The Biocultural Trauma Feedback Loop

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It is widely known that trauma is repeated throughout a victim's life, but the biological mechanisms of its recurrence (revictimization), even though understood biologically, are not accepted or discussed in all disciplines. A combination of socio-cultural and biological perspectives is needed to understand this cycle of revictimization and to offer help for sufferers and public health agencies. In order to better understand these issues, I conducted a synthesis of existing scientific research regarding the discrepancies between biological and sociological studies on revictimization. Reviews of sociological research revealed that initial trauma and revictimization are clearly understood as a positive feedback loop, with one increasing the other over a victim's life. In biology, however, this loop has been acknowledged but the study of the recurrence of trauma has not been integrated into these disciplines. In humans, biology and sociology are inseparable, a fact acknowledged by both fields of study. Therefore, a recognition in these disciplines that a positive feedback loop exists regarding revictimization is key. Recognizing the existence of this biological feedback loop has the potential to mitigate the damage of past, present, and future trauma. Devastated sufferers, with a better understanding of the biological aspects of their recurring trauma, are empowered against damaging ideologies, such as biological determinism and victim blaming.

Key Terms: revictimization, trauma, positive feedback loop

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