

Kennedy Johnston

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Texas A&M University | Department of Economics | College Station, TX 77843

Education

Texas A&M University

College Station, TX

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Economics (in progress)

Expected May 2027

Dissertation Committee: Danila Serra (Chair), Catherine Eckel, Jonathan Meer, Laura Dague

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Lincoln, NE

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

May 2022

Major: Economics (Honors); Minor: Mathematics

Research Fields

Crime; Gender; Behavioral and Experimental

Job Market Paper

The Under-Reporting of Sexual Assault: An Experiment on Victims, Perpetrators, and Social Judgment

[Link to Paper.](#)

[Pre-Registered on the AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0015001; Funded by Arnold Ventures.]

Media Coverage: Fighting Crime Podcast ([YouTube](#); [Spotify](#))

Abstract: Sexual assault imposes substantial economic costs, yet existing data likely understate its prevalence. I investigate how social judgment suppresses disclosure by victims and perpetrators. In an online experiment with 1,600 college students and graduates, respondents answer questions about rape and unwanted sexual contact using direct elicitation or “hard-garbling,” which provides plausible deniability. Among women, deniability increases reports of non-rape victimization by 23 percent. Among men, it doubles reports of rape perpetration, with 13.1 percent admitting perpetration under hard-garbling. I also find widespread beliefs that victims may be lying and misperceptions about victim-blaming prevalence, suggesting victims anticipate negative judgment for disclosing.

Other Working Papers

Shaping Major Choice: The Role of High School Counselors

(with Jonathan Meer and Danila Serra)

NBER Working Paper No. 35365. [Link to Paper.](#)

[Pre-Registered on the AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0004320; Funded by SSRC and CSWEP.]

Works in Progress

A Crime with Little Punishment? The Likelihood of Arrest Following A Sexual Assault Report

Returns to College Grades

(with Jonathan Meer)

The Impacts of Campus Violence: Evidence from College School Shootings

(with Nathan Wise)

Sexual Assault Reporting Platforms and Social Norms: Insights from Callisto Users and an Online Experiment

[Pre-Registered on the AEA RCT Registry: AEARCTR-0016107; Funded by Arnold Ventures.]

Redefining Strength: Martial Arts, Masculinity, and Girls' Empowerment

(with Danila Serra and Olga Shurchkov)

Grants

Arnold Ventures (planning grant) – \$97,387	2024
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(with Danila Serra)

Title: Breaking the Silence: Under-Reporting of Campus Sexual Assault and the Role of Callisto

Scholarships and Fellowships

Gail Frey Monson Memorial Scholarship (Texas A&M University)	2026
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MH Webber Scholarship (Texas A&M University)	2025
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John Van Huyck Fellowship (Texas A&M University)	2024
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Aviles-Johnson Graduate Fellowship (Texas A&M University)	2022
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Presentations

Freiburg Ph.D. Workshop on the Economics of Criminal Behavior (Planned), Germany	2026
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Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting (Planned), Houston, TX	2026
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The Virtual Crime Economics (ViCE) Seminar Series (Planned)	2026
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Texas Economics of Crime Workshop (TxECW), Austin, TX	2026
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North-American Economic Science Association (ESA) Conference, Tucson, AZ	2025
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Annual Texas Experimental Association Symposium (TExAS), Waco, TX	2025
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Research Experience

Research Assistant

Drs. Jonathan Meer and Danila Serra, Texas A&M University	<i>Spring 2024 – present</i>
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Dr. Danila Serra, Texas A&M University	<i>Summer 2023</i>
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Dr. Daniel Tannenbaum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln	<i>Summer 2022</i>
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Drs. Ann Mari May and Daniel Tannenbaum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln	<i>Summer 2019</i>
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Teaching Experience

ECON440: Experimental Economics

<i>Instructor of Record at Texas A&M University</i>	<i>Summer 2025</i>
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ECMT461: Economic Data Analysis

<i>Teaching Assistant for Dr. Craig Schulman at Texas A&M University</i>	<i>Fall 2023, Fall 2025</i>
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ECON441: Policy Economics

<i>Teaching Assistant for Dr. Danila Serra at Texas A&M University</i>	<i>Spring 2024</i>
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ECON421: Economics of Crime

Teaching Assistant for Dr. Chelsea Strickland at Texas A&M University Fall 2022, Spring 2023

Referee Experience

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management

Professional Service

Economic Graduate Student Association

Second Year Representative

College Station, TX

August 2023 – May 2024

Department of Economics, Texas A&M University

First-Year Ph.D. Student Mentor

College Station, TX

August 2023 – May 2024

References

Danila Serra (Chair)

Professor

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Texas A&M University

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Catherine Eckel

Sara and Jon Lindsey Professor

University Distinguished Professor

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Jonathan Meer

Department Head

*Mary Julia and George R. Jordan Professor
of Public Policy*

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Laura Dague

James M. Griffin Professor of Health Policy

Department of Public Service and
Administration

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