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## **Social mobility and integration of Amsterdam Jews: the ethnic niche of the diamond industry, 1850-1940**

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# 8

## Sparkling Students or Disadvantaged Dropouts? Educational Outcomes of the Next Generation

“The ANDB library catalogue functioned as a literary guide. By reading these instructive books, the working people sometimes discovered that they themselves had hidden talents, so some of them became actors, musicians, poets, scientists. Others plugged passionately into new arts and crafts and became innovative interior decorators or ceramists.”

— Meyer Sluyser<sup>1</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the intergenerational analyses presented in Chapter 4 by focusing on the next generation. As we saw, Amsterdam-Jewish sons in general were progressively entering higher-status occupations relative to their fathers at the time of their respective marriages. The children of Jewish diamond workers also appeared to have higher likelihoods of occupying ‘elite occupations’ starting in the 1920s, especially when compared with the sons of Gentile diamond workers. A widespread explanation for these elevated rates of attending secondary and tertiary education among Jewish diamond workers’ sons are Jews’ greater appreciation for learning.<sup>2</sup> In Amsterdam, this was supplemented by the encouragement for self-improvement offered by the ANDB and its leaders.<sup>3</sup> If the union indeed increased members’ willingness to invest in their children’s education, then the sons and daughters of diamond workers would be seen to achieve higher levels of educational attainment than Jews and Gentiles from other social backgrounds. This can be tested by using conscription records, which consistently reported the educational attainment and occupations of all 18-to-20-year-old men since 1919.<sup>4</sup> On top of comparing Jews’ and Gentiles’ educational attainment directly, this source combined with our life courses enable me to answer three additional questions: (1) did sons of Jewish diamond workers obtain higher education levels than Gentile diamond workers sons; and (2) did Jewish diamond workers obtain more education than

<sup>1</sup> Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, 59.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of generally higher levels of educational attainment among Jews, see Reuven Brenner and Nicholas Kiefer, “The Economics of the Diaspora: Discrimination and Occupational Structure,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 29.3 (1981): 517–34; see Section 4.3.2 of this dissertation for a discussion of the mixed empirical results historically.

<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 3 we discussed how the union pushed to educate the members through their library, newsletter, and educative trips and courses.

<sup>4</sup> Education was already reported earlier, but inconsistently and not for everyone. Since 1919 the education was recorded for everyone regardless of educational attainment. Between 1919 and 1923 education was reported if the conscript had surpassed basic primary education. It is therefore assumed that anyone who was listed with no education during those years only had primary education.

Jews whose fathers had different careers; and (3) how did educational attainment vary with Jews' integration?<sup>5</sup> This chapter will additionally examine the varying occupational structures of young Jewish and Gentile conscripts by socioeconomic and ethno-religious background, as well as assess how occupational choices and educational attainment were related in Amsterdam in the 1920s and '30s.

Earlier research has indicated that there was already a relationship between social class backgrounds and educational attainment in the past. This body of research has also used conscript records but primarily for the post-World War II era.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Huang and co-authors studied all conscripted men born between 1944 and 1947 and found that education levels varied considerably by the occupational status of their parents.<sup>7</sup> Sons of higher status fathers were found to have significantly higher levels of educational attainment. Such studies show that conscription records can be used to study educational attainment. The educational attainment of pre-World War II conscripts has, however, not been studied directly yet. This chapter will therefore be the first examination of conscripted Dutch men's educational attainment prior to 1940 while also contrasting educational attainments between Jewish and Gentile men within the same urban landscape of Amsterdam. Additionally, I will pay considerable attention to conscripts' social backgrounds, measured as their fathers' social class around the sons' births. The data presented in this chapter comprises 743 sons, split equally among Jewish and Gentile families, born between 1900 and 1920 and pooled from the various life course samples used in this dissertation. Since women were not recorded on conscript records, and unfortunately no other sources are available for structural comparisons of women's educational attainment, this chapter will focus solely on sons.

## 8.2 Background

As discussed in the preliminary overview of the educational opportunities of Jews presented in Chapter 2.6, early-nineteenth-century Jewish poor schools were of particularly low quality relative to Gentile schools. State enforcement of Dutch, rather than Yiddish, instruction in these schools improved the connection between the Jewish poor schools and the general labour market. Significant improvements in the quality of education followed from the Education Law of 1857, which paved the way for equal opportunities in primary schooling and greater attendance of Jewish pupils in non-denominational public schools. Henceforth the differences in the quality of schooling between Jews and Gentiles were minimised, although some differences could persist by neighbourhood and for those with private education. The transition from Jewish poor schools to non-denominational public schools, particularly in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, has been claimed to have raised attendance levels of Jewish pupils, increased their human capital attainment, and accelerated their integration into

<sup>5</sup> Integration is included by comparing sons of intermarried or disaffiliated parents with a representative sample of Jewish sons. Due to small sample sizes intermarriage and disaffiliated are grouped.

<sup>6</sup> Ying Huang, Frans van Poppel, and Bertie Lumey, "Differences in Height by Education among 371,105 Dutch Military Conscripts," *Economics & Human Biology* 17 (2015): 202–7; Kristina Thompson, "Does Size Matter? Body Height and Later-Life Outcomes in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Netherlands" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Huang, Van Poppel, and Lumey, "Differences in Height by Education among 371,105 Dutch Military Conscripts," 205.

mainstream society.<sup>8</sup> Samples of Dutch populations and national statistics, like the educational census of 1930, indeed suggest that Jews attained higher levels of education than other religious groups.<sup>9</sup> On average, Jews were more than twice as likely to attend secondary education in 1880 and 1920, as well as having graduated from universities by 1930. However, these statistics may be tainted by selection biases or contrast incomparable groups. For instance if university graduates more likely originated from urban areas, as was true for Jews, Jews' success in attaining university education could be overstated by comparing them with a predominantly rural Gentile population.<sup>10</sup> Differences could, hypothetically, be considerably smaller if their comparison group was urban-born Gentiles. Moreover, recent research has shown a correlation between being part of the broader Jewish 'elite' and higher educational attainment,<sup>11</sup> illustrating how class is an important covariate to include. Aggregated national statistics hide such group differences in regional origins and class backgrounds. Statistics regarding university education further limit results to the highest level of education possible. Since only a small minority of Dutch residents belonged to this educational group, using more common educational levels would be more fitting for comparisons. Microdata, such as collected from our life course database and conscription records, allow for more informed comparisons.

We have further reason to dive into more specific microdata beyond the limits of aggregated national statistics. While a growing research body has ascribed a greater historical willingness to invest in education of Jews generally,<sup>12</sup> there are additional indications that diamond workers were particularly incentivised to accrue human capital.<sup>13</sup> For instance, female diamond workers were motivated to join the ANDB through educational courses; and the union strongly urged workers to spend their time on self-improvement, especially after successively lowering working hours from over 12 hours daily in the nineteenth century to eight hours in 1911.<sup>14</sup> The union motivated workers to spend their 24 hours in a day equally between work, rest, and self-improvement. To achieve the latter the union provided various courses, supplied members with ample news and discussions in its weekly, and established an impressive library in their headquarters prior to the opening of the first public library in Amsterdam. The union succeeded in attracting female union members through educational courses they offered,<sup>15</sup> and anecdotal evidence suggests that the children of

<sup>8</sup> Dodde, *Joods onderwijs*.

<sup>9</sup> Mandemakers, "Gymnasiaal en middelbaar onderwijs," 615. See also the Educational Census of 1930. This census distinguishes university graduates by religious affiliation. Consequently, non-affiliated Jews and Gentiles are not counted among their religious groups. These estimates are therefore less reliable if the degree of selection into disaffiliation varied by religious group.

<sup>10</sup> This is what we find in the Netherlands according to educational census of 1930; it is also what Abramitzky and Halaburda found for interwar Poland. Abramitzky and Halaburda, "Were Jews in Interwar Poland More Educated?"

<sup>11</sup> Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 111–20.

<sup>12</sup> Botticini and Eckstein, "From Farmers to Merchants"; Becker, Rubin, and Woessmann, "Religion in Economic History."

<sup>13</sup> Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 172; Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 114–16, 149–51, 317–19, 325–26, 500–502, 507–8, 644–48; Hofmeester, "The Amsterdam Diamond 'Marketplace' and the Jewish Experience."

<sup>14</sup> For a complete overview of the ascribed impact of the union on educational attainment, see Chapter 3.3 or Schrevel, "Een stem in het kapittel," 53.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

diamond workers also benefitted from these opportunities.<sup>16</sup> The presence of such a strong union, and particularly one which heavily encouraged its workers to educate themselves and their children, are most likely related to higher levels of educational attainment among this group. Limited evidence of this was already provided in Chapter 4. Grooms whose fathers had worked in the diamond industry generally worked in higher-status occupations than other grooms with fathers employed as skilled labourers. This was especially true for Jewish diamond workers' sons (cf. Figures 4.1 and 4.3). Chapter 7 also indicated that Jewish diamond workers experienced rapid residential upgrading. Many Jewish diamond workers, especially those born between 1873 and 1892, had grown up in the old Jewish Quarter and, later in life, had moved to newer neighbourhoods in Amsterdam South and East. Their children therefore grew up in much nicer neighbourhoods than they themselves had, which was associated with various benefits including access to decent schools. Comparing the educational attainment of Jewish and Gentile sons of diamond workers and general, representative samples of fathers can illustrate whether Jews, and particularly Jewish diamond workers, indeed attained higher levels of education when compared with peers from similar social backgrounds.

## 8.3 Data

### 8.3.1 Conscription records

Mandatory conscription in the Netherlands was introduced under French rule in 1811. Three years later, it was decided that one conscript would be selected per 100 inhabitants. Potential conscripts could avoid selection in a number of ways. They could be too short, have a brother already in service, or pay for someone to take their place. However, in each case the potential conscript would still go through the required medical check-up. Persons who needed to undergo a health check-up were named in large registers commonly referred to as “alphabetical lists.”<sup>17</sup> The results of the check-ups were recorded in the militia registers (*militieregisters*), also known as conscription records. It is these records that contain the information we need for our analyses.

