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Nathan A. Jorgensen  
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Moving Toward and Away from Others: A Person-Centered  
Analysis of Social Orientations in Emerging Adulthood

Nathan A. Jorgensen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

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## ABSTRACT

### Moving Toward and Away from Others: A Person-Centered Analysis of Social Orientations in Emerging Adulthood

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Master of Science

Emerging adulthood is a time rife with transitions, and is thus an important time period to study the various ways in which people both connect with and move away from others, or how they are socially oriented. Previous research has suggested a number of factors that contribute to social orientations, including social motivations, the self in relation to others, other-directed emotions and cognitions, and actual social behaviors. The current study examined what types of social orientations exist and how they relate to indices of relational and individual well-being in a sample of US emerging adults ( $N = 787$ ). Using latent profile analysis, results suggest five types of social orientations, each showing a distinct pattern of moving toward and/or away from others and links to varying degrees of relational and individual well-being. Overall, results suggest that being overly oriented toward or away from others presents both relational and individual challenges, whereas more balanced approaches tend toward optimal outcomes. This study presents a unique and novel view of how emerging adults move toward and away from others, allowing for a more detailed discussion of social and nonsocial subtypes and the nuances of how and why they relate differentially to well-being. This is the first study to consider multiple aspects of social orientations, and as such provides one of the clearest and most detailed descriptions of social subtypes in emerging adulthood to date.

Keywords: social motivation, self-evaluations, relationships, emerging adulthood

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## Moving Toward and Away from Others: A Person-Centered Analysis of Social Orientations in Emerging Adulthood

With the many transitions that can take place during emerging adulthood (e.g., leaving the parental home, entering college/workforce, developing romantic relationships), young people are frequently faced with the challenge of navigating complex changes to their relationships and social interactions (Barry, Madsen, & Degrace, 2016; Padilla-Walker, Memmott-Elison, & Nelson, 2017). Thus, researchers have recognized the importance of understanding how emerging adults connect with and relate to others (Bowker, Nelson, Markovic, & Luster, 2014; Nelson, 2013). One of the primary lenses through which researchers have previously examined the extent to which individuals orient themselves toward or away from others is via social approach and avoidance motivations (Asendorpf, 1990). This model, which captures aspects of interpersonal cognitive and emotional processes, has certainly made significant contributions to the field of social development, demonstrating the existence of various social subtypes and how they relate to relational and individual well-being (see Coplan & Armer, 2007). However, recent work has challenged the idea that types of sociality can be fully captured by social motivations alone (Bowker, Stotsky, & Etkin, 2017), suggesting that there may be other important factors that influence how people are oriented toward or away from others. In this paper, the term “social orientations” is proposed to represent a broad and holistic way to understand the various ways in which emerging adults might move toward and/or away from others. Specifically, in addition to social motivations, how people view the self in relation to others, how people feel and think about others, and how people behave socially have yet to be explored together as aspects of social orientations. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper was to use a person-centered analysis to identify multiple types of social orientations based on several factors, and then to

compare how these orientations relate to indices of relational and individual well-being in emerging adulthood.

### **Social Motivations and Social Withdrawal**

In the social motivations model (Asendorpf, 1990), which has previously been the primary model for understanding social orientations, individuals are described according to their internal motivations to approach and/or avoid social interaction. As the approach and avoidance motivations are independent of one another, they interact to define several motivational states, namely sociability (high approach, low avoidance), shyness (high approach, high avoidance), avoidance (low approach, high avoidance), and unsociability (low approach, low avoidance). These states reflect several cognitive and emotional processes that relate to how individuals are oriented toward others. Indeed, they are both conceptualized and frequently measured in terms of how people *think* and *feel* about their interactions with others (e.g., Asendorpf, 1990; Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004; Nelson, 2013). Specifically, this model captures aspects of thinking about social interaction with measures such as desiring to interact and making decisions about preferences for sociability or solitude (Coplan & Armer, 2007). The model also reflects how people feel about social interaction, including feelings of happiness, fearfulness, anxiety, and/or nervousness in various situations (Barry, Nelson, & Christofferson, 2013; Etkin, Bowker, & Scalco, 2016).

These cognitive and emotional components of social motivations, albeit limited, have been useful for both identifying certain types of social orientations and demonstrating how these orientations are differentially associated with indices of well-being. For example, subtypes of social withdrawal (i.e., shyness, avoidance, and unsociability), which can also be considered initial attempts to describe types of social orientations, have been identified in childhood (Coplan

et al., 2004), adolescence (Bowker & Raja, 2011), and emerging adulthood (Nelson, 2013; Nelson, Coyne, Howard, & Clifford, 2016). In emerging adulthood, shy and avoidant individuals have been shown to be prone to myriad individual and relational challenges, including internalizing problems (Nelson, 2013), delayed identity commitment (Barry et al., 2013), peer and relational problems (Barry et al., 2013; Bowker et al., 2014; Nelson, 2013), and later entry into romantic relationships (Boisvert & Poulin, 2016). On the other hand, unsociable individuals tend to suffer from far fewer problems, but are still prone to some psychological and health difficulties, such as depression and emotional eating (Etkin et al., 2016; Nelson, 2013). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that emerging adults who are oriented away from others may struggle with both individual and relational well-being, although the degree of these struggles may vary based on individual differences in these cognitive and emotional social processes. Thus, social motivations provide a good starting point for understanding overall social orientations, but several shortcomings of this model merit a deeper exploration of other factors that may contribute to social orientations.

First, although the social motivations model can potentially explain reasons for both social engagement (e.g., high approach, low avoidance) and withdrawal (e.g., low approach, high avoidance), its primary focus has been withdrawal (i.e., shyness, avoidance, unsociability). In other words, there has been much exploration of individual differences in cognitive and emotional processes that lead people *away* from others, but little inquiry into similar factors that might lead them *toward* others. Given the social nature of human beings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and that most emerging adults tend to not be socially withdrawn (Nelson, 2013), an attempt to capture overall social orientations requires that both withdrawal and engagement be considered. Second, motivations offer only a narrow view of the vast cognitive, emotional, and

behavioral processes that contribute to how one is oriented toward and/or away from others. Specifically, past research has demonstrated that in addition to social motivations, several factors contribute to social orientations and predict indices of well-being. These include how people view the self in relation to others, a wider array of other-directed emotions and cognitions, and actual social behaviors. In the past, however, these have been analyzed separately, and no known study has considered these together as components of overall social orientations. Hence, there is a need to explore multiple factors that contribute to social orientations, including social motivations, the self in relation to others, other-directed emotions and cognitions, and social behaviors.

### **The Self in Relation to Others**

For many years, researchers have used a wide variety of definitions, constructs, and processes to describe the self. Leary and Tangney (2012) identified five distinct ways in which the term “self” has been used in the behavioral and social sciences, and urged researchers to be clear in their usage of the term. Two of these definitions of the self are especially applicable to social orientations, and are therefore addressed in this paper. Specifically, the self is considered as both beliefs about oneself (including how these beliefs develop) and as the individual’s executive agent (i.e., the agent that regulates behavior and decision-making).

**Beliefs about oneself: Self-evaluations.** Terms that refer to beliefs about the self are also wide and varied, and this paper refers to them broadly as self-evaluations, or the valence (i.e., labels of positive/negative, good/bad, etc.) that people attach to their personal traits. Past research shows that self-evaluations are related to social orientations because they influence how people view and connect with others. At a basic level, self-esteem (i.e., global feelings about oneself) may reflect confidence (or lack thereof) to interact with other people (Harter, 2012;

Teppers et al., 2013), thus acting as an initial step in approaching or avoiding social interaction. Furthermore, people's evaluations of themselves are frequently a basis for how they perceive others (Dunning, 2003; Leary & Terry, 2013), which might determine whether they approach or avoid them. For example, people with positive self-evaluations are more likely to evaluate others' traits positively and to feel like others see them positively, and vice-versa for people with negative self-evaluations (Carlson & Barranti, 2016; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, & Ellsworth, 1998), demonstrating that positive and negative self-evaluations may lead people to move toward or away from others, respectively. There is also evidence that self-evaluations are tied to individual and relational outcomes. For example, high self-esteem is related to lower levels of depression (Harter, 2012) and relationship security and stability (Fitzsimons & Anderson, 2013).

