

## Call for Papers

### **The Sociology of Failure: Failing in Contemporary Society**

The editors invite contributions to a co-edited book which aims to establish a sociological account of failure. We seek empirical case-studies attempting to uncover the role of failure, or the thought of failure, in contemporary western societies. Thus far, sociologists have generally discussed failure in a reflexive, almost, philosophical manner. This is evident in the work of Beck on risk society, Bauman on fear, Sennett on the workplace and De Botton on status anxiety. This book intends to approach failure from an empirical viewpoint: through sociologically informed case studies, we aim to understand and discuss the topic of failure broadly.

We challenge you to look at your empirical data through the prism of failure. Topics might encompass the relationship between failure and psychological illnesses such as depression; failure in political engagement (i.e. failed civic participation); failure at work, on the labor market, in education; and in informal care taking; pedagogical failure in parenting; failure in maintaining social networks and friendships, in meeting beauty standards, or failure in the academic world.

In contemporary western societies success seems a choice, and a duty. Opportunities abound and choices are perceived as endless. Failure, the inevitable flip side of success, is hidden from view, and becomes shameful. Education, fitness centers and self-help books exhort us to seize opportunities, to achieve, and to become successful and better versions of ourselves. Through social media these better versions of selves are further constructed and perfected, while one hardly asks how true they are. We suggest that failure is such a crucial part of life in meritocratic societies that it merits attention in itself.

The editors invite empirical contributions exploring the place of individual failing and (fear of) failure in contemporary societies. All subjects and theoretical perspectives are welcome as long as they deal with individual failure (and not institutional or state failure) and are empirical and social scientific in nature. We primarily focus on:

- The role of failure in contemporary society.
- The way failure is related to meritocratic ideals.
- Failure and (social) media.

For more information or contributions: Judith Elshout ([j.a.g.elshout@uva.nl](mailto:j.a.g.elshout@uva.nl)) or Thomas Franssen ([t.p.franssen@uva.nl](mailto:t.p.franssen@uva.nl))

Edited by Judith Elshout, Thomas Franssen and Giseline Kuipers. University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Proposals (300 words max.) must be submitted by April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Full Chapters Due: November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011