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Is Being Part of the Elite still Meaningful? An Exploratory Study based on Interviews with *Alumni* from Polytechnique and Harvard

This article discusses the increasing trend among young people to question their professional aspirations and be in search of meaningful work. Young graduates from elite schools are no exception to this. In this qualitative research interviews were conducted with alumni from Harvard University and École polytechnique, Paris. The main results are threefold. First, young graduates from elite schools find most meaning at work in environments where they feel intellectually stimulated and have opportunities to constantly learn and/or advance their career. Second, paradoxically, this quest for excellence through self-betterment often comes at the cost of depersonalisation, as notably manifest in how the informants behave like ‘excellent sheep’ lacking a sense of self-direction, showing inner conflicts, and giving ambivalent answers. Third, this mental confusion often gives way to a trade-off logic, showing how various coping strategies can be applied to make elite work more meaningful.

Keywords: Meaningful work, young graduates, elite schools, work-life balance, coping strategies

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❖ 12h30 – Salle 103 / Comodal

❖ Participer à la réunion Zoom

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