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

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Conclusion

9.1 The story

Social mobility among nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Amsterdam Jews was considerable and widespread, spanning the life domains of work, residence, and education. Their social status rose more rapidly than that of Gentiles, ultimately surpassing it by the early twentieth century. Increasing improvements in work opportunities, housing quality, and education benefited Jews throughout their life courses and, notably, across generations. These structural changes increased the exposure to Gentiles, particularly in new non-denominational schools, in their neighbourhoods, in clubs and organisations, and at work. As a community, Amsterdam Jews ascended from a perceived 'impoverished minority' to a group that contributed disproportionately to the economic and cultural fabric of the Dutch capital. Many of them joined the middle classes, became politicians, and entered the sphere of elites through the arts and sciences.[1] Given the available evidence, it seems that no other group achieved such rapid socioeconomic gains during the same period.[2] Jews also increasingly disaffiliated from their Synagogues and married non-Jewish partners, phenomena almost unheard of in the mid-nineteenth century.[3] By the 1930s, nearly every Jewish family likely included an intermarried person within their extended family. In the years preceding the Holocaust, Jews firmly embedded themselves in the capital's institutions through their enduring contributions and participation in Amsterdam's culture. They did so in a distinctive Amsterdam-Jewish way. They established both Jewish and co-denominational spaces, integrating into broader society while preserving key aspects of their traditions.[4] They were, in the words of Henri Polak, who worked relentlessly to

[1] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 60–61, 111–12.

[2] Based on overviews of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century immigrants in the Netherlands and Amsterdam: Jan Lucassen and Rinus Penninx, *Newcomers. Immigrants and Their Descendants in the Netherlands 1550-1995* (Amsterdam, 1997); Leo Lucassen, ed., *Amsterdammer worden. Migranten, hun organisaties en inburgering, 1600-2000* (Amsterdam, 2004); Jan Rath, "A Game of Ethnic Musical Chairs? Immigrant Businesses and Niches in the Amsterdam Economy," in *Minorities in European Cities*, ed. Sophie Body-Gendrot and Marco Martiniello (London, 2000), 26–43; Lucassen, "To Amsterdam"; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Migratie als DNA van Amsterdam*; and studies on specific immigrants groups, such as those from China: Henk Wubben, *Chineezen en ander Aziatisch ongedierte: Lotgevallen van Chinese Immigranten in Nederland, 1911-1940* (Amsterdam, 1986); Italy: Frank Bovenkerk and Loes Ruland, "Artisan Entrepreneurs: Two Centuries of Italian Immigration to the Netherlands," *International Migration Review* 26.3 (1992): 927–39; Margareth Chotkowski, "Vijftien ladders en een dambord. Contacten van Italiaanse migranten in Nederland 1860-1940" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2006); and Germany (in Utrecht): Marlou Schrover, *Een kolonie van Duitsers. Groepsvorming onder Duitse immigranten in Utrecht in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2002).

[3] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 135, 148; Peter Tammes, "Abandoning Judaism: A Life History Perspective on Disaffiliation and Conversion to Christianity among Prewar Amsterdam Jews," *Advances in Life Course Research* 17.2 (2012): 81–92.

[4] For instance, most Jewish-Jewish marriages continued to take place in the Synagogues and virtually all boys were still circumcised in the early twentieth century. Blom and Cahen, "Joodse Nederlanders," 298–300; Tammes and Scholten, "Assimilation of Ethnic-Religious Minorities in the Netherlands."

uplift and incorporate these workers, referring to himself, "Dutch among the Dutch but also Jewish among the Jews."[5]

This story closely echoes the historiography's status quo. However, this dissertation has showcased, through new data and methods, that trends were not the same for all Jews and varied significantly among different groups. This variation is exemplified by the followers of Henri Polak, the Jewish diamond workers, who formed *the* core of the Amsterdam-Jewish community and culture from the late nineteenth century onward.[6] Although sometimes mischaracterised as the Jewish 'proletariat,'[7] diamond workers led many of these changes among non-elite Jews. While at times facing periods of incessant unemployment, the workers in this centuries-old, but in the 1870s rapidly expanding, Jewish ethnic niche experienced upward social mobility earlier and more dramatically than other Amsterdam Jews. By collaborating with Gentile colleagues, they leveraged their numbers to successfully strike for better working conditions.[8] This led to the formation of the Netherlands' first modern union, the *Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond* (ANDB; 'General Dutch Diamond Workers' Union'), which steadfastly worked to improve workers' lives and provided unprecedented benefits. The union's impact was evident in the workers' social positions—their societal image transformed from "the rotten cabbage at the greengrocer" to respected, emancipated labourers—and especially in their children. This dissertation demonstrates that Jewish diamond workers' sons commonly achieved higher social positions and educational attainment than both their Gentile and Jewish peers with a similar background. These benefits were also transferred to women and daughters. The industry and union offered skilled work to women at equal pay, which was rare in an era when most Jewish and Gentile women worked as domestic servants or seamstresses, earning far less than men. Others benefited indirectly through family members or the increased spending power of diamond workers. Thus, the successes and challenges of Amsterdam's Jewish diamond workers impacted the entire community; young and old, men and women, whether themselves employed in the diamond industry or indirectly benefitting from Jews' growing wealth and status.

