

Bethany Kotlar

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Rhode Island
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, College of Health Sciences

Kingston, RI
January 2026

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Boston, MA
September 2024

EDUCATION

Harvard University
PhD, Population Health Sciences-Social and Behavioral Sciences
Dissertation: "It Takes a Village: Non-Maternal Caregiving and its Effects on Wellbeing in Early Childhood"
Committee: Henning Tiemeier, Aisha Yousafzai, Monik Jimenez, Carolyn Sufrin

Cambridge, MA
June 2024

Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health
MPH, Global Health-Sexual and Reproductive Health and Population Studies

Atlanta, GA
May 2015

Boston University
BAS, Linguistics
summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Boston, MA
May 2012

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Child development, parental incarceration, public policy, family wellbeing, child health, maternal health, social disparities, community-based participatory research, qualitative research, mixed methods

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Peer Reviewed Publications

Kotlar, B., Piontkowski, K., Lao, J., Tiemeier, H., Poehlmann, J. "I'll make sure he knows you": a mixed methods study of caregiver facilitated contact between incarcerated postpartum mothers and their infants. (Accepted).

Kotlar, B., Matthews, M., Piontkowski, K., Odayar, V., Thomas, K., Gwan, A., Schlafer, R., Sufrin, C. Access to family planning services for incarcerated women in the United States: a federal and state policy review. (Under review).

Kotlar, B., Kotlar, A., Jimenez, M., Sufrin, C., Yousafzai, A., Schlafer, R., & Tiemeier, H. (2025). Broken Bonds: Caregiving Stability Among Infants Exposed Prenatally to Maternal Incarceration. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-025-03082-3>

Kotlar, B., & Tiemeier, H. (2025). The quandary of high-quality evaluation in complex child welfare systems. *Nature medicine*, 10.1038/s41591-025-03643-5. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-025-03643-5>

Kotlar, B., Kotlar, A., Sadikova, E., Jimenez, M., Yousafzai, A., Sudo, M., Kyeong, Y., Setoh, P., Ngoh, G., Rifkin-Graboi, A., Meaney, M. J., Chen, H., Brockman, B. F. P., Goh, D. Y. T., Yap, F., Lee, Y. S., Cai, S., & Tiemeier, H. (2025). Whose sleep matters? Untangling the relationships between maternal sleep, child sleep, and maternal depressive symptoms in the first two years of life. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-025-02689-7>

Kotlar, B., Yousafzai, A., Sufrin, C., Jimenez, M., & Tiemeier, H. (2025). “The system’s not getting my grandchild”: A qualitative study of caregiver relationship formation for children born to incarcerated mothers. *Social Science & Medicine*, 117881. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.117881>

Kotlar, B., Dawson, K., Odayar, V., Mason, E., Tiemeier, H. (2024). “How Am I Going to Do It?” Understanding the Challenges of Assuming Care of a Child Born During their Mothers’ Incarceration. *Health Equity*, 8(1), 731–737. <https://doi.org/10.1089/heq.2024.0098>

Trejbalo, T., Sufrin, C. B., **Kotlar, B.**, Saunders, J., Mason, E., Sherman, J., & Schlafer, R. J. (2024). Right to “Life”: The Cruel Contradiction of Exceptions to the Death Penalty for Pregnant People. *The Prison Journal*, 00328855241263499. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00328855241263499>

Vitagliano, J., Shalev, T., Saunders, J. B., Mason, E., Stang, J., Schlafer, R., **Kotlar, B.** (2024). Forgotten Fundamentals: A Review of State Legislation on Nutrition for Incarcerated Pregnant and Postpartum People. *Journal of correctional health care*, Doi: 10.1089/jchc.23.07.0063. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jchc.23.07.0063>

Howland, M. A., **Kotlar, B.**, Davis, L., & Schlafer, R. J. (2021). Depressive Symptoms among Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Prison. *Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health*, 66(4), 494–502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmwh.13239>

Kotlar, B., Gerson, E., Petrillo S., Langer A., Tiemeier H. (2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and perinatal health: A scoping review. *Reproductive Health*, 18; 18(1):10. Doi: 10.1186/s12978-021-01070-6.

