Karlan, Appel Publish New Book

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Dean Karlan, Professor of Economics and Director of the International and Development Economics Program (IDE), along with co-author, Jacob Appel, have just published their second book called, Failing in the Field: What We Can Learn When Field Research Goes Wrong (Princeton University Press). The authors describe five common categories of failures, review six case studies in detail, and conclude with some reflections on best (and worst) practices for designing and running field projects, with an emphasis on randomized controlled trials.

According to Karlan’s blog, the book was inspired by U.S. inventor Thomas Edison, and highlights “different types of research failures—of cases where a study is conceived with a particular question in mind, but does not manage to answer it. Either researchers started out with a faulty plan, or they had a good plan but were derailed by events that took place once the study was underway.”

Continuing in the same post, Karlan writes, “Failing in the Field is an effort to document some of the failures and lessons learned in this space so that others, to paraphrase Edison, do not have to re-prove that all those 700 ways do not work.”

Dean Karlan is President & Founder of Innovations for Poverty Action and a Professor of Economics at Yale University. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Jacob Appel previously worked with Innovations for Poverty Action, and is currently pursuing his MPA at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Karlan and Appel are the coauthors of More Than Good Intentions: How a New Economics Is Helping to Solve Global Poverty.

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