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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
March 2024

Good afternoon,

In May 2023 we announced the launch of the [J-PAL North America Racial Equity Advisory Committee](#) to inform how to fund research related to racial equity, how to identify the researchers positioned to do this work, and how to support those researchers. As the Scientific Advisor to the committee, I've benefited greatly from working with a group of insightful and dedicated collaborators, both on our committee and among the staff at J-PAL. We've learned a lot about the challenges and great potential in this area. I look forward to building on this momentum in our next phase of work.

Since J-PAL North America's formal commitment to furthering research related to racial equity in 2023, we have made several strides. The establishment of the advisory committee—composed of scholars from a diversity of backgrounds and disciplines—has been central. As a committee, we have been tackling important questions, such as: How do we define racial equity within research? How do we conduct ethical randomized evaluations related to racial equity? What support and information do researchers need to do this work well? What collaborations and connections are needed to diversify J-PAL's researcher network and encourage a wider set of research agendas? While we continue to seek answers to these questions, we have made progress on provisional definitions and framings, on setting the parameters of our initial efforts, and on concrete and tangible goals for the near future.

In the next few months, we are looking forward to several notable opportunities to involve more scholars interested in questions of racial equity and advance research related to racial equity. In our upcoming Spring and Fall [Request for Proposals](#), we will solicit proposals that aim to address racial equity in the research questions and study design. In the meantime—with support from J-PAL North America staff—the committee will conduct a literature review on the scientific value of randomized evaluations in investigating and addressing the causes and consequences of racism in North America. We hope to provide an overview of existing studies, identify important insights from disciplines outside of economics, and spur new work to fill gaps in the literature.

I invite you to join us in our effort to center racial equity in economics research by exploring our [seven-part blog series on researching racial equity](#) or getting in touch. The Spring RFP, for researchers in the J-PAL network, will open in two weeks, on April 10. We particularly welcome proposals that incorporate research questions involving racial equity. I

encourage you to reach out to [Noreen Giga](#), Senior Research Manager at J-PAL North America, or myself in the meantime with any questions.

Damon Jones

Associate Professor, University of Chicago

Scientific Advisor and Chair, J-PAL North America Racial Equity Advisory Committee



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Researching racial equity: Building capacity for research and practice

In the [last blog post](#) in our seven-part series on researching racial equity, [Damon Jones](#) (UChicago) and J-PAL staff reflect on the recent efforts by J-PAL North America to prioritize research addressing racial equity. These efforts include forming our racial equity advisory committee and establishing J-PAL North America's working definition of racial equity. We highlight key milestones and outline future plans for advancing racial equity in economic research, with a focus on supporting rigorous investigations into the root causes of poverty and racial disparities.



Photo credit: J-PAL North America

The LA Homelessness Evaluation Network: Lessons learned from supporting organizations build evidence and evaluation capacity

In August 2023, J-PAL North America launched a new project to increase the capacity of Los Angeles-based homeless service providers and government agencies to generate and use evidence to inform decision making—the LA Homelessness Evaluation (LAHE) Network. Over the course of seven months, network members attended monthly trainings on impact evaluations and “office hour” sessions where they received small group support from J-PAL North America staff to facilitate peer learning. The lessons learned through the LAHE Network—highlighted in [this J-PAL blog post](#)—demonstrated the value of providing trainings and office hours, offering resources on building out research questions and theories of change, and preparing organizations to think critically about evaluation.



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Centering parents' emotions in randomized evaluations of cash transfers

Baby's First Years is a J-PAL-supported evaluation studying the role of poverty alleviation on child development. [On the J-PAL blog](#), [Lisa A. Gennetian](#) (Duke University) and [Sarah Halpern-Meekin](#) (University of Wisconsin-Madison), two researchers involved in Baby's First Years, discuss the importance of centering parents and their experiences to better understand the impact cash payments have on families. They reflect that “expanding our understanding of parenting and development by considering...emotions can strengthen the validity and relevance of results of randomized evaluations.”

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



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Quantifying racial discrimination in major US housing markets

Racial housing discrimination is tied to residential segregation and inequitable economic opportunity. In a 2020 study, featured in [part two](#) of the researching racial equity series, researchers conducted a correspondence study assessing property managers' responses to rental listing inquiries from prospective tenants with distinctively Black, Hispanic/Latinx, or white names in the United States. Property managers were significantly less likely to respond to messages from prospective Black or Hispanic/Latinx renters than white ones. The differences in response rates varied across cities, and anti-Black discrimination was associated with larger patterns of residential segregation and economic mobility.

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



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Leveraging the J-PAL dataverse

Data publication is a key tool in advancing open and transparent research practices that can enhance the ability of researchers to replicate and learn from data and enable exploration by students, policy partners, study participants, and others. [J-PAL's dataverse](#) contains data from more than 100 randomized evaluations, as well as analysis code, survey instruments, and other useful components. In this [research resource](#), J-PAL staff share guidance on finding and downloading materials in the dataverse and walk through how to use some of its tools.

FEATURED EVENT

[J-PAL's annual Evaluating Social Programs course](#)

Our annual Evaluating Social Programs course equips participants with the resources and

knowledge to design, use, and interpret evidence from impact evaluations of social programs. [Apply today](#) for the week-long course hosted in Cambridge at MIT!

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