Kotlar, B., Kornrich, R., Deneen, M., Kenner, C., Theis, L., von Esenwein, S., Webb-Girard, A. (2014). Meeting Incarcerated Women’s Needs for Pregnancy-Related and Postpartum Services: Challenges and Opportunities. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, doi: 10.1363/47e3315

Invited Presentations

Kotlar, Bethany. (2021, February). COVID-19 and Maternal and Child Health. *USAID Belarus and World Learning “Community Connections” Program*. Online.

Kotlar, Bethany. (2020, February). Tackling Black Maternal Mortality. *Harvard Black Health Matters Conference*. Harvard Black Health Matters Conference, Boston, Massachusetts.

Conference Presentations

Kotlar, B. (2024, April). “The system’s not getting my grandchild.” A qualitative study of temporary caregiver relationship formation for children born to incarcerated mothers in Georgia. Paper presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, Phoenix, AZ.

Piontowski, K; **Kotlar, B.** (2024, April). “All she wants to do is hold her baby.” A mixed methods study of contact between incarcerated postpartum people and their infants in Georgia. Poster presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, Phoenix, AZ.

Kotlar, B., Saunders, J., Mason, E., Schlafer, R. (2023, April). Forgotten fundamentals: results from a review of state legislation on nutrition during pregnancy for incarcerated people. Paper presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, Raleigh, NC.

Berzansky, I., **Kotlar, B.** (2023, April). Design and preliminary baseline characteristics of Birth Beyond Bars, a pilot cohort of children exposed prenatally to maternal incarceration in Georgia. Paper presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, Raleigh, NC.

Kotlar, B., Saunders, J., Mason, E., Trejbalova, T., Sufrin, C., Shlafer, R. (2022, April). Right to “Life” – The Cruel Contradiction of Exceptions to the Death Penalty for Pregnant People. Paper presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health, remote.

Howland, M., **Kotlar, B.**, Davis, L., Hall, M., Shaver, E., Shlafer, R. (2021, April). Depressive Symptoms among Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Prison. Paper presented at the Academic & Health Policy Conference on Correctional Health., remote.

Sufrin, C., **Kotlar, B.**, Clarke, J., Marsteller, J., Latkin, C. (2019, October). Pregnant Women with Opioid Use Disorder in Jails: Current Treatment Practices and Challenges for an Overlooked Population. *Addiction Health Services Research Conference*. Paper presented at the Addiction Health Services Research Conference, Park City, UT.

Kotlar, B., Cuoto, M., Foster, J., Rochat, R. (2015, April). 'No te puedo acompañar:' Gynecologists' decision making regarding legal abortion provision in Montevideo, Uruguay. *Population Association of America*. Paper presented at the Psychosocial Workshop, San Diego, CA.

Von Esenwein, S., Nuhaily, S., **Kotlar, B.** (2015, September). Maternity and Postpartum Care in Incarcerated Populations in the Southeast. *CityMatCH*. Poster presented at the CityMatCH Urban MCH Leadership Conference. Salt Lake City, UT.

Kotlar, B., Nuhaily, S. (2015, November). Mothering from the Start and Healthy New Mothers: Innovative Curricula Promoting Maternal and Child Health in Georgia Prisons. *American Public Health Association*. Poster presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition, Chicago, IL.

Selected Articles for a Lay Audience

Bethany Kotlar. A matter of life and death. *History Today*, September 2024.

Bethany Kotlar, Vanessa Garrett. Child welfare system reform shouldn't leave incarcerated mothers behind. *The Hill*, October 2024

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Associate Director, Maternal Health Taskforce 2020-2022

- Served in an editorial capacity to develop, curate, and disseminate blogs; lay articles; and peer-reviewed research, policy, and practice articles in maternal health to an audience of ~20,000.
- Managed a team of 2-5 research assistants in executing daily activities.

Researcher, ARRWIP 2018-2020

- Assisted Dr. Carolyn Sufrin in refining a survey of policies on the treatment of pregnant women with substance use disorder in county jails.
- Managed survey data collection and preliminary analysis in REDCap.
- Conducted in-depth interviews with jail administrators on current opioid dependence treatment policies and willingness to change.

