This paper examines processes of social mobility and social reproduction for men and women born in Britain in 1970. We examine the roles of social origins and educational institutions in determining social class and income destinations in mid-life. What is the role of elite universities and elite fields of study in determining elite social class position and income in mid-life? Did social origins have a direct influence on social position in mid-life, net of educational and cognitive factors? How important were selective and fee-paying schools in reproducing social inequalities or generating social mobility for this generation?

We examine both income and social class attainment for men and women at age 42, using the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70). We exploit rich data on higher education attainments to examine the roles of both elite institutions and field of study on outcomes. We find differentials in the returns to degrees according to the subject studied. For both men and women, degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and Law, Economics and Business (LEB) were higher than returns for humanities degrees. The status of the higher education institution appeared to matter less than the subject studied. Attending a private secondary school had a direct link income at age 42 for men but not for women.

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