



# Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective

*By Pamela C. Alexander*

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## **Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective** By Pamela C. Alexander

**Exploring the conditions under which children, as a function of their own abuse, become abusive themselves.**

That experiences from childhood affect our behavior in adulthood, especially in the ways we treat our children and intimate partners, is generally accepted. Indeed, theories of intergenerational transmission of violence indicate that if we ourselves have been abused and neglected as children, we will likely be abusive and neglectful to others close to us?thus extending the cycle across generations. However, many individuals who were maltreated as children do not replicate this cycle, and such models make little sense of the individual raised in a “good family” who is violent either as a child or as an adult. These discontinuities of cycles of violence and trauma have challenged professionals and nonprofessionals alike. However, broadening our vision and attending to new areas of research can help to illuminate this conundrum and open up new avenues of intervention. In this book, Pamela Alexander does just that.

She proposes that an increased risk for abusive behavior or revictimization, as a function of one’s own experiences of abuse or trauma in childhood, can best be understood through the complementary lenses of attachment theory (focusing on the relationship between the child and the caregiver) and family systems theory (focusing on the larger context of this relationship). That is, what a child acquires from her relationship with a caregiver is not simply a reflection of what she has “learned” from experiencing or witnessing abuse. Rather, it emerges from the child’s felt experience of the relationship itself?on implicit emotional, physical, and neurobiological levels.

Alexander founds the book on this multifaceted parent–child attachment relationship and its place in the wider family system, integrating clinical experience with close attention to the long-term neurobiological and epigenetic effects of trauma. She focuses on common outcomes of a history of maltreatment, and of child sexual abuse in particular, including peer

victimization, partner violence, parenting problems, and sexual offending. A detailed review of the literature accompanies instructive case examples. Sources of trauma from outside the family, including combat exposure, political terrorism, foster care, and incarceration of parents are considered. Finally, Alexander analyzes the multiple sources of natural resilience?the neurobiological, the individual, the relational, and the social?to enable professionals of all backgrounds to tailor-make effective interventions for interrupting cycles of trauma and violence.

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**Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective** By Pamela C. Alexander **Bibliography**

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

“For clinicians, it is invaluable diagnostically . . . [L]eaves few if any stones unturned in regards to what is currently known on this topic. . . [A] highly detailed and useful book for anyone interested in conducting research or who would like to expand their understanding of violence, how it affects relationship dynamics, and how it is reinforced domestically.” (Somatic Psychotherapy Today)

“I wish I had this book when I started my career, and I am thrilled to have it now. Dr. Alexander brilliantly integrates leading theory and research from a wide variety of fields to help readers understand the complex interactions between familial, biological, psychological, and social factors that can lead to intergenerational cycles of violence and trauma. This book will be a valuable resource for clinicians and researchers for years to come.” (Scott R. Woolley, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Couple and Family Therapy California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University)

“This is the best—and in reality only—comprehensive treatment of intergenerational cycles of maltreatment and abuse. It is also one of the best integrations of systemic thinking with attachment theory you are likely to find anywhere. Alexander’s book is essential reading for all those working clinically with children and adults, together or individually, who bring experiences of trauma into the consulting room.” (Peter Fonagy, OBE, FMedSci, FBA, PhD, Professor of Psychoanalysis, Head of Research Dept of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London; Chief Executive, Anna Freud Centre)

“This book is essential reading for researchers and clinicians who work in the area of violence and trauma. The compelling case examples help to bring the material to life. Implications for treatment are presented as well as factors that can enhance resilience. This significant volume tackles difficult questions and provides an insightful analysis of the current literature on violence and victimization. It is a foundation for guiding future research.” (Victoria Follette, PhD, Foundation Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, University of Nevada, Reno)

“In this beautifully written book, Dr. Pam Alexander has shed light on an important and understudied topic: intergenerational cycles of trauma and violence. She has drawn from a variety of sources and melded them with contemporary findings from the neurosciences and from attachment and family systems theories to offer new insights about intergenerational cycles of violence that affect individuals and families. The information provided here can be used to guide the development of relational and behavioral interventions that offer hope for breaking the cycle, thereby sparing victims from repeated abusive behavior and from revictimization.” (Christine A. Courtois, PhD, ABPP, Psychologist, Private Practice, Washington, DC; National Clinical Trauma Consultant, Elements Behavioral Health, Promises, Malibu)

#### **About the Author**

Pamela C. Alexander, PhD, has conducted family violence research for over 30 years. At the Universities of Memphis, Maryland and Pennsylvania, she was the PI for three federally funded projects including the first randomized clinical trial of group treatment for incest survivors and a psychotherapy outcome study of the use of motivational interviewing with male batterers. She also evaluated the Army’s and the Marines’ home visitation child abuse prevention program. She currently consults with JBS International and has a private practice. She lives in Sherborn, Massachusetts.

## **Users Review**

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#### **William Fiscus:**

This book untitled Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective to be one of several books which best seller in this year, that is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy that book in the book store or you can order it by using online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you quickly to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to you personally to past this reserve from your list.

#### **Jackie Peters:**

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book can be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the e-book untitled Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective can be excellent book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

#### **Bryan Lopez:**

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always aim to and must have the free time or they will get large amount of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , whenever we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the book you have read will be Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma and Violence: An Attachment and Family Systems Perspective.

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