In summary, beliefs about the self play a role in how people approach and experience social interaction and why they may choose to withdraw socially, and are thus an important consideration when examining overall social orientations. However, this role becomes much more evident when one considers how these beliefs develop. Just as self-evaluations influence connections with others, others play a role in the formation of self-evaluations, although individual differences exist in the degree of this influence. Thus, it is also important to examine the degree to which others influence and shape self-evaluations.

**Beliefs about oneself: Developmental processes.** Beliefs about the self are formed as individuals receive and interpret information pertaining to themselves. Although this includes some information that can be objective and independent of other people (e.g., personal observations, abilities, performance, etc.), the majority of self-relevant information comes from others, both directly and indirectly (Harter, 2012; Leary & Terry, 2013; Strickhouser & Zell,

2015). Indeed, for many years researchers have emphasized the importance of both significant/close others (Cooley, 1902) and generalized others (i.e., perceptions of general social norms; Mead, 1934) in the formation of self-evaluations. Processes by which this occurs include explicit feedback from others (e.g., “You did very well at this”), social comparison (e.g., “I am better than others at this”), and reflected appraisals (e.g., “I bet others think I am bad at this”; Festinger, 1954; Leary & Terry, 2013). During adolescence and emerging adulthood, self-evaluations are most heavily influenced by social comparison and reflected appraisals, even when more objective information about performance and abilities is available (Callan, Kim, & Matthews, 2015; Harter, 2012; Leary & Terry, 2013; Strickhouser & Zell, 2015), and have thus received the most attention in the research literature.

Social comparison occurs when one’s own abilities, accomplishments, and/or experiences are compared to those of others (Buunk & Gibbons, 2006; Festinger, 1954; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Individuals who frequently socially compare are considered to be oriented toward others, as reflected by high interest in and concern for others (Buunk & Gibbons, 2006). However, frequent social comparers also tend to be easily influenced by social pressures (Litt, Stock, & Gibbons, 2014), struggle to make meaningful connections with others (Yang, 2016), and feel uncertain of themselves (i.e., have lower self-evaluations; Buunk & Gibbons, 2006; Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles, & Franz, 2015; Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014). As mentioned previously, negative self-evaluations tend to orient people away from others, and thus social comparison presents an interesting possibility in its role in social orientations. Social comparison may initially orient people toward others, but in excess may reflect an over-reliance on others for self-evaluations, thus orienting people away from others as they start to fear the implications of these comparative evaluations.

Another process by which self-evaluations are formed is reflected appraisal, or perceptions of what others think about the individual. One of the primary ways these are observed is self-consciousness, which is manifest in many ways, including concern for what others think (Cheek & Buss, 1981), sensitivity to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Mehrabian, 1976), and fear of negative evaluation (Leary, 1983). Self-conscious emotions (i.e., pride, shame, embarrassment, or other feelings about the self based on others' reactions to the individual) are considered moral emotions that aid in learning and adhering to social norms (Else-Quest, Higgins, Allison, & Morton, 2012) and are quite common during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Buss, 1986; Harter, 2012). However, an excess of these emotions can lead to increased anxiety, feelings of inferiority, and relationship insecurity (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Fitzsimons & Anderson, 2013; Mehrabian, 1976). Thus, similar to social comparison, self-consciousness at an appropriate level may orient individuals toward others and, in turn, be tied to individual and relational outcomes. However, at excessive levels it may orient them away from others due to concern about what others are thinking of them and thereby contribute to internalizing and relationship difficulties.

Taken together, beliefs about the self and the processes by which these are formed both play important roles in understanding social orientations and experienced outcomes, and most important is the interaction of the two. In other words, the extent to which an individual incorporates other people (i.e., social comparison, self-consciousness) into the formation of self-evaluations appears to reflect how one, in turn, orients the self toward or away from others. It appears that some people are highly concerned with how they compare to others and what others think of them, while other people are not inclined to be so concerned. Hence, in addition to social

motivations, this study also examined the extent to which self-evaluations and the inclusion of others in those evaluations contribute to different types of social orientations.

**The self as executive agent: Self-regulation.** Up to this point, I have reviewed various motivations, cognitions (e.g., self-evaluations, social comparison), and emotions (e.g., anxiety, fear, self-conscious emotions) that frequently arise during social interactions and how these each contribute to social orientations. A question remains of how individuals may react to and deal with these experiences differently. Hence, another aspect of the self deserves attention, namely the self as executive agent, or one's ability to exercise self-control, self-regulation, and decision-making (Leary & Tangney, 2012). In addition to being present in a wide range of individual thoughts and behaviors, the executive self also plays a role in interpersonal behaviors and relationships (Baumeister & Vohs, 2012), and can thus be considered another part of how the self relates to others. Research suggests that in terms of social orientations, self-regulation may be a particularly important aspect of the executive self in relation to others.

As reviewed above, social interaction often involves uncomfortable and undesirable feelings (e.g., anxiety, fear, self-consciousness). Self-regulation refers to both reactivity to stimuli (including social stimuli) and the ability to manage and cope with these reactions (Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1988). Higher reactivity is related to increased negative affect and social discomfort (Cole, Zapp, Fetting, & Pérez-Edgar, 2016; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1995), suggesting that highly reactive individuals may feel greater discomfort in social situations. Furthermore, in the presence of social fears and anxieties, various forms of dysregulation (e.g., emotional, physiological, attentional) have been shown to predict shy and withdrawn behaviors (Calkins & Fox, 2002; Cole et al., 2016; Eisenberg et al., 1995; Kiel & Buss, 2014), suggesting that social discomfort combined with the inability to self-regulate may orient people away from

others. Additionally, high regulatory functioning in adolescence is indicative of relational and individual outcomes such as positive social relationships (Farley & Kim-Spoon, 2014) and less substance use (Wills, Walker, Mendoza, & Ainette, 2006).

Taken together, it is evident that two aspects of self-regulation might contribute to social orientations: first, some aspect of reactivity to stimuli might make some more susceptible to difficult emotions in social situations (i.e., heightened anxiety or fear), and second, the (in)ability to effectively deal with uncomfortable aspects of social interaction may exacerbate or buffer the influence of reactivity on social behavior decision-making. Thus, reactivity and self-regulation together contribute to whether people will move toward or away from others, and should both be considered in an exploration of social orientations. Both have previously been operationalized in a variety of ways. For example, reactivity has been measured using attention to threat (Cole et al., 2016), emotional and autonomic excitement (Eisenberg et al., 1995), and perceptual sensitivity (i.e., detection of low-intensity stimuli in the external environment; Rothbart, Ahadi, Hershey, & Fisher, 2001). Self-regulation has been measured with factors such as emotional control, emotional masking, inhibitory control, and attention focusing (Cole et al., 2016; Eisenberg et al., 1995). Hence, this study also examined sensory reactivity (i.e., being bothered by external stimuli) and emotional self-regulation as additional factors that influence social orientations.

### **Other-Directed Emotions and Cognitions**

As mentioned above, social motivations (Asendorpf, 1990) capture some aspects of how people think (e.g., social preferences) and feel (e.g., anxiety, fear) about interacting with others. In addition to social motivations and self-processes in relation to others, there is a wider array of other-directed emotions and cognitions that contribute to social orientations. For example, Buunk

and Gibbons (2006) observed that frequent social comparers, in addition to having lower self-evaluations, are also characterized by empathy, sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and willingness to help. Thus, it may be useful to examine how various other-directed emotions and cognitions influence moving toward or away from others.