Program Manager, Harvard Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health 2018-2020

- Managed a team of student Research Assistants to develop a data collection plan and survey tools for a longitudinal study of wellbeing in homeless families.
- Conducted research management for the family homelessness project including IRB submissions, communication with community research partners, and the development of a data usage agreement.

TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Simmons University

2024-2025

Introduction to Epidemiology

- Design course materials
- Deliver class content to 20-30 undergraduate students

Co-Instructor, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2019-present

Programs and Policies in Maternal and Child Health

- Secured a grant through the Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching to design case studies in maternal and child health programs and policies for graduate student learners.
- Redesigned course content in collaboration with Dr. Henning Tiemeier and pedagogical staff.
- Develop and deliver interactive maternal health course sessions to learners in diverse graduate programs.
- Mentor students in learning through weekly office hours and program design and evaluation workshops.

Teaching Fellow, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2024-present

Social, Behavioral, and Structural Determinants of Health

- Teach lab sessions of approximately 20 graduate students
- Grade student assignments

Teaching Fellow, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2023-present

Intersectoral Perspectives in Public Health

- Advise students on conducting informational interviews with professionals from other sectors
- Oversee grading of student assignments.
- Manage online course Canvas site.
- Provide recommendations for course improvement.

Practicum Supervisor

2016-present

- Mentor (15 to date) graduate students (MSW, MPH, MS, DrPH) in research practica through the Birth Beyond Bars cohort; five mentees are co-authors on peer-reviewed publications.
- Mentor (6 to date) undergraduate students from a variety of institutions in research projects; two mentees are co-authors on peer reviewed publications.
- Mentored 5 Emory MPH students in completing program development and management practica through Motherhood Beyond Bars and MotherToBaby.

Pedagogy Fellow, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Fall, 2022

- Consulted on the design of graduate student deliverables for MPH106, Interprofessional Learning.
- Designed a proposal for integrating public health professional learners into graduate-level courses.
- Developed a syllabus for a global maternal and child health course.
- Analyzed and presented course enrollment data to inform departmental course offerings

Teaching Fellow, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2021-2022

Mass Incarceration and Health

- Designed and delivered a lecture on incarceration and reproductive health (ongoing)
- Assisted Dr. Monik Jimenez in the design of student deliverables
- Coordinated guest speakers
- Served as the Canvas site administrator

Teaching Fellow, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2021-2022

Maternal and Child Health Seminar

- Designed student debate activities

- Identified, invited, and coordinated guest lecturers
 - Served as the point of contact for students
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SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

F32, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Development, Prenatal exposure to maternal incarceration and infant and toddler health and development, 2025

Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Dissertation Grant, 2024

Harvard Horizons Fellow, awarded to eight exceptional Harvard PhD candidates, 2023

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, National Research Service Award (NRSA) Reproductive, Perinatal and Pediatric Life Course Epidemiology Fellowship, 2021-2023

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Rose Fellow, 2021

Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching, SPARK Grant Recipient, Blended Learning in Maternal and Child Health, 2019

Emory University, Coalition for Liberal Arts course development grant to develop “In here you’re a number:” Female Incarceration and Women’s Narratives, 2015

Emory University, Global Health Institute Field Scholar, awarded to fund multidisciplinary public health research, 2014

Emory University Center for Ethics grant entitled Improving Reproductive Healthcare and Education for Incarcerated Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Georgia, 2014

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Teaching Fellow Award, 2022

Boston University, Scarlet Key Honor Society Inductee, 2012

Boston University, Pitts Scholarship, awarded for academic achievement and potential, 2012

Boston University, College Prize for Excellence, Romance Studies, 2012

Boston University, Alice M. Brennan Humanities Award, 2011

Boston University, Dean Elsbeth Melville Scholarship, 2011

Boston University, Phi Beta Kappa Award, Linguistics, 2010

MEDIA COVERAGE

[When it comes to maternal health, these shameful facts prove the U.S. must do better.](#) What to Expect (quoted)

[When women give birth while in prison, how do their children fare?](#) Harvard T.H. Chan News

[Moving motherhood Beyond Bars.](#) Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences News

[From scissors, PFAS everywhere to effects of standardized tests, incarcerated moms.](#) Harvard Gazette
