Received 02/01/19
Revised 07/30/19
Accepted 08/01/19
DOI: 10.1002/jcad.12309

Color-Conscious Multicultural Mindfulness Training in the Counseling Field

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The Color-Conscious Multicultural Mindfulness (CCMM) training focuses on addressing intercultural relationship ruptures, individual inequity, and systemic disparities. In this randomized control study, the authors examined the CCMM training effectiveness with 39 prelicensed counselors and counseling students using repeated measures analyses of covariance. Participants reported statistically significant changes in multicultural competence; mindfulness; and color-blind racial attitudes related to privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racism. Implications for counselor training practices and future research are provided.

Keywords: training, multicultural, mindfulness, counselors, counseling students

Although most people in the United States would not consider themselves capable of racist words or actions, everyone has biases that emerge unconsciously through their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). Hays (2008) asserted that sociopolitical realities of inequity and disparity for people from minoritized populations are also perpetuated within counseling. In intercultural situations, well-intentioned counselors may misunderstand clients and may experience challenges based on their assumptions about visible and invisible differences. Mental health professionals are ethically obligated to consider how their biases and privileges are influenced by their intersectionality, and how they may in turn influence counseling sessions (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). Crenshaw (1989) coined the term *intersectionality* to illustrate how one's layers of identities can affect one's experiences of oppression and privilege. Interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences are influenced by intersecting cultural contexts, such as ability, affectional orientation, age, cognitive development, education, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, health status, nationality, race, religious affiliation, sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and spirituality (Hart, 2018).

Helping professionals need to consider cultural complexity and honor identity salience (ACA, 2014; Hart, 2018; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Powers and Duffy (2016) explained that when people consciously situate themselves within systems of power, they may become more responsive to the needs of others. Intersectionality can influence a person's views and experiences as well as how the person treats and is treated by others on individual and systemic levels (Crenshaw, 1989; Hart, 2018).

Multiculturalism in Counseling

Scholars have identified multiculturalism as a fourth force in counseling (Ratts, 2011). Although there is no single definition for multiculturalism, many professionals agree it is an awareness of intersecting and mutually influencing self-identified subcultures that affect self-perception and worldview (Hart, 2018). Counseling leaders have endorsed cultural competencies, including awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions related to counseling diverse clients (ACA, 2014; Ratts et al., 2015). Masuda (2014) explained that cultural competence is not held only within the counselor or their

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behavior, but within the complexity of momentary interactions between client and counselor, and may not translate to other time periods, clients, or across contexts. Educational institutions often lack sufficient guidelines, modeling, and accountability related to race-conscious social justice training for counselors (Hargons et al., 2017). This deficiency is concerning because multicultural competence does not automatically occur (Ratts et al., 2015). Competency development requires continuous knowledge seeking and self-examination of worldviews, biases, values, and beliefs (Ratts et al., 2015). Bemak and Chung (2008) described the necessity for well-meaning counselors to move beyond the "nice counselor syndrome," in which fear, perceived powerlessness, apathy, anxiety, anger, and/or people-pleasing motives can lead to an unquestioning approach toward practices and policies supporting the status quo of inequity. Mindfulness strategies may help with this by cultivating experiential discernment and emotional regulation (Lemberger-Truelove, Carbonneau, Atencio, Zieher, & Palacios, 2018).

Multicultural Mindfulness

For thousands of years, people have practiced mindfulness with an intention to alleviate suffering (Pollak, Pedulla, & Siegel, 2014). There is debate about the definition of mindfulness, a term that Gethin (2011) indicated was translated from Buddhist texts. Surmitis, Fox, and Gutierrez (2018) emphasized the importance of considering cultural appropriation when implementing mindfulness within counseling in Western societies. Similarly, Hyland (2015) cautioned against decontextualizing and commodifying mindfulness, which, in the case of Buddhism, distorts the ethical foundations (the Noble Eightfold Path).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) explained how mindfulness can help transform multiple levels of conflicts (e.g., within and between individuals, systems, and nations). Kabat-Zinn (2005), originator of mindfulness-based stress reduction, explained that mindfulness helps train one's mind to dispel self-centered preoccupations. Mindfulness promotes global compassion and liberation from suffering (Dalai Lama & Ekman, 2008), which appears to align with goals of multicultural training. Kabat-Zinn (2005) described mindfulness as purposeful attention with an accepting, curious, and nonjudgmental orientation to the present moment. Mindfulness may help people develop a different internal relationship as they learn to witness their thoughts with compassionate understanding and to engage in intentional behaviors (Hayes, 2002). The developers of the Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) explained mindfulness as consisting of five dispositional aspects: nonreacting, nonjudging, observing, describing, and acting with awareness (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006).

