

## ABSTRACT

Title: Learning the rules of art – A sociological study of uncertain future investments  
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This dissertation illuminates approaches to artistic professional fields with uncertain conditions and work markets. The aim is to examine eleven actors' career paths in terms of position-taking and capital accumulation. The empirical material builds upon sequential interviews which have taken place on four occasions, between 1999 and 2003/2004, with seven young women. On one occasion, four well-established professors of art have also been interviewed. The study investigates how the actors negotiate about careers in relation to economic standard, housing and family projects, as well as what significance class and gender identity, security and uncertainty have had in these contexts. Theoretical linkage is to Pierre Bourdieu's conflict perspective and feministic views of actors' resources and possibilities to compete and negotiate with these resources. Anthony Giddens' and Ulrich Beck's theories are used to understand people's choice situations, security-seeking, and reflexive possibilities in relation to a modern society.

For the interviewees, the artistic path's risks concern opportunities for work and reasonable income, what is suitable to achieve and present in artistic contexts, and anxiety that one's creative ability may disappear. They see the more positive chances in the profession's potential freedom and the possibility of contributing through art to something aesthetically, ethically and politically meaningful in society.

In the dissertation, two theoretical tools are developed for analysing one's attitude toward the future. The 'vision biography' is a conscious plan where the future is more calculable by comparison with the 'practical future-feeling', which is an investment made to a greater extent on a level of practical action. To deal with the artistic profession's uncertainties, it is important to have learned, early in family and educational contexts, with the more or less explicit rules of the game. It is then easier to survey career paths and have confidence that the obstacles in the path can be overcome. This trust enables the actors to strengthen reliance in their artistic abilities and to cope better with the ideology of will that they encounter during the journey – an outlook in which individual will and ambition are seen as the primary foundation of artistic careers.

In various portals to professional fields of art, the interviewees build up a practical feeling about their future prospects. They learn a modernistic conception that artistic self-development is hindered by care for other people. The seven young women reproduce this dualistic mental image in their career paths, but also challenge it by maintaining that self-development can equally well involve social relations and taking time to consider what future they want. As a kind of children of freedom in late modern fields, they try both to control the future and to make the most of the present. Thus they are less classically combative than an earlier modernistic avant-garde and exploit experiences from private life as cultural resources, which they weave together in a life-political manner of working. Artistic activity thereby becomes a practice where the borders between public and private are diffuse – a capacity which, however, depends on previous experiences and accumulated capital, as well as the times and spaces in which they operate.

Keywords: Future investment, artistic field, habituation, cultural capital, gender, will-ideology, reflexivity, children of freedom.