It were the Jewish diamond workers' successes that enabled them to be the first non-elite Jews to leave the overcrowded 'Jewish Quarter' behind and move to more liveable neighbourhoods. It were the high wages in times of employment, the ANDB's weekly newsletter, and an enviable library which enabled and motivated them to invest so heavily in their children's education. Not surprisingly, the milieu of diamond workers produced some of the Social Democratic movement's most important figures. The foremost example is Henri Polak, a diamond worker who had followed his father into the industry, and later became president of the ANDB and the NVV, a confederation of unions that would eventually lead to the formation 'f the FNV, the largest Dutch union today. Women from this community also became influential leaders in the labour movement.[9] The diamond workers served as role models, inspiring both Jews and Gentiles to adopt

[5] Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1991, 37.
[6] Bregstein and Bloemgarten, *Herinnering aan Joods Amsterdam*, 48–51; Hofmeester, "The Impact of the Diamond Industry," 47.
[7] For instance Kleerekoper, "Het joodse proletariaat"; and Leydesdorff, *Het Joodse proletariaat*.
[8] Van Tijn, "De Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond," 410.
[9] Hofmeester, "Roosje Vos, Sani Prijes, Alida de Jong, and the Others,"; Van der Veen, ""Je had als vrouw al een achterstand"."

Social Democratic principles and establish or join unions. The 'emancipation' of the Jewish working class therefore began with the diamond workers, making it essential to examine their role and the institutions that shaped them to fully understand the Amsterdam Jewish community.

9.2 What is new?

Much of the above narrative is already well-documented. Over the past eight decades, several historians have addressed the integration of Amsterdam Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasising the importance of Social Democracy, the diamond industry, and its leaders.[10] This dissertation distinguishes itself through four elements that offer fresh insights into this historiography. First, while previous scholars have focused primarily on integration, few have discussed Jewish social mobility or used detailed, individual-level statistics to study it.[11] By broadening my focus and applying new data combined with innovative techniques, I have presented long-term patterns of social mobility and integration for the entirety of the Amsterdam-Jewish community.

Second, by introducing individual-level data, I was able to investigate differences within the Jewish community based on social class. Previous literature has largely argued that integration of Jews was a slow yet persistent process.[12] These commentators have correctly noted that the process of Jewish integration was layered and diverged among subgroups such as Orthodox, Liberal, Socialist, and Zionist Jews.[13] Amsterdam Jewry has therefore been described as a 'Mosaik' at times.[14] Yet, indicators of social mobility and integration were often measured only at the communal level.[15] This obscured the significant influence of individual characteristics on lived experiences. There were indeed important differences between Jews from diverse social backgrounds, with Jewish diamond workers standing out as the most exceptional. These workers and their families exhibited a unique combination of high upward mobility and mixed integration trajectories, distinct from those of other Jews.

This connects closely to the third element: the decoupling of social mobility and integration as independent processes in different facets of life. In the context of this dissertation, these facets include occupational following or intergenerational mobility, marriages, careers during the life course, residences, and educational attainment. By doing so, we are able to contrast experiences across life domains. This has emphasised that social mobility and integration were, indeed, distinct processes: they could be interconnected, but not necessarily so, and individuals could experience significant upward mobility independent from integration and vice versa.

[10] Kruijt, "Het Jodendom in de Nederlandse samenleving"; Kleerekoper, "Het joodse proletariaat"; Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…'"; Blom and Cahen, "Joodse Nederlanders"; Leydesdorff, *Het Joodse proletariaat*.

[11] Exceptions include Van Poppel, Liefbroer, and Schellekens, "Religion and Social Mobility"; Tammes, "'Hack, Pack, Sack.'"

[12] Blom and Cahen, "Joodse Nederlanders"; Tammes and Scholten, "Assimilation of Ethnic-Religious Minorities in the Netherlands"; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*; Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers."

[13] Gans, "De kleine verschillen."

[14] David Sorkin, "The New 'Mosaik'. Jews and European Culture, 1750-1940," in *Dutch Jewry in a Cultural Maelstrom 1880-1940*, ed. Judith Frishman and Hetty Berg (Amsterdam, 2007), 11–30; Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers."

[15] For instance, access to kosher food was declining, religious attendance was falling, and religious disaffiliation and intermarriages were on the rise. Blom and Cahen, "Joodse Nederlanders"; Tammes and Scholten, "Assimilation of Ethnic-Religious Minorities in the Netherlands."

Lastly, the historiography, focused on explaining the experiences of Jews, has often overlooked contrasts with life trajectories of Gentiles. Such comparisons are essential to offer a comprehensive view of how unique Jewish lives were. For example, existing studies have described the poverty of the Jewish Quarter without noting similarly destitute conditions in the Jordaan, a comparable, poor district primarily inhabited by working-class Gentiles; quoted intermarriage rates without considering non-Jews' role in the lack of interfaith marriages; and attributed patterns of residential segregation to immobile Jews rather than migrating Gentiles. As a result, these studies were unable to highlight the noteworthy mobility of Amsterdam Jews. Comparing within and between groups provides a clearer view of the distinct experiences of Jews, dependent on social class and subject to intersectionality. This approach also highlights Jewish workers—a frequently overlooked category at the expense of Jewish entrepreneurs[16]—and their differences from Gentile workers.