Illustration 8.1 offers an example of a militia registry entry. It concerns Lion Abas, born on 16 September 1908 in Amsterdam. His father, Pinas, is listed as deceased, but his mother, Clara van Beek, was still alive. Abas lived with his mother and stepfather, J. (Joseph) Goudket at the latter's address, Jodenbreestraat 42. On the check-up date, 16 March 1927 (not shown on the illustration), Lion worked as an office clerk in the administrative department of a ‘radio and electro’ company. Below his occupation we read that Lion graduated from a three-year course of the *Hogere Burgerschool* (HBS; ‘Higher Civic School’), then the main type of secondary education,<sup>18</sup> with a diploma in 1926. Compiling such information for a large number of conscripts with distinct ethno-religious backgrounds can tell us more about group differences in educational attainment.

<sup>16</sup> Benima, *Kippesoep was ondenkbaar zonder saffraan*, 50–51; Van Praag, *Een lange jeugd*, 108–10; Sluyser, *Mr. Monday and Other Tales of Jewish Amsterdam*, 58–59.

<sup>17</sup> Björn Quanjer and Jan Kok, “Drafting the Dutch: Selection Biases in Dutch Conscript Records in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Social Science History* 44.3 (2020): 503.

<sup>18</sup> Petrus Boekholt and Engelina de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen, 1987), 273.

**ILLUSTRATION 8.1** An example of an entry in the militia registers, 1927.

Source: Stadsarchief Amsterdam 5182#4466.

15	260	3/69	1. Aas	1. Amst. 16	1. Pinaas (overl.)	1. a. Amst.	1. a. Radio- en Telegr. Bedrijfs	1. a. 1
			2. Lion	2. Sept. 1908	2. a. van Beek	b. id.	b. J. B. Goudket.	b. 1
					b. Clara	3. a. J. B. Goudket.	3. J. C. 1927	3. 1

### 8.3.2 Our sample

For each son in the various life course samples used throughout this dissertation—random samples of diamond workers (ANDB), the general Jewish population as well as intermarried and disaffiliated Jews (JDJ), and the overall Amsterdam population (HSN)—I collected and transcribed the date of the check-up, the occupation, and the educational attainment. Since the militia registers in Amsterdam consistently recorded the educational attainment since 1919, I only include sons who were conscripted in that year or later. We can find individuals up to 1940, after which the militia registers are only available anonymously, meaning we no longer track individuals based on their names and date of births.

For a small subset of sons it was not possible to retrieve their entry in the militia registers. This could happen if they had died prior to their check-up, their family had left Amsterdam prior to their conscription age, or the conscript had not been born in the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup> In our diamond worker sample, emigrants predominantly consisted of families that moved to Antwerp, while for the other samples migration to other Dutch cities was more common. Nonetheless, attrition rates were low. In total, 743 sons were located that were (i) born between 1900 and 1919; (ii) lived until at least 19; (iii) whose families lived in Amsterdam at the time of their conscription; and (iv) had a health check-up where their education and occupation was recorded.

These 743 conscripts are divided into several categories. First, we have 333 sons of representative Gentiles from our HSN life courses. Their educational attainment reflects that of the general non-Jewish population of Amsterdam. Next, 148 sons of representative Jews from the JDJ database represent the average outcomes in education for the Jewish population of Amsterdam. Additionally, our data contains 128 Jewish sons of diamond workers and 43 sons of Gentile diamond workers observed in our diamond workers' life courses. Comparing them with the general populations will indicate whether diamond workers attained higher levels of education than their average peers. Lastly, 91 sons of 'non-identifying Jews'—a combination of sons where at least one parent had a Jewish background but either disaffiliated from their Synagogues, converted to Christianity, or entered a mixed-faith marriage—showcase the educational attainment of Jews stemming from more integrated families. Altogether, comparing the groups enable preliminary conclusions to be made regarding the impact of being part of the Jewish community, the son of a diamond worker and ANDB member, and the impact of integration on educational attainment and occupational choices while including comparisons within their respective social class origins.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion on potential biases in the conscript records, see Quanjer and Kok, "Drafting the Dutch."

#### 8.4 Education Levels

In the nineteenth century, primary education was not yet mandatory for all children. Diamond workers commonly introduced their sons, and later their daughters also, to the industry at the early age of 13. In some problematic cases, the union expelled children as young as nine years old from the workplaces. A law introduced in 1900 formally made primary schooling compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 13. After graduating from primary school a number of non-mandatory options were available to extend one's education. The most common of these schools was the MULO ('More Advanced Primary Education,' Dutch: *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs*) later known as the ULO. The MULO was introduced in the 1870s but, due to the entrance fees, was not immediately well-attended. In 1875 the Amsterdam MULO's cost varied between 20 and 80 guilders per year.<sup>20</sup> For most labourers this was several weeks' worth of wages, although the highly-paid diamond workers required much less labour time to pay for this school. These schools were not yet seen as secondary education, but rather as an extension of primary school education.<sup>21</sup> Although in theory not intended to be the endpoint of the educational trajectory, instead seen as the precursor to secondary schools, in practice it was rarely followed by other forms of schooling. In the nineteenth century the MULO replaced older forms of post-primary education, including the 'French schools.'<sup>22</sup>

Another common form of post-primary schooling was applied vocational schooling. This education was offered in various forms. It was commonly provided in trade schools (*ambachtsscholen*) which offered training for a range of general, skilled occupations. Here we should also note several specific schools, such as schools that trained teachers—although their student body had attended secondary schooling as well—non-tertiary schools for the fine arts (*kunstnijverheidsscholen*), or training institutes for seafarers and marines (*Kweekschool voor de Zeevaart*). More technical education, for instance to train future engineers, was offered in *Middelbare* and *Hogere Technische Scholen* ('Middle and Higher Technical Schools'; MTS and HTS), which became available in Amsterdam after 1910,<sup>23</sup> or in the 'Electrotechnical School' (*Electrotechnische school*, ETS).

Practical education was also offered to be used in commerce and business. These *Handelsscholen* ('business schools') were administratively considered separately from the more general trade schools as they were formally included in the Education Law of 1857. Initially, these schools were seen as a precursor to the HBS, but later business schools were also attended by HBS graduates oriented towards commerce, blurring the order between the two forms of education. The business schools offered practical training in foreign languages, bookkeeping, business correspondence, and other qualities needed for successful employment in the commercial sector. Outside of the formal business schools, these skills could also be acquired in private courses or from other institutions. One example is Mercurius, the union for office clerks and other

<sup>20</sup> Wouter Marchand, "Onderwijs mogelijk maken: twee eeuwen invloed van studiefinanciering op de toegankelijkheid van het onderwijs in Nederland (1815–2015)" (PhD diss., University of Groningen, 2014), 85.

<sup>21</sup> Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 177.

<sup>22</sup> Marchand, "Onderwijs mogelijk maken," 85.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Schippers, *Van tusschenlieden tot ingenieurs. De geschiedenis van het Hoger Technisch Onderwijs in Nederland* (Hilversum, 1989), 27–29.

white-collar personnel, which offered certified business courses.<sup>24</sup> More commonly, however, prospective office workers attended the public business schools either during the day or at night after their workday ended. After 1920, the popularity of business schools decreased due to increased competition from HBS schools, although in Amsterdam business schools remained a popular option.<sup>25</sup>

Up to the latter half of the nineteenth century, secondary education was primarily offered in private ‘French schools’ and Gymnasiums. An education law in 1863 added the *Hogere Burgerscholen* (‘Higher Burger Schools,’ HBS) which soon became the most common form of secondary education. The HBS was often costly and attendance was highly esteemed.<sup>26</sup> The HBS offered a 3-year and a 5-year curriculum, where the shorter course often led pupils to follow business courses afterwards or to start their careers early, while the 5-year course was intended primarily for prospective university students. The popularity of HBS schools rose in the twentieth century and, as secondary education expanded, so did the options for attending various other schools in Amsterdam. The city’s only gymnasium, the Barleaus Gymnasium (founded as a Latin School in 1342; as Gymnasium in 1847), was joined by a second school, the Vossius Gymnasium, in 1926. These schools were among the most elite institutions for secondary education in the Netherlands.

**TABLE 8.1** Potential educational levels in conscript records ca. 1920-1940.

Schooling level	Includes	Approximate age at completion
Primary only	Primary	13
Primary and additional schooling	Additional non-secondary years of schooling (ULO; MULO; continuation schools; private tutoring)	14-16
Vocational schooling	Vocational schooling; music classes if occupation is musician	14-16
Secondary education	Gymnasium; HBS; MTS/HTS/ETS	15-18
Business education	Public or private business schools	15-18
University	University or Conservatorium	18-21

Source: author’s classification based on Boekholt and De Booy (1987) *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*. Dotted lines refer to distinctions made later in the chapter.

Table 8.1 presents the hierarchy that will be used throughout this chapter. Key indicators will be the share of sons who (a) achieved any additional years of schooling beyond the basic seven years of primary schooling; and (b) achieved at least one year of secondary, business, or university education.

<sup>24</sup> Reinalda, “Bedienden georganiseerd,” 133, 351.

<sup>25</sup> Boekholt and De Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 207–8, 269–70.

