**Peer Review and Communication History**

**MS Title**: Individual Differences in Mentalizing Tendencies

**Author Names**: Netanel Y. Weinstein, Lucy B. Whitmore, Kathryn L. Mills

**Submitted:** Feb 15, 2022

**Editor First Decision**: Revise & Resubmit

Jun 9, 2022

Dear Weinstein,

First, let me apologize for the delay in making a decision on your manuscript. I had some difficulty finding available reviewers, and have opted to make a decision based on a review from a trusted expert in the area. I have examined the review for your manuscript, “Individual Differences in Mentalizing Tendencies”, and also independently read the manuscript before consulting this review. The reviewer had positive feedback on your manuscript as well as some suggestions for improvement. I very much agreed with the reviewer’s comment on the somewhat overwhelming nature of the many variables incorporated in this manuscript. I think this reviewer has provided some important feedback and I would encourage you to submit a revised version for further consideration at Collabra: Psychology. You should include a document with a point-by-point response to the reviewers’ comments, outlining each change made in your manuscript or providing a suitable rebuttal.

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 resubmission.

If you have any questions or difficulties during this process, please contact us at the editorial office 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,

Beth Visser
Action Editor

**Reviewer 1**

**Rating scale questions**

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong construct validity (good measures and/or manipulations of the constructs the authors wish to study). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  |  |  | ✔ |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong statistical validity (appropriate statistical tests, assumptions are clear and reasonable, no statistical errors, appropriate statistical inferences, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript) |  |  | ✔ |  |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong internal validity (any causal claims or implications are well-justified, alternative explanations are thoroughly considered, etc.). (Choose “Neutral” if this is not an empirical manuscript, or no causal claims are made or even vaguely implied.) |  |  | ✔ |  |  |
| The study/studies in this manuscript have strong external validity (authors appropriately constrain their conclusions based on the limits of the generalizability of their findings to other contexts (including from lab to real world), other populations, other stimuli or measures, etc.) |  |  |  | ✔ |  |

**Open response questions**

Please write your review here. The author(s) will see this review. Your identity will not be revealed to the authors unless you also include your name (i.e., sign your review) in this box. It is up to you whether to reveal your identity or not, either is fine.

In this paper the authors examined how various measures of mentalizing were related to various measures of individual differences. There were some useful descriptive findings. I had a few general comments which i hope are helpful.

1. There were a lot of variables. On the one hand, this was nice because it allowed a fairly comprehensive pattern of findings to emerged, and in a relatively diffuse construct like mentalizing, that is useful. But it was also a little overwhelming. Ideally, some kind of data reduction strategy could be used to simplify the presentation, but the challenge there is that some constructs within certain domains don’t hang together as might be expected (which is itself of interest) and the sample was too small to identify underlying latent dimensions with confidence. I guess the solution to this problem would mostly lie in collecting a larger sample, but i also wondered about combining some measures in a principled way to articulate more general findings. It might be useful along these lines to know that McLaren and colleagues recently published a meta-analysis of associations between personality pathology and mentalizing in the American Journal of Psychotherapy (this might also be a way to benchmark effect sizes as suggested by Funder and Ozer).
2. I appreciate that the authors are focused on effect sizes, but i would still report CIs for the effects, so that we can get some idea about precision.
3. The authors don’t do much with method effects, but this seems relevant, as the study mixed a variety of performance-based and self-report measures.

I hope these comments are helpful, and wish the authors luck with their research.
Chris Hopwood

**Author Response**
Jul 19, 2022

Dear Dr. Visser:

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript, *Individual Differences in Mentalizing Tendencies.* We appreciate the thorough review and constructive suggestions.

Following this letter, we have included the reviewer comments with our responses in italics. The revision has been reviewed and approved by all authors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Netanel Weinstein, M.A., Lucy Whitmore, B.A., & Kathryn Mills, Ph.D.

REVIEWER COMMENTS:

In this paper the authors examined how various measures of mentalizing were related to various measures of individual differences. There were some useful descriptive findings. I had a few general comments which i hope are helpful.

1. There were a lot of variables. On the one hand, this was nice because it allowed a fairly comprehensive pattern of findings to emerged, and in a relatively diffuse construct like mentalizing, that is useful. But it was also a little overwhelming. Ideally, some kind of data reduction strategy could be used to simplify the presentation, but the challenge there is that some constructs within certain domains don’t hang together as might be expected (which is itself of interest) and the sample was too small to identify underlying latent dimensions with confidence. I guess the solution to this problem would mostly lie in collecting a larger sample, but i also wondered about combining some measures in a principled way to articulate more general findings. It might be useful along these lines to know that McLaren and colleagues recently published a meta-analysis of associations between personality pathology and mentalizing in the American Journal of Psychotherapy (this might also be a way to benchmark effect sizes as suggested by Funder and Ozer).