By combining these four elements—that is, examining the social mobility and integration trajectories of Amsterdam Jews independently, separating these processes by life domain, using uniquely-detailed individual-level data to establish long-term trends, and comparing within the Jewish community by social class backgrounds and between Jews and Gentiles from similar walks of life—this dissertation confirms much of what was previously assumed about Amsterdam Jews, while at the same time uncovering new insights into their social mobility and integration patterns. This comparative perspective reveals that Jews were exceptional in their upward mobility, especially across generations and compared with Gentile peers in similar social classes, and that while Jews integrated concurrently, these processes were not necessarily linked. This approach also highlights important variations in the pace and extent of social mobility and integration, as well as their evolving relationship across life facets and over time. For instance, Jewish diamond workers exhibited remarkable intergenerational mobility, even compared to other Jews, and showed strong political integration, yet intermarried far less frequently than anticipated by their social positions. These variations in social mobility and integration among Jews and Gentiles of different social backgrounds can be understood through several interconnected frames. These include the diamond industry's role and characteristics as an ethnic niche, the influence of institutions, and resulting changes in social networks and opportunity structures. I will explore each of these frameworks in detail followed by a discussion on the relationship (or lack thereof) between social mobility and integration.

9.3 Frames

9.3.1 *The ethnic niche*

The characteristics of the diamond industry as an ethnic niche explain why Jews were able to reap the benefits of the 1870 *Cape Time* boom as well as later advances in the labour movement. The origin of these characteristics go back to the first arrival of Sephardic diamond traders around the turn of the seventeenth century and have long-run repercussions. For instance, if the mid-eighteenth-century city government of Amsterdam had not denied Gentile's request for a diamond workers' guild—citing Jews' role in bringing the diamond industry to Amsterdam in the first place—nineteenth-

[16] Green, *Jewish Workers in the Modern Diaspora*, 1–2.

century Jews could not have benefited from the industry's expansion. Jews were the main employers in this industry and progressively the workers as well. Since the start of the seventeenth century, Jews used the diamond industry, one of the few industrial trades they were allowed to enter, to circumnavigate exclusion in a segregated labour market. Subsequently, maintaining this niche over centuries enabled them to 'hoard opportunities' from a minority position,[17] placing them in an excellent position to prosper from the arrival of South-African-mined diamonds in the winter of 1870.

As the newfound supply of rough primary material found its way from South Africa to the Amsterdam harbour, the number of workers in this industry expanded from 1500 in 1865 to surpassing 10,000 in 1890. With a stronghold in this niche, Jews constituted the majority among this new workforce. Since learning *the* 'trade,' as it became colloquially known among Jews, was lengthy and costly, and Jews had strong footing specialising in larger diamonds, Gentile entrants focused on smaller diamonds called *chips*. With the diamond industry in the Netherlands being solely located in Amsterdam, having circumvented direct competition from local Gentile outsiders, and not yet facing severe competition internationally, Amsterdam Jews could continue to benefit from the windfall of the *Cape Time* boom for the upcoming decades.

Although not affected by competition from other workers or diamond centres in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the industry was heavily impacted by fluctuating financial markets and international conflicts. Consequently, diamond workers were frequently unemployed, in particular the Jews, who specialised in larger, more speculative diamonds. This instilled a future-oriented perspective to deal with this problem. In 1894, the answer was found in collective action. This helped stabilise living conditions in the short term, for instance by establishing unemployment funds, and granted control over the labour market to limit the number of future entrants. In the long-run, however, solutions were sought in the form of alternative careers and investments in education. These were direly needed after 1920, when the Amsterdam diamond industry collapsed due to the intensifying competition from Antwerp.

The characteristics and development of the diamond industry make it highly unique in comparison to other niches frequently participated in by Jews. Unlike tailoring or trade in second-hand clothing,[18] diamond manufacturing required years of training with costly materials, leading to high wages and initially shielding them from most forms of competition. The strong hierarchy in the industry additionally allowed Jews to keep the best positions, such as the cleaving of diamonds, for themselves. Moreover, frequent unemployment created a problem that could be partially solved by collective action and has been hypothesised to serve as a 'bridge' to better positions since these workers had both the means and the motivation to consider other careers.[19] The characteristics of the industry and its history set the stage for Jews to profit between 1870 and 1894, to profit again from its main institution in 1894, which in turn helped evade worse economic tragedies after the industry's collapse.

[17] Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, 153–54.
[18] De Vries, *From Pedlars to Textile Barons*, 28–29; Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…,'" 48–49; Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race*, 52.
[19] Heertje, *De diamantbewerkers*, 225.