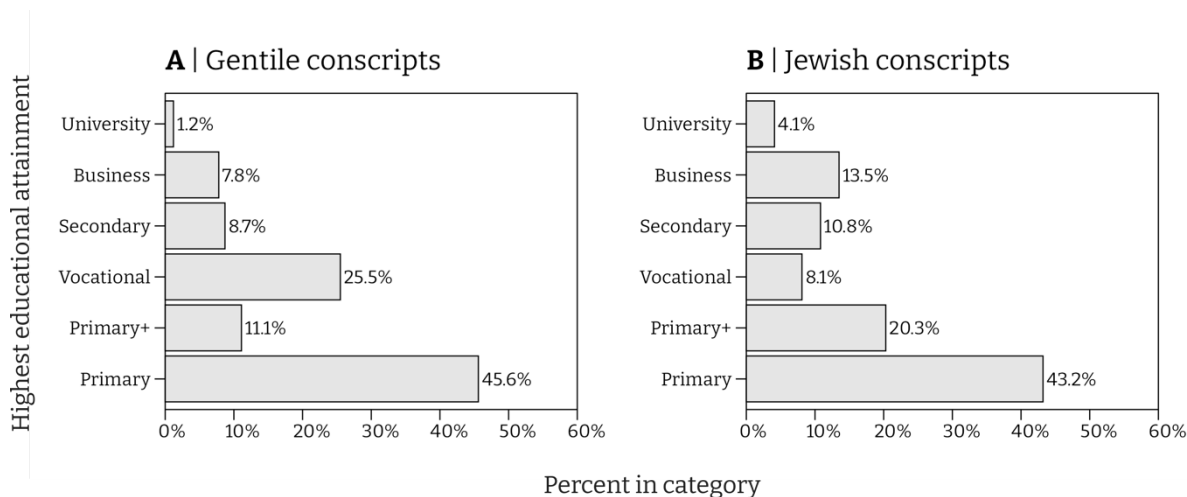
<sup>26</sup> Jules Schelvis, who attended the HBS in the 1930s, remarked on the high number of classmates from notable parents. As the son of a diamond worker, Jules was one of the less affluent children in the class. Schelvis, *Een jeugd in Amsterdam*, 83–84.



## 8.5 Educational attainment

Taking as a starting point the two ‘general samples—i.e. the samples based on random selection in the JDJ and HSN databases—we can get a clear idea of how educational attainment was distributed among the ethno-religious groups. These are presented in Figure 8.1. The left panel presents the educational distribution of Gentile sons; Jewish sons’ educational levels are shown in the right panel. As the Figure shows, nearly half of all conscripted in each group had no more than primary education; this was true for 45.6 percent of Gentile and 43.2 of Jewish conscripts. In other words, over half of conscripts experienced at least one year of education beyond basic primary education. It is this subsequent education where Jews and Gentiles diverged. In terms of frequency, only having primary education was followed by vocational schooling for Gentiles. One in four (25.5%) Gentiles gained (semi-)skilled occupational training, compared with one in twelve (8.1%) Jews. Instead, Jews were more frequently found in the MULO schools (20.3%), in public or private commercial training (13.5%), or in HBS schools (10.8%). Seemingly, Jews more often chose theoretical types of schooling, whereas Gentiles were more commonly found in practical schooling types.

If we add together the bottom three and the top three education forms, we can approximate those who were trained for manual occupations and those trained for non-manual occupations. 71.6 percent of Jewish men were trained for the manual group, compared with 82.2 percent of Gentiles. In contrast, 28.4 percent of Jews were found in educational programmes which predominantly led to white-collar work, compared with 17.7 percent of Gentiles. In early-twentieth-century Amsterdam, Jews clearly attained higher levels of non-manual education.



**FIGURE 8.1** Educational attainment of representative Jews and Gentiles’ sons, Amsterdam 1919-1940.

Source: author’s calculations using an extension of “ANDB Members’ Life Courses,” 2024 release.

Note: based on 333 Gentile and 148 Jewish conscripts’ educational attainment.

### 8.5.1 Educational attainment by social class

By limiting our sample to conscripts in Amsterdam, we have already limited the bias towards urban areas that is present in national educational data.<sup>27</sup> Another problem mentioned is the difference in social class backgrounds between the different ethno-religious groups. To address this, we can compare the shares of sons in non-manual education within each group by the social class their father held around their birth. If higher levels of educational attainment are more accessible to men originating from higher social class backgrounds, or if coming from such backgrounds makes one value education more, than these rates should be increasing with social class.

As Figure 8.2 shows, this is more or less true for the Gentile community. All sons of higher professionals and managers attained this level of education (panel A), and many of the lower managers and professionals' sons did also (panels B and C). The sons of Gentile unskilled workers rarely attended this type of schooling (panel F), but those born to skilled and semi-skilled workers did (panels D and E). The trends for Jews are similar, although Jewish sons of skilled and semi-skilled workers were more likely to attain this level of education than the Jewish sons of lower managers and professionals. Meanwhile, sons of Jewish unskilled workers had even lower educational attainment than comparable Gentile sons. Jewish sons of lower professionals and managers (panels B and C) show a peculiar difference with similar Gentile sons. While Gentiles with fathers in this category that worked in non-trade occupations had significantly higher levels of educational attainment than sons of fathers working in trade, the difference between these groups is negligible for Jews. Moreover, although sons of Jewish merchants had significantly more education than sons of Gentile merchants, Jewish sons of non-trade lower white collar workers attained non-manual schooling much less frequently than Gentile sons. However, because of small samples of Jewish sons of non-trade lower professionals ( $N = 7$ ) we should be careful not to overinterpret this finding.<sup>28</sup>

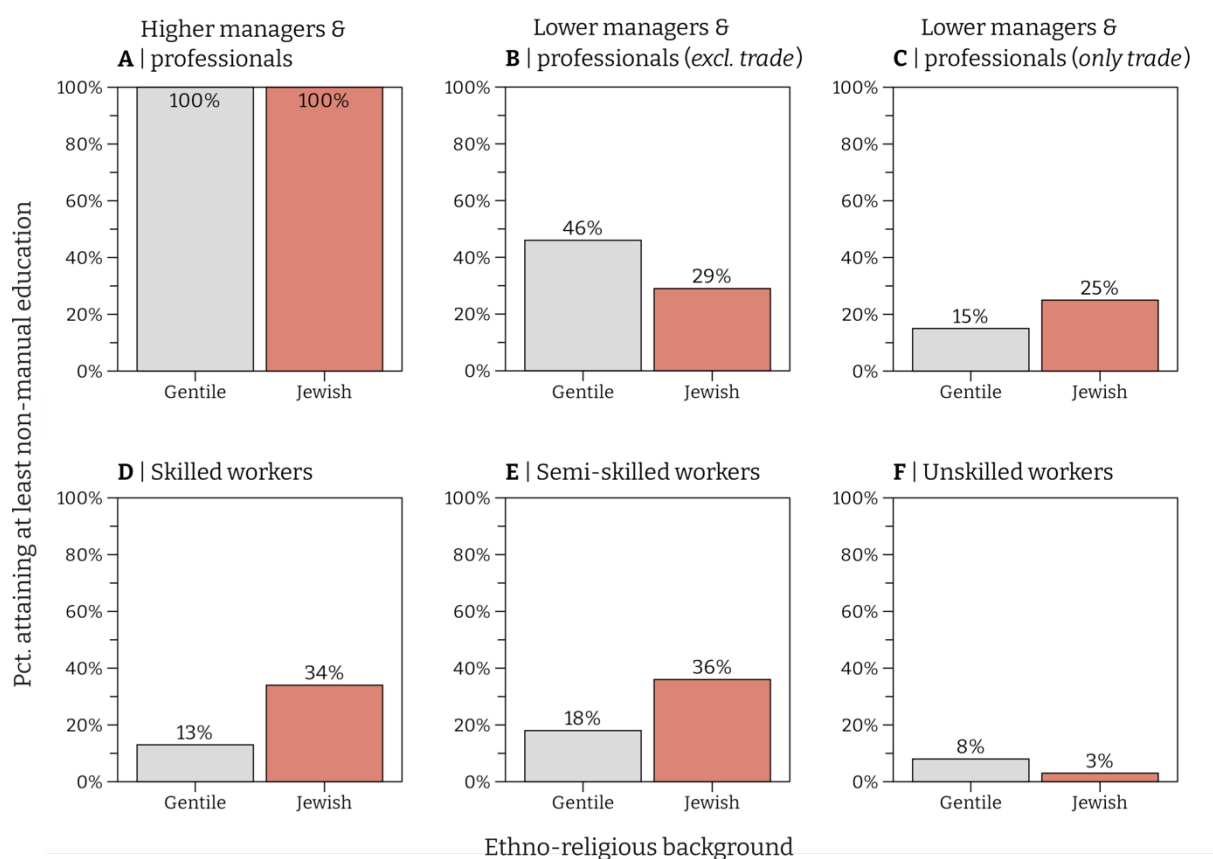
The same trend is seen when we examine any additional years of schooling beyond basic primary education. The differences between Jews and Gentiles are especially pronounced among the skilled and semi-skilled workers' sons. One element at play here is the greater propensity to attend vocational schooling among Gentile conscripts.

The comparison of Jews and Gentiles per social class backgrounds illustrates that Gentiles had higher levels of educational attainment at the tail ends of the class distribution—among lower white-collar workers (panel B), since the sample of higher professionals was too small,<sup>29</sup> and unskilled workers (panel F)—whereas Jews had attained higher forms of education in the middle and most densely populated part of the class distribution, i.e. the (semi-)skilled workers (panels D and E). The strong adherence to Social-Democratic ideology among these Jewish sons of (semi-)skilled workers could be seen as an explanation for their higher rates of secondary education. Jewish fathers in these social classes were most affected by the growing Social-Democratic movement

<sup>27</sup> Which is generally observed, also in the Dutch educational census of 1930. See also Abramitzky and Halaburda, "Were Jews in Interwar Poland More Educated?"

<sup>28</sup> Moreover, only one of these seven sons had no more than basic primary education. One attended vocational schooling, one had multiple years of MULO, and two had private classes in languages.

