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Lean on Me: Developing Restorative Thinking in Online Higher Education Faculty

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Abstract
This article is a literature review to understand if there is a need to study the implementation of restorative thinking in the online classroom. Restorative thinking is the metacognitive processing of the power dynamics in a learning environment that works toward equalizing the balance of power while increasing student engagement, relationship building, and social consciousness. The researchers focused on the importance of strengthening student-faculty relationships and communication, particularly in the distance learning environment, through analyzing established theoretical information and research on teacher perceptions of transformative thinking and students' self-perception of their contributions in an online classroom. This review centered on students' educational experiences in the classroom and how educators can increase student performance. The researchers look to guide educators' perceptions of transformative thinking by implementing restorative practices, mindfulness, relational competencies, social presence, and positive self-conception, providing opportunities to identify students' positive and negative academic experiences to increase academic performance.

Keywords
restorative thinking; restorative practice; social-emotional; mindfulness; relational competence; social presence; academic self-attributions

Introduction

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that enrollment in distance learning courses was on a steady incline before the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to rise (Digest of Education Statistics, 2021). Students are increasingly seeking nontraditional ways to obtain degrees in higher education communities. While distance learning allows for student flexibility, classroom engagement is a common concern among online educators. Entering the online classroom with

various educational experiences, diverse educational backgrounds, and preconceived expectations of faculty interactions also requires consideration from faculty.

Distance educators create and enhance virtual relationships and communities that embrace positive relational school cultures by understanding student behavior within an appropriate social context. By promoting a social web of connections, the priority of building, maintaining, and repairing relationships becomes the standard expectation. Students are recognized as a vital part of the community (Manassah et al., 2018; Zehr, 2015). Students thrive developmentally and academically when socially aligned approaches and strategies are centered in an educational program (Aspelin, 2021). These strategies provide faculty with tools to respond effectively to students' needs (Rahimi et al., 2021). Establishing environments that help students develop intellectually requires educators to enhance their relational competence (Aspelin, 2021; Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019) and their understanding of social presence and student self-concepts. The creation of positive professor-student academic and social bonds in online teaching environments positions educators to restore any previous negative educational perceptions held by the student. Framed in the Restorative Justice Theory, restorative thinking incorporates building positive relational cultures, restorative practices, mindfulness, social presence, and positive self-conception into online educators' strategies and best practices.

Literature Review

This section reviews the current research on restorative thinking concepts, including restorative thinking practices, mindfulness, social presence, and social-emotional learning. Specifically, the review of the literature describes the background of the problem, how the problem has evolved, topics relevant to this review, and strategies to promote restorative thinking. Literature on its historical context and the Restorative Justice framework is included to provide a greater understanding of restorative thinking. This section also reviews the literature on academic self-attributions, academic self-concepts and examines strategies faculty can use to help promote restorative thinking. Also included is a review of current restorative thinking practices that instructors can utilize to help create a classroom climate conducive to student engagement and participatory learning.

To obtain the literature review, the researchers surveyed peer-reviewed and scholarly articles found through databases including Academic Search Complete, Education Search Complete, EBSCOhost and ProQuest search engines. Keywords for this literature review included: restorative justice, restorative thinking, relational culture, restorative practices in the classroom, faculty perceptions of restorative thinking, negative and positive academic attributions, mindfulness, classroom culture, social presence practices, and faculty perceptions of social presence. While the literature review focuses on research presented within the last five to seven years, research prior to 2017 provides insight into key concepts and theoretical frameworks.

Relational Culture

Educators can enhance classroom relational culture through direct communication and interactions. However, there is a need for more research on establishing and building relationships between the online instructor and students. To maintain a relational culture, educators and students must have mutual empathy, empowerment, authenticity, and boundaries. Employing these

concepts increases self-worth and student engagement while creating a desire for more connection (Miller & Stiver, 1977, as cited in Edwards & Richards, 2002). One essential qualification needed for educators to create healthy environments is relational competence. Jensen et al. (2015) defines relational competence as the ability "to meet students with openness and respect, to show empathy, and to be able to take responsibility for one's own part of the relationship as an educator" (p. 265). When an educator's relational competence is lacking, students may experience educational harm, such as decreased self-confidence, a feeling of not belonging, or a lack of willingness to engage in intellectual risk-taking (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019; Jensen et al., 2015). Educational harm, without intervention, has the potential to manifest into educational trauma. If students perceive their classrooms as emotionally unsafe environments, there is a high probability of feelings of shame and embarrassment to ask questions, seek academic guidance, or request educational assistance. These acts of perceived shaming are a feedback cycle that makes it challenging for postsecondary distance learning educators to develop and nurture positive professor-student relationships (Morgan et al., 2015). To create an inclusive, relational culture, professors must have the knowledge and ability to establish connections to feel empathy, respect, and tolerance while taking an interest in each student's potential (Jensen et al., 2015).

