**Peer Review and Communication History**

**MS Title:** Proof of Concept and Moderators of Transference Processes in an Online Setting

**Author Names:** Katelin E. Leahy and William J. Chopik

**Submitted:** May 6, 2021

**Editor First Decision: Revise & Resubmit**

May 9, 2021

Dear Dr. Leahy,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript, “Age and Attachment-related Moderation of Transference Processes in an Online Setting” for streamlined review at Collabra: Psychology. I have read the manuscript, the reviews and decision letter from Personal Relationships, as well as your response letter. I believe that your manuscript has important strengths and also that there are some issues that still need to be addressed. I therefore encourage you to submit a revised version for further consideration at Collabra: Psychology. In your resubmission, please include a document with a point-by-point response to both the points I list here, outlining each change made in your manuscript or providing a suitable rebuttal.

My main concern is that your interpretations of some of the results are more confident than I think is warranted by the design and results. Specifically, you did not pre-register this study, from what I can tell you did not correct for multiple tests, and some of the results you interpret are interaction effects (in some cases three-way interactions) some of which do not seem especially robust (i.e., the p-values are not very small - on a related note, please report 95% CIs for all of your results, as this will help readers understand the uncertainty). I am especially concerned about your interpretations of the interactions with age, as those seem less robust, though the same concerns apply to a lesser extent for the interpretations of the interactions with attachment style.

At Collabra we are open to publishing papers with inconclusive or suggestive results, and we are also open to publishing results from studies that were not pre-registered (though we prefer new studies to be pre-registered whenever possible). However, the most important factors are the strength of the methods, and that the conclusions be well-calibrated to the strength and quality of the evidence presented. In this case, I don’t think the results warrant strong conclusions about these moderator effects, so I would want major revisions such that the conclusions are better aligned with the limitations of the study (lack of pre-registration) and the ambiguity of the results (especially when considering that p-values are very difficult to interpret in the absence of a detailed pre-registered analysis plan and corrections for mutliple tests).

These concerns are mitigated by the fact that the interactions with age and attachment style were only some of the aims of the current study, and to my mind the bigger contribution is the methodological contribution and the replication of the basic transference findings. Because I think these contributions may be missed if you focus more heavily on the moderator results, and because I think the moderator results are more uncertain anyway, I strongly recommend that you look for ways to put the main effects and the methodological contribution front and center throughout your manuscript. Right now, this is clear from the “Current Study” sub-section in the introduction, but other parts of the paper seem to draw equal attention to the moderator results. This is especially true for the discussion section, but also for the results section (I admit it is hard to see how you could give less attention to the moderator results in the results section, as it seems these more complicated results almost require more space to explain, but perhaps there are ways to structure the results section such that readers don’t forget about the importance of the other aims and results). I also think the abstract could be modified so that the moderation results are presented in a more tentative fashion, and/or the other aims are emphasized even more. I will leave the specifics of where and how much to bring the other aims into the spotlight, but I would like you to try to keep the reader’s attention on these other aims more so than the moderator questions/results. (This is in addition to the revisions I am requesting above, regarding toning down the confidence with which you interpret the moderator results.)

In summary, I think this is a promising manuscript and, I hope you will revise it for further consideration at Collabra: Psychology. I look forward to receiving your revision.

Please ensure that your revised files adhere to our author guidelines, and that the files are fully copyedited/proofed prior to upload. Please also ensure that all copyright permissions have been obtained. This is the last opportunity for major editing, therefore please fully check your file prior to re-submission.

If you have any questions or difficulties during this process, please contact the editorial office at [editorialoffice@collabra.org](mailto:editorialoffice@collabra.org).

We hope you can submit your revision within the next six weeks. If you cannot make this deadline, please let us know as early as possible.

Sincerely,

Simine Vazire Editor in Chief Collabra: Psychology

**Author Response**

May 25, 2021

Dear Dr. Vazire,

My coauthor and I would like to resubmit the attached manuscript (word count: 11168), “Proof of Concept and Moderators of Transference Processes in an Online Setting,” for **streamlined review** and possible publication in *Collabra: Psychology*. We have addressed each suggestion in full in the revised manuscript we are submitting to you. We believe the manuscript has significantly improved as a result of these recommendations.

Regarding the study itself, previous research examining transference – which posits people draw on past experiences with close others to inform novel interactions – has found that people attribute qualities to and express preferences for novel targets based on their similarity to significant others. However, classic tasks for testing transference required multiple sessions over many weeks, limiting the test of this process to small, college student samples. The purpose of the current study (*N* = 532, *M*age = 34.81, *SD* = 9.83, 61.47% Men, 63.35% White) was to create an online version of a transference task administered in one session and replicate the effect of transference with a larger sample of participants across the lifespan, and test whether targets resembling parents and ex-partners were preferable to control targets. The effects of transference and preference were replicated in the online version of the transference task. We also found some evidence that the effects of transference and preference were slightly stronger in older individuals and secure individuals, albeit the effects were small and were the result of exploratory analyses. Results are discussed in the context of how individuals use previous and existing relationships to guide their behavior in new relationships.

This manuscript is original, not previously published, and not currently under consideration elsewhere.

The data were collected in a manner consistent with ethical standards for the treatment of human subjects. We have read the Transparency and Openness policy of *Collabra: Psychology*’s Editorial Policies. The data and syntax files can be found at <https://osf.io/qdr74/?view_only=a879ecd9845a4e0480b1efb3c7ee256e>.

We believe this manuscript would be of interest to a broad audience and readership of *Collabra: Psychology* and makes a significant contribution to the field. We hope that our work meets your high standards.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katelin E. Leahy (corresponding author)

Department of Psychology

Michigan State University

316 Physics Rd

East Lansing, MI 48824

(517) 353-1652 (fax)

[leahyka1@msu.edu](mailto:leahyka1@msu.edu)

William J. Chopik

Department of Psychology

Michigan State University

[chopikwi@msu.edu](mailto:chopikwi@msu.edu)

**Editor Final Decision: Accept**

June 5, 2021

Dear Dr. Leahy,

I have now had a chance to read over your manuscript “Proof of Concept and Moderators of Transference Processes in an Online Setting”, along with the letter describing the changes you made. Thank you for your responsiveness to the concerns I raised after streamlined review. I am happy to say that your paper is now officially accepted for publication in Collabra: Psychology. Congratulations on this excellent work, I think it will make an important contribution to the literature and I look forward to seeing it published! I hope your experiences with Collabra: Psychology have been positive and that you will continue to consider it as an outlet for your work.

As there are no further reviewer revisions to make, you do not have to complete any tasks at this point. Our managing editor will contact you in case there are any pre-prodution file related questions. You will have an opportunity to check the page proofs before we publish your article. Thank you again for publishing in Collabra: Psychology.

Sincerely, Simine Vazire Editor in Chief Collabra: Psychology