<sup>29</sup> The two Gentile sons and four Jewish sons in this category all achieved at least secondary or higher education.



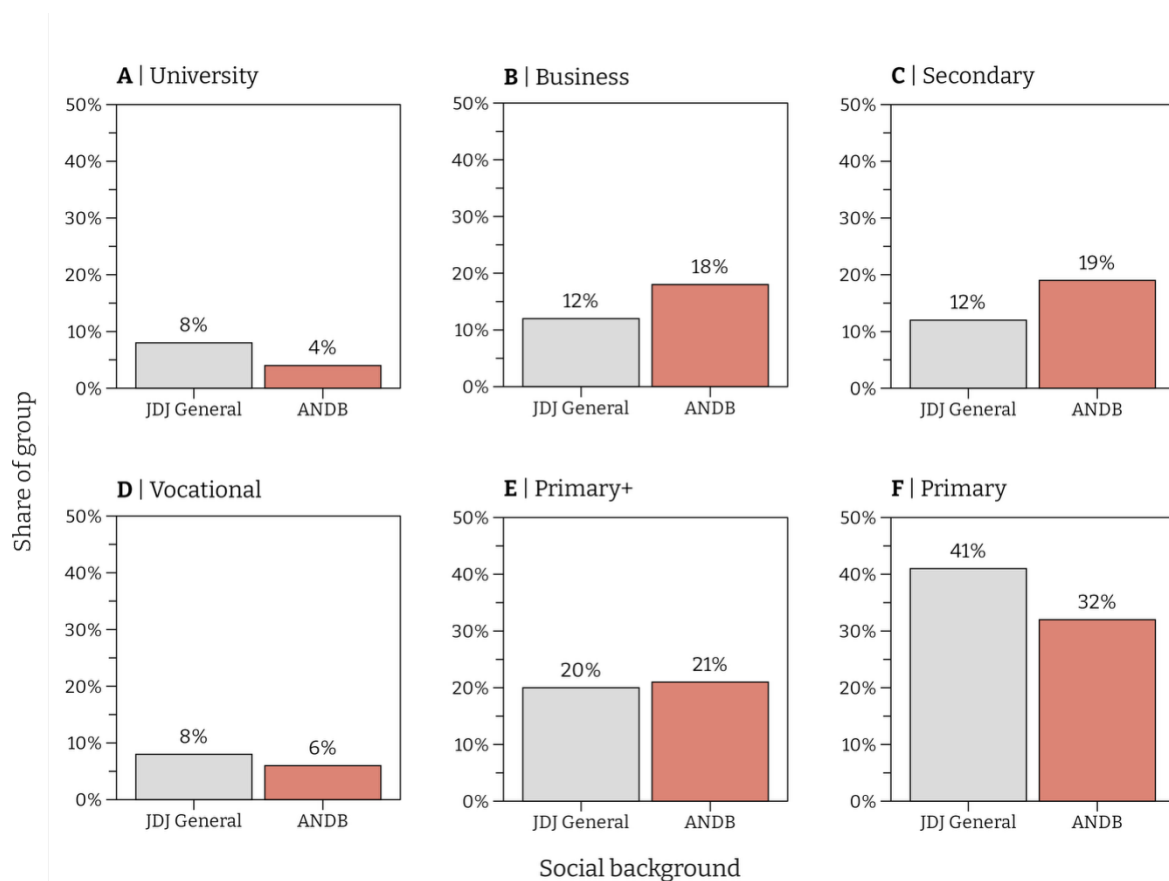
**FIGURE 8.2** Share of conscripts attaining non-manual (secondary, business, or university) education by ethno-religious background and social class of the father, 1919-1940.

Source: author's calculations using an extension of "ANDB Members' Life Courses," 2024 release.

Note: based on 333 Gentile and 148 Jewish conscripts' educational attainment.

in Amsterdam.<sup>30</sup> The large differences in educational outcomes by social class background also highlights the impact of social class, and perhaps associated income or wealth, on the accessibility to or demand for education. Thus, the average Gentile was more likely to attend vocational schooling because he was more likely to have a father who worked as a skilled worker. But other types of non-economic reasons could also be at play and have impacted the demand for education. The impact of the Socialist movement, and the union for the diamond workers in particular, could potentially explain why sons of Jewish skilled workers attained higher levels of education than the sons of lower-white-collar fathers.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion, see Hofmeester, "Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...", 89–90; Frank van As, "Judeo-socialisme? Een verkenning van de relatie tussen het Amsterdamse Joodse proletariaat en de sociaal-democratische beweging, ca. 1870–1940," *Onvoltooid Verleden* 30 (2014): 1–9; Veldhuizen, "De partij," 63–65.



**FIGURE 8.3** Educational distribution of Jewish diamond workers' sons and sons of Jews whose fathers had at least social class of skilled worker (excluding diamond workers), 1919-1940.

Source: author's calculations using an extension of "ANDB Members' Life Courses," 2024 release.

Note: based on 128 ANDB members' sons and 51 general Jewish sons' educational attainment.

### 8.5.2 Educational attainment of diamond workers' sons compared

If the ANDB had a positive impact on members' affinity for education, then we would expect sons of diamond workers to have higher rates of educational attendance than sons with similar class backgrounds. To test this, Figure 8.3 makes a comparison between Jewish diamond workers' sons, denoted with "ANDB," and the sons of general Jews who had a social class of skilled worker or higher ("General"). In the latter group we exclude those fathers who worked in the diamond industry, in order to highlight the differences between diamond workers and all those with an equivalent or higher status. The Figure shows that 68 percent of Jewish diamond workers' sons attained a level higher than only basic primary education, compared with 59 percent of Jewish sons with similar or higher social backgrounds.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, 41 percent of Jewish diamond workers' sons attended at least secondary or business education, compared with 32 percent of the comparison group. Only among university attendees Jewish diamond workers are less common. This is explained by the presence of PhD graduates and

<sup>31</sup>  $100\% - 32\% = 68\%$ ;  $100\% - 41\% = 59\%$ .

doctors among fathers in the overall Jewish sample: two sons of Marcus Boas (1879–1941), a professor in ancient languages,<sup>32</sup> and the son of Jacob Simon Rudelsheim (1887–1969), a medical doctor, also attended university. Additionally, Benjamin Kan (1909–1942), a cellist and the son of a butcher, attended the Conservatory and was therefore listed in the category of tertiary education. Only in his case can we speak of upward mobility through education, whereas the other three university attendees followed in their fathers' footsteps. In contrast, all five Jewish diamond workers' sons moved socially upwards through attending university. Here we find Isidore Herman Voet (1913–1938), the son of diamond worker turned ANDB executive Ies Voet (1878–1943); Aron (1914–1997) and Elias Broches (1918–1942), sons of the Russian-born diamond sawyer Abraham Broches (1880–1943); Joseph Krant (1916–unk.), son of butcher Pieter Krant (1886–1943); and Arnold Bronkhorst (1913–1943), son of diamond worker Isaïc Bronkhorst (1891–1943), who attended the Conservatory. Overall we can confidently state that Jewish diamond workers outperformed their peers who originated from similar social backgrounds.

Figure 8.4 presents the same numbers for Gentile sons. Comparing Gentile sons of diamond workers with the sons of Gentiles from similar or higher class backgrounds, we find much smaller differences. 70 percent of Gentile diamond workers' sons and 67 percent of their comparison group attained any education beyond basic primary schooling. However, 24 percent of the latter attended at least secondary education, compared with 26 percent of the Gentile diamond workers' sons. Thus, while Jewish diamond workers' sons had rates of non-manual education far exceeding those of their Jewish peers, Gentile diamond workers' sons had virtually the same rates as the average middle-class Gentile son.

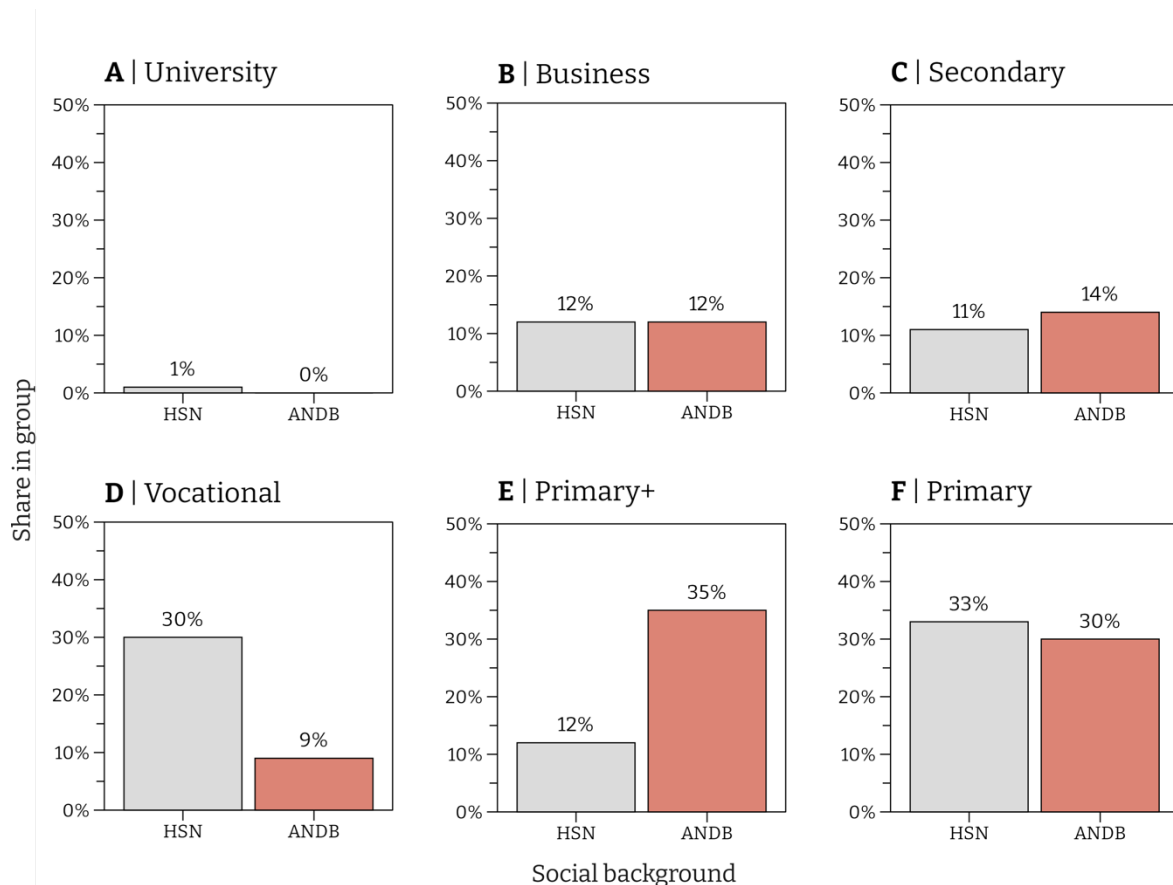
The direct comparison between Jewish and Gentile diamond workers' sons' attendance of these non-manual types of education—41 percent for Jewish sons and 26 percent for Gentile sons<sup>33</sup>—suggest a difference that cannot fully be explained by differences in the socioeconomic position of their respective fathers. While Jews in the diamond industry often held higher-paying positions, they also experienced more frequent periods of unemployment, negating most excess incomes earned. Instead, the messaging of the union to invest in their own self-improvement and the education of their children was likely better received among the Jewish members, who (1) lacked a Jewish 'pillar' in a pillarised society leading them to affiliate more closely with Social Democratic ideology and adopting its 'uplifting' motto; (2) were the majority of their industry's workers; and (3) belonged to the same ethno-religious group as the president who delivered these pro-education ideas.<sup>34</sup>