High-quality professional interactions with students create relational cultures. These interactions increase the student's ability to learn and develop positive interpersonal relationships with faculty (Ewe, 2020; Nordenbo et al., 2008). A student's high sense of self-confidence correlates with faculty effectiveness since self-confidence promotes socialization skills and enhances classroom management techniques. Research shows that faculty with low self-confidence tend to become frustrated in troubled relationships with students (Ewe, 2020), which can cause students to perceive the classroom negatively.

Another aspect of building a relational classroom culture is the considerations of students who have a traumatic background. Taking a trauma-informed approach focuses on the way individuals are treated (Blue Knot Foundation, 2019). It involves recognizing trauma and its effects as pervasive, undertaking work with the intention to do no harm while supporting staff, and creating a safe environment for everyone involved in academic interactions (Laurent & Hart, 2021). Helping students heal from negative interactions will enhance their academic practices and outcomes. By focusing on student experiences, educators can utilize trauma-informed professional skills to enhance the participation of the online learner. Through the lens of Sawatsky's (2007) healing justice theory, educators can shift their focus from academic outcomes to the process of assisting students in educational healing. Healing justice is a way for educators to focus on their internal beliefs and help students find their place in the educational environment. Increasing evidence shows that academic engagement and achievement decline without developing and nurturing professor-student bonds (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019).

Restorative Practices in Education

For thousands of years, indigenous communities have practiced ways to increase relational competencies that repair conflict and antisocial conduct while maintaining an individual's dignity, encouraging community values, and restoring common cohesiveness. According to Wachtel (2016), restorative practices are a social science that is focused on how to "build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making" (p. 1). While there is not one set theory or definition of restorative practice (Weber & Vereenooghe, 2020), it is

grounded in humanism and social reconstructionism. Gregory et al. (2014) supported this concept and found that restorative practices stem from a tradition within humanism where the shared experience between the victim and the disputant is acknowledged. Together, they go through the problem-solving process.

The American judicial system began incorporating restorative practices in the 1970s, shifting proactive discipline from a behaviorist approach toward one that focuses on the social-emotional development of individuals (Pranis, 2005). Utilizing the restorative justice framework, educational organizations also began to focus on how they perceived justice, human nature, social engagement, and social responsibility (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Adopting restorative approaches in the education system was intended to build positive and productive communities that encouraged reflection and sought answers to questions like "What happened? Who has been affected? What can you do?" (Sellman et al., 2013, p. 1). Education stakeholders concluded that shifting the focus of how authority figures perceived discipline and environments allowed the inclusion of students with negative behaviors, enabling educators to build, maintain, and repair relationships in the classroom. These underlying skills allowed educators to increase social responsibility and feelings of belonging while nurturing relational ecologies.

Associated with repairing relationships caused by interpersonal harm, restorative practices have shifted into a larger field of addressing social relationships, including within the context of learning and teaching (Cohen, 2016; Kehoe et al., 2018). According to High (2017), educators started to use restorative practices in the classroom and school setting to help develop student behavior, competency, and social-emotional well-being. Restorative practices in education assume that all students bring strengths and weaknesses to the learning process, shown through discussion and communication (Costello et al., 2009, as cited in Adamson & Bailie, 2012). These skills and experiences can be positive or negative, as students bring past academic experiences, both good and bad, to the classroom.

Restorative practices permit instructors to create a classroom climate that restores past negative academic experiences. The restorative classroom allows active, engaging, and participatory learning while providing support, structure, limits, and boundaries (Adamson & Bailie, 2012). Using affective statements and questions is encouraged as it allows for clear and emotionally rich communication between students and teachers. Within the context of restorative thinking, affective queries and statements can help students express their thoughts and emotions appropriately and establish a clear and effective communication channel with teachers and their peers. Wachtel & McCold (2001) explain a continuum of restorative practices from an informational context to a formal process. These practices can be instituted by faculty and universities seeking to create a restorative culture in the online classroom. Affective statements and questions engage faculty and learners in emotionally rich conversations. Faculty may initiate small impromptu conferences, either student-to-student or student-to-faculty, to resolve conflict or share positive or negative experiences. A more formal setting or group can be faculty-driven so that students can learn more about each other, build relationships, and set classroom norms. Formal conferences allow those impacted in the wake of a serious incident or conflict to address each other to minimize recourse and harm while seeking resolution (Adamson & Bailie, 2012).