Neither mindfulness nor multicultural competence is a stagnant achievement. Both constructs are dynamic and process based, require effort and devotion, and have unique ethical considerations. Lillis and Levin (2014) explained that mindfulness may help enhance multicultural consciousness by (a) increasing awareness of automatic thoughts, (b) improving the ability to see another perspective, (c) promoting cognitive flexibility, and (d) fostering prosocial behavior aligned with one's values. Mindful counselors may deliver more genuine, empathic responses because of their ability to sit with and understand emotions without reacting judgmentally or defensively (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). Sitting quietly and breathing deeply is often the wise response when one does not know what to do (Angelou, 2014).

Focusing on the breath can bring the mind to a more restful state amidst experiences of strong emotions (Dalai Lama & Ekman, 2008). Counselors may experience uncomfortable emotions (e.g., confusion, sadness, doubt, defensiveness, blame) when working interculturally, and therefore, emotional regulation is important for multicultural competence (Ratts et al., 2015). Remmers, Topolinski, and Koole (2016) found that mindfulness improved both implicit and explicit levels of emotional regulation. Hargons et al. (2017) emphasized that emotional considerations are vital for healing, understanding, and antiracism leadership in the counseling field, given the historical and current racial trauma that Black communities experience. Furthermore, Bartoli, Bentley-Edwards, García, Michael, and Ervin (2015) outlined aspects counselors need to understand about race: (a) racism may evoke unpleasant emotions; (b) race is a source of identity; (c) systemic racism is personal; (d) there are costs related to racism; and (e) talking about race with clients has meaning.

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes

Color-blind racial attitudes refer to beliefs that race should not and does not matter (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). These beliefs reflect a lack of awareness of realities of racism, including (a) White privilege, (b) institutional discrimination, and (c) blatant overt racism (Neville et al., 2000). Vittrup (2016) found 70% of White mothers were likely to use color-blind (don't see) and color-mute (don't discuss) strategies when talking to their children about race. Thus, when analyzing structural racism, Bartoli et al. (2015) acknowledged that many White counselors have been raised to avoid noticing and talking about race due to fear of being perceived as racist.

Although people may attempt to create inclusive environments by ignoring race, color-blind racial attitudes are ineffective for reducing prejudice (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Cammarota (2011) reported that instead of acknowledging historical and contemporary institutional inequities that create intergenerational disparities in cultural capital, White people often erroneously explain racial inequalities by attributing character flaws to people of color (POC). Additionally, Bray and Balkin (2013) noted that

counselors who have fused and unintegrated racial identity development may impede the process of counseling with ineffective or harmful practices that locate the source of a problem within the individual, ignoring discriminatory systemic causes. Burkard and Knox (2004) also found therapists' levels of color-blind racial attitudes were positively correlated with rating African American clients as more responsible for solving their own problems, which may be detrimental for clients experiencing discrimination and oppression. Moreover, researchers found POC perceived individuals who had color-blind racial attitudes as less friendly and more likely to engage in racially insensitive actions (Chao, Wei, Good, & Flores, 2011). Furthermore, Chao (2013) examined color-blind racial attitudes among school counselors and found that individuals with the highest levels of color-blind racial attitudes and the least multicultural training had the lowest multicultural competence. Given the counterproductive nature of color-blind attitudes, increasing color-consciousness may be beneficial in reducing unintentional harm to clients.

Color-Consciousness

King (2018) described the simultaneous coexistence of ultimate and relative reality and explained that awareness is incomplete if one focuses solely on one or the other. In ultimate reality, all individuals are one interconnected humanity that transcends difference, whereas in relative reality, there are meaningful systemic and individual discrepancies in the opportunities, treatment, and experiences of people with differential intersectional identities (King, 2018). Race is a socially constructed political phenomenon (García & Sharif, 2015) used to distinguish skin color and other physical characteristics. Ethnicity is distinct from race in that it encompasses the heritage, lineage, nationality, or country of origin of a person's parents or ancestors (Lerma, Zamarripa, Oliver, & Cavazos Vela, 2015).

In the United States, race often eclipses other cultural identities (Robinson-Wood et al., 2015) and is mistakenly combined with socioeconomic status and educational background assumptions (Pederson, Walker, & Wise, 2005). Although social class indicates differential access to resources, individuals with White racial affiliation (regardless of financial status) escape structural racism (Liu, 2017). Racial disparities are apparent in institutional, interpersonal, and individual dynamics, and there are divisions in access and power (Hargons et al., 2017). Many people see racism as individualized actions and fail to recognize systemic structures of racism; however, García and Sharif (2015) defined racism as a social system that reinforces sociopolitical inequalities, unearned advantages, and disadvantages based on racial categories.