Since nearly all diamond workers present in our life courses and born between 1873 and 1892 had remarkably long careers in the diamond industry, it is hard to study differences by the length of the ANDB's influence. These results would also be conflated by the career mobility of diamond working fathers, which directly affected membership lengths. Disregarding this, since nearly all diamond workers had career lengths of at least 10 years in the diamond industry and as members of the ANDB, it is fair to say that ANDB had enough time to influence the thoughts of the members included in our data.

<sup>32</sup> Marcus Boas was, himself, the son of a diamond worker. His daughter Henriëtte Boas (1911–2001) also completed a doctorate.

<sup>33</sup> For Jews, see Figure 8.3: 4% + 18% + 19% = 41%; for Gentiles, see Figure 8.4: 12% + 14% = 26%.

<sup>34</sup> Discussed in Section 4.5, the Conclusion to Chapter 4.



**FIGURE 8.4** Educational distribution of Gentile diamond workers' sons and sons of Gentiles whose fathers had at least social class of skilled worker (excluding diamond workers), 1919-1940.

Source: author's calculations using an extension of "ANDB Members' Life Courses," 2024 release.

Note: based on 43 ANDB members' sons and 156 general Gentile sons' educational attainment.

Future research could include more diamond workers with shorter careers as a comparison group.

### 8.5.3 Educational attainment of 'non-identifying' Jews

When controlling for social class backgrounds, Jewish diamond workers' sons outpaced the average Jewish conscript in educational attainment. Another group that could plausibly have exceeded the average young Jewish man in education were those who came from more integrated backgrounds. Recent research on the broad Dutch-Jewish 'elite' suggests a strong correlation between high socioeconomic backgrounds, elevated levels of educational attainment, and above-average rates of integration into mainstream society.<sup>35</sup> The conflation of the three factors makes it hard to interpret whether high social class backgrounds, integration, or the combination of the two led to higher rates of education; or whether integration followed from higher levels of educational attainment. Incorporating integration only through parents' characteristics eliminates the latter pathway. Then, comparing the educational attainment of 91 sons of

<sup>35</sup> Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 61, 112, 133, 144.

at least one ‘non-identifying’ Jewish parent, we can disentangle the impact of high social backgrounds and integration on educational attainment of the next generation.

On average, sons of ‘non-identifying’ Jews were more likely to attend at least one additional year of schooling beyond basic primary education. Only 32 percent were limited to primary education, meaning over two-thirds attended at least one extra year of schooling. Compared with the Jewish diamond workers’ sons, of whom 41 percent attended secondary or business education, the offspring of these ‘non-identifying’ Jews attended these types of education more frequently at 46 percent. They, however, more often obtained secondary education, whereas the Jewish diamond workers’ sons more frequently attended business schooling.

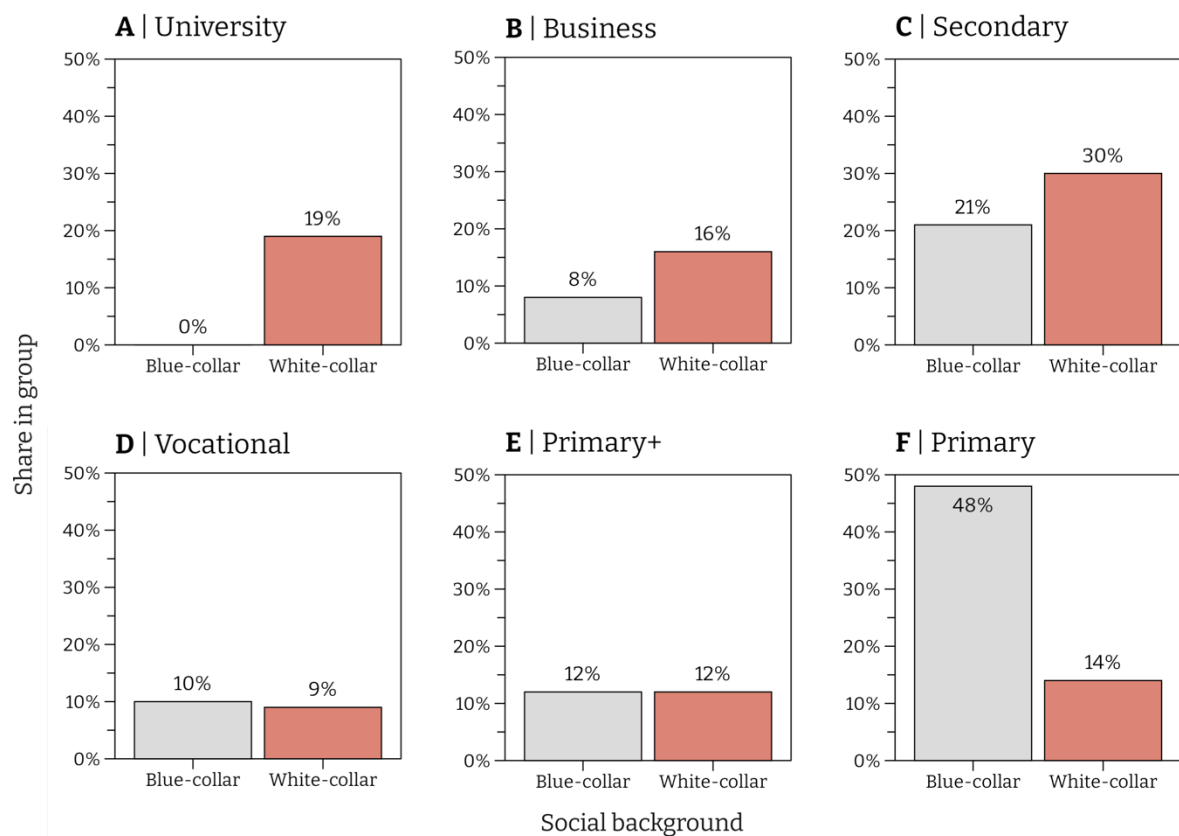
As we saw earlier, these percentages hide large differences by social class background. Figure 8.5 presents these differences by social class for this group. While 86 percent of sons of non-identifying Jews whose fathers worked as lower or higher professionals or managers, i.e. white-collar workers, attended at least one additional year of schooling beyond primary, this was true for only 52 percent of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers’ sons.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, 65 percent of sons from white-collar fathers attended at least secondary or business education, compared to 29 percent of the blue-collar sons.<sup>37</sup>

By comparing blue and white-collar Jewish sons with general Jews from the same social backgrounds, we can tell whether having integrated parents led to higher educational attainment for all Jewish sons, or whether this differed by social background. For this purpose, I split the data used in Figure 8.3 for the general JDJ sample into blue and white-collar backgrounds. 27 percent of these general blue-collar Jews’ sons attended at least secondary or business education. This is remarkably similar to the 29 percent of integrated blue-collar Jews’ sons. In contrast, while only 34 percent of the general white-collar Jews’ sons attended this type of education, it was as high as 65 percent for the integrated white-collar Jews’ sons. While this astonishing difference is partially explained by the relatively higher occupational status of integrated white-collar fathers compared with the general group—more of the integrated parents held elite positions—a similarly large difference was found when limiting the comparison only to lower professionals and managers. For instance, while the sons of non-integrated merchant fathers rarely had above primary education, nearly half of the ‘integrated’ merchants’ sons did.

Thus, high levels of educational attainment were not necessarily a characteristic of ‘integrated’ Jews. For the offspring of integrated Jewish manual workers, their parents’ integration did not immediately translate to higher rates of educational attainment. Instead, high levels of educational attainment appear to be the result of an interaction between integration and high social class backgrounds. Two key pathways in which integration could impact educational attainment is (i) by changing worldviews, i.e. having a more open-minded perspective which aligns with acquiring human capital, and (ii) a different social network. Ideological changes are expected to be present for both groups of sons of integrated blue-collar and white-collar parents. This would explain why, for both groups of sons, sons of non-identifying fathers were more likely to obtain at least secondary education than their general Jewish counterparts. However, social

<sup>36</sup> Based on Panel F of Figure 8.5:  $100\% - 14\% = 86\%$ ;  $100\% - 48\% = 52\%$ .