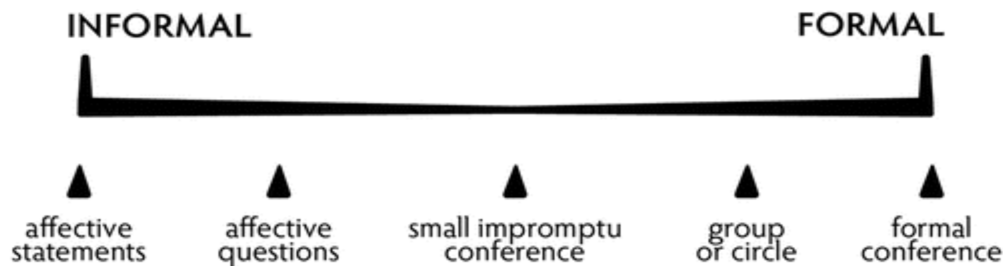

Figure 1. Restorative practices continuum. Wachtel & McCold (2001, p. 125). Used with permission.

Incorporating restorative practices can positively impact relationships within an online classroom. Studies on restorative practice found that students who had teachers that used specific restorative practice methods, such as affective statements, self-reported higher instances of improved school climate and school connectedness (Acosta et al., 2016). Additional studies on distance learning showed that typical online students valued personalized instructor interaction (Dyer et al., 2018). High (2017) also found evidence that restorative practices positively impact student connectedness, school climate, and prosocial behaviors. Furthermore, Gregory et al. (2016) established that restorative practices can promote a positive teacher-student relationship as they effectively elicit cooperation within the teacher-student relationship through structured support.

Restorative Thinking

Online learning has become increasingly popular in recent years as more and more students seek flexible and convenient learning methods. However, online learning can also be isolating, making it difficult for some students to feel connected to their instructors and classmates. While online learning has many benefits, it is important to be aware of the potential difficulties that can arise in these environments. Effective online learning requires careful planning and design and ongoing support and engagement from instructors and peers to address these challenges and ensure positive learning outcomes for all students.

One solution to meet students' needs is to develop the educators' ability to engage in restorative thinking. The restorative thinking process directs faculty to be forward-thinking, encouraging, proactive, and motivational. In a classroom setting, it is essential for both faculty and students to have a say in the learning process. Educators can create a more collaborative and inclusive learning environment by equalizing the influence between faculty and students. Educators can create opportunities where their presence and students' presence are equally important by thoughtfully focusing on increasing engagement, relationship building, and social consciousness. Using various strategies in mindfulness, social presence, social-emotional learning, positive self-attribution, and self-concept can achieve positive student engagement and create a culture where students feel seen, heard, and valued.

Restorative thinking can help students who struggle to connect in the remote learning classroom by addressing isolation and negative academic self-perception. By understanding students' life experiences and cultural environments, educators are more prepared to empathize with various feelings and thoughts that can arise in student interactions and learning situations. The positive and negative interactions that students have experienced in learning environments can have a long-term impact on their relationships with others in the classroom and effect how future interactions

are interpreted. This can, in turn, affect their ability to engage positively in online learning. (Shapiro & Stolz, 2019). Restorative thinking is an essential factor in student engagement and success. Allowing educators to foster positive interactions and open communication between students and educators.

Restorative Thinking and Mindfulness

When defining mindfulness, researchers tended to focus on process-based reflective thinking. Kabat-Zinn, a founding mindfulness researcher, referred to mindfulness as the ability to intentionally focus on one's sensory, cognitive, and emotional experiences to remove the adverse effects of stress and depression (2003). Mindfulness is also defined as the "cultivation of an unbiased experience that emerges through intentional and continuous awareness of momentary events and processes" (Frank et al., 2021, p. 418). Similarly, Bishop et al. (2004) interpreted mindfulness as the understanding of self-regulation in an individual's current experience and their alignment toward this knowledge, characterized by curiosity, receptiveness, and acceptance. To explain the main aspects of mindfulness, Baer et al. (2006) "developed five facets, represented by the five following component skills: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and nonreactivity to inner experience" (p. 10). Mindfulness has the potential to help educators practice restorative and reflective thinking, allowing teachers to become more sensitive to their values, emotions, and behaviors (Stanszus et al., 2017), creating spaces that promote inclusion and respect while encouraging taking educational risks.

