Working title: Mindreading is an asynchronous joint activity

Why?
- Normativity – the criteria for "good" mindreading include others recognising the ascription as reasonable and appropriate (whether or not the inferences become public).
- Abduction – abductive mindreading inferences require identification of what is "relevant", and success requires that people (including the mindreading target) would broadly agree on what is relevant.
- Mindshaping – humans learn to behave in ways that are reasonable in light of a mindreading interpretation.

Contrasts with
- Core challenge of mindreading is "decoding" of underlying mental states from observable behaviour. (There may or may not be objectively identifiable mental states. Observed behaviour is clearly involved, but it is often insufficient – because of normativity and abduction – and is not necessary – consider inferences about story characters.)
- Mindreading is essentially spectatorial / 3rd person. Even the most "spectatorial" mindreading is essentially a joint activity, albeit one where the "joint" aspects are structured by past experience and anticipate social evaluative criteria.
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Compatible with
- Mindreading as a pragmatic / "intentional" stance, but the pragmatic stance is a socially constructed interpretative framework, not an individually constructed theory to explain observable data.
- Mindreading is "socially constructed". But existing social constructivist accounts focus on acquisition of basic mindreading concepts. Whether or not this is true, we suggest that the ability to put those concepts to practical use IS socially constructed.
- Mindreading as "narrative practice" – but puts a good deal of important functional flesh on the bones of this idea.
- "interactive alignment" – except interactive alignment theory stops at the end of an interaction. We're assuming there are long-term effects of repeated interactive alignment.

Makes sense of
- Developmental roles of social environment, communicative aspects of language, and reading fiction/literature
- Continuing development and developmental continuity beyond tests of key concepts. (On the conceptual view, it's unclear what "advanced" tests measure, or why "early" tests predict "advanced" tests.)
- Challenge of mindreading across cultures, despite fundamentally similar "theories of mind"

Has big implications for

- Measurement
  - o Provides a theory of sources of variability, esp beyond early development – different criteria for what might count as "good" mindreading
  - o Challenges the idea of "ground truth" whereby the "right" answer to a mindreading problem can be defined a priori. Pretty much all current approaches assume an objective ground truth, usually defined by researchers.
  - o The challenge of abductive inference suggests that a key criterion for individual success is having similar intuitions to other people about what is relevant.
  - o The challenge of normativity means that the "best" mindreading won't always be the majority answer (because people may not always think about it hard enough), but rather the one that the majority would agree was the best answer given sufficient time and support (cf jury decision-making).

- Differences between groups
  - o Between cultures. We should definitely expect the abductive element of mindreading inferences to vary between cultures.
  - o The many ways in which mindreading can be "disrupted" by mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions. In some cases this might be genuine disruption. In others it might be a group difference, cf the "double-empathy" problem in relation to autism.

****** some background

Mindreading is real, and it is important.
- Role of mindreading has been denied, marginalised, and transformed into an "implicit" competence, distinct from our everyday experience of wondering what someone else is thinking or feeling.
- In contrast there is strong evidence that it predicts social outcomes and is a transdiagnostic difficulty in a very wide range of mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions.
- It is also clearly something that we do, and is integral to story-telling and narrative in film and literature.