The reality of the harmful experiences minoritized people have endured (e.g., colonialism of indigenous populations, the model minority myth) is more expansive than there is space to adequately address. The transatlantic human enslavement, ensuing Jim Crow laws, and lingering effects of intergenerational trauma prompted the Black/White racial emphasis in this article. However, race is not a binary construct, and all interracial interactions are worthy of investigation. POC who are non-Black or multiracial may feel minimized, unacknowledged, or supplementary when racial discussions are dedicated to only a Black/White racial binary (Yoo, Steger, & Lee, 2010). Colorism is the prejudicial hierarchy found within and between groups based on lightness or darkness of skin tone and hair (Hall, 2016). McDonald, Chang, Dispenza, and O'Hara (2019) asserted that given the correlation between discrimination experiences and multiracial identity, counselors need to broach dialogue related to all salient identities; avoid microaggressions, stigmatization, or alienation; and intentionally create safe spaces for addressing intercultural relationship ruptures while attending to cultural positionality.

Need for the Study

A need exists for a counseling curriculum that is race-conscious and based on social justice principles (García & Sharif, 2015). Continued research through a color-consciousness lens is both timely and important in light of the societal salience of racial interactions, such as unarmed Black people being killed during police interactions and the prevailing Black Lives Matter movement (Grills, Aird, & Rowe, 2016). A few scholars have focused on examining the relationship between mindfulness and multicultural competence (Campbell, Vance, & Dong, 2018; Ivers, Johnson, Clarke, Newsome, & Berry, 2016, Tourek, 2014). However, these studies lacked random assignment of participants and did not focus on color-blind racial attitudes. We found no intervention studies that investigated how experiential mindfulness interventions may affect the multicultural competence or color-blind racial attitudes of counseling trainees and prelicensed counselors. The use and investigation of integrating mindfulness interventions into multicultural competence training is still in its infancy (Masuda, 2014). Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a Color-Conscious Multicultural Mindfulness (CCMM) training. The research questions were the following:

Research Question 1: What is the effect of a CCMM training on multicultural competence?
Research Question 2: What is the effect of a CCMM training on mindfulness?
Research Question 3: What is the effect of a CCMM training on color-blind racial attitudes?

Method

Participants

The sample included prelicensed counselors and graduate-level counseling students residing in the southeastern United

States. There were 18 participants in the training group and 21 in the control group. The mean age was 26.28 years (*SD* = 4.85), with a range of 22 to 44 years. Across participants, the number of completed courses, workshops, and/or research projects about multicultural counseling ranged from none to five, with an average of 1.56. Additional participant demographics are included in Table 1.

CCMM Training and Fidelity

The principal investigator (first author) developed the CCMM training after reviewing the literature on multicultural competence, color-blind racial attitudes, and mindfulness in counselor education. The training included multimodal (e.g., music videos, expressive arts) multicultural content delivery and mindfulness practices. To ensure inclusion of perspectives of people from marginalized communities, the principal investigator integrated materials developed by POC (e.g., a YouTube video centering on people who self-identified as trans and queer Latinx, a Black Lives Matter meditation). Additionally, she consulted with people of various intersectionalities to design the activities. After developing the training, she conducted 12 hours of practice sessions with eight participants of diverse multicultural identities who work in helping professions. Then, she used their feedback to finalize activities and content delivery.

Ivers et al. (2016) recommended using mindfulness nonreactivity as a framework for conceptualizing defensiveness when educating counselors about multicultural competence. Thus, when designing the CCMM training, a mindfulness practice was paired with each multicultural activity to help participants check their internal reaction before responding externally. The principal investigator also adapted activities from mindfulness books (e.g., Pollak et al., 2014; Tenney & Gard, 2016), and infused practices from a mindfulness-based stress reduction teacher-training packet. CCMM sessions included body scans; mindful eating; mindful stretching; breathing exercises; mindful movement; and witnessing body sensations, thoughts, and emotions. The training also included metta (loving-kindness) meditations. Leppma and Young (2016) explained that the aim of metta meditation is to cultivate an other-orientation and reduce self-absorbed thoughts, which may help foster empathy among counseling students.

The principal investigator conducted sessions in a circular seating format. During introductions, the facilitator modeled multicultural intersectionality disclosures, including social positioning and potential intercultural blind spots. The facilitator also provided a list of local counseling resources for trainees who might need support in response to training content or experiences. The training included four 3-hour components with content focused on (a) foundations of intersectionality, multiculturalism, color-blind racial attitudes, and mindfulness; (b) privilege, cultural bias, socialization, and mindful communication; (c) inner and outer awareness of reactions and responses to cultural conflict or hate crimes, and metta meditation; and (d) institutional awareness, implications for counseling, mindful movement, and action steps.