Mindfulness allows educators to focus on reflective thinking, enhancing awareness of personal values, emotions, and behaviors (Stanszus et al., 2017). Combined with restorative thinking, reflective thinking and mindfulness have the ability to create online educational environments that enhance students educational confidence. Researchers have found that teachers are the single dominant factor promoting students' development and achievement (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), showing that teacher-student relationships significantly impact the students' educational processes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). By implementing mindfulness and restorative thinking practices, educators can shift self-awareness to promote meaningful, supportive teacher-student relationships (Lavy & Berkovich-Ohana, 2020) while enhancing the development of critical and creative thinking (Arhip, 2022)—assisting educators in fostering an increased capacity for caring relationships (Gouda et al., 2016; Kemeny et al., 2012), while creating a positive classroom culture that supports all aspects of the learning process.

When educators engage in mindfulness and focus on the present moment, they create an openness to originality, attentive to perceptions, aware of context, and conscious of various perspectives (Langer, 1993)—demonstrating a positive relationship between mindfulness, restorative thinking and academic performance (Lin & Mai, 2018; McCloskey, 2015). While mindfulness reduces stress and anxiety (McCloskey, 2015) and increases attention and memory (Sampl et al., 2017), combining it with restorative thinking should increase student engagement and overall academic performance. Restorative thinking combined with mindfulness can help individuals recognize and challenge negative thought patterns, positively impacting decision making and critical thinking.

Restorative Thinking and Social Presence

Social presence is one of three presences (cognitive and teaching) within The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework. CoI was developed by Garrison et al. (1999) as a way to guide learning

experiences in the online classroom. CoI research traditionally focused on social presence as a way to address online teaching and relationships beyond a transmission of ideas (Richardson & Swan, 2003; Richardson et al., 2016). The CoI model has been used by online faculty due its versatility, simplicity, and scholarly support. CoI provides the foundation and framework for online learning as it is known today. CoI creates opportunities for student and faculty collaboration. Cleveland-Innes et al. (2019) share that collaboration is one of the greatest benefits of CoI, which brings students together, which allows them to value collaboration. CoI has long been known as the foundation for online learning as it is known today and should be researched as a way to investigate restorative thinking practices in the online classroom due to the growth of online learning not only in higher education but K-12 as well.

Several K-12 full-time online schools are usually labeled as charter schools that offer online learning opportunities. Some public-school districts offer hybrid options and fully online virtual school opportunities. Total enrollment in these supplemental programs is over 1 million (Johnson et al., 2021). While these options may seem prevalent, prior to 2020, these programs served as a relatively small percentage of the overall K-12 learning opportunities. In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 caused a majority of K-12 school districts in the United States to shift toward online learning. Most school districts, teachers, and parents were ill-prepared to handle the complicated task of online learning.

One aspect of online learning that needs to be considered is restorative justice and restorative thinking. Restorative thinking practices focus on the building and repairing of relationships as well as interconnectedness (Zehr, 2015). Online aggression and cyberbullying continue to affect individuals in online environments. Remote learning seems here to stay and with the growth of online learning opportunities in higher education, understanding how to define and implement restorative thinking practices in the online modality is vital. Tomkins (1962), who pioneered the affect theory, states that engagement responses through face-to-face communication are important to conflict resolution. Online learning lacks those traditional face-to-face nonverbal cues. Thus, social presence becomes an important vehicle for successful interactions and engagement with those who teach and learn in online environments (Christen et al., 2015).

Social presence has varying definitions, yet all are similar in theory. Social presence can be defined as “the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationship” (Short et al., 1976, p. 65). Kreijns et al. (2014) defined social presence as “the perceived degree of illusion that the other in the communication appears to be a real physical person” (as cited in Akcaoglu & Lee, 2016). Social presence has been continually linked to engagement in the online learning classroom. Engagement is a key component of restorative thinking practices (Corrigan & Robertson, 2015).

Students crave social connections. Because online learning and communication lacks traditional nonverbal cues, it has been labeled as being impersonal and lacking connection. For this reason, social presence becomes a vital indicator to those who seek to teach and connect students in the online environment (Christen et al., 2015). Social presence is key for high quality online communication.

Restorative Thinking and Social-Emotional Learning

Restorative thinking encompasses actions within a learning environment geared towards increasing engagement, building community, and encouraging relationships in a restorative way. Social-emotional learning supports the goals of restorative thinking by allowing students an avenue to manage their emotions, be open to diverse perspectives, and handle relationships in a learning environment effectively (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). Social-emotional learning through a restorative lens increases students' academic success and leads to positive student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships (Noureddine & Vasquez, 2020).