Empathy refers to emotional and cognitive abilities to understand and share the feelings and experiences of others. Research shows that both emotional and cognitive aspects of empathy are strong predictors of general social behavior (Berger, Batanova, & Cance, 2015; Findlay, Girardi, & Coplan, 2006) and prosocial/helping behavior (Laible, Murphy, & Augustine, 2014), suggesting that both aspects of empathy orient people toward others. The emotional aspect of empathy is frequently assessed as empathic concern, or tender and compassionate feelings toward others (Berger et al., 2015; Laible et al., 2014). Empathic concern has been found to buffer against the negative social repercussions of social anxiety (Batanova & Loukas, 2011), suggesting that empathic concern may orient people *toward* others even when other processes (i.e., social anxiety) are orienting them *away* from others. The cognitive aspect of empathy has most frequently been assessed as perspective taking, or the ability to understand others' thoughts and experiences (Berger et al., 2015; Laible et al., 2014). Although perspective taking has been linked to positive social behaviors, it has also been linked to some negative social interactions (i.e., relational aggression; Batanova & Loukas, 2011), and it is thus unclear whether this contributes to an orientation toward or away from others. Another factor of empathic cognition, however, appears to solely contribute to an orientation toward others. Perceptual awareness of others (i.e., noticing change in others' physical appearance) is related to prosocial/empathic behavior, such as comforting someone who is upset (Evans, Nelson, & Porter, 2012). Thus, it is possible that a simple cognitive awareness of others may lead individuals to be more aware of

and sensitive to the needs of others. Because empathy also influences relational well-being outcomes by fostering emotional connections between people (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015), it is important to examine how people feel and think directly toward others as another component of social orientations. Thus, this study also explored the contribution of other-directed emotions (i.e., empathic concern) and cognitions (i.e., perceptual awareness) in different types of social orientations.

### **Actual Social/Unsocial Behaviors**

Thus far, proposed components of social orientations include social motivations, self-processes in relation to others, and other-directed emotions and cognitions. It may seem that people with similar patterns across these processes would also display similar behaviors, or that social orientations would be accurate predictors of social behavior. However, there is some evidence that even among people who share similar motivations, self-processes, and emotions/cognitions, there may be different patterns in actual behavior. Thus, it may be important to include actual social behaviors as another component of social orientations.

There is evidence that behavioral differences may exist even among people of similar motivations. For example, two studies found differences in social behavior among people who experience an approach-avoidance motivational conflict (i.e., social anxiety; Kashdan, Elhai, & Breen, 2008; Kashdan, McKnight, Richey, & Hofmann, 2009). Many of these socially anxious people displayed the more predictable patterns of behavioral inhibition and risk aversion, but others reported higher levels of social activity, including talking/interacting with others and meeting new people, as well as some externalizing and risk-prone behaviors. These behavioral differences were observed not only between groups of socially anxious individuals, but also in comparison to others with minimal social anxiety, demonstrating that these were indeed high

levels of outward behavior. One defining characteristic of the people in this group is that their social behaviors were strongly motivated by the desire to advance their social status (Kashdan et al., 2008). In other words, despite the fact that some processes (i.e., fear, anxiety) were pulling these people away from others, other processes (i.e., concerns for the social self) seemed to take precedence and orient them toward others, at least behaviorally. Thus, there is evidence, albeit limited, that in addition to cognitions, emotions, and executive function, it is also important to study how people are behaviorally oriented toward or away from people. Therefore, this study also examined actual social behavior as an additional contributing factor of social orientations.

In summary, current approaches to understanding how people are socially oriented (e.g., Asendorpf's social motivational model) offer only a partial glimpse into the many facets of social orientations. Specifically, it is important to consider social motivation, self-evaluations in relation to others, self-regulatory functioning, other-directed thoughts and feelings, and social behavior to achieve a more complete understanding of the diverse ways in which people are oriented toward others. The existing literature provides evidence that each of these processes individually contributes to social orientations and is related to indices of relational and individual well-being. By examining these together, we not only gain a more holistic understanding of social orientations, but may also begin to more clearly delineate the diversity in how people are oriented toward (or away from) others and how this influences relational and individual well-being.

### **Current Study**

No known study has broadly examined social orientations by including factors that tap social motivations, self-processes in relation to others, other-directed emotions and cognitions, and social behavior. Hence, this study aimed to first identify types of social orientations by

examining these four factors via latent profile analysis. Specifically, this study examined variations in the extent to which individuals orient themselves toward and/or away from others in their social motivations (i.e., sociability, shyness, unsociability), self-processes in relation to others (i.e., self-esteem, perceptions of physique, fear of negative evaluation, social comparison, sensory reactivity, emotional self-regulation), other-directed emotions (i.e., empathic concern) and cognitions (i.e., perceptual awareness), and actual social behaviors (i.e., social involvement). Based on the extant literature, it was expected that groups would vary in the extent to which they were oriented toward and/or away from other people. Specifically, it was expected that at least one group would reflect an appropriate balance between others and the self (e.g., motivated toward others, self-processes not highly influenced by others, positive emotions and cognitions toward others, moderate to high social behaviors). It was also expected that at least one group would be overly oriented toward others (e.g., motivated toward others, self-processes highly influenced by others, positive emotions and cognitions toward others, high social behaviors; Barry et al., 2013), and one would be overly oriented away from others (e.g., motivated away from others, self-processes not influenced by others, lack of emotions and cognitions toward others, low social behaviors). Although these general trends were expected, the nature of latent profile analysis precluded specific hypotheses about the numbers of groups and precise descriptions of these groups.

This study then aimed to determine the extent to which social orientation groups differed on several indices of relational and individual well-being. Specifically, this study examined group differences in relationship quality with best friends, romantic partners, and parents, and individual adjustment factors of depression and substance use. These specific outcomes were selected based on the fact that emerging adults experience a variety of changes to their

relationships and face tasks that are more focused on individual growth (Barry et al., 2016; Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). Interestingly, success in relationships not only helps fulfill continued needs for social connection, but also promotes success in those tasks more related to self-reliance (Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). Thus, how individuals approach their connections with others (i.e., social orientations) may be closely related to both relational and individual success, as is evident in research on each of the four contributors to social orientations. For example, social motivations that orient people away from others are related to peer and relational problems (Bowker et al., 2014) and depression (Nelson, 2013). Over-involvement of others in self-evaluations is related to relationship insecurity (Fitzsimons & Anderson, 2013), anxiety and depression (Harter, 2012; Mehrabian, 1976), and increased susceptibility to social pressures such as substance use (Litt et al., 2014; Varela & Pritchard, 2011). Self-regulatory functioning reflects the ability to effectively deal with the discomforts of social interaction (Kiel & Buss, 2014), and may act to balance the negative effects of other social orientation processes (or exacerbate them if regulatory functioning is low), foster positive relationships (Farley & Kim-Spoon, 2014) and protect against substance use (Wills et al., 2006). Other-directed feelings and thoughts are related to social interaction (Batanova & Loukas, 2011) and success in forming emotional connections with others (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015). Social behavior is clearly related to social connections, a necessary component of forming and maintaining relationships, but differences in relational success may exist depending on the context and types of social behavior (Kashdan et al., 2008). In sum, based on this evidence, there is reason to believe that how individuals orient themselves (towards or away from others) may be related to indices of both relational (i.e., relationship quality with best friends, romantic partners, and parents) and individual (i.e., depression and substance use) well-being.

Although it was difficult to form specific hypotheses before knowing specifically what groups would be identified from the latent profile analyses, several trends were expected based on previous research. Specifically, previous work suggested that those who appropriately balanced the self and others would fare the best on relational and individual outcomes. Those who were overly oriented toward others would struggle individually because of their over-dependence on others, but may have moderately positive relationships because of their concern about these relationships. Those who were overly oriented away from others were expected to struggle both individually and relationally.

## Method

### Participants

Participants for this study were drawn from a study of emerging adults entitled "Project READY" (Researching Emerging Adults' Developmental Years). The sample for the current study ( $M_{age} = 19.60$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ,  $range = 18-29$ ) consisted of 787 (of the original 792, five were removed for missing several attention check questions) undergraduate students (544 female, 241 male, 1 transgender, 1 unspecified). Participants were recruited from four universities across the United States, including the Pacific-West, South, Mid-West, and Mid-Atlantic regions. Response rate varied by site (ranging from 50-71%), with an overall response rate of approximately 60%.

In terms of year in school, 40% of emerging adults were in their first year, 27% second year, 20% third year, 19% fourth year, and 4% beyond. The majority of emerging adults were European American (69% European-American, 18% Asian-American, 5% Latino-American, 3% African-American, 3% mixed/biracial and 2% other). Ninety percent of emerging adults reported living outside of their parents' home in an apartment, house, or dormitory. Thirty-eight percent

of participants reported both parents having a bachelor's degree or more, and 71% reported their parents having a combined income of over 50,000 per year.