Jain et al. (2007) found that a mindfulness training yielded statistically significant results after 4 weeks, and Delphin-Rittmon et al. (2016) found statistically significant changes in multicultural competence after a 2-day intensive training. Thus, the principal investigator offered two training options for participants to choose from (a) evening sessions held 1 evening per week for 4 weeks (3 hours × 4 weeks = 12 hours) or (b) a weekend-intensive format (6 hours × 2 days = 12 hours). The principal investigator created a CCMM training manual, and an observer evaluated adherence to a fidelity checklist during every session. Although there were slight adjustments in the timing of activities, and group discussions varied based on responses, there was 100% session consistency with fidelity checklists.

TABLE 1

Participant Demographics

Demographic Category	*n*	%
Race or ethnicity		
Asian or Asian American	3	7.69
Black, Black American, or African American	4	10.26
Latina/o/x or Hispanic	5	12.82
White or Caucasian	27	69.23
Sexual orientation[a]		
Bisexual	4	10.26
Heterosexual	27	69.23
Lesbian or gay	3	7.69
Pansexual	1	2.56
Polyamorous	1	2.56
Queer	2	5.13
Questioning	1	2.56
Sex assigned at birth		
Cisgender woman	35	89.74
Cisgender man	4	10.26

Note. $N = 39$ (21 for control group and 18 for training group). Data combined for both groups.
[a]Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding.

Procedure

After receiving institutional review board approval, the principal investigator emailed faculty to recruit counseling students who were interested in participating in a research project evaluating the CCMM training. Although there was no course requirement for participation, one instructor provided extra credit for participation or completion of an alternative project. The researcher also recruited participants through statewide counseling email lists. Individuals expressing interest were emailed a Qualtrics (online survey program) link to the informed consent and screening question. Potential participants who clicked *no* for either consent or the screening question related to being a graduate-level counseling student or a prelicensed counseling professional were directed to the end of the survey. Eligible participants

were randomly assigned to the training or control group and directed to complete the pretest instruments and create a unique ID to match their pre- and posttest data. Following the training period, participants received a link to the posttest. The researcher sent weekly reminder emails to complete the posttest during a 3-week period following the training. Participants in the control group were invited to participate in the training after study completion.

Measures

Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey–Counselor Edition–Revised (MAKSS-CE-R). The MAKSS-CE-R (Kim, Cartwright, Asay, & D'Andrea, 2003) is a 33-item self-report scale designed to assess multicultural counseling competence. It has three subscales: Awareness (10 items), Knowledge (13 items), and Skills (10 items). In two separate studies, Kim et al. (2003) reported the total MAKSS-CE-R internal consistency as .82 and .81, with coefficients of .71 and .80 for Awareness, .85 and .87 for Knowledge; and .87 and .85 for Skills, respectively. In the present study, although the posttest coefficient for MAKSS-CE-R Awareness subscale was .77, the pretest value for the Awareness subscale (.48) was consistent with Robb's (2014) finding (.55), which was too low to be acceptable. Corrigan and Gurdineer (2012) reported that a coefficient of .60 and above was an acceptable level. The internal consistency in the present study for the pretest and posttest, respectively, was .84 and .91 for MAKSS-CE-R total, .90 and .93 for Knowledge, and .80 and .89 for Skills.

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). The CoBRAS (Neville et al., 2000) is a 20-item self-report scale designed to measure color-blind racial attitudes and sensitivity to diversity training. It includes three subscales related to unawareness of (a) Racial Privilege (seven items), (b) Institutional Discrimination (seven items), and (c) Blatant Racial Issues (six items). The Cronbach's alphas for the CoBRAS total and subscales in this sample (ranging from .62 to .87) were generally consistent with previous research (.70–.91; Neville et al., 2000).

Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ). The FFMQ (Baer et al., 2006) is a 39-item, self-report questionnaire designed to measure dispositional mindfulness (i.e., mindfulness as a personality trait). It includes five subscales: Observing, Describing, Acting With Awareness, Nonjudging of Inner Experience, and Nonreactivity to Inner Experience. Each subscale has eight items, except the Nonreactivity to Inner Experience subscale, which has seven items. Baer et al. (2006) reported internal consistencies for the FFMQ that ranged from .75 to .91, which was consistent with those found in the present study (.74–.96).