9.3.2 *Institutions*

After Jewish diamond workers had benefited from the *Cape Time* boom, a combination of institutions—the *Handwerkers Vriendenkring* (HWV), ANDB, and SDAP—was all fundamental in uplifting working-class Jews and Jewish diamond workers. As exclusion from Gentile organisations persisted even after political emancipation in 1796, Jews were motivated to start their own institutions. The *Handwerkers Vriendenkring* was one of the more notable ones, established in 1869 one year before the *Cape Time* boom and following decades of calls for Jews to pick up skilled manual work.[20] The HWV aided Jews who worked in skilled labour, providing small funds for unemployment, training, and encouraging self-development.[21] After smaller associations in the diamond industry had failed to gain traction among diamond workers during the prosperous 1870s and 1880s, the HWV played a crucial role in pushing Jewish diamond workers to join the diamond workers' union in 1894 and later emerged as one of the most prevalent housing associations for Amsterdam's Jewish working-class residents.[22]

The story of Amsterdam's diamond workers cannot be told without an extensive discussion of the ANDB. Primarily, it was non-denominational despite the overrepresentation of Jews in the industry.[23] Jews and Gentiles, specialised in diamonds of different sizes, fought and went on strike side by side for better working conditions. Mandatory membership for all diamond workers was beneficial for Jews, who were the main workers in the industry, as it strengthened their numbers while minimising ethno-religious competition, but also for Gentiles, whose limited numbers in the industry would give them insufficient influence. For the Jews, a significant minority in Amsterdam, the union offered power to an otherwise largely disadvantaged and vulnerable community. High wages and a full unionisation rates enabled workers to pay hefty contributions and afforded the union to save up to sustain workers during unemployment or periods of sickness and to fund strikes. It also allowed the ANDB to heavily invest in the 'uplifting' of their members. The union's activities aimed at 'emancipating' the workers—to which Henri Polak and colleagues worked tirelessly for decades—were embodied physically by the commanding headquarters, shaped like a fortress with tall stairs to symbolise the uplifted status of its members. Messaging from the union, spread through lectures, courses, the ANDB weekly, and an imposing library subject to nationwide envy, motivated workers to invest more time in education and culture. Additionally, major successes in the union's fight for better working conditions, such as the first European eight-hour working day, facilitated self-improvement. "These people awakened… they started to read," said historian Jacques Presser, who grew up among them, including his father.[24] The subsequent social and intergenerational mobility of these workers and their families, among whom we can count Presser and many of his peers, resulted from the efforts of strong leadership, inspiring personnel, and the individual contributions of numerous motivated members. It is in this climate that most Jewish and Gentile sons and daughters of diamond workers were raised. The dissertation finds evidence that the union's promotion of continued self-development

[20] Caransa, *Handwerkers Vriendenkring*, 21–28; Blom and Cahen, "Joodse Nederlanders," 249–50.
[21] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…,'" 62.
[22] Ibid., 68-69; Caransa, *Handwerkers Vriendenkring*, 57–63.
[23] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben…,'" 352.
[24] Bregstein, *Gesprekken met Jacques Presser*, 12.

positively impacted the educational attainment for the sons of diamond workers, and this impact was significantly larger for Jewish sons as compared to their Gentile counterparts. It was this intersectionality—being Jewish and a diamond worker—that disproportionally improved the chances of their next of kin to experience upward social mobility. This also highlights how the impact of institutions like the ANDB, spreading social and cultural capital, can lead to advances in domains like human capital.

Additionally, the ANDB as an institution empowered women. Unique for its time, the union enforced equal pay for equal work, resulting in significant raises in female diamond workers' earnings. They exclusively held high positions as cutters and sometimes cleavers, which enabled—and boosted—benefits of intergenerational transmission to include daughters. In the weekly newsletters, the editor gave leading female essayists a platform to openly advocate for women's positions in the labour market.[25] There also was no marriage bar and women even received a small amount of financial support when they became mothers. Thus, female diamond workers could work in a variety of family situations, including living independently, supporting their parents, adding to the family income, and not uncommonly as female breadwinners.[26] Their relatively privileged position became all the more noticeable after 1920, when employment in the industry became harder to come by and women, more often than men, ended up in positions of lower social status.

Alongside the ANDB, Socialism provided Jews their missing pillar in a 'pillarised' society,[27] bolstered exposure to Gentiles, and fostered integration. In particular, the SDAP—the largest political party in early-twentieth-century Amsterdam— presented Jews with a political voice, considerable representation, and later worked towards building new homes for their predominantly working-class base. The ANDB played a cataclysmic role in bringing Jews into Social Democratic politics and influenced them to join the SDAP. Together, the ANDB and SDAP emphasised commonalities rather than differences between workers of distinct ethno-religious backgrounds. These commonalities were shared from a young age in new meeting spaces, such as the *Arbeiders Jeugdcentrale* ('Labourers' Youth Centre'), often credited with increasing Jewish-Gentile intermarriage rates.[28] The combination of the ANDB and SDAP largely explain why Jewish diamond workers' families so disproportionately reaped the rewards of workers' emancipation.[29] Since Gentiles had their own pillars, they received moral messaging from sources other than the ANDB. Jews, in contrast, heard the same encouragement from both the ANDB and the SDAP, each organisations where Jews were well-represented among its members and leadership. This motivated Jewish diamond workers especially to make use of the opportunities the union offered them.

