

# Karen Nershi

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## Academic Appointments

Postdoctoral Fellow, Stanford Internet Observatory *Sep 2021 - present*

## Education

**Ph.D. in Political Science**, University of Pennsylvania *2021*

Studies in the Political Economy of Anti-Money Laundering Regulation  
Committee: Beth A. Simmons (chair), Edward D. Mansfield, Julia Gray  
Fields of Study: International Relations & Comparative Politics

**M.A. in Political Science**, University of Pennsylvania *2018*

**B.A. in International Studies** (*summa cum laude*), University of Alabama *2013*

## Additional Training

*Summer Institute in Social Science Methods*, ETH Zürich; Zürich, Switzerland. *2019*

*Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models*, Collegio Carlo Alberto; Turin, Italy. *2018*

## Doctoral Research

How Strong Are Anti-Money Laundering Laws in Practice? Evidence from Cryptocurrency Transactions. *Dissertation.*

Although many countries have adopted strict anti-money laundering laws, data leaks and a growing number of major money laundering scandals call into question how effectively countries enforce these laws. I provide insight into cross-national variation in enforcement by studying the application of a new customer due diligence law, which requires cryptocurrency exchanges to screen customers for money laundering risk. I collect a new dataset of cryptocurrency trades from 60 exchanges and compare levels of suspicious activity across exchanges by measuring trade “bunching” below a 1,000 USD/EUR threshold that requires customer due diligence. My research shows that there is significant variation in how well countries enforce anti-money laundering laws, a finding that holds important implications for international efforts to combat money laundering.

Ties that Bind? Chinese Foreign Direct Investment & Political Influence in Africa.  
*Working paper.*

Estimating the Economic Costs of Money Laundering. *Work in progress.*

## Selected Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

Perry World House Graduate Associate, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	2020-2021
Provost Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Innovation, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	2020
Research Grant, <i>Browne Center for International Politics</i>	2018, 2019, 2020
Prestige-Cook Travel Award, <i>Southern Political Science Association</i>	2020
Summer Institute in Computational Social Science, <i>ETH Zürich</i>	2019
Young Investigator Scholarship, <i>Network for the Advancement of Social and Political Studies</i>	2018
E. W. Mumford Graduate Fellow, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	2018
Mellon Ethnopol Graduate Fellow, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	2017
Foreign Language & Area Studies Fellowship (Arabic), <i>U.S. Dept. of State</i>	2016
Benjamin Franklin Fellowship, <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	2015
Critical Language Scholarship (Arabic), <i>U.S. Department of State</i>	2013

## Original Datasets

### Cross-National Cryptocurrency Trades Dataset

Includes trades from 65 of the world's highest volume cryptocurrency exchanges between 07/01/2020 and 08/15/2020

Details the time, amount, and price of trades between Bitcoin and Ethereum to dollars, euros, and other international currencies

Collected in real time from each site's API using remote servers from Amazon Web Services

### International Money Laundering Cases Dataset

Details money laundering cases against individuals and banks between 01/01/2001 and 07/01/2020

Collected using keyword searches of articles in the *New York Times* and *The Financial Times*

Presents the first dataset of money laundering cases and is supported by the Browne Center for International Politics and the University of Pennsylvania's GAPSA Provost Innovation Fellowship

## Conference Presentations

“Testing the Economic Costs of Money Laundering.”

*American Political Science Association annual conference.* Seattle, WA. 2021  
*International Studies Association annual conference.* Virtual. 2021

“How Strong Are Anti-Money Laundering Laws in Practice?”

*American Political Science Association annual conference (Poster).* Virtual. 2021  
*International Empirical Research Conference on Anti-Money Laundering and  
 Financial Crime.* Virtual. 2021  
*Southern Political Science Association annual conference.* Virtual. 2021  
*Visions in Methodology Job Talk Series.* Virtual. 2020

“Ties that Bind: Chinese Foreign Direct Investment and Political Influence.”

*International Studies Association annual conference.* Virtual. 2021  
*Graduate Student International Political Economy Workshop: The Inter-  
 national Political Economy of Aid and Development.* Virtual. 2020  
*Southern Political Science Association annual conference.* San Juan, PR. 2020

## Skills

### *Statistics*

Linear & Logistic Regression, Time Series Analysis, Hierarchical Models, Instrumental Variables, Synthetic Control, Random Forests

### *Data Science*

Web Scraping, APIs, SQL, Data Cleaning

### *Technology*

Python, R, STATA, LaTeX

### *Languages*

Arabic (intermediate), German (intermediate), French (beginner)

## Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, *University of Pennsylvania*

Introduction to International Relations (Prof. Edward Mansfield) 2016, 2020  
 International Relations and Ethics (Prof. Mark Pollack) 2018  
 Introduction to International Relations (Prof. Alex Weisiger) 2017  
 International Political Economy (Prof. Mark Pollack) 2017

## Professional Experience

**Executive Project Manager**, *Barrister Global Services Network, Inc.* 2014-2015

**Hammond, LA**

Analyzed contracts with top vendors and negotiated with a top vendor to reduce costs by 30%

Provided research and managed special projects for the executive board, including a successful bid for a federal contracting certification for which the company had previously been rejected

**Public Affairs Intern, U.S. Department of State; Frankfurt, Germany** 2012

Wrote speeches, reports, and talking points for consulate spokespeople on cultural and political topics relevant to U.S.-German relations

Presented on U.S. politics at high schools throughout the Rhein-Neckar region and participated in events with consulate officials and key figures of the region's art and cultural communities

Co-managed the consulate's social media leading to a 27% increase in traffic to the Facebook page

**Foreign Language Immersion Programs**

*CIEE Intensive Arabic Language Program; Amman, Jordan (8 weeks)* 2016

Supported by a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship

*Critical Language Scholarship Program (Arabic); Meknes, Morocco (8 weeks)* 2013

*Direct Exchange: University of Mannheim; Mannheim, Germany (5 months)* 2012

**Academic Service**

Southern Political Science Annual Conference 2021

*Discussant*, Panel: Politics, Big Data, and New Technology

International Studies Association Annual Conference 2021

*Chair*, Panel: Politics and Power in Global Financial Markets

*Chair*, Panel: Refugees and Migrants: The Political Economy of Mobility

*Chair*, Panel: The Political Economy of Autocratic Resilience

**University Service**

Graduate Associate in Residence, *Gregory College House (UPenn)* 2016-2021

Mentored undergraduate students in a residential setting and provided educational programming for residents

## Activities

- Perry World House Graduate Associate** *2020-2021*
- The Data Open** (Datathon), Citadel *2020*
- Summer Invitational Datathon**, Citadel *2020*  
One of the top 10% selected from 2,000 applicants to compete in Citadel's datathon  
Finished 3rd out of 50 teams in a competition to create the best data-driven report addressing an original research question

## References

### **Beth A. Simmons**

Professor of Political Science  
University of Pennsylvania  
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### **Edward D. Mansfield**

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### **Julia C. Gray**

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