An understanding of social-emotional learning is not only reserved for students. As cases of COVID-19 surged in the spring of 2020, students, teachers, administrators, and parents transitioned to distance learning despite their varying degrees of knowledge and understanding. Prior to the pandemic, social-emotional actions and research were geared toward classroom management and the well-being of students (Yang, 2021). New research argues that educators should leverage the restorative thinking of social-emotional learning to support teaching, learning, and care for educators (Schlund & Weissberg, 2020). To date, there is little research-based evidence on how online teaching experiences interact with restorative thinking practices and social-emotional learning (Yang, 2021).

The consensus in education research is that schools should continue to be aware of students' social-emotional development. This mindset is growing in K-12 education, yet little research on the concern of those in higher education and their student's social and emotional well-being. Due to the degree of student diversity in online higher education, teachers must adhere to an understanding of social-emotional learning through restorative thinking to care for and understand a student's beliefs, dispositions, emotions, and behaviors (Allbright et al., 2019). Creating a cohesive community in an online classroom may not be easy, but it is vital to overall student success. Past research has demonstrated that a teacher's knowledge and application of a student's social-emotional learning may improve academic performance, attendance, behaviors, and classroom climate (Belfield et al., 2015; Berkowitz et al., 2017).

Academic Self-Attributions

Attribution theory was first developed by Heider (1958) as a way to explain how people tend to find causal explanations for their own or other people's behaviors and events. Wong et al. (2022) explains it as how individuals will ascribe the cause of an event or situation in their life to a specific attribution. In the context of education, attributions are students' justification for past academic work or behavior (as cited in Richardson et al., 2012). Braun & Zolfagharian (2016) state that this is when students make "causal inferences about the success or failure of, or determine satisfaction or dissatisfaction with, an educational experience that was co-created by both the educator and the student" (p. 969). According to Graham (2020), this is when students try to answer the "why" behind an event such as "why am I not passing math" or "why am I failing?"

Weiner (1975) is largely credited with expanding upon attributions and their influence on behavior (as cited in Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014). Weiner suggested that people attribute success or failures (both their own and others') to three dimensions of causality: locus, stability, and controllability (Soriano-Ferrer & Alonso-Blanco, 2020). Salanova et al. (2012) noted that the

attribution process is used to determine the extent a student's success is due to several factors: internal or external, stable or unstable, as well as controllable or uncontrollable circumstances.

From an academic context, there are four main attributions: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Johnson et al., 2016; Rosito, 2020). Students' perceptions of academic success or failure due to external or internal factors correlate with locus of causality (Rosito, 2020). Stability is a student's perception of how likely the cause will change over time or occur again (Maymon et al. 2018). The stability dimension categorizes the explanation as fixed (stable), able to fluctuate (unstable) (Salanova et al., 2012), or able to be altered (Erten & Burden, 2014). Stable factors include intelligence, ability, bad luck, and lack of effort (Rosito, 2020). Finally, controllability is the extent to which a student feels they have control over what happens (Erten & Burden, 2014).

Gonzálvez et al. (2021) found that students tend to attribute their success and failures to internal factors like perceived ability and to external factors such as difficulty of task. For example, two students who take the same test and fail might have different perceptions of why they failed. One student might think their failure was due to lack of effort (not studying enough) while the other is due to lack of ability (not smart enough). These perceptions of why they failed will influence future behavior (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014). Additionally, the perception of failure due to low ability could lead to low self-efficacy, whereas an increase in self-efficacy could occur when students had the perception their successes were due to effort (Rosito, 2020).

Furthermore, maladaptive attributional styles can impact student learning. This attributional style is when students perceive their success is to "external, unstable and uncontrollable factors (such as luck) and failure to internal, stable and uncontrollable factors (such as lack of ability)" (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014, p. 79). Research shows that maladaptive attributional styles are linked to pessimistic views on future academic success as well as student disengagement on tasks that are perceived to be too hard (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014; Núñez et al., 2005). Shifting from a maladaptive to adaptive attributional style can have a long-lasting and positive impact on students and their academic performance (Wong et al., 2022).

Zhong (2020) noted that one of the key elements to consider in designing the online learning environment is the attributions of online learners and how it relates to academic performance. According to Larson et al. (2019), the online asynchronous format can be challenging because of the lack of physical interaction between students and the instructor. Students can perceive the lack of physical proximity as isolating and a lack of support. Rakes et al. (2013) noted that in the online environment, attributions students make are important because the nature of the learning environment puts most of the responsibility of learning on the student.