The HWV, SDAP, and corresponding building associations such as the AWV were also instrumental in bringing the residences of Jews and Gentiles in closer proximity to one another. The HWV and the *Algemene Woningbouwverening* (AWV) built housing in the Transvaalbuurt, in close vicinity to buildings of other Socialist and non-Jewish building

[25] Such as Henriette van der Meij, the first female journalist in the Netherlands, who frequently wrote articles for the ANDB weekly. Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 115, 431.
[26] "Rapport over huisindustrie uit 1914. Hoofdstuk 10, De diamanthuisindustrie te Amsterdam," page 9.
[27] Daalder, "Dutch Jews in a Segmented Society."
[28] Gans, "De kleine verschillen," 51–52.
[29] That the union had a larger impact on the outcomes of Jews than Gentiles has been noted by the following historians: De Jong Edz., *Van ruw tot geslepen*, 733; Kleerekoper, "Het joodse proletariaat," 220; Bloemgarten, "Henri Polak," 1993, 645.

cooperations, creating a shared space where political beliefs and values—and not ethno-religious backgrounds—became a distinguishing feature. "The red village,"[30] as it was often called, eliminated much of the geographic differences between Jews and Gentiles. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Jewish diamond workers thus led the way out of the Jewish Quarter and into newer, cleaner, and more spacious neighbourhoods in Amsterdam East. Here, Jews identified and were seen as Socialists. In the 1930s, Gentiles increasingly moved away from the Transvaalbuurt as annexations and expansions towards the North, South, and West of the city continued.

While politics and housing brought Jews closer to Gentiles ideologically and spatially, the continued employment of Jews in the diamond industry also isolated them to some extent and limited their integration. Jewish diamond workers less commonly renounced their religious affiliation explicitly or entered into a marriage with a Gentile partner than other Jews, regardless of social class backgrounds. This is especially surprising when we consider the alleged impact participation in the Social Democratic movement had on intermarriage rates.[31] However, since I find that this pattern is not transmitted to their children, another determinant must be at play. The explanation should instead be sought in the composition of Jewish diamond workers' social networks. At work and in their union, virtually all their peers were Jewish, and these workers primarily married into families with similar backgrounds. This brings us to the third element, the changing opportunities available to Amsterdam Jews and their evolving social networks.

9.3.3 *The opportunity structure and social networks*

Another facet that is important to discuss is the evolving opportunity structure, and the social networks within them, as a frame that contributed to the variation in social mobility and integration for our different groups. In the case of Jews and Jewish diamond workers, occupational choices were established under limited opportunities by guild exclusion and general non-acceptance by mainstream society in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Wherever possible, Jews therefore found work within an ethnic niche, with co-ethnic employers, or independently. Consequently, a Jewish economy emerged with the diamond industry at the centre. Although the acceptance of Jews grew—and social differences between them and Gentiles declined—employers with similar backgrounds continued to be or became a main source of employment at the end of the nineteenth century, as was the case for the diamond industry. This niche could only persist the way it did over the long-run because Jews had historically started as employers in this field.

As the average social position of Jews began to rise, more and more Amsterdam-born Jews became successful enough to run their own stores, firms or factories with employees. Although the spectacular rise in Jews' status since 1870 was jumpstarted by the expansion of the diamond industry, this dissertation shows that growth also occurred in other occupations, including commercial travellers, merchants and shopkeepers. The growing number of domestic Jewish employers were joined by Jews from outside Amsterdam, either from the Dutch *mediene* or abroad, frequently Germany. The growing number of Jewish employers opened up opportunities for occupational diversification and upward occupational mobility for Jews in particular. Alongside

[30] Bregstein, *Gesprekken met Jacques Presser*, 15.
[31] Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 51–52.

small-scale Jewish-owned shops which employed at most a handful of employees, large department stores such as De Bijenkorf, which is still around today, and companies like De Vries Van Buuren, Hirsch and Cie, and Hollandia-Kattenburg, all became major employers of Jewish workers and helped them transition from unskilled and skilled (but niche) work into (lower) white-collar work. This is evidenced by the massive reduction in Jewish unskilled labour and rapid rises in the number of Jewish department store clerks, in warehouses, and among tailors. The diversification of occupations allowed more people to envision themselves rise within a firm or company, which may have promoted educational attainment as the expected returns to education increased.[32]