Preliminary Analyses

An a priori power analysis using G*Power (Version 3.1) for analysis of variance repeated measures between factors with an effect size of 0.5, alpha level of .02 (which is .05/3 for Bonferroni correction), and power of .80 for two groups with a pre- and posttest revealed the minimum number of participants was 34. There were minimal missing data for pretest: seven out of 3,588 (0.20%), which was below the cutoff (5%–20%) for when analyses are likely biased (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). Additionally, Little's (1988) missing completely at random test revealed data were not missing in any systematic pattern, $\chi^2(453, N = 39) = 0.00$, $p > .05$. We conducted multiple imputation (MI) to address the missing data and averaged the results for the five MI data sets. We also investigated potential differences between pretest scores for the training and control groups for all variables. The results revealed race/ethnicity was statistically significantly different between the randomly assigned groups, with more POC in the training group. Thus, in alignment with Chang's (2002) study, we used repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA; with POC/White as a covariate) to analyze the changes between pretest and posttest for training and control groups. Also, to protect against a Type I error, we included a Bonferroni correction. All variables followed a normal distribution with skewness values ranging from –1.07 to 1.00 and kurtosis values from –1.22 to 1.34. Box's and Levene's tests showed covariance matrices and error variances of the dependent variables were equal across both groups, except for the CoBRAS Institutional Discrimination subscale ($p = .018$) and total CoBRAS ($p = .044$) at posttest. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and alpha values of all variables.

Results

The results of the analyses are displayed in Table 3. Average scores of all dependent variables were not statistically significantly different for training and control groups at pretest. The results are presented in the following sections.

Multicultural Competence

The interaction between groups and changes between the pretest and posttest was statistically significant for MAKSS-CE-R total score, with a large effect size based on partial eta squared, $F(1, 35) = 34.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .494$. Follow-up ANCOVAs revealed statistically significant increases on average for both the training and control groups in multicultural competence scores between the pretest and posttest, with large to very large effect sizes as measured by partial eta squared and Hedges's *g* (Fritz, Morris, & Richler, 2012). However, the interaction effect indicated the increase was statistically significantly larger in the training group.

We examined pre-post changes in the MAKSS-CE-R Knowledge and MAKSS-CE-R Skills. The reliability of the pretest of MAKSS-CE-R Awareness was too low

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Alpha Values

Scale and Subscale	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) total					
Pretest	88.08	9.60	–0.54	1.06	.84
Posttest	99.72	12.62	0.25	–0.15	.91
MAKSS Knowledge subscale					
Pretest	34.51	6.16	0.60	0.37	.90
Posttest	40.36	7.04	–0.04	–1.20	.93
MAKSS Skills subscale					
Pretest	26.03	4.59	–1.07	1.34	.80
Posttest	30.18	5.29	–0.31	0.14	.89
MAKSS Awareness subscale					
Pretest	27.54	2.49	0.95	1.21	.28
Posttest	29.18	4.17	0.52	–0.33	.77
Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) total					
Pretest	38.00	9.13	0.26	–1.00	.84
Posttest	35.03	9.73	0.35	–0.96	.87
CoBRAS Racial Privilege subscale					
Pretest	14.64	4.60	0.19	–0.99	.72
Posttest	13.26	4.20	0.22	–1.05	.66
CoBRAS Institutional Discrimination subscale					
Pretest	14.59	3.83	0.21	–0.92	.65
Posttest	13.64	4.64	0.60	–0.70	.81
CoBRAS Blatant Racial Issues subscale					
Pretest	8.77	2.60	0.63	–0.94	.67
Posttest	8.13	2.30	1.00	0.68	.62
Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) total					
Pretest	130.69	20.05	–0.03	–0.53	.94
Posttest	133.18	21.24	–0.26	–0.09	.95
FFMQ Observing subscale					
Pretest	27.31	4.53	0.08	0.30	.74
Posttest	28.08	4.46	–0.31	0.63	.77
FFMQ Describing subscale					
Pretest	29.64	4.66	0.00	–1.03	.82
Posttest	30.87	5.61	0.22	–1.22	.90
FFMQ Acting With Awareness subscale					
Pretest	25.13	5.53	–0.19	1.16	.92
Posttest	25.39	5.90	–0.08	0.07	.91
FFMQ Nonjudging of Inner Experience subscale					
Pretest	27.38	7.97	–0.32	–0.89	.95
Posttest	26.97	8.37	–0.33	–0.69	.96
FFMQ Nonreactivity to Inner Experience subscale					
Pretest	21.23	4.15	–0.39	–0.33	.83
Posttest	21.87	3.66	–0.25	–0.10	.82

Note. $N = 39$.

for inferences. The interaction between groups and changes between the pretest and posttest was statistically significant for the MAKSS-CE-R Knowledge, $F(1, 35) = 34.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .496$, and MAKSS-CE-R Skills, $F(1, 35) = 19.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .360$, with large effect sizes. Follow-up ANCOVAs showed a statistically significant increase in average scores for MAKSS-CE-R Knowledge in only the training group between pretest and posttest. For the MAKSS-CE-R Skills, both the training and control groups indicated statistically significant increases in average scores. However, the interaction effect indicated that increases from pretest to posttest was statistically significantly larger in the training group than in the control group for MAKSS-CE-R Skills. The effect sizes of all statistically significant increases ranged from large to very large.