Having a positive attributional style is important in the online learning environment. One of the key attributions, persistence, is needed due to the independent nature of the online learning environment. Academic procrastination is another concern as it is one of the primary causes of failure in online courses (Rakes et al., 2013). As Chodkiewicz & Boyle (2014) noted, students with a maladaptive attributional style may not be as confident or motivated as those with a positive attributional style, causing them to avoid engaging in positive learning behaviors such as persistence. Instead, maladaptive attributional styles can cause negative or destructive learning behaviors such as task avoidance (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2014). These attributions may cause several behavioral consequences. Students who internalize negative events may experience low

self-esteem (Liu & Bates, 2014). Depression also begins to emerge out of these potentially uncontrollable events. Students may experience these negative and positive events through similar paradigms shown graphically in Figure 2.

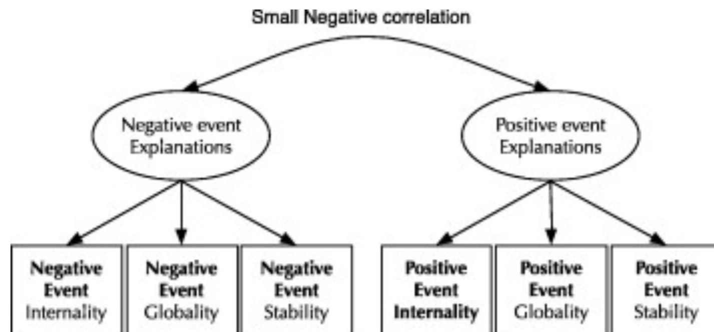

Figure 2. Model of attributional style based on learned helplessness theory of responses to experience of negative events, Liu & Bates, (2014). Used with permission.

Restorative thinking can help students with maladaptive attributional styles by encouraging adaptive (optimistic) attributional beliefs. Instructors can encourage adaptive attributions through the use of direct feedback, modeling, and education. According to Chodkiewicz & Boyle (2014), helping students shift from a maladaptive attributional style can lead to improved learning and positively impact emotional and behavioral factors. Using praise feedback as a restorative thinking tactic can also help reduce maladaptive attributional styles. Zhao & Huang (2019) found that praise feedback positively impacted task effort and persistence for online students.

Academic Self-Concept

Self-concept is a construct that researchers have long been interested in. Broadly defined, self-concept is the subjective composite view of oneself (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). "It is built on self-awareness and assessment of qualities and characteristics made through involvements in one's situation" (Ajmal & Rafique, 2018, p. 226). In the context of education, academic self-concept is a student's own evaluative view of their academic abilities formed through their experiences and interpretation of school environments (Guay et al., 2010). Included in their academic self-concept is a students' feelings, thoughts, and perceptions associated with their academic abilities (Arslan, 2021; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2018) and their interests, enjoyment, and as their perception of academic competency (Zhan & Mei, 2013).

Ajmal & Rafique (2018) noted that academic self-concept can be defined as how a student feels about themselves as a learner, which can affect their behavior in an academic setting. This point has validity as Arslan (2021) found that previous research has shown academic self-concept is important when it comes to explaining and predicting behavior within the academic domain. Having a positive academic self-concept can aid in higher achievement and persistence when failure occurs, and is a key variable of a college student's success (Simonsmeier et al., 2020; Zhan & Mei, 2013).

Zhan & Mei's (2013) research on academic self-concept in an online environment versus a face-to-face classroom, found that this construct was important in both learning modalities. This is further supported by Pellas & Kazanidis (2014) who found previous research shows the importance

of self-concept in an individual's ability to adjust to a learning environment. For example, in an online classroom, task persistence is important due to the self-paced nature of the course and feelings of isolation. Academic self-concept might have a greater impact on student learning and behavior within the online modality than a face-to-face classroom (Zhan & Mei, 2013). In order to help promote a positive academic self-concept of online learners, instructors can use collaborative learning activities, provide support and feedback, as well as open and clear communication (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2018).

In addition to these, feedback can be used to help increase positive academic self-concept. While feedback tends to be retrospective, and used to justify a grade, the right feedback is not only usable, but can impact a student's sense of self-worth (Hughes et al., 2014). Comments and grades can provide students with a powerful message of their self-worth as a learner and scholar. For many, this can be perceived in a negative manner (Hughes et al., 2014). Implementing restorative thinking strategies during the grading process can help instructors as Dyer et al. (2018) found, providing quality feedback that is not only usable, personalized, and affirmational can have a significant impact on student learning and their sense of self-worth as they feel valued.

