance from Russian Jews and other SCE European immigrant groups stimulated these natives' avoidance- or exclusionary-actions (e.g., native-White flight and/or housing discrimination), with the goal of maximizing spatial distance from SCE European ancestry groups, and, in turn, residential segregation reduced the targeted groups' respective median home values. Of course, this causal reasoning is speculative. Nonetheless, it deserves investigation, for urban sociologists firmly establish that social distance and spatial distance are correlated, and that residential segregation from the native White majority tends to depress a minority group's home values ([Massey & Denton, 1993](#)).

A second conclusion is that NW European immigrant groups' socioeconomic attainment in the early twentieth-century was facilitated by a generous premium

of privilege derived from U.S. natives' favorable social distance attitudes toward these groups. This conclusion aligns with previous research implying that NW European immigrant groups benefited from their relatively high standing in the ethnic queue of the U.S. labor market (e.g., Lieberson, 1980). However, the present study extends prior investigations by showing that this premium may have been greater than past studies have suspected. There is no doubt that NW European immigrant groups met with more fortunate receptions than did their SCE European counterparts; yet, little research has tried to discern the magnitude of rewards that NW European immigrant groups might have realized from their relatively close relationships to the U.S. White majority. The findings reveal that NW European immigrant groups' high position in society's ethnic queue—evinced in social distance scores that bespeak U.S. natives' openness to associating with these groups' members in various settings—significantly boosted the groups' socioeconomic attainment.

Apparently, U.S. natives were not only willing to include NW European immigrant groups in the intimate interactions of friendship and kinship; these natives, it is reasonable to infer, were also willing to afford NW European immigrant groups with advantageous standings in the aforesaid economic markets, and these standings were then leveraged by the groups' members to advance their socioeconomic attainment. This inference, based on queuing theory, moreover, aligns with critical perspectives' core argument, to wit: that a majority group's promulgation of a self-serving group-superiority ideology—in this case, White Supremacy—generates collective benefits for that group, and for related groups, by justifying the groups' preferential access to top positions in society's asset-allocation queues. Apropos of the dependent variable, median owned-home values, it is likely that NW European immigrant groups' access to native-Whites' neighborhoods, which occupied prime urban locations, was a key factor in enhancing the groups' wealth accumulation through home ownership, although as stated above, additional analysis is required to verify this inference.

The third conclusion is that, for the European immigrant groups examined, there was a reciprocal relationship between socioeconomic attainment and natives' social distance attitudes—that is, a group's socioeconomic attainment was affected by natives' social distance attitudes toward that group and, vice versa, natives' social distance attitudes toward a group were affected by that group's socioeconomic attainment. This conclusion adds to prior research on ethnic stratification. Supporting the theory that total prejudice against an ethnic group is racial/ethnic prejudice plus social class prejudice, the results suggest that U.S. natives' social distance attitudes toward European immigrant groups in the early twentieth century rested partly on presumptions that SCE Europeans were low in social class and that NW Europeans were high in social class. The findings thus affirm past observations that prejudice against SCE European ancestry groups at the time, to some extent, reflected social class prejudice, that is, the majority group's desire to avoid minority groups perceived to be of lower social class.

However, the present investigation advances knowledge by demonstrating that privileges enjoyed by NW European ancestry groups in the early twentieth century were also undermined by the majority's social class prejudice. It follows that critical perspectives on group relations should recognize that ethnicity-based privilege, like ethnicity-based prejudice, is moderated by the majority-group's perceptions of social class differences—not only among minority groups, but also among those groups that are culturally and biologically related to the majority itself.

In sum, consistent with the vicious circle argument's underlying notion, ethnic groups' respective socioeconomic attainment levels are significantly affected by the majority group's social distance attitudes toward such groups. Some groups' socioeconomic attainment levels are reduced by unfavorable majority-group attitudes, while other groups' socioeconomic attainment levels are increased by favorable majority-group attitudes. Penalties of prejudice and premiums of privilege coexist; indeed, this study concludes, they are two sides of the same coin.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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