### **Procedure**

Participants were recruited through faculty's announcement of the study in large, general education undergraduate courses in an attempt to access a broad range of students. Professors at the various universities were provided with a handout to give to their students that had a brief explanation of the study and directions for accessing the Project READY online survey. Interested students then accessed the study website with a class-specific recruitment code and gave their informed consent before beginning the survey. The survey took approximately 45 minutes to complete. Most participants were given a \$20 Amazon gift code for their participation, while others were offered extra credit.

### **Measures**

All scale measures were created using mean scores, with higher scores representing higher levels of that variable, unless otherwise reported. Measures used in the latent profile analysis were standardized prior to the analysis. Because some constructs were measured with multiple variables, variable names are italicized for readability.

**Social motivations.** Social approach/avoidance motivations were measured using the Child Social Preference Scale (Coplan et al., 2004) revised for college students (Nelson, 2013). Participants answered 21 questions on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) point scale. Three scales were created for *sociability* ( $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g., "I like to be with people"), *shyness* ( $\alpha = .91$ ; e.g., "I'd like to hang out with other people, but I'm sometimes nervous to"), and *unsociability* ( $\alpha = .70$ ; e.g., "I like spending time alone more than I like spending time with other people").

**Beliefs about the self.** Beliefs about the self were assessed using four measures that included both self-evaluations and the extent to which others influence those evaluations. First, participants rated their *self-esteem* using five questions ( $\alpha = .85$ ; e.g., “I am happy being the way I am”) from the Self Perceptions Profile for College Students (Neeman & Harter, 1986). Second, participants’ evaluations about their own *physique* were measured with three questions ( $\alpha = .81$ ; e.g., “In the presence of others, I feel apprehensive about my physique or figure”) from the Social Physique Anxiety Scale (Hart, Leary, & Rejeski, 1989). Third, *fear of negative evaluation* was assessed using three questions ( $\alpha = .70$ ; e.g., “I am afraid others will not approve of me”) from the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983). Fourth, two questions about *social comparison* (e.g., “When I am not certain about how well I am doing at something, I usually like to be around others so I can compare myself to them”) were taken from the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992). The first measure was on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true for me*) to 4 (*very true for me*), whereas the latter three measures were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Self-regulation.** Two aspects of the self as executive agent were measured. First, *sensory reactivity* was measured using seven questions ( $\alpha = .75$ ; e.g., “Little noises bother me”) from the Children’s Reactions Questionnaire (Evans & Spooner, 2004), adapted for college students, on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely untrue*) to 7 (*extremely true*). Second, *emotional self-regulation* was measured using five questions ( $\alpha = .80$ ; e.g., “I get upset easily”) from the Emotional Self-Regulation Subscale (Novak & Clayton, 2001). These questions were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*). On this scale, higher scores represented emotional dysregulation.

**Other-directed emotions and cognitions.** Other-directed emotions were assessed using five items measuring *empathic concern* for others ( $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g., “I am often quite touched by things that I see happen to others”; Davis, 1983). These items were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 5 (*very much like me*). In order to capture other-directed cognitions, *perceptual awareness* ( $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g., “I notice when a friend is wearing new clothing”) was measured using seven questions from the Children’s Reactions Questionnaire (Evans & Spooner, 2004), adapted for college students. These items were on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely untrue*) to 7 (*extremely true*).

**Social behaviors.** Actual *social behaviors* were measured using five items created for this study ( $\alpha = .69$ ; e.g., “I participate in student clubs or associations.”) that gauged participants’ frequency of social involvement, ranging from 0 (*none*) to 5 (*every day or almost every day*).

**Relational well-being.** In order to assess relational well-being, *relationship quality* (e.g., “How happy are you with the way things are between you and this person?”) with participants’ best friend, romantic partner, mother, and father were measured using the Social Provisions Questionnaire (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Participants answered 12 questions about each relationship on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*little or none*) to 5 (*the most*). Reliabilities were acceptable for all four ratings ( $\alpha = .95, .98, .93, \text{ and } .94$ , respectively).

**Individual well-being.** Two indices of individual well-being were included. *Depression* levels were assessed using eight questions ( $\alpha = .76$ ; e.g., “I felt everything I did was an effort”) from the original CES-D scale (Radloff, 1977). Questions were answered on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*most of the time*). Frequency of *substance use* (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, and other illegal drugs) was assessed on a 0 (*none*) to 5 (*every day or almost every day*) scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### **Analysis Plan**

A 3-step mixture model latent profile analysis (LPA) was conducted in *Mplus 7.4* to identify types of social orientations and their associations with indices of relational and individual well-being (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). The LPA identified groups based on similar patterns of responses to the 12 social orientation variables described above. The decision about the correct number of profiles was made according to several model fit indices, including Bayesian information criterion (BIC), the sample size adjusted BIC (SABIC), the Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (LMR LRT), and the bootstrapped likelihood ratio test (BLRT). The two likelihood ratio tests compare the current model ( $k$  profiles) to the model with one fewer ( $k-1$  profiles). Better model fit is indicated by lower BIC and SABIC values and significant values for the two likelihood ratio tests, although BIC and BLRT are thought to be the best indicators of latent classes/profiles (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). Finally, profile solutions were compared based on meaningful theoretical interpretation of the profiles. Entropy and average probabilities for most likely profile membership were used to determine if the final model accurately classified individuals into groups, with values closer to 1 indicating more accurate classification of individuals into latent profiles. Additionally, variable-specific entropy contribution values (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014) were obtained for each indicator variable to determine the extent to which each variable played a role in classification. The DU3STEP command was used to compare latent profile group means for the distal outcomes of relationship quality with best friend, romantic partner, mother, and father, and individual adjustment outcomes of depression and substance use.

## Results

### Latent Profile Analysis: Social Orientations

Latent profile analyses specifying 2-7 profiles were conducted using the social orientation variables and were compared according to model fit indices (see Table 1). BIC's decreased noticeably from 2-5 profiles and then slightly from 5-6 and 6-7 profiles, indicating improvement in model fit as the number of profiles increased. SABIC's also indicated improved model fit with more profiles, as they decreased noticeably from 2-6 profiles and then slightly from 6-7 profiles. The LMR LRT  $p$ -values indicated that a 2-profile solution was better than a 1-profile solution, but did not indicate that more profiles would further improve model fit. The BLRT  $p$ -values were all less than .001, indicating that more profiles indeed did improve model fit. Because BIC, SABIC, and BLRT indicated that choosing 3-6 profiles would yield the best model fit, these were compared according to theoretically meaningful interpretations of the groups that were identified. It was determined that the 3, 4, and 5 profile-solutions yielded meaningful groups, whereas the 6 profile-solution added little substantive distinction between groups and had one noticeably small group. Ultimately, it was decided that the 5-profile model offered the most insight into social orientation profiles. Two of the profile sizes in this model were noticeably small ( $n = 32$  and  $n = 59$ ), which raises caution about statistical power for ensuing group comparisons. However, there is no fixed rule for class sizes, and it is best to rely on theory and interpretability in making these decisions (Muthén, 2014). As will be discussed below, both the composition and size of these groups are theoretically sound and interpretable. Therefore, the 5-profile model was chosen, but caution should be used when interpreting comparisons of these profiles. Entropy for this model was .80, and average probabilities for most likely class membership were .87, .87, .88, .86, and .87, respectively, all indicating good

prediction of class membership. Variable-specific entropy contribution values suggest that some variables contributed to the classification of social orientations more than others (sociability = .28, shyness = .39, unsociability = .24, self-esteem = .31, physique = .30, fear of negative evaluation = .35, social comparison = .21, reactivity = .18, dysregulation = .19, empathic concern = .20, perceptual awareness = .20, social involvement = .16).