<sup>37</sup> Based on Panels A through C of Figure 8.5:  $30\% + 16\% + 19\% = 65\%$ ;  $21\% + 8\% + 0\% = 29\%$ .



**FIGURE 8.5** Educational attainment of sons of 'non-identifying Jews' by fathers' social background, 1919-1940.

*Source:* author's calculations using an extension of "ANDB Members' Life Courses," 2024 release.

*Note:* fathers' social class were grouped into blue- and white-collar as otherwise the samples would be too small. Based on 43 white-collar and 48 blue-collar sons of non-identifying Jews' educational attainment.

networks of white-collar and blue-collar sons of integrated Jews are expected to differ if we assume that integrated Jews were exposed primarily to Gentiles belonging to the same social class. Since Gentiles with blue-collar backgrounds generally had lower levels of educational attainment than Jews, increasing the number of blue-collar Gentiles in one's network would reduce, rather than increase, the average educational attainment of Jews' networks. In contrast, Gentiles with white-collar backgrounds had higher levels of educational attainment than Jews whose fathers had worked in white-collar careers. In this case, increasing the share of white-collar Gentiles raises the average educational attainment of one's network. In short, more contact with Gentiles was not enough to increase integrated Jews' educational attainment; what mattered was the type of Gentiles in one's network and whether they valued or could afford education themselves.



## 8.6 Occupational distribution

Besides educational levels, the conscript records also registered the occupations of all working conscripts. We can therefore observe how family background, educational attainment, and career choices were interrelated for both ethno-religious groups. I show this for all sons, conscripted between 1919 and 1940, with a listed occupation. First, I discuss the five most common occupations among Jewish diamond workers' sons, comprising nearly two-thirds of this groups' conscripts, before highlighting ethno-religious differences by social class.

### 8.6.1 Occupational titles

#### Office clerks

The most common occupation among all conscripts in our samples, both within the Jewish and Gentile samples and among the diamond workers' sons, was employment as office clerks in the growing office sector.<sup>38</sup> These sons worked in a variety of offices, including several companies related to the tobacco trade, in investments and banking, but also in the offices of small-scale factories, including one diamond polishing factory. Even though Jewish diamond workers' sons attended at least secondary education at much higher rates than Gentile diamond workers' sons, Jews were not more likely to become office clerks: 14 Gentile (35.0%) and 34 Jewish (29.4%) sons became office clerks.<sup>39</sup> The same is true when we compare the two general samples; 47 Gentile (15.5%) and 21 Jewish sons (16.2%) became office clerks.<sup>40</sup>

However, when Jews became office clerks, they had almost always attended secondary schooling—HBS or Gymnasium—and/or business schools, whereas the Gentile sons rarely had such high levels of education, and were instead more generally becoming office clerks after attending the MULO.<sup>41</sup> Thus, whereas their higher rates of office clerks suggests that Gentiles were more welcome or more willing to enter these occupations, there is a real possibility that Jewish sons performed more challenging tasks and had better career prospects after entering these occupations. Alternatively, it may be that they had to compensate for their Jewishness by obtaining additional years of schooling for the exact same job, similar to the status exchange premiums discussed in Chapter 6 on mixed marriages. The finding that Jewish sons were just as likely to become office clerks refutes Leydesdorff's claim that companies informally closed their doors for Jewish office workers.<sup>42</sup> However, Jews were less likely to be listed as office workers at the time of marriage, a later point in time than the conscription check-up.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that Jews may have struggled more to embark on office careers than Gentile peers with similar levels of educational attainment *and* that they might have

<sup>38</sup> In 1930, office clerks had the most unionised employees out of all occupational sectors in Amsterdam. *Statistisch jaarverslag der gemeente Amsterdam 1930*, Table 318, pp. 272–273.

<sup>39</sup> The difference is not statistically significant:  $t(147) = 0.66$ ,  $p = 0.52$ .

<sup>40</sup>  $t(432) = -0.18$ ,  $p = 0.86$ .

<sup>41</sup> The 55 Jewish sons that worked as office clerks ( $m = 0.636$ ,  $sd = 0.486$ ) were significantly more likely to have at least secondary or business education than the 61 Gentile office clerks ( $m = 0.475$ ,  $sd = 0.504$ ),  $t(124) = -1.95$ ,  $p = 0.06$ .

<sup>42</sup> Leydesdorff, *Het Joodse proletariaat*, 265, 315. One of the interviewees stated: "At one office I was told, 'I don't hire Jews.' This happened several times."

<sup>43</sup> Based on findings in Chapter 4.

switched after shorter times. Jewish experiences in the office sphere, symbolic for the modernisation of work, would benefit from additional research.

Anecdotal accounts, like the ones presented by Leydesdorff, suggest that Jews' absence from offices earlier, and successes in office work later, depended on their conviction and the networks they built in these offices. Sal Santen's (1915–1998) father, a clever man who had been offered employment as an office clerk at a law office, had to forgo the opportunity due to his fathers' rejection of working on the Sabbath.<sup>44</sup> Sal's grandfather later became a socialist, as did his father—who picked up work as a leather merchant and cobbler—and Sal later became an office clerk himself.

Siegfried van Praag and Jacques Presser, sons of Jewish diamond workers and later small-scale diamond traders, became office clerks. Both left personal memoirs that show that neither of them had aspired to work as clerks but both had been required to take up this line of work for economic reasons. In Van Praag's memories, harsh antisemitism was uncommon in these offices, but *risjes*—antisemitic micro-aggressions—occurred more frequently. In this new economic sphere, the Jewish presence was limited, and Jewish office workers were generally a small minority in the office. Jewish networks became all the more important in these spaces. During his brief employment at the bank, Van Praag was supported by two Jewish colleagues: “two gentlemen co-ethnics, the vice-president Mr. Godschalk and the attorney Mr. Voorzanger, liked me and wished the best for me. For me, the worst: to become a serious banker.”<sup>45</sup> When Van Praag eventually left, partially due to the frequent *risjes*, Voorzanger stated solemnly that “we wanted the best for you, we wanted to see you climb here.”<sup>46</sup> In Jo van Praag's case, Siegfried's brother, we find a reference to a Jewish superior that could aide in the fight against antisemitism. When a Gentile attorney at his office told Jo that “for every hundred Jews, there are only three good ones,” Jo remarked “that would be me, our boss Van Nierop, and the third I do not know. Shall we ask Van Nierop?”<sup>47</sup>

Leman Lakmaker (1885–1942), a cigar maker, office clerk, and later editor of the *Wereldbibliotheek*, a publishing house for affordable world literature, had more luck with his colleagues. His Jewish boss was a large inspiration for his upward growth in his office.<sup>48</sup> In nearly all cases, however, Jews had to acquire the cultural capital of office work themselves, coming from social backgrounds and networks with little to no office work. In the four cases mentioned here, all were sons of (semi-)skilled Jewish workers, some upwardly mobile. Even in the case of the successful merchants, as was the case for Presser, economic differences were persistent for the social climbers. Van Praag remarked that Presser, who was the top student in their year, had been among the least affluent students in his class.<sup>49</sup> For Jews, entry into higher spheres of education and working as an office clerk often meant entering non-Jewish spheres and a lack of personal ties; the opposite of working in the diamond industry.

<sup>44</sup> Sal Santen, *Jullie is Jodenvolk. Herinneringen aan een jeugd* (Amsterdam, 1969), 57.

<sup>45</sup> Van Praag, *Een lange jeugd*, 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Josje Lakmaker, *Voorbij de Blauwbrug. Het verhaal van mijn joodse grootvader* (Amsterdam, 2009), 60–61.

<sup>49</sup> Van Praag, *Een lange jeugd*, 45.

## Department store, store, and warehouse clerks and porters

Another important and growing occupational group for Jews was the group of (department) store and warehouse employees (*winkel- en magazijnbedienden*). As large department stores were being opened in Amsterdam, it were predominantly young Jewish men and women who entered these positions. In total 37 Jewish conscripts (12.3%) worked in this field, compared with 14 Gentile (4.1%) conscripts.<sup>50</sup> Jews also entered this occupational group with higher levels of educational attainment. Only two of these Gentile clerks had any years of schooling beyond the basic primary education, compared with 18 of the Jewish clerks.<sup>51</sup>

The growing presence of Jewish department stores and textile factories, as well as the over-representation of Jews among storekeepers, explains why Jews more frequently started their careers working these jobs.<sup>52</sup> Their relatively higher educational levels, however, requires another explanation. This can be explained by the diverging social backgrounds of Jewish and Gentile store and warehouse clerks and porters. While 64 percent of Gentiles grew up with fathers who worked as semi-skilled or unskilled labourers, this was true for only 13.5 percent of Jews. Instead, Jews employed in these (department) stores were more frequently skilled workers, engaged as merchants, or lower white-collar workers.

Why the relatively better-positioned Jewish fathers had more sons entering these occupations is less clear. One possibility is that Jews used the occupational title for different tasks. For instance, it has been suggested that Jewish department store employees also functioned as salespersons,<sup>53</sup> an occupational title associated with a higher social status. Alternatively, Jews had fewer opportunities available to them and were therefore, despite higher levels of educational attainment, necessitated to take up such entry-level positions. In certain cases, the family situation and subsequent mobility suggest that the latter is true. One example is Jacob Asscher (1904-1943), the son of a Jewish diamond worker with a 3-year HBS diploma, was a warehouse porter in 1923, a time during which his father had become unemployed. He was likely only temporarily a warehouse porter to contribute to the household income in the short-run. When he married six years later, he worked as an office clerk in a leather business and by 1939 he had become an attorney.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Jacob Kurk (1916-1945) had completed four years of vocational schooling when he became a warehouse porter at age 16 in the middle of the Great Depression,<sup>55</sup> but by 1939 he was listed as a typesetter,<sup>56</sup> presumably what he had been trained to do.