*We appreciate the reviewer’s observation that measuring a wide range of variables is relevant for the study of a multi-faceted construct such as mentalization. We also agree with the reviewer’s concern over data reduction strategies which may obscure important findings pointing to ways in which variables that were expected to “hang together” do not necessarily do so. In our perspective, this issue is particularly important when dealing with constructs such as “egocentrism” which carry a wide range of technical and colloquial meanings. Furthermore, while we agree that combing measures in a principled way (such as reporting overall scores rather than subscale scores) could contribute to our ability to communicate more general findings, we are concerned that this could mask some important findings. For example, in the case of the (PAI-BOR) we found that the self-harm subscale (but not the total score) was significantly associated with performance on the director task and the MASC. We are therefore reluctant to reduce the number of variables reported.*

*We are grateful to the reviewer for alerting us to the recent 2022 meta-analysis by McLaren and colleagues. Due to the relevance of this work to our study, we revised one paragraph on page 6 to incorporate their findings into our presentation of the topic and contrasted our findings with those of McLaren and colleagues on page 38. As well, following the reviewer’s suggestion, we explicitly compared several key effect sizes observed in our data with relevant previously published meta-analyses (including McLaren and colleagues) in our discussion section.*

*In the introduction:
“On the other hand, there is currently mixed evidence regarding the notion that certain conditions are neatly associated with a particular type of mentalizing style (see Langdon & Brock, 2008). For example, in a recent meta-analytic review, McLaren et al. (2022) found that over-mentalizing was associated with a wide range of psychopathology symptoms, calling into question the notion that over-mentalizing is specifically tied to specific personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder.”*

*In the discussion:
“In light of prior research pointing to a link between general intelligence and performance on the “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” task (RMET) (e.g., Baker et al., 2014) this pattern of results was expected. However, the magnitude of these effects was generally higher than observed in previous research. To illustrate, while Baker et al.,’s (2014) meta-analysis of the relation between IQ and RMET scores revealed an effect of r=.24, 95% CI [.19, .29], we found that accuracy scores on the MASC were positively associated with fluid intelligence scores at r=.39, 95% CI [.25, .52], and negatively associated with director egocentrism at r = -.53, 95% CI [-.63, -.39].”*

*“Interestingly, with the exception of an r = .22, 95% CI [.058, .4], association with somatization (BSI-18), over-mentalizing on the MASC was not significantly associated with any of the other measures tapping psychopathology. This pattern of results stands in contrast to previous findings pointing to an association of r = .25, 95% CI [.17, .31] between over-mentalizing and a wide range of psychopathology instances (McLaren et al., 2022). Future research can address this discrepancy.”*

*“Consistent with previous work (e.g., Müller et al., 2021), the effect sizes for these associations tended to be quite large.”*

1. I appreciate that the authors are focused on effect sizes, but i would still report CIs for the effects, so that we can get some idea about precision.

*We have added 95% Confidence intervals around the Pearson’s correlations for the effects unpacked in the discussion section of the manuscript. We have also added a supplementary materials document with 95% CI’s around all Pearson correlations reported in the manuscript.*

1. The authors don’t do much with method effects, but this seems relevant, as the study mixed a variety of performance-based and self-report measures.

*We appreciate this comment and agree that greater clarity regarding method effects was necessary. To address this point, we added a paragraph on page 39 directly addressing this issue.*

*“The fact that uncertainty about mental states was more robustly associated with psychopathology than the other mentalizing dimensions we measured can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, given the fact that RFQ-8 (in contrast to tasks such as the dot or director task) was designed within a clinically oriented framework (see Fonagy, 2016), some of these correlations are to be expected. Furthermore, in contrast to the rest of the mentalizing dimensions which were behaviorally probed, certainty/uncertainty was the only mentalizing dimension which we measured by self-report. The relatively stronger associations observed between this dimension and psychopathology may therefore be due to the specific wording of key items on the RFQ (see Müller et al., 2021), or, at least in part, to the fact that behavioral and self-report measures tend to be weakly correlated (see Dang, King & Inzlicht, 2020). On the other hand, the remarkably consistent patterns observed in our data underscores the extent to which the certainty/uncertainty dimension may be promising for future investigation of the relationship between mentalizing tendencies and psychopathology.”*

Closing Remarks:

*Our thanks to you and the reviewer for the thoughtful reading of our manuscript, and the constructive feedback provided. We’ve worked hard in the revision to address the valuable points raised and hope to hear that it is now ready to be accepted for publication in Collabra: Psychology.*

**Editor Final Decision:** Accept

Jul 21, 2022

Dear Dr. Weinstein,

I have now had a chance to read over your manuscript “Individual Differences in Mentalizing Tendencies”, along with the letter describing the changes you made. Thank you for your responsiveness to the concerns that the reviewer and I raised. 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.

You will be receiving separate correspondence regarding any production and technical comments, data deposits, as well as publication charges. We work with the Copyright Clearance Center to process any applicable APC charges. Please note that your APC transaction must be completed before your article gets published.

You will have an opportunity to check the page proofs before we publish your article. Thank you again for publishing in Collabra: Psychology.

Sincerely,
Beth Visser