Estimated group means and comparisons for each social orientation variable are displayed in Table 2 and group response patterns in Figure 1. The first profile ( $n = 32$ , 4.1% of the sample, 74% male) was characterized by low social approach motivation, poor self-perceptions, little inclusion of others in self-evaluations, moderate levels of self-regulation, lower levels of other-directed emotions and cognitions, and low social involvement, thus reflecting an overall orientation away from others. Thus, this group was labeled as the Away-from-Others Orientation. The second profile ( $n = 225$ , 28.6% of the sample, 36% male) was characterized by high social approach motivation, high self-evaluations, low inclusion of others in the self, low levels of reactivity and a good ability to self-regulate, high levels of other-directed feelings and thoughts, and average levels of social behavior. This reflects an overall orientation toward others while balancing the self in relation to others, and was thus given the label of Balanced-toward-Others Orientation. The third profile ( $n = 59$ , 7.5% of the sample, 25% male) displayed a social motivation conflict (i.e., high approach, high avoidance), the lowest overall self-evaluations, highest inclusion of others in the self, highest reactivity and dysregulation, average other-directed feelings and thoughts, and average levels of actual social involvement. Thus, this group appears to be anxious and poorly regulated around others, yet very strongly oriented toward them, and was labeled the Dependent-toward-Others Orientation. The fourth profile ( $n = 137$ , 17.4% of the sample, 14% male) was similar to the Balanced-toward-Others group except for

higher social approach motivation, lower self-evaluations, higher inclusion of others in the self, and higher other-directed feelings, thus reflecting a strong orientation toward others. Thus, this group was labeled as the Toward-Others Orientation. The fifth profile ( $n = 224$ , 42.4% of the sample, 31% male) was characterized by social approach and avoidance motivational conflict, moderate to low self-evaluations, moderate inclusion of the others in the self, moderate levels of reactivity and emotional dysregulation, moderate levels of other-directed feelings and thoughts, and average social involvement. Thus, this orientation group appears to be the most conflicted in going toward and away others, and was labeled the Conflicted-toward-Others Orientation.

### **Distal Outcomes**

Next, the model compared mean scores across orientation profiles on relational and individual distal outcomes. A critical  $p$ -value of .01 was used for mean comparisons to avoid Type I errors due to multiple comparisons. It should be noted that the Away and Dependent Orientation groups were small, and thus caution should be used in interpreting comparisons with these groups. Group comparisons for relational and individual outcomes are presented in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. Results showed that individuals in the Balanced and Toward Orientation groups had the highest relationship quality levels with best friends, followed by the Conflicted Orientation group, with the Away and Dependent Orientation groups at the lowest levels. In terms of romantic partner relationship quality, the Toward Orientation group reported the highest, followed by the Balanced group. The Balanced, Toward, and Conflicted Orientation groups had higher levels of parental relationship quality. In terms of depression, the Balanced Orientation demonstrated the best adjustment (i.e., lowest levels), with the Dependent Orientation group faring the worst. Lastly, the Conflicted Orientation group demonstrated the

lowest levels of substance use, and the Away Orientation demonstrated the highest, with the other three groups in-between.

### **Discussion**

Previous research has suggested that a number of factors contribute to how people are oriented toward and/or away from other people, including social motivations, self-evaluations in relation to others, self-regulatory functioning, other-directed thoughts and feelings, and social behavior. However, these factors have been studied separately, and no previous study has aimed to assess social orientations broadly. The current study had two primary objectives: first, to explore whether or not meaningful social orientation groups could be identified in emerging adults based on these factors, and second, to determine whether or not these social orientation groups are associated with varying levels of relational and individual well-being. Results suggest the existence of five different social orientations that relate to varying degrees of well-being. Briefly summarized, these groups include Away-from-Others (low social motivation, low inclusion of others in self-processes, low other-directed emotions and cognitions, low social behavior; struggling relationally and individually), Toward-Others (high on social motivation, inclusion of others in self-processes, other-directed emotions and cognitions, and moderate social behaviors; high relational and moderate individual well-being), Balanced-toward-Others (high social motivation, positive self with low inclusion of others, high other-directed emotions and cognitions, moderate social behavior; successful relationally and individually), Dependent-toward-Others (conflicted social motivations, high inclusion of others in self-processes, high other-directed cognitions and emotions, moderate social behavior; struggling relationally and individually), and Conflicted-toward-Others (conflicted social motivations, moderate inclusion

of others in self-processes, moderate other-directed emotions and cognitions, moderate social behavior; moderate relational and individual well-being).

The findings from this study make a number of significant contributions to our understanding of social development during emerging adulthood. Most notably, this study presents a unifying framework to understand decades of research on how people are oriented toward and away from others and why this is relevant for well-being. Prior to this study, many researchers have been interested in social orientations, but their scope has been rather narrow and unable to capture social orientations holistically. Specifically, many past approaches have focused on one or two variables that contribute to social orientations, which have been helpful in identifying a number of important constructs. However, these studies did not assess the patterns and trends of multiple constructs that exist among individuals. For example, the social motivations model (Asendorpf, 1990) examines individuals' internal motivations to approach and/or avoid social interaction, thereby assessing cognitions and to some extent emotions (e.g., fear), but does not capture, for example, actual behaviors or the extent to which others play a role in the development of the self. Therefore, a study examining social motivations alone is incomplete, unable to determine whether or not individuals actually behave in a manner consistent with their internal motivations, nor how they might relate to, or orient towards, others in different ways. By utilizing a person-centered approach that captures a wider range of constructs that influence sociality, this study presents a unique and novel view of how emerging adults move toward and away from others, allowing for a more detailed discussion of social and nonsocial subtypes and the nuances of how and why they relate differentially to well-being.

### **Social Orientations: Beyond Social Motivation**

Although this study is not the first to describe distinct groups or subtypes of social interaction (see Cheek & Buss, 1981; Coplan et al., 2004), it is the first to explore these groups using multiple aspects of social orientations. The social orientations approach both adds to and challenges the existing social motivations model (Asendorpf, 1990), as it provides a more detailed and diverse description of social subtypes. The five social orientations identified in this study suggest that the four motivational subtypes (i.e., shyness, unsociability, avoidance, and sociability) offer only a partial glimpse into the patterns and complexities by which people connect with or orient themselves towards others. The following sections will highlight the unique contributions of the social orientations approach relative to social motivations.

Specifically, this study adds a unique perspective on why and how people might experience shyness and how it relates to dependence on others, offers a new description of unsociability as being in-between sociability and social withdrawal, provides additional detail in describing individuals who are oriented away from others, and identifies multiple forms of sociability. Additionally, this discussion focuses on developmental considerations for each social orientation and their importance for positive development in emerging adulthood.

**Dependent: Implications for shyness.** First, the social orientations approach provides added information about why and how people might be in the approach-avoidance conflict of shyness. Whereas traditional motivational models explain approach-avoidance conflict as simply a desire to approach coupled with fear in approaching, the current study might shed light on what it is people want to approach and what they may be afraid of and thereby want to avoid. The Dependent-toward-Others orientation group ( $n = 59$ , 7.5% of the sample, 25% male) displays the most pronounced motivational conflict, but the other ways in which they are oriented toward and

away from others (e.g., self in relation to others, other-directed emotions) reveal new details about the processes that might underlie approach and avoidance. The approach motivation in the Dependent group may be based in a desire for others' approval as well as positive feelings toward and awareness of others, whereas the avoidance may stem from negative self-perceptions and oversensitivity to others' opinions. Indeed, it appears that people in the Dependent group regard others more positively than they regard themselves; they are seeking the approval of others while perhaps doubting that they are worthy of this approval and fearing that it will not come. Over-emphasizing others while lacking a solid inner sense of self seems to be a perfect storm for depression (Harter, 2012), and may actually elicit negative responses from others in social interactions. Thus, ironically and sadly, for individuals who are Dependent-toward-others, their fear of the very thing they are seeking appears to actually move them away from others and contribute to struggles in close relationships. Thus, the social orientations approach presents a unique picture of the processes that may underlie the approach-avoidance conflict and why it might be related to relational and individual difficulties, including lower relationship quality and higher depression. These results raise concern for individuals who are oriented toward others to the point of becoming dependent on them, suggesting that they might be a target for intervention. In summary, this study contributes to the current understanding of shyness, demonstrating that it is more than just a motivational conflict, but also includes being highly concerned for and easily influenced by others, and suggesting that the approach-avoidance motivational conflict may be based in a simultaneous desire for and fear of the approval and opinions of others.