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes

The interaction between groups and changes of CoBRAS total score between pretest and posttest was statistically significant, $F(1, 35) = 61.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .637$, with a very large effect size. Follow-up ANCOVAs revealed statistically significant decreases in average CoBRAS total scores in the training group with a large effect size, but there was no statistically significant change in the control group. An analysis of the subscales showed the interaction between

TABLE 3

Comparison of Means and Repeated Measures Analyses of Covariance Exploring Effects of Color-Conscious Multicultural Mindfulness Training on Multicultural Competence, Color-Blind Racial Attitudes, and Mindfulness

Dependent Variable and Classification	Prettest (T1)		Posttest (T2)		T2 – T1 Comparison				Interaction of Time × Group		
	M	*SE*	*M*	*SE*	*F*(1, 35)	*p*	η_p^2	Hedges's *g*	*F*(1, 35)	*p*	η_p^2
Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) total									34.17	<.001	.494
Control	86.94	2.33	92.74	2.44	8.68	.006	.199	2.39			
Training	89.59	2.44	110.68	2.13	104.42	<.001	.749	9.00			
MAKSS Knowledge subscale									34.45	<.001	.496
Control	35.17	1.42	37.08	0.93	2.89	.098	.076	1.56			
Training	34.66	1.49	46.11	0.98	94.72	<.001	.730	8.88			
MAKSS Skills subscale									19.69	<.001	.360
Control	24.71	1.11	27.62	0.99	9.91	.003	.221	2.72			
Training	27.17	1.16	34.41	1.03	55.93	<.001	.615	6.45			
MAKSS Awareness subscale									1.56	.220	.043
Control	27.06	0.60	28.05	1.00	2.26	.142	.061	1.18			
Training	27.76	0.63	30.15	1.05	12.10	.001	.257	2.70			
Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) total									61.51	<.001	.637
Control	37.69	2.19	38.80	2.29	1.57	.218	.043	0.49			
Training	40.45	2.29	31.63	2.40	91.89	<.001	.724	–3.68			
CoBRAS Racial Privilege subscale									19.60	<.001	.359
Control	14.46	1.13	13.94	1.04	0.89	.351	.025	–0.47			
Training	15.56	1.18	12.28	1.08	31.61	<.001	.475	–2.84			
CoBRAS Institutional Discrimination subscale									32.09	<.001	.478
Control	14.77	0.93	15.97	1.04	4.90	.034	.123	1.19			
Training	15.26	0.97	11.58	1.09	41.54	<.001	.543	–3.49			
CoBRAS Blatant Racial Issues subscale									9.74	.004	.218
Control	8.46	0.62	8.89	0.54	0.96	.333	.027	0.73			
Training	9.64	0.65	7.77	0.56	17.19	<.001	.329	–3.01			
Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) total									6.29	.017	.152
Control	136.00	4.83	133.78	5.33	0.44	.511	.012	–0.43			
Training	124.27	5.06	133.77	5.58	7.40	.010	.174	1.74			
FFMQ Observing subscale									0.98	.329	.027
Control	27.77	1.09	28.12	1.07	0.15	.701	.004	0.32			
Training	27.45	1.14	28.94	1.12	2.52	.122	.067	1.29			
FFMQ Describing subscale									0.01	.909	.000
Control	30.72	1.12	32.06	1.37	2.45	.126	.065	1.05			
Training	28.00	1.17	29.26	1.43	1.95	.171	.053	0.94			
FFMQ Acting With Awareness subscale									1.68	.204	.046
Control	26.59	1.34	26.06	1.45	0.31	.579	.009	–0.37			
Training	24.04	1.40	25.35	1.52	1.77	.192	.048	0.88			
FFMQ Nonjudging of Inner Experience subscale									8.32	.007	.192
Control	29.40	1.90	25.45	2.04	10.32	.003	.228	–1.97			
Training	24.56	1.99	27.63	2.14	5.72	.022	.140	1.45			
FFMQ Nonreactivity to Inner Experience subscale									14.41	.001	.292
Control	21.53	1.00	22.09	0.87	0.67	.420	.019	0.59			
Training	20.21	1.05	22.59	0.91	10.77	.002	.235	2.37			

Note. Control group $n = 21$; training group $n = 18$. Means adjusted to control for race/ethnicity.

groups and changes between the pretest and posttest was statistically significant for the CoBRAS Racial Privilege subscale, $F(1, 35) = 19.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .359$; the CoBRAS Institutional Discrimination subscale, $F(1, 35) = 32.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .478$; and the CoBRAS Blatant Racial Issues subscale, $F(1, 35) = 9.74$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .218$, with medium to large effect sizes. Follow-up ANCOVAs demonstrated average scores for the CoBRAS Racial Privilege statistically significantly decreased in the training group, whereas there was no statistically significant change in the control group.