Despite the dissolution of guilds and their incorporation into the overall education system, Jews continued to be discriminated against in the labour market. Jewish religious traditions played a role in the general apprehension among employers to hire Jews. Jews initially preferred to work on Sunday rather than Saturday—to keep *Sjabbes* ('Sabbath') free—which made it difficult for them to gain employment in Gentile-owned businesses even after the guild system was dismantled. When observing religious practices such as the Sabbath became less common in the nineteenth century, barriers to entering the mainstream economy declined, but did not disappear completely. The presence of Jewish employers enabled Jewish workers to combat some of this structural discrimination. However, prejudice in the labour market had taken a new form, no longer institutional but now based on individual preferences and dislikes of employers. The evidence in this dissertation that Jews marrying Gentiles came from significantly higher social backgrounds than their spouses serves as an example of such preference-based discrimination in the marriage market. Additionally, weak evidence for discrimination is found in the fact that Jewish workers had, on average, higher levels of educational attainment than their Gentile peers in the same occupations. Both cases suggest that Jews had to 'compensate' for their ethno-religious background because of discrimination. Even if Gentile employers' preferences for working with co-ethnics over Jews were weak, taste-based discrimination in a labour market could lead to total segregation.[33] Modern audit studies have identified that immigrants face more difficulty getting jobs based only on their names[34]—many Jews could be identified based on their distinctive names, as my innovative methodology has shown in this dissertation—and historical studies have found that such discrimination also existed in the past.[35]

Thus, until the end of the nineteenth century, a likely Gentile reluctance to hire Jews, based on a 'taste' to work with co-ethnics, persisted. These tastes changed, as people did, with the emergence of Social Democracy as a force in late-nineteenth-century Amsterdam. Jews and similar-minded Gentiles rebranded themselves as socialists and grew up in the same neighbourhoods, influencing their preferences for partners through more shared beliefs and exposure to one another. In other words, boundaries between groups blurred. Political beliefs, and not religious background, increasingly mattered

[32] Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race*, 221–22.
[33] Gary Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination* (Chicago, 1957), 14–16.
[34] Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *American Economic Review* 94.4 (2004): 991–1013.
[35] Petra Moser, "Taste-Based Discrimination Evidence from a Shift in Ethnic Preferences after WWI," *Explorations in Economic History* 49.2 (2012): 167–88; Vasiliki Fouka, "How Do Immigrants Respond to Discrimination? The Case of Germans in the US during World War I," *American Political Science Review* 113.2 (2019): 405–22.

when finding a life partner. Intermarriage rates rose significantly when the SDAP soared in membership counts from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Moreover, Socialism changed the social networks people had. Within the working class, Jews no longer mingled exclusively with co-ethnics. In higher strata, political leaders of Jewish descent garnered greater acceptance for the Jewish people in the capital and across the country.

This dissertation highlights the diverging changes in the networks of Jews and Gentiles. While Jews continued to marry partners of similar class backgrounds, they decreasingly married partners whose families worked in the same occupational groups as their own families. This allowed for more intergenerational diversification of occupations and, combined with increasing intermarriages—which also became more equal between partners—started a self-reinforcing process of widening social networks and occupations.

The competing diamond manufacturing centre in Antwerp offered an alternative to dealing with Amsterdam's opportunity structure. Migrating to Antwerp allowed diamond workers to widen or circumnavigate their opportunities. However, the same social networks persisted in the *Scheldestad* and remained an important driver of career success. Jewish diamond workers were more likely to make this trek but often ended up in exclusively Jewish circles and mainly working for Dutch-Jewish employers such as Eduard van Dam. Thus, Amsterdam's Jewish diamond workers were strictly bounded by their local and nearby opportunities and networks, which were definitive for current and intergenerational mobility, but also subject to change during the period studied.

9.4 Relationship between social mobility and integration

My dissertation complicates the common notion that social mobility and integration are synonymous or always moved in tandem. In classical assimilation theory, upward social mobility and assimilation were by-and-large equated and assumed to be processes that progressed linearly.[36] The divergent patterns shown in this dissertation indicate that this was not the case. Like broader society, the Jewish community was segmented and diverged in the pace and extent of social mobility and integration. Segmented assimilation theory was developed to incorporate such diversity.[37] On top of the general, linear pathway ("linear upward assimilation"), it added two alternative pathways: "linear downward assimilation," which occurred when minorities integrated into lower social classes, and "selective assimilation," whereby individuals deliberately maintained strong ethnic ties and worked in ethnic economies to pursue social mobility absent of integration.

Several subgroups of Amsterdam Jews fit in these categories, albeit as a native minority group and not as immigrants. For instance, many 'elite' Jews followed the first pathway,[38] and the Jewish underclass of porters discussed in Chapter 5 embody elements of the second, downward pathway. To some extent, Jewish diamond workers fit in the third category. They exemplified the core of the Jewish ethnic economy through which they achieved upward mobility while keeping strong ties to the Jewish community as indicated by their low intermarriage and disaffiliation rates. However, key aspects of

[36] Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 70–71.
[37] Portes and Zhou, "The New Second Generation."
[38] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 105–7.

their experiences do not fit the mould presented by the theory. Although working in the diamond industry shielded Jews from most labour market discrimination, few Jews who were members of the ANDB—and not the much smaller Jewish union Betsalel—"deliberately" maintained their ties through employment in the Jewish economy. Instead, the diamond industry offered the best chances for upward mobility, both within and outside of the Jewish community, evidenced by mobility rates that exceeded those seen by other groups in Amsterdam. Moreover, Jewish diamond workers did integrate strongly in several life domains, including working on the Sabbath, which became normalised in the twentieth century,[39] their strong representation among Social Democrats, and pioneering spatial integration. Their temporary isolation in the domain of work through participation in an ethnic niche also directly contributed to their descendants' educational attainment and enabled them to follow more traditional paths of integration. At the same time, most "downwardly assimilated" porters did not show signs of integration into the Gentile underclass, and recent evidence suggests experiences of Jewish elite also does not show a uniform pattern.[40] Thus, while segmented assimilation offers key insights for studying integration and problematises its relationship with social mobility, its pathways cannot incorporate the full range of experiences observed among Amsterdam Jews and in different facets of life.