**Conflicted: Implications for unsociability.** Second, the social orientations approach provides a richer description of what it might mean to be unsociable, both challenging and adding to previous conceptualizations and suggesting that this newly identified group is common

among emerging adults. The Conflicted-toward-Others group ( $n = 224$ , 42.4% of the sample, 31% male), which displayed high levels of the characteristic of unsociability, can hardly be summed up as simply having low-approach and low-avoidance social motivation. In fact, people in this group report moderate levels of both of these motivations (i.e., sociability and shyness). However, it is only when the complete social orientation profile (i.e., motivation, self-processes, emotions, cognitions, and behaviors) is examined that this group begins to make sense. It is important to note that the word “conflicted” here is meant to signify that people in this group are simultaneously oriented *both* toward and away from others in various ways, but is *not* synonymous with “conflicted shyness,” a term used to describe the social approach-avoidance motivational conflict in previous work (Coplan et al., 2004; Kopala-Sibley & Klein, 2016). The Conflicted group presents a unique combination of being oriented both toward and away from others. They are oriented toward others in a moderate desire for social interaction, moderate inclusion of others in the self, and awareness of and positive regard for others. Yet they are also oriented away from others in moderate shyness, unsociability (i.e., preference for/enjoyment of being alone), moderate reactivity, and moderate social involvement. Unlike the low-approach/low-avoidance unsociable individuals, people in the Conflicted group are by no means low in social motivation, but rather demonstrate an interesting blend that can only be considered somewhere in between social and withdrawn, which is especially significant because nearly half of all emerging adults in this sample fit this description. Thus, the social orientations approach offers a more complete and nuanced description of unsociable individuals. A brief discussion of developmental factors can begin to explain why this social orientation might exist and why it might be common among emerging adults.

Several developmental trends support the finding that the Conflicted social orientation might be a common orientation found in emerging adults. During adolescence and emerging adulthood, inclusion of others in self-perceptions is normative and higher than at other developmental periods (Callan et al., 2015; Harter, 2012), and thus the moderate inclusion of others found in the Conflicted group may be a normative trend, one that reflects more of an awareness of rather than over-concern for others' opinions. Additionally, individuals often experience an increase of appreciation for time spent alone (i.e., unsociability) beginning in adolescence and continuing through adulthood (Goossens, 2014; Larson, 1997), which is consistent with the Conflicted group reporting higher levels of this characteristic. Results from this study further indicate that it may be normative for emerging adults to experience moderate social apprehension, positive thoughts and feelings toward others, and moderate social involvement, perhaps stemming from the novel and changing social contexts faced in emerging adulthood (e.g., college, work transitions, roommates). This orientation appears to be related to positive adjustment during emerging adulthood, with some exceptions. Individuals in the Conflicted group are doing well with best friendships, parental relationships, and have the lowest levels of substance use, but are less successful in romantic relationships and experience moderate levels of depression. Again, these struggles may be due to the changing social contexts of emerging adulthood. The high level of reactivity reported in the Conflicted group may indicate that these individuals are easily overstimulated by novel or crowded social situations. Although they also demonstrate the ability to regulate intense emotions and appear to be fully capable of social interaction, they may be more passive in their interactions with others and less likely to actively pursue social interaction. As a result, Conflicted individuals may therefore not meet as many friends or romantic partners as others, and because they are still prone to compare

themselves to others, might understandably struggle with some level of depression. While the uncertainty and changes faced in emerging adulthood may present some challenges to those of this social orientation, these challenges may fade as people enter into adulthood and face fewer changes to their social contexts. To summarize, findings related to the Conflicted social orientation are important because they identify a group of people not fully described by any previous study and indicate that this orientation is common among emerging adults.

**Away: Implications for avoidance.** Third, the social orientations approach may shed new light on the socially avoidant, a group that has received much less attention in previous literature. It appears that those who have previously been labeled as socially avoidant according to the motivational model might be those who fall into the Away-from-Others orientation ( $n = 32$ , 4.1% of the sample, 74% male). By examining more than just social motivations, however, we get a much clearer picture of who these individuals are and why they may be so averse to social interactions. The Away-from-Others orientation is more than a simple motivational desire to be away from other people, but, rather, is based on a thorough cognitive, emotional, and behavioral detachment from others. Indeed, individuals in this group display markedly low concern for others (i.e., self in relation to others, other-directed feelings and thoughts) and little social involvement. By taking a holistic social orientations approach, this study makes a significant contribution by shedding new light on this group of individuals who are thoroughly oriented away from others and struggle on multiple indices of well-being. The results seem to raise concern regarding individuals who so strongly avert themselves away from others in all aspects of their lives, showing that that this orientation group is the most likely to struggle relationally and individually. In fact, it may be that the relatively extreme pattern of moving away from others and the small size of this group suggest that this orientation reflects a more

clinical/pathological trend. For example, the Away Orientation reflects aspects of social anhedonia (i.e., disinterest toward and lack of pleasure in social interaction; Bowker et al., 2017; Olino, Horton, & Versella, 2016; Martin, Cicero, Bailey, Karcher, & Kerns, 2016) and callous unemotional traits (i.e., disregard for others, lack of empathy; Frick & White, 2008; Sakai et al., 2016), although further work will be needed to explore these connections. Findings from this study also hint at possibilities of how this type of orientation might develop. For example, some characteristics of the Away-from-Others orientation, such as lack of empathy and avoidance of social information about the self, may be rooted in past experiences with social isolation (e.g., exclusion, rejection, ostracism; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003). It is possible that people who are oriented away from others were previously oriented differently, but through repeated negative social experiences turned away from others. Historically, this social group has received far less attention in research than others, and this study makes an important contribution by providing the most detailed description of them to date. These findings can motivate and inform future research that may be of particular interest to scholars interested in psychopathology and peer exclusion in adolescence and emerging adulthood, as these appear to be closely related to being socially orientated away from others.

**Toward and balanced: Implications for sociability.** Lastly, the social orientations approach also makes a significant contribution to our understanding of sociability. This study identified two distinct forms of sociability, Toward-Others ( $n = 137$ , 17.4% of the sample, 14% male) and Balanced-toward-Others ( $n = 225$ , 28.6% of the sample, 36% male), whereas the social motivations model describes only one. Results underscore the importance of this distinction between types of sociability not only in the characteristics that describe them, but also in their differing levels of individual well-being. Of the two sociable groups, the Toward-Others

orientation is characterized by higher social approach motivation, higher inclusion of others in self-perceptions, and higher other-directed emotions. This group also displays comparatively higher levels of depression and substance use than the Balanced group, indicating that although being oriented toward others may be good for interpersonal relationships, it may also pose some risks for individual well-being. The struggles of the Toward group may reflect being overly oriented toward others in some areas. Specifically, over concern for others and their opinions may make individuals more prone to depression and more likely to engage in substance use for social status, whereas a balance between the self and others may protect against these risks. Hence, just as the traditional motivational model points at different ways of being withdrawn being associated with different outcomes, the social orientation approach identifies different ways of being social that are linked to various indices of relational and individual well-being. Specifically, this study shows that although an orientation toward others appears to be beneficial for relationships, the way in which people are oriented toward others makes a difference for individual outcomes. Just as an orientation completely away from others appears to be problematic, an orientation completely toward others may be likewise indicative of risk, albeit not to the same extent. This study is the first of its kind to not only suggest multiple forms of sociability in emerging adulthood, but also demonstrate that these are important for individual well-being.

In summary, by taking a holistic approach to social orientations, rather than only examining social motivation, this study makes several important contributions to the field of social development. Specifically, this study adds a richer description to our understanding of shyness, redefines unsociability as a combination of sociability and withdrawal, describes people who are fully oriented away from others, and identifies two distinct forms of sociability.

### **Flourishing in Emerging Adulthood**

Taken together, these findings have important implications for research concerned with positive development and flourishing in emerging adulthood. Amidst the many personal and relational transitions during this time period, steady relationships help to foster healthy development (Barry et al., 2016; Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). Much of the research on relationships in emerging adulthood has focused on factors such as formation processes (i.e., similarities that bring people together) and relationship qualities (e.g., intimacy, commitment, conflict; Barry et al., 2016; Shulman & Connolly, 2016), but there has been less attention given to individual differences that might precede both the formation and qualities of these relationships. Social orientations may provide meaningful insight into some of these individual differences. For example, some orientations (i.e., Balanced, Toward) may promote the formation of more relationships than other orientations (i.e., Dependent, Away). Additionally, once these relationships form, social orientations may act as a personal characteristic that promotes (e.g., balances the self and others) or inhibits (e.g., creates dependence on others) healthy relational functioning. Healthy relationships are not only a part of positive development in emerging adulthood, but they also help to foster other areas of flourishing such as better mental health, higher overall happiness, and less risk behavior (Padilla-Walker et al., 2017). In summary, the social orientations perspective may provide emerging adulthood scholars with a new approach to studying relationships, which could have important implications for understanding factors that lead to flourishing or floundering in emerging adulthood.