Strategies to Promote Restorative Thinking

Restorative thinking is a set of practices that can help to build social presence in online learning environments. Restorative thinking is based on the idea that conflict and harm can be repaired through dialogue, understanding, and accountability. By using restorative thinking practices, instructors can help to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks and learn from their mistakes. Restorative thinking practices can be used to build social presence in online learning environments.

Mindfulness and Restorative Thinking Strategies

Mindfulness strategies can assist students to develop a greater understanding of themselves and others. These strategies can be beneficial in the online learning environment, where students have limited face-to-face interactions with their peers and instructors. Breathwork, observing thoughts, practicing non-judgment, taking breaks engaging in senses, and practicing gratitude are some of the mindfulness strategies that will assist in increasing student engagement and enhance the classroom culture.

Mindfulness can help educators: reduce stress and anxiety, improve focus and concentration, increase empathy and compassion, and build stronger relationships with students. As a part of the human experience, the use of intrinsic motivation and self-regulation to continually enhance areas of learning, development, and healing can enhance personal growth and provide a space for curiosity and learning, allowing educators to assist online students with overcoming the stress and demands of life (Gouda et al., 2016; Grossman, 2015). By intentionally focusing on restorative thinking, online educators can build and enhance positive connections with their students while fostering personal competencies and contemplative practice in online pedagogy.

One aspect of mindfulness is the ability to be aware of what is happening in the present moment without judgment. By practicing mindfulness combined with restorative thinking, individuals can develop the ability to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment, improving the ability

to think critically and creatively. Mindfulness helps to reduce distraction and increase focus, allowing individuals to process information better and make decisions. It can also enhance working memory, attention, and executive function, which are important cognitive skills needed for problem-solving and decision-making. By implementing restorative thinking, mindfulness can help individuals perform better academically and professionally and enhance their overall quality of life. Through regular restorative thinking practice, individuals can learn to approach tasks with a clear and focused mind, leading to greater success and sense of well-being.

Social Presence and Restorative Thinking Strategies

There are a number of strategies that instructors can use to build social presence in online learning environments. Some of these strategies include: Encouraging open communication, using group work and collaborative activities, personalizing the learning experience, and using technology effectively. By using these strategies, instructors can help to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks and learn from their mistakes. This can lead to increased student engagement, success, and satisfaction.

Open communication is a requirement of social presence in the online classroom, similar to restorative thinking practices. Emotion and affect are also part of the social presence process. Like restorative thinking practices, social presence relies upon open communication and relationship building, both of which must be orchestrated by instructors in the online classroom (Stenbom et al., 2016). Restorative thinking practices are based on three tenets: Identify the harm and needs to the individual or group, the individual or group who has caused the harm needs to accept responsibility and be accountable, and engagement by those who caused the harm and the individuals or group who have been harmed (Breedlove et al., 2021). Social presence is paramount in achieving these three pillars of restorative thinking in the online learning environment. Yang et al. (2016) describe three categories of social presence: affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion. All of these are needed to achieve restorative thinking in the online learning environment.

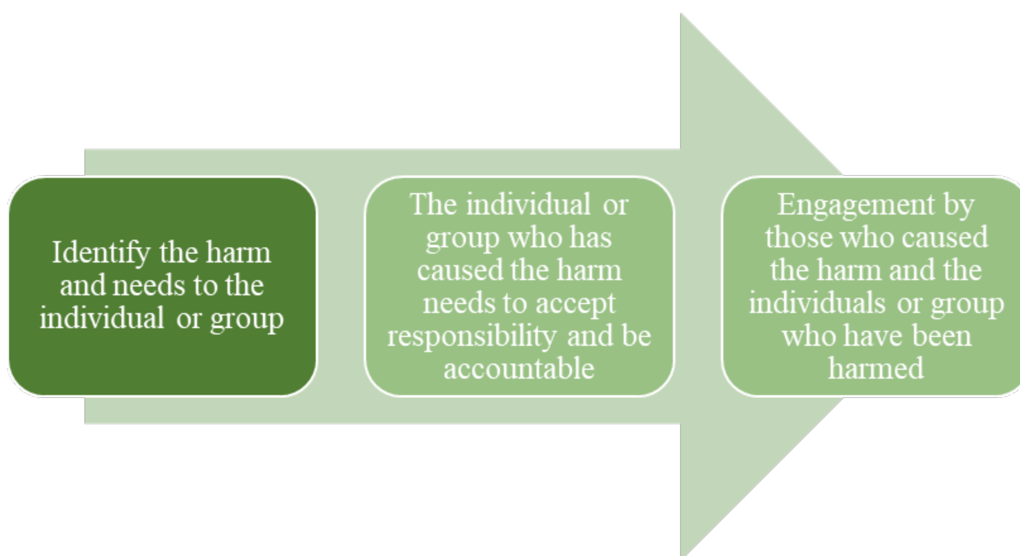

Figure 3. Three Tenets of Restorative Thinking. Adapted from Breedlove et al. (2021).