New assimilation theory presented by Alba and Nee offers a non-normative alternative to segmented assimilation theory. It provides a common language to discuss the process of integration. Additionally, it creates more space for non-ethnics, like Amsterdam's Gentiles, as actors in the process of Jewish integration. Differences between ethnic groups are identified as "(bright) boundaries" which can be altered through "blurring," "crossing," and "shifting."[41] The individual act of crossing to the mainstream group, leaving the boundary unchanged, was rare; religious conversions hardly occurred. Blurring takes place when social distinctions fade, for instance through mixed marriages, widespread religious disaffiliation, and decreasing residential segregation. Since the late nineteenth century, boundaries were blurred extensively through departures from the Jewish Quarter, increasing marriages with Gentiles, and to some extent by secularisation, although this rarely translated in disaffiliation recorded in population registers.[42] Jews blurred boundaries in different ways depending on their social class. For instance, Jewish diamond workers moved to "red villages" with other socialists and later to middle-class neighbourhoods in Amsterdam South, elite Jews moved further away to upper-class districts in the southwest of the city, and many working-class Jews remained in the Jewish Quarter until their living quarters were destroyed and were relocated to more spacious homes in Amsterdam East. Gentiles, however, partially 'brightened' lines in the early twentieth century. After Jews and Gentiles had simultaneously moved into areas in Amsterdam East, Gentiles started departing for newer areas, leaving behind a growing Jewish concentration. Such patterns were less observed for elite Jews. Furthermore, while Jews' residential patterns blurred nicely along class lines, intermarriages showed less clear patterns. Here, diamond

[39] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 96.
[40] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 265–67.
[41] Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream*, 60; Richard Alba, "Bright vs. Blurred Boundaries: Second-Generation Assimilation and Exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28.1 (2005): 20–49.
[42] See Chapter 2 for statistics by occupation. For a broader discussion, see Tammes, "Abandoning Judaism."

workers stood out with their uniquely low levels of intermarriage in contrast to Jews from all other social classes.

Shifting, the increasing inclusion of previously excluded individuals, also occurred differently by social class. The political sphere is one main aspect of this category. Initially, Jews had adhered to Liberalism, but since the last decade of the nineteenth century working-class Jews more strongly associated with Social Democracy.[43] The Jewish diamond workers were, through the messaging from their union and its leader, Henri Polak, the most politically active subgroup of Amsterdam Jews. Consequently, their high civic involvement caused numerous important SDAP figures to come from diamond worker milieus. Jews employed in unskilled labour often had no unions to turn, leading to much lower rates of political participation. Another aspect of shifting boundaries is prejudice from outsiders. This dissertation has provided evidence of discrimination in the marriage market and, likely, the labour market. However, discrimination declined over time, embodied by more intermarriages, narrowing differences in social status backgrounds of intermarried partners, and a widening of Jews' occupational distribution. At the same time, remnants of discrimination remained noticeable. Working-class Jews increasingly worked in Jewish-owned department stores and workplaces for ready-to-wear garments,[44] many diamond workers switched to employment as commercial travellers, and among Jews in the educational elite historic preferences for topics in law and medicine persisted.[45]

In short, the case of Amsterdam Jews shows that upward social mobility could be a sign of integration, especially with regards to boundary blurring, but their experiences and reception by Gentiles varied distinctly by social class background. As such, class is not an all-encompassing characteristic that can be automatically linked to integration and the same is true for changes in social classes. The existence of ethnic niches within different social strata complicates this further. The diamond workers stand out as a unique case in this regard. While ethnic niches could hamper integration through isolation and persistent strong ties with co-ethnics, it could also advance integration in the domains of political participation and, in turn, residential assimilation. Especially in intergenerational respect, it created a fertile ground for the mainstream integration of their children. How ethnic niches affected the integration and social mobility of Jews depended strongly on their own characteristics, those of the ethnic niche, and the wider opportunity structure in which they were located. For the autochthonous Amsterdam Jews, who comprised a significantly large share of the population and held a stronghold over a well-remunerated niche in a luxury industry, remaining in the Jewish economy could actually accelerate their integration in some domains while limiting it in others. This builds on earlier research showing that this held true in Amsterdam and diverged from experiences in Jewish niches in Paris and London.[46] This dissertation has attempted to illuminate this case further for one group of Jewish *workers* who, based on the findings presented here, deserve further investigation in other contexts to contrast against the experiences of Jewish entrepreneurs.

[43] Hofmeester, "Jewish Parliamentary Representatives," 77.
[44] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 48–49.
[45] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 116–17.
[46] Hofmeester, "'Als ik niet voor mijzelf ben...,'" 341–56; see also David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914* (New Haven, 1994); and Green, *The Pletzl of Paris*.