### **Future Directions**

Findings from this study point to a number of interesting avenues for future research to address, particularly in regards to understanding these social orientations from a developmental

perspective. This includes exploration of the existence of different social orientations at various developmental periods. For example, many factors that contributed to social orientations in this study, such as self-consciousness and perspective taking, develop over time and are manifest differently at various developmental stages. Therefore, there may be additional or fewer social orientations that exist throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Also important is research on how social orientations develop and change over time for individuals, including the potential role of parental socialization and social experiences in shaping a person's orientation. For example, individuals subject to frequent social rejection display many similarities to the Away-from-Others orientation, such as lack of empathizing with others, emotional insensitivity, impaired self-regulation, decreased self-esteem, and seeking to escape social information about the self to avoid painful reflection on personal flaws (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2006; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge et al., 2003; Warburton & Williams, 2004). Hence, peer rejection may be an important factor in one's developing orientation toward or away from others. In sum, it is possible that social experiences, positive or negative, can shape and change how individuals are oriented toward others, and future work should identify what these experiences are and the impact they can have.

### **Limitations**

Despite the contributions this study makes, it is not without limitations. First, this sample of emerging adults did not include non-college students, and is thus not representative of emerging adults in the United States (Arnett, 2016). This may be an important consideration given the topic of social orientations. For example, an orientation away from others may drive people away from the highly social college atmosphere. Thus, it is possible that the number of people fitting into each orientation category will be different in the general population of

emerging adults, or that there are entirely new types of orientations not observed in the present study. The sample also lacked racial and ethnic diversity, which may similarly limit conclusions about group sizes and types of social orientations. There is certainly reason to believe that cultural factors (e.g., collectivist views) would influence how people are oriented toward others (Ding et al., 2015), and this could be a fruitful avenue for future inquiry. Furthermore, the measures utilized in this study could have more thoroughly assessed the proposed aspects of social orientations. For example, the measures of self-regulation could have been more focused on social situations, and measures of social behavior could have been broader to capture multiple types of social interaction (i.e., attending parties, engaging in conversations, etc.). Nonetheless, the measures used do measure some important aspects of self-regulation and actual social behavior and, as such, did contribute to differentiation between groups.

### **Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, however, this study offers a significant contribution to current models of social development and interaction. This is the first study of its kind to assess social orientations from a holistic, person-centered approach, identifying five meaningful social orientations that differ in terms of relational and individual well-being. In doing so, the results provide new insight into the approach/avoidance conflict of shyness and the nature of unsociability, offer a more thorough description of social avoidance, and suggest multiple forms of sociability. In general, findings suggest that balancing the connections between others and the self leads to optimal relational and individual outcomes, whereas moving further toward or away from others comes with fewer benefits and increased risks. Findings from this study are meaningful not only to researchers, but also provide helpful perspectives to practitioners (especially those in university settings), parents, and adolescents and emerging adults

themselves. As this is the first study to consider multiple aspects of social orientations, it provides one of the clearest and most detailed descriptions of social subtypes in emerging adulthood to date.

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Table 1.

*Model fit indices for latent profile analyses.*

Profiles	<i>n</i>	BIC	SABIC	LRT	BLRT	Entropy
2	390,397	22216	22098	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	.76
3	45,398,344	22072	21913	$p = .14$	$p < .001$	.82
4	13,143,263,368	21939	21739	$p = .23$	$p < .001$	.81
<b>5</b>	<b>32,225,59,137,334</b>	<b>21798</b>	<b>21556</b>	$p = .45$	$p < .001$	<b>.80</b>
6	12,178,103,266,140,88	21748	21466	$p = .59$	$p < .001$	.77
7	9,82,211,105,154,179,47	21738	21414	$p = .27$	$p < .001$	.77

Table 2.

*Estimated group means and comparisons for 12 social orientation variables.*

Variable	Profile 1 Away	Profile 2 Balanced	Profile 3 Dependent	Profile 4 Toward	Profile 5 Conflicted
<b>Motivations</b>					
Sociability	-1.85	0.20 <sup>a</sup>	-0.09	0.89 <sup>b</sup>	-0.33 <sup>ab</sup>
Shyness	-0.04 <sup>a</sup>	-0.79 <sup>b</sup>	1.20 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.72	0.62
Unsociability	-0.09 <sup>abc</sup>	-0.04 <sup>a</sup>	-0.06 <sup>b</sup>	-0.95 <sup>c</sup>	0.48 <sup>ac</sup>
<b>Self-Processes</b>					
Self-esteem	-1.08 <sup>a</sup>	0.72	-1.55	0.32	-0.21 <sup>a</sup>
Self-physique	-0.32 <sup>ab</sup>	0.83	-1.46 <sup>a</sup>	-0.19 <sup>a</sup>	-0.14 <sup>b</sup>
Fear Neg Eval	-0.80 <sup>a</sup>	-0.95 <sup>a</sup>	1.31 <sup>b</sup>	0.42 <sup>b</sup>	0.26
Social Comp	-1.44	-0.35	0.62 <sup>ab</sup>	0.25 <sup>a</sup>	0.14 <sup>b</sup>
Sensory React	-0.33 <sup>abc</sup>	-0.44 <sup>a</sup>	0.43 <sup>b</sup>	0.00 <sup>cd</sup>	0.24 <sup>d</sup>
Emot Dysreg	0.47 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.43	0.70	-0.17 <sup>a</sup>	0.18 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Emotions and Cognitions</b>					
Emp Concern	-1.30	0.14 <sup>a</sup>	0.06 <sup>b</sup>	0.55 <sup>c</sup>	-0.23 <sup>abc</sup>
Percept Aware	-1.60	0.03 <sup>a</sup>	0.08	0.46 <sup>a</sup>	-0.08 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Behaviors</b>					
Soc Behavior	-0.52 <sup>a</sup>	0.17 <sup>b</sup>	-0.24 <sup>bc</sup>	0.19 <sup>ac</sup>	-0.10 <sup>ab</sup>

Note: Group means (by row) sharing superscript letters are not significantly different from each other at the  $p < .05$  level.

