

Review of: "[Commentary] Exposing the Woke Lie Called Microaggressions for What It Is"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The commentary argues that the concept of “microaggressions” is ill conceived and ultimately “a lie”. The main argument is that avoiding microaggressions requires a very deep understanding of others’ perspectives that is possible to get only with very few trusted intimate people. It is indeed impossible to adopt such a deep understanding with many people because of our general cognitive limitations. The commentary also argues that the concept of microaggression ignores any agency on the part of the victim and places all responsibility and agency on the hypothetical aggressor, while in everyday life, relations with others are potential causes of suffering or contrariety for everyone and everyone has to learn to deal with this.

In my view, the argument of cognitive limitations preventing the sharing of the details of the perspective of a large number of people is well grounded in the literature. I think that this argument is interesting and, as far as I know, not common as a criticism of the concept of microaggression.

However, I imagine that the defenders of the concept of microaggression would answer that what matters the most is taking a perspective on a general experience of stigmatisation or marginalisation, which, arguably, is accessible to standard cognitive abilities. Therefore, I think that the author of the commentary should discuss this potential counter-argument.

I think that Figure 2 should be strengthened with references from the literature. Indeed, the labels of the arrows shown on this figure do not convince me. In my view, being treated with a lower status than expected is always hurting and upsetting and is always likely to trigger discussions. Anyway, I think that these different labels are useless for the main argument.

Finally, the assertion that microaggressions are a lie seems weakly argued to me and a bit inaccurate. Indeed, lying implies the intentionality of cheating. So far, the author has argued that the concept is unrealistic because it ignores cognitive limitations and the realities of human relations. However, as far as I understand, the author did not argue about the intention of the proponents of microaggressions to mislead their followers. In addition, I do not see how a concept can lie. Maybe the author means that the proponents of the concept of microaggression are attempting to give a fake scientific legitimacy to a purely political stance. I would agree that this would be dishonest and possibly dangerous for science. However, showing this would still require more arguments.