9.5 Setting the agenda

In her recent dissertation, Sietske van der Veen proposed that future research should focus on the various subgroups of Dutch Jewry, rather than go on a "quest" for representative quantitative data. [47] Although I agree with Van der Veen that egodocuments provide deep insights into Jews' life strategies and feelings of identity and belonging, I believe that the lack of quantitative data and analyses regarding Dutch Jewry has limited the ongoing discussion, prevented existing knowledge from being challenged and new questions from being asked, and constrained comparisons with non-Jews to advance our holistic understanding of Dutch Jews. Moreover, the reliance on deep contextual knowledge on Jewish history, for instance through specific microhistories, has kept a narrow, qualitative perspective within Dutch-Jewish history. Consequently, few contemporary sociologists or demographic and economic historians have engaged with this historiography, hindering new insights from a more comparative perspective. Nor do I believe a quest for representative quantitative data is needed. This data already exists. As I have shown, a majority of Jews can easily be identified in historical records on the basis of their names. My *Jewish Name Index* makes it possible to study individual Jewish lives with any source containing possible Jewish names. Since 1811, Jews were present and recorded in the same sources used to write the social, economic, and demographic histories of non-Jews throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Moreover, the dissertation by Van der Veen and the current dissertation showcase the complementarity between quantitative and qualitative analyses. Personal narratives and ego documents help us understand individual motivations. How widespread these motivations were can be questioned. This can be clearly seen in the discussion on intermarriages. Diamond workers, predominantly of Social Democratic ideology, were presumed to be more likely to intermarry with Gentile partners. Empirical results from this dissertation show that was not the case. Alternatively, what large-scale data on Jewish diamond workers can tell us about their beliefs, motivations, and aspirations has its limits. Novels, biographies, newspapers and union periodicals shape the meaning behind these numbers. Together, quantitative and qualitative sources will enable us to fully understand the lives, experiences, and mobilities of Jews in historical Amsterdam.

Instead of focusing on the "quest" for representative quantitative data, this dissertation has identified a number of avenues that require further investigation. One key element relevant for both social mobility and integration that has, thus far, received too little attention in the historiography, is the educational attainment of Dutch Jews. At the time of their political emancipation, Jews were more often illiterate than Gentiles. They received segregated primary education, generally of considerably worse quality than available to the rest of the population. Until the Education Law of 1857, this separated education system prevailed. Since 1861, when the law was formally enacted, Jews received the same non-denominational primary education as everyone else. The fruits of this reform are clearly seen in the decades closest to World War II. Young Jewish men attained more years of schooling than their Gentile counterparts, regardless of class, and Jewish men and women were markedly overrepresented among university graduates.[48] What happened in between those two points in time remains understudied.

[47] Van der Veen, "Novel Opportunities, Perpetual Barriers," 271.
[48] Evidenced by the outcomes of the Education Census of 1930 and discussed in Chapter 8.

However, one may expect that Jews' greater investments in education led to increased integration and continued upward social mobility in Dutch society. Studying the student bodies of individual secondary schools in Amsterdam, particularly the earliest HBS and business schools, would be a good starting point to bring more clarity to the subject. This would also enhance opportunities to incorporate the lives and stories of Jewish girls and women. Educational elites, such as Jewish doctorates, similarly deserve more attention.

Related to the topic of education is the expansion of Jewish employers. As my study of the diamond industry has shown, Jewish employers were key in ensuring employment for their co-ethnic employees. Regardless of educational attainment, nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Jews have regularly mentioned discrimination in employment practices by non-Jewish managers. The growth in Jewish-owned businesses, both small and large, enabled Jews to capitalise on their varying types of education. Garment factories, department stores, law offices and banks all contributed to the employment of lower and higher skilled Jews. This was key for uplifting the poor working classes, Leydesdorff's 'lumpenproletariat,' but also avoiding discrimination felt by higher-educated Jews.[49] Although Jewish businesses have received considerable attention from historians,[50] rarely has their role in hiring practices been examined. These businesses, together with the growing number of commercial travellers—employed by larger firms, especially in textiles—increasingly stood at the core of Jews' economic and cultural experiences and offered a stepping stone for next generations to navigate the much wider Gentile society. Jewish businesses also provide the possibility to link Amsterdam-Jewish history with new locations, including the origins of its founders and the social destinations of their employees.

[49] Such as those described by Van Praag, *Een lange jeugd*, 57–61.

[50] For instance, De Vries, *From Pedlars to Textile Barons*; Berg, Fischer, and Wijsenbeek, *Venter, fabriqueur, fabrikant*; Fransisca de Haan, *Een eigen patroon: geschiedenis van een joodse familie en haar bedrijven, ca. 1800-1964* (Amsterdam, 2002); Ter Braake and Van Trigt, *Leerhandelaar, looier, lederfabrikant*; De Jong, "Joodse ondernemers in het Nederlandse film- en bioscoopbedrijf"; Knoop, *Hirsch & Cie*; Metz, *Diamantgracht*; Wallet, Post, and Joachimsthal, *Joachimsthal*.