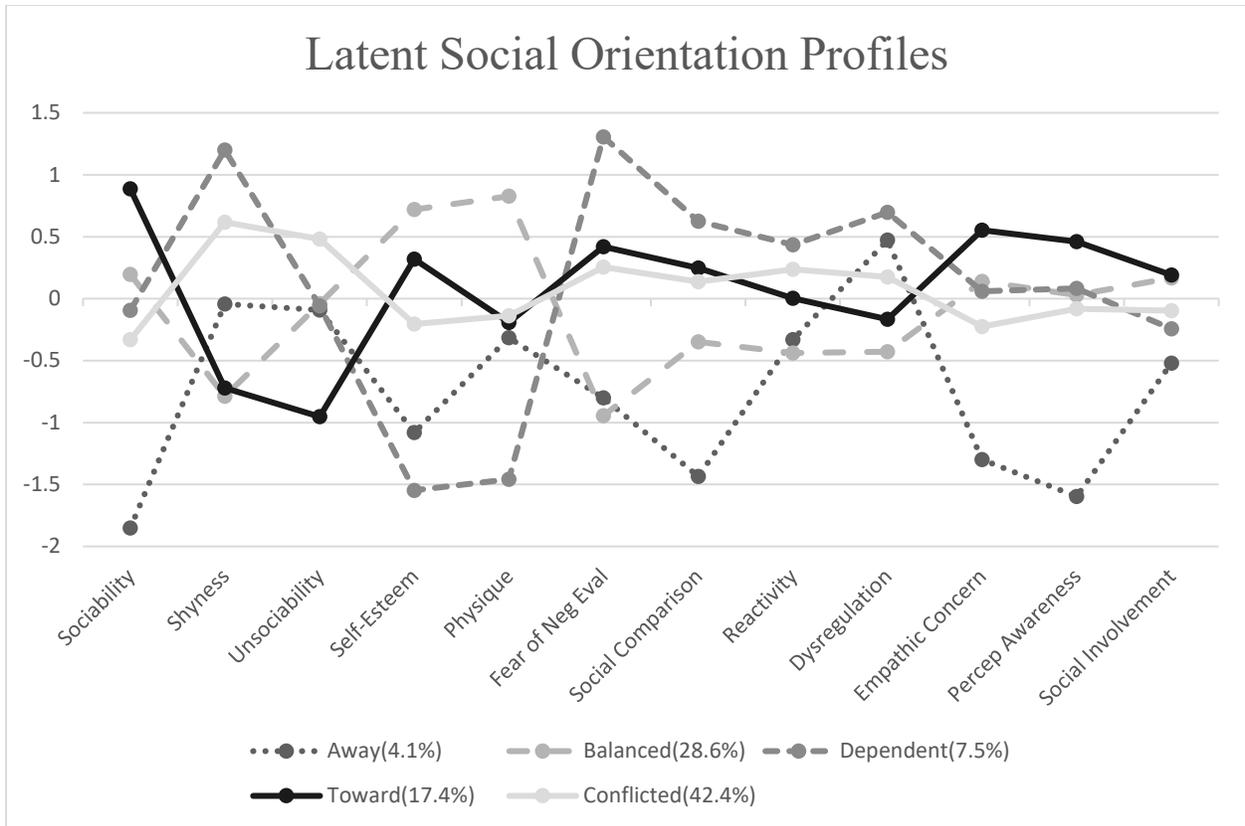


Figure 1. Response patterns across 12 variables for social orientation profiles.

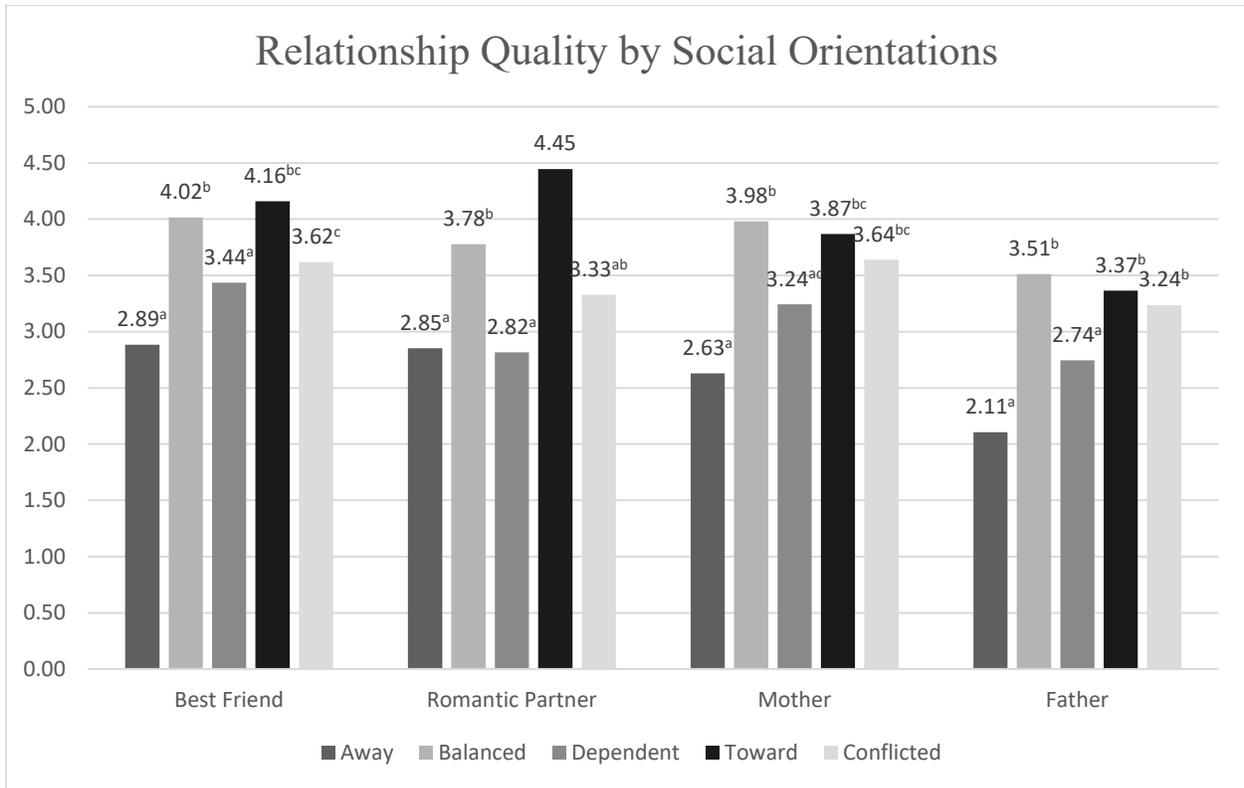


Figure 2. Distal relational outcomes for each profile. Estimated means sharing a superscript letter are not statistically different at the  $p < .01$  level.

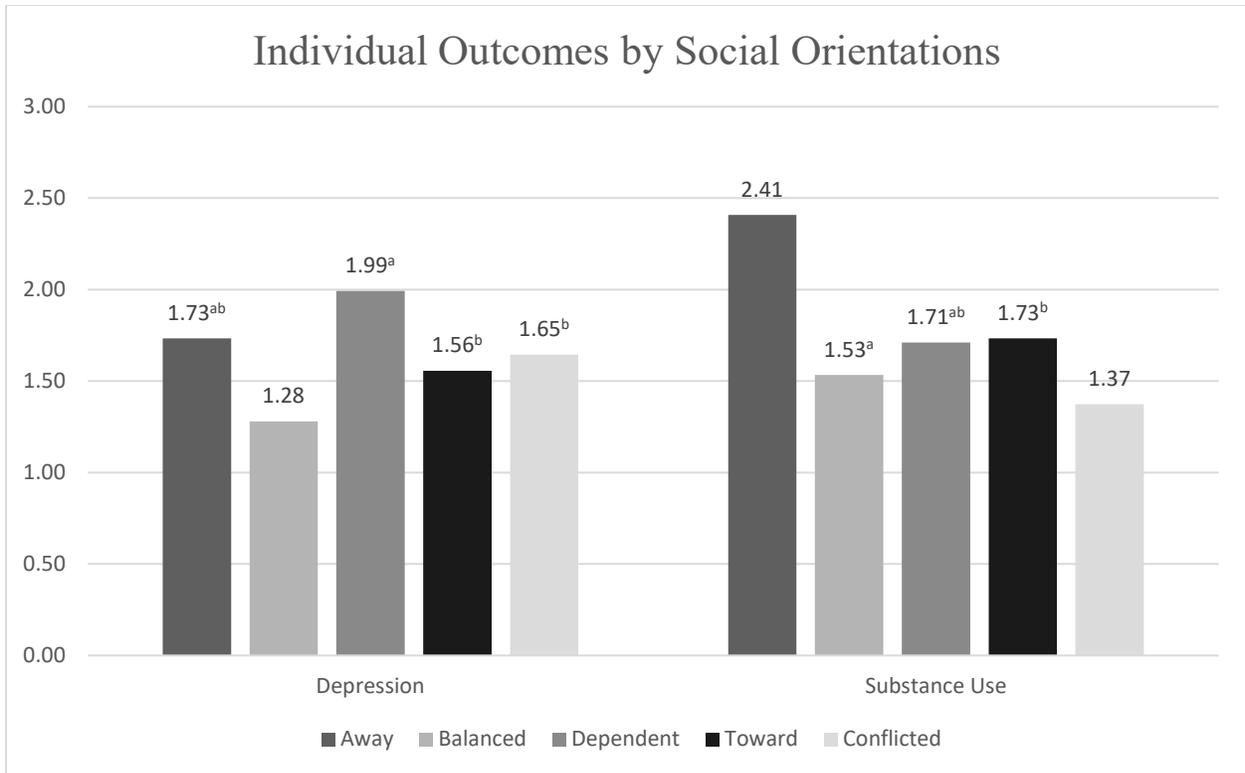


Figure 3. Distal individual outcomes for each profile. Estimated means sharing a superscript letter are not statistically different at the  $p < .01$  level.