Average scores for the CoBRAS Institutional Discrimination statistically significantly decreased in the training group but increased moderately in the control group. For the CoBRAS Blatant Racial Issues in the training group, average scores showed statistically significant decreases and revealed no statistically significant change in the control group. The effects sizes of all statistically significant decreases for the training group were large.

Mindfulness

The interaction between groups and changes between the pretest and posttest for the FFMQ total score was statistically significant, $F(1, 35) = 6.29$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .152$, with a medium effect size. Follow-up ANCOVAs showed statistically significant increases in average scores for the training group with a medium effect size, whereas there was no statistically significant change in the control group. An examination of FFMQ subscales revealed no statistically significant interaction effects between groups and no changes between the pretest and posttest for FFMQ Observing, $F(1, 35) = 0.98$, $p = .329$, $\eta_p^2 = .027$; FFMQ Describing, $F(1, 35) = 0.01$, $p = .909$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$; and FFMQ Acting With Awareness, $F(1, 35) = 1.68$, $p = .204$, $\eta_p^2 = .046$. However, the interaction effect between groups and changes between the pretest and posttest was statistically significant for the FFMQ Nonjudging of Inner Experience, $F(1, 35) = 8.32$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .192$, and the FFMQ Nonreactivity to Inner Experience, $F(1, 35) = 14.41$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .292$, with medium effect sizes. Follow-up ANCOVAs revealed statistically significant increases in average scores for FFMQ Nonjudging of Inner Experience in the training group, but the control group showed statistically significant decreases with medium effect sizes. Average scores for FFMQ Nonreactivity to Inner Experience revealed statistically significant increases in the training group, with a large effect size, whereas they did not change with any statistical significance in the control group.

Discussion

We examined the effectiveness of a CCMM training and found that individuals who participated in this CCMM training reported statistically significant increases in mindfulness (FFMQ total and Nonjudging of Inner Experience and Nonreactivity to Inner Experience subscales) and multicultural competence (MAKSS-CE-R total and Knowledge and Skills subscales) and statistically significant decreases in color-blind racial attitudes (CoBRAS total and Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial Issues subscales). Most effect sizes for multicultural competence and color-blind racial attitudes in the training group ranged from large to very large, with medium effect sizes for mindfulness. We used race/ethnicity as a covariate because there were more POC in the randomly assigned training group, and researchers have found White people rate themselves with lower levels of multicultural competence than do POC (e.g., Ivers et al., 2016; Tourek, 2014).

Research Question 1: The Effect of CCMM Training on Multicultural Competence

Consistent with previous research (Delphin-Rittmon et al., 2016; Robb, 2014), our findings support the use of multicultural trainings to assist in the development of multicultural competence, as well as furthering support for trainings that differ from the traditional college course format, to include an intensive training, such as a 2-day workshop (e.g., Delphin-Rittmon et al., 2016) or a 4-week training. Additionally, our results expand upon previous research through the inclusion of random assignment, strengthening the establishment of a cause-and-effect relationship. Although we found support for the development of multicultural knowledge (i.e., increased understanding of terms) and skills (i.e., ability to provide information and resources to better serve culturally different clients) following the CCMM training, we were unable to investigate the development of multicultural awareness because the MAKSS-CE-R Awareness subscale pretest score had low internal consistency, which means the items did not correlate well. Robb (2014) also found low internal consistency for the MAKSS-CE-R Awareness subscale. Nonetheless, the results of this study provide support for the inclusion of color-conscious mindfulness practices into multicultural trainings to foster multicultural competence regarding knowledge and skills.

Research Question 2: The Effect of CCMM Training on Mindfulness

Regarding mindfulness, consistent with Bruin, Meppelink, and Bögels's (2015) study, we found statistically significant changes in overall mindfulness, mindful nonjudgment, and mindful nonreactivity. The two subscales represent important mindfulness skills for counselors to cultivate, given that the *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) instructs counselors to increase their awareness of bias within themselves, respect diverse views, and refrain from imposing their beliefs on others. Mindful nonjudging and nonreacting may be useful multicultural skills relevant to intercultural encounters between individuals who are socialized differently.

Although this CCMM training included emotionally evocative topics (e.g., interracial dating), mindfulness processes helped participants contextualize the experience with compassionate curiosity. Before, during, and after challenging conversations, the facilitator asked participants to focus on the emotions they were experiencing, notice their thoughts, and investigate the sensations that emerged within their bodies.

The facilitator provided a space for dialogue and conscious communication with respect for each person's dignity. Ivers et al. (2016) reported that without mindfulness skills, counselors might be more susceptible to overidentifying with socially conditioned prejudicial thoughts or feelings.