<sup>50</sup> Statistically higher among Jews ( $m = 0.123$ ,  $sd = 0.329$ ) than Gentiles ( $m = 0.041$ ,  $sd = 0.199$ );  $t(644) = -3.89$ ,  $p = 0.000$ .

<sup>51</sup> Statistically higher among Jews ( $m = 0.487$ ,  $sd = 0.501$ ) than Gentiles ( $m = 0.143$ ,  $sd = 0.363$ );  $t(49) = -2.50$ ,  $p = 0.011$ .

<sup>52</sup> Examples include De Bijenkorf, Maison de Bonneterie, Gerzon, and Hirsch & Cie. For a discussion, see Roger Miellet, "Joodse ondernemers in het Nederlandse grootwinkelbedrijf in de negentiende en de eerste decennia van de twintigste eeuw," in Venter, *fabriqueur, fabrikant. Joodse ondernemers en ondernemingen in Nederland 1796-1940*, ed. Hetty Berg, Thera Wijsenbeek, and Eric Fischer (Amsterdam, 1994), 78-91.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion, see the life story of Jacob Waas (1911-1941) in the Amsterdam City Archive, "De razzia's van 22/23-02-1941," <https://amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/themasites/razzia/jacob-waas>.

<sup>54</sup> Militieregister, huwelijksakte, Gezinskaart, Persoonskaart van Jacob Asscher 1904-1943.

<sup>55</sup> Gezinskaart David Kurk (26-07-1878).

<sup>56</sup> Persoonskaart Jacob Kurk (10-01-1916).

## Diamond workers

In the late nineteenth century, the most common occupation for diamond workers' son was to also enter the diamond industry. However, after 1920 this was hardly the case. Nonetheless, several sons still followed their parents into the lapidary profession. This was the situation for 16 Jewish (14.7%) and 3 Gentile (5.0%) diamond workers' sons. Additionally, 12 Jewish sons from the representative sample (9.2%) and seven from the non-identifying group (11.1%) also entered the diamond industry, while none of general Gentile sample did so. Thus, the share of conscripts who became diamond workers was only slightly higher among the diamond workers' sons compared with the comparison groups, highlighting the increasing lack of intergenerational following among these workers.

Notably, many of the Jewish diamond workers had only completed basic primary education. This was the case for 62.5 percent for Jewish diamond workers' sons also working in the diamond industry, compared with only one in three among the Gentile diamond workers' sons. Regardless of ethno-religious group or background, none were ever listed with vocational schooling. Clearly, the mandatory multi-year apprenticeships required for entry into the diamond industry were not recorded as vocational schooling by the conscript registrars. Instead, two Gentile diamond workers were listed with several years of MULO. Among Jewish diamond workers, one was listed with secondary education, while another was listed with business education. In contrast, many Jewish diamond workers' sons had benefited from extended education, but few of them went on to work in the diamond industry afterwards. Louis Goudvis (1909-unk.), who completed five years of HBS, was an exception in this regard; Albert Salomon de Jong (1909-unk.) attended his four years of evening business schooling while working as a diamond worker. Louis later worked as a merchant before moving to South Africa in 1935.<sup>57</sup> Albert also worked as a merchant,<sup>58</sup> starting his own car business by 1939.<sup>59</sup>

## Tailors

One occupational group that Jews increasingly moved into in the twentieth century was that of tailors. Among the diamond workers' sons, eight Jewish conscripts (7.3%) and none of the Gentile conscripts worked in this skilled trade. In the representative samples, two Gentiles (0.7%) and eight Jews (6.2%) became tailors, on top of three non-identifying Jews' sons (4.8%). Compared with the diamond workers, who were never listed with vocational education, several tailors were listed with skilled manual training. Still, roughly half were listed with only primary education, an indication of possible undercounting of Jews' vocational schooling. Tailors' fathers were generally skilled workers, but these garment makers also often originated from unskilled workers' families.

Compared with the diamond industry, which offered poor prospects since 1920; and warehouse or department store employment, which was often only a temporary or static position;<sup>60</sup> tailoring offered the possibility for a stable career with potential for upward mobility through starting one's own business. Among the diamond workers' sons'

<sup>57</sup> Gezinskaart Simon Goudvis (09-04-1874).

<sup>58</sup> Gezinskaart Abraham Salomon de Jong (14-02-1909).

<sup>59</sup> Persoonskaart Abraham Salomon de Jong (14-02-1909).

<sup>60</sup> This was true in Germany, but also held in Amsterdam. Lerner, *The Consuming Temple*, 54.

examples include Nathan Breemer (1899–1943), who became a wholesaler in tailors' supplies;<sup>61</sup> Abraham Zeelander (1908–1944) and Charles Fernand Witteboon (1914–1943), who became independent tailors;<sup>62</sup> and Louis Bonewit (1899–1989), the only 19-year-old tailor that had completed the MULO, who later switched careers and became an office clerk.<sup>63</sup> However, stability or upward trajectories among tailors was not guaranteed, and several moved down over time. Marcus Bril (1908–1941) and Maurits Coopman (1916–unk.) put down their tools and turned to peddling flowers and fruit, respectively, later in life to make a living.<sup>64</sup> Maurits became an independent tailor after the war and emigrated to Canada in 1952.<sup>65</sup> In their cases, a lack of family connections in profitable trades limited career options. Both their fathers grew up in the families of cigar makers, themselves later becoming diamond workers and experiencing unemployment during the years in which their sons commenced their careers. With the diamond industry offering only scarce employment then, limited networks among tailors, and the cigar industry of their fathers lacking good career prospects, these young men turned to trade as a last resort.

Together, these four occupational groups—office clerks, department store employees, diamond workers, and tailors—represent over half of Jewish diamond workers' sons, and nearly half of the average Jewish sons, but only twenty percent of Gentile sons. Within each of these common Jewish occupations, the young Jewish men held higher educational attainment than their Gentile peer with the same social background. We now turn to the social class positions of the conscripts, where we will contrast Jews and Gentiles' occupational choices by educational choice.

### 8.6.2 *Social classes*

Given the wide distribution of occupations listed in the conscript records, discussing each separately as we have done above is infeasible. Instead, we can aggregate each occupation into the social class they belong to. Then, for each social class and group, we can measure (a) the share that has received at least primary education and (b) the share that received at least some secondary or business education. These statistics are presented in Figure 8.6. Only the group and social combinations with at least 10 occurrences are shown.

Earlier we discussed that Jews had higher educational attainment than the average Gentile with the same social background. The relative distribution over the social classes, indicated by the sample sizes at the bottom of the panels, show the consequence of this: Jews more frequently ended up in white-collar positions.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Figure 8.6 suggests that educational levels determined the social class in which one's early career started. Except for the Jewish diamond workers' sons, of whom more than 50% obtained at least one additional year of post-basic primary education, less than one-third of

<sup>61</sup> Gezinskaart Nathan Breemer (16-05-1899).

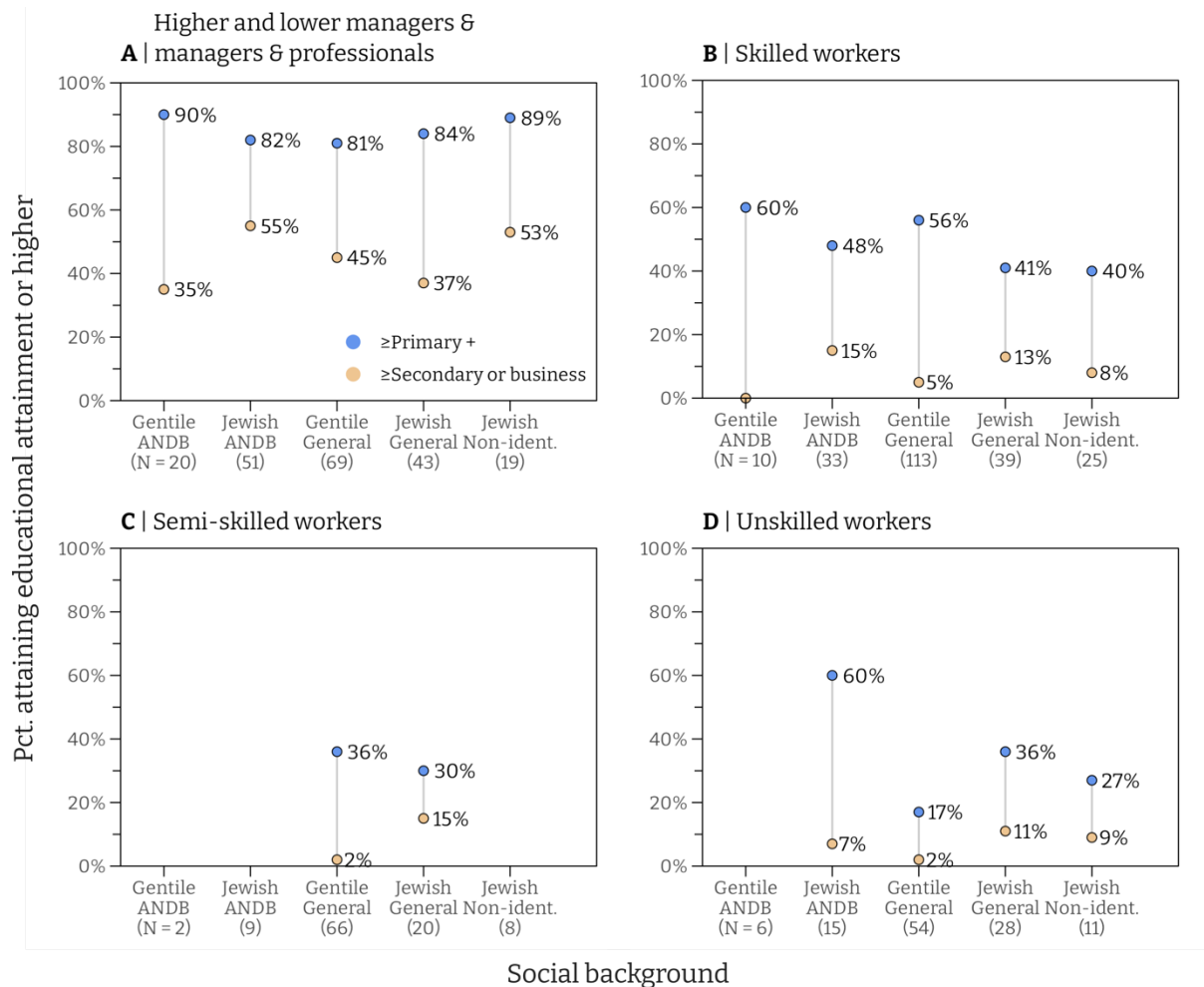
<sup>62</sup> Persoonskaart Abraham Zeelander (04-04-1908); Persoonskaart Charles Fernand Witteboon (18-12-1914).