Social-Emotional Learning and Restorative Thinking Strategies

Adult students enter into an online learning environment with a great deal of past experiences and educational trauma. Online teachers should be cognizant of the impact of those experiences on student-to-teacher relationships. Creating an online classroom environment that promotes community cohesion and open communication is valuable for students but could potentially lead to compassion fatigue. Figley (1995) defined compassion fatigue as "the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other and the stress resulting from wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (p. 7). In order to overcome or control compassion fatigue, online teaching self-efficacy is needed.

Online teaching self-efficacy alludes to an educator's confidence in their knowledge and skills regarding online teaching and instructional technologies, ability to engage students, and online classroom presence (Green & Bettini, 2020). This requires understanding social presence in the online classroom, a social presence literacy. Social presence literacy refers to a teacher's ability to define, implement, and invest in social presence as a way to manage emotions and relationships to strengthen the overall learning experience (Dyer, 2022).

Attributional Styles, Academic Self-Concept, and Restorative Thinking Strategies

Restorative thinking can help students with maladaptive attributional styles by encouraging adaptive (optimistic) attributional beliefs. Instructors can encourage adaptive attributions through the use of direct feedback, modeling, and education. According to Chodkiewicz & Boyle (2014), helping students shift from a maladaptive attributional style can lead to improved learning as well have a positive impact on emotional and behavioral factors. Faculty can help students shift from a maladaptive attributional style by helping students set realistic goals, maintain a positive classroom culture, and be encouraging. Using praise feedback as a restorative thinking tactic can also help reduce maladaptive attributional styles. Zhao & Huang (2019) found that praise feedback positively impacted task effort and persistence for online students. Graham (2020) suggests that feedback must also be constructive, effective, and wise. It should clearly communicate areas that need work, expectations, and provide assurances that the student has the ability, while offering strategies to improve upon.

In order to help promote a positive academic self-concept of online learners, instructors can use collaborative learning activities, provide support and feedback, as well as open and clear communication (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2018). While feedback tends to be retrospective and used to justify a grade, the right feedback is usable and can impact a student's sense of self-worth (Hughes et al., 2014). Comments and grades can give students a powerful message of their self-worth as learners and scholars. For many, this can be perceived negatively (Hughes et al., 2014). Implementing restorative thinking strategies during the grading process can help instructors, as Dyer et al. (2018) found; providing quality feedback that is not only usable, personalized, and affirmational can have a significant impact on student learning and their sense of self-worth as they feel valued.

Recommendations for Future Research

The literature shows that positive educational experiences can be fostered when educators focus on mindfulness and social presence through the lens of restoration. The present theoretical analysis reveals a need to explore the challenge of evaluating restorative thinking in online education. The literature further reveals that online faculty require a deeper understanding and relevant strategies regarding restorative thinking. Due to the complexity of restorative thinking, the authors recommend a reflective practice study. Reflective practice is a process of learning and understanding through and from lived experiences (Finlay, 2008). The author's desire to better understand the challenge and opportunities for evaluating restorative thinking in the online classroom while engaging in deep discussions about how the relational culture theory seeks to identify cultural challenges that impede individuals' ability to create, sustain and participate in growth-fostering relationships (Comstock et al., 2008).

The second recommendation for future research is prioritizing online student experiences. Many students experience negative educational experiences because of their demographic profiles and narratives that are projected onto them. These negative experiences hinder students from fully engaging with their peers, coursework, and instructors, limiting their access to academic content and personal growth. Researchers may consider using the social development theory and the social presence theory to conduct a qualitative descriptive study on how students describe educational trauma in online courses.

A third implication for future research is the exploration of faculty perceptions of restorative thinking in the online classroom, including best practices and strategies regarding restorative thinking practices. Further research must be conducted to study teacher perceptions about restorative thinking and its ability to create a more engaging and rigorous learning environment. It will be relevant to consider the effects of creating positive educational experiences that can be achieved with relationship building, mindfulness, and social presence. Also, analyzing the implementation of restorative thinking practices will provide evidence that teachers can shift students' negative academic self-perceptions to increase positive self-awareness creating a culture of inclusivity. Although research pinpoints the importance of growing educators' relational competence, literature that provides methodology, strategies, and understanding of the restorative thinking process does not exist.

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