Research Question 3: The Effect of CCMM Training on Color-Blind Racial Attitudes

Participants in this study reported overall decreases in potentially harmful color-blind racial attitudes related to a lack of awareness of privilege, blatant racism, and institutional discrimination, consistent with Kernahan and Davis's (2007) findings. In addition to using random assignment, our study expanded upon previous research of color-blind racial attitudes through the integration of mindfulness practices. No other studies to date were found that investigated how mindfulness practices may lead to change in color-blind racial attitudes. It is possible that mindfulness practice taught in conjunction with race consciousness may help mitigate the heightened emotionality that often emerges within intercultural conversations about race. The results provide some initial support for use of the CCMM training to decrease color-blind racial attitudes, providing evidence that attitudes can change with training experiences.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite being large enough for analysis, the sample size for this CCMM training was small. Future studies may involve a larger sample with greater representation of POC. Additionally, we used self-report instruments, which are susceptible to social desirability. Future research may involve multiple facilitators with different intersectional identities and additional forms of data collection, including client outcomes and supervisor evaluations. Moreover, qualitative studies may further explore participants' experiences. Researchers may also conduct longitudinal studies to examine long-term effects of the training.

Regarding this CCMM training, the use of two training formats may have affected the results, warranting the use of one training format in future research. Future research may also include trainings with homework or additional mindfulness practices. Researchers may also examine if the training influences other constructs (e.g., cultural humility, implicit bias, relationships), as well as if an expanded training focused on other cultural identities or sociopolitical groups (e.g., sexuality, gender identity, religion) could further influence multicultural competence development. Regarding mindfulness, future research may focus on the extent to which counselors' state-specific mindfulness (e.g., within an intercultural session) is influenced by the training, because our study focused on assessing dispositional mindfulness. Finally, researchers may examine the use of multicultural mindfulness skills to help people understand the difference between their intention and the effect of their words and actions on others.

Implications for Counselors

Professionals may offer a CCMM training as continuing education or as core counseling curricula. With increasing diversity in the United States, a color-conscious training is a necessary effort. Well-intended counselors may accidently or unconsciously victim-blame, minimize, and distort the experiences of people who are from a different racial group. The CCMM training focuses on decreasing multicultural mistakes (e.g., misunderstandings, microaggressions, invalidations, pathologizing differences) and providing tools for intentional responding when mistakes occur. The mindful disposition, nonreactivity, includes participants' ability to pause before immediately reacting. This is important due to the high emotionality (e.g., self-doubt, fear, shame, confusion, guilt) that can emerge in intercultural situations. Conceivably, mindful nonreacting may help counselors to self-regulate, to be present with their clients with a beginner's mind, and to let go of implicit bias and conditioned thoughts and emotions.

Counselors need to develop skills (e.g., mindfulness) to navigate emotions that may arise when talking about race and racism. If counselors have an increased awareness of systemic disparities, intergenerational trauma, and blind spots when working interculturally, they may be better equipped to serve people who have grown up with different intersectional backgrounds. Counselors are in positions of power when working with clients, and it is important for people to use their social location to emphasize racial justice (Bartoli et al., 2015). For example, White individuals (including White counselors) are called to be leaders in disrupting the status quo of White supremacy, rather than modeling neutrality (Caswell, 2017). Intentional leverage of one's privilege may contribute to greater institutional justices (e.g., recruitment and hiring diverse faculty, educational materials from representative authors, power sharing). Accordingly, Hargons et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of listening to leaders who have embodied knowledge of oppression and marginalization.

The CCMM training included discussions about the intricacies of being multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic, and participants disclosed internal judgments they have of themselves and others. Participants practiced recognizing their societal conditioning and intentionally letting go of socially ingrained stereotypes that arise in their mind. In their FFMQ responses, participants reported an increased

capacity to suspend assigning thoughts as good or bad. If counselors are able to consider their thoughts as having roots in social conditioning, rather than assigning them to be a good or bad person, they may be able to move beyond myopic self-protectiveness. When intercultural relationship ruptures occur, a more expansive focus on systemic harm reduction may help with repair.

Conclusion

The purposes of the CCMM training include decreasing unintentionally oppressive interactions, disrupting the perpetuation of intergenerational trauma, increasing efficacy in meeting individual and collective multicultural needs, and enhancing systemic justice in the counseling field. The CCMM participants in this study practiced recognizing socially conditioned biases, shared humanity, and deconstructing societal discriminations. The CCMM training provided opportunities for counseling professionals to practice mindful responses, use self-regulation, and designate time and space for exploring one's sociopolitical positionality. Through the use of the mindfulness skills (e.g., compassionate curiosity), professionals may increase their intercultural consciousness and may enhance their intercultural responsivity.

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