<sup>63</sup> Persoonskaart Louis Bonewit (21-03-1899). Louis emigrated to the United States in 1953 and where he died in 1989.

<sup>64</sup> Persoonskaart Marcus Bril (17-10-1908); Persoonskaart Maurits Coopman (01-02-1916).

<sup>65</sup> Idem.

<sup>66</sup> For instance, 43 out of the total 130 Jews in the general Jewish sample were found in this social class, compared with 69 out of 302 Gentiles in the general Gentile sample; statistically higher among Jews ( $m = 0.331$ ,  $sd = 0.472$ ) than Gentiles ( $m = 0.234$ ,  $sd = 0.424$ );  $t(432) = -2.11$ ,  $p = 0.02$ .



**FIGURE 8.6** Share of conscripts with at least one additional year of primary (yellow) and at least secondary or business education (blue) by sample and social class, Amsterdam 1919–1940.

Source: author’s calculations using an extension of “ANDB Members’ Life Courses,” 2024 release.

Note: sample sizes under 10 were censored.

unskilled and semi-skilled workers had any *reported* education beyond the basic primary schooling. These Jewish diamond workers’ sons also obtained at least secondary or business education more than average—displayed in orange—which is most evident when we look at the groups of skilled workers and white-collar workers. Among these white-collar workers, the Jewish diamond workers’ sons had at least secondary or business education 55 percent of the time, compared with 35 percent of Gentile diamond workers’ sons.<sup>67</sup> Thus, Jewish sons of diamond workers tended to have higher levels of educational attainment when compared to other conscripts with occupations in similar social classes. This tells us that the high educational attainment of Jewish diamond workers’ sons is not explained by their own social class.

<sup>67</sup> Statistically weakly higher among Jews ( $m = 0.558$ ,  $sd = 0.502$ ) than Gentiles ( $m = 0.364$ ,  $sd = 0.492$ );  $t(72) = -1.53$ ,  $p = 0.07$ .

The Gentile conscripts that started their careers as lower or higher professionals and managers, a group dominated by office clerks, tended to have slightly more ‘non-manual’ educational attainment than the average Jewish conscript in this group.<sup>68</sup> However, this is partially driven by the higher propensity of Jews to enter this social class. As mentioned, this represents the highest 24 percent of Gentiles and the highest 33 percent of Jews by social class. Moreover, Jews more often worked in occupations that did not formally require higher forms of education, like merchants and commercial travellers.

### 8.6.3 Vocational schooling

One caveat that has been mentioned throughout the chapter has been the lack of Jews’ registered vocational schooling. This is most markedly seen when looking at diamond workers, a group of workers known for long apprenticeships, who were never recorded with recorded skilled training. Instead, those who did not attend any additional formal schooling beyond their lapidary apprenticeships were listed as only having received basic primary education. This under-recording of vocational training was more common among occupations generally performed by Jews than Gentiles. Compared with carpenters, the most common skilled occupation among Gentile conscripts, highlights this. Only three out of 23 Gentile carpenters (13.0%) were listed with only basic primary schooling.

Jewish diamond workers and Gentile carpenters were not the exceptions in this diverging trend. To get a better idea of the size of this discrepancy, we can contrast the share of all Jewish and Gentile conscripts with any note of skilled training on their conscript record. Assuming that all skilled workers required some vocational or on-the-job training to work in their professions, these rates should be relatively high. Moreover, if Jews and Gentiles worked in occupations that were equally likely to be recorded with vocational training, then the percentages should be similar. However, the rates differ significantly. Among all Jewish conscripts employed as skilled workers, 18.8 percent were listed with vocational training. For Gentile skilled workers, this was much higher at 45.1 percent.<sup>69</sup>

Which factors could explain such large differences? The main factor is formal vocational schooling. These schools offered skilled training for many common manual occupations, such as carpenters, electricians, fitters, and mechanics. In the Gentile population, these occupations were practiced often. Jews rarely worked in these professions, a legacy of the discriminatory pre-nineteenth-century guild system. With Jews’ limited population shares in Amsterdam and under-representation among many skilled occupations, the ratio of Jewish to Gentile pupils at the vocational schools must have been minimal. Instead, Jews worked in more niche skilled crafts. Besides the obvious case of the diamond workers, these include bakers, butchers, tailors, leather workers, cigar makers, typographers, and furniture makers. In absence of Jewish vocational schools until the 1930s, many of these skills were obtained through tacit learning and in one-on-one apprenticeships rather than formal institutions.

<sup>68</sup> However, the difference between Gentiles ( $m = 0.451$ ,  $sd = 0.501$ ) and Jews ( $m = 0.372$ ,  $sd = 0.489$ ) is not statistically significant;  $t(112) = 0.819$ ,  $p = 0.41$ .

<sup>69</sup> Significantly higher among Gentiles ( $m = 0.451$ ,  $sd = 0.500$ ) than Jews ( $m = 0.188$ ,  $sd = 0.392$ );  $t(216) = 4.24$ ,  $p = 0.00$ .

Consequently, Jewish craftsmen lacked formal accreditation for their obtained skills. While such diplomas had only limited importance for early-twentieth-century skilled workers, it highlights the continued, historically-guided position of Jews' manual work at the fringes of the formal labour market.

## 8.7 Conclusion

This chapter shows that Jews attended more non-primary education than Gentiles. While this was already suggested by national statistics on university graduates, it had not been established for the Dutch capital city specifically, for all educational levels, and for comparisons within fathers' social classes. Jews attended more secondary education but also studied at business schools at higher rates than Gentiles, exemplified by Jews' overrepresentation among merchants and other commercial activities. Consequently, Jews more frequently worked in higher positions in trade or as white-collar service workers.

This excess educational attainment of Jews relative to Gentiles was especially observed among the diamond workers. The sons of Jewish diamond workers attended secondary or business education twice as often than their Gentile counterparts. Since both grew up in the household of a diamond worker, the social class background could not explain this difference. Nor could the general higher levels of educational attainment of Jews since Jewish diamond workers' sons exceeded the educational attainment of other Jews with similar or higher social class backgrounds. Instead, the explanation should be sought in the influence of the ANDB on their members. The ANDB and its leaders propagandised self-improvement and investments in education. This message likely connected more strongly with the Jewish members. Jewish diamond workers revered their president, comprised a majority of the union's members, and did not have their own 'pillar' in a pillarised society. In contrast, Gentile members could rely more heavily on their own pillars. However, this expectation cannot be tested directly.

Jews from backgrounds characterised by some form of 'radical assimilation'—religious disaffiliation, conversion, or mixed marriages—also attended higher forms of education than the average Jewish Amsterdammer. Greater open-mindedness among such *assimilants* could explain their sons' higher educational attainment. However, the largest differences were seen among the group of non-identifying Jewish sons from upper-middle-class backgrounds, whereas the sons from working-class backgrounds did not receive more schooling than the average Jewish conscript. Although it cannot be tested directly with the data at hand, this interaction highlights the potential diverging impact of social networks on integration and social class. For working-class Jews, greater exposure to working-class Gentiles may not have aided possibilities for upward mobility.

Most commonly, working-class Gentiles only attended primary education or some form of vocational schooling. This skilled training frequently took place in formal institutions, while Jewish craftsmen obtained their skills in more informal settings. The absence of Jews' social and cultural networks in formal settings of professional training maintained the barrier for Jews to enter more mainstream skilled manual occupations. Jews specialised in niche crafts where training was passed along from one generation to the next or through one's extended network, as had been common for the Jewish diamond workers. As a result, most of their efforts towards skilled training went under



the radar of official reporting, to a large extent the enduring consequence of centuries of labour market discrimination and segregation.

While the missing Jewish vocational schooling highlights the persistent impact of past labour market segregation, Jews' greater investment in higher forms of formal education underline their massive strides in structural integration. In the early twentieth century, Jews were overrepresented in secondary schools, in business schools, and at Dutch universities. This was both the result of decades of social upward mobility in the Jewish community, but also that of novel opportunities and disappearing barriers to Jews' entry into adequate schooling, particularly since the Education Law of 1857 and the broadening of Jews' residential distribution in Amsterdam. The latter was important since pupils went to school close to their homes. In the decades prior to World War II, this launched Jews into previously Gentile spheres, including office spaces where Jews frequently had spent more time in formal education than their Gentile peers. Their greater rates of educational attainment, visible in nearly all segments of Jews' economic participation, created the pathway to continued intergenerational, marital, and career mobility.