

# Are You in a Healthy Relationship? Linking Conscientiousness to Health via Implementing and Immunizing Behaviors

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## Abstract

The benefits of living a conscientious life have been demonstrated across multiple domains, and yet, few studies have sought to explain how the positive effects in one area may help explain those in another. The current article considers the possibility that conscientious individuals live healthier lives by virtue of having greater success in their relationships. Using both past research and new findings to support our model, we set forth a framework by which to consider how Conscientiousness affects relationship functioning, which in turn leads to better physical, emotional, and psychological health. In so doing, we also provide a new outlook on the health benefits associated with Conscientiousness, and how these may be conferred by relationship success.

One of the more deceptively difficult questions for psychologists to answer is what makes for a healthy life? For most of us, a healthy individual is defined with respect to being unimpaired by physical issues or pain, as well as feeling capable to actively engage in one's day-to-day life. In a similar fashion, health researchers tend to focus on physical health, neglecting the importance of social and romantic "health" for living a worthwhile life, even though prominent definitions of health note the importance of such relationships (e.g., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; World Health Organization, 1948). An important question then is whether health in social domains may have downstream effects on emotional and physical well-being as well. In other words, when trying to define a healthy life, it is not merely determining which domains are important, but whether and how these different components of well-being foreshadow one another.

Integral to testing such effects is the notion that certain individuals will experience better health across domains. In other words, when considering whether relationship health helps explain later effects on emotional or physical health, it may be important to first nominate a common predecessor to both outcomes. One potential candidate is the personality trait of Conscientiousness. Conscientious individuals tend to experience a wide array of benefits in their day-to-day lives (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). However, most research has focused on how conscientious individuals outperform their peers in certain domains, and has yet to examine whether those benefits then help explain the trait's influence on other areas of health.

In the current review, we take up this aim with respect to understanding how success in romantic relationships may promote later health. In order to do so, we focus our discussion on how conscientious individuals may live "healthier" lives by virtue of their greater propensity both to implement positive behaviors and to avoid negative ones, a dichotomy that proves valuable for discussing health across different domains. First, we outline this framework with reference to why conscientious individuals experience better physical health. Second, we carry through this structure when describing the multiple roles that Conscientiousness can take in a romantic relationship. Third, we begin to empirically test the potential for Conscientiousness to affect emotional and physical health through relationship health. We conclude by nominating important future directions for more fully testing our suggested framework.

## LINKING CONSCIENTIOUSNESS TO HEALTH: AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

Across multiple samples and outcomes of interest, Conscientiousness has remained among the most consistent and

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valuable individual difference predictors of positive health outcomes (Hampson, 2012; Roberts, Walton, & Bogg, 2005). Conscientious individuals are less likely to report a wide array of physical and psychological health ailments (Goodwin & Friedman, 2006). In addition, Conscientiousness has a noted positive effect on a number of physiological markers (e.g., Möttus, Luciano, Starr, Pollard, & Deary, 2013; Sutin et al., 2010; Turiano, Mroczek, Moynihan, & Chapman, 2013). As such, it is unsurprising that Conscientiousness is a prominent predictor of greater longevity, even above and beyond known buffers like education and socioeconomic status (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007).

The most common explanation for these effects is that conscientious individuals enact behaviors that can be broadly defined as “healthier” in nature. Indeed, one meta-analysis demonstrated that Conscientiousness predicted a greater propensity for health-promoting behaviors, such as greater fitness and exercise frequency, as well as a diminished likelihood for risky behaviors, such as drug use, self-harm, and risky driving or sexual activity (Bogg & Roberts, 2004). More broadly, work on the trait’s overall behavioral signature again demonstrates this dichotomy, insofar that conscientious people are more likely to spend their time doing positive things like organizing their lives, persisting at difficult tasks, and cleaning their living space, but are less likely to slack off, forget important events, or cheat on tests or taxes (Jackson et al., 2010). In other words, conscientious people may be healthier because they catalyze the good *and* attenuate the bad.

Even though this general idea is prevalent across the literature on Conscientiousness, only rarely have these two pathways been incorporated into a single model (for an exception, see Lodi-Smith et al., 2010). One potential reason is that researchers rarely examine both health-promoting, or “implementing,” and risk-reducing, or “immunizing,” behaviors in the same study. However, when considering health behaviors more broadly, one can see clear value in taking such an approach. For instance, navigating our social environments requires both avoiding potentially detrimental actions (like enacting revenge or forgetting important social events) as well as striving toward more positive relationships (like providing support and upholding promises).

In the following review, we intend to describe these implementing and immunizing pathways for Conscientiousness and demonstrate the utility of this framework within the context of romantic relationships. Specifically, we review the literature demonstrating that conscientious partners appear to promote greater relationship satisfaction and success, while avoiding relationship pitfalls along the way. This review then lays the groundwork for a more profound and novel contribution, namely, that these two pathways may help explain the health benefits associated with Conscientiousness. In other words, by striving toward implementing and immunizing romantic well-being, people may in turn ultimately promote their physical health.

## CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The value of Conscientiousness in romantic relationships becomes clear when considering the type of partner most people prefer. People tend to appreciate those individuals who truly work toward relationship success, by virtue of enacting behaviors such as remembering important dates or duties, being generally responsible and reliable, and upholding promises. All of these behaviors are indicative of a conscientious individual (Jackson et al., 2010), and thus it is unsurprising that research on mate preferences suggests that individuals tend to favor conscientious partners (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997). In line with these preferences, research on lay perceptions of personality suggests that we expect married individuals to be higher on this trait than the unmarried (Wood & Roberts, 2006).

Accordingly, one would predict that conscientious individuals should experience better “health” in their romantic relationships. Such effects could occur because conscientious individuals are focused on making their relationships work, and thus will be rewarded with greater relationship satisfaction and a decreased risk for divorce or relationship dissolution. On the other hand, conscientious individuals should immunize themselves from relationship problems by avoiding temptations toward revenge and infidelity. We discuss in turn the evidence for these potential implementing and immunizing effects in relationships.

### Implementing Relationship Health

#### **Conscientiousness and Relationship Satisfaction.**

Researchers have examined how Conscientiousness predicts one’s own relationship satisfaction, as well as that of one’s partner. Although personality may evidence a stronger link with relationship satisfaction when examined in a more contextualized manner (Slatcher & Vazire, 2009), and there is a need to evaluate whether the lower-order facets (e.g., orderliness, industriousness, self-control) differ in their predictive value, even global measures of Conscientiousness tend to predict greater relationship satisfaction. Given the dyadic nature of these partnerships, researchers have sought to address two central questions: Do conscientious individuals report greater relationship satisfaction, and do partners of conscientious individuals report greater satisfaction?

First, self-reports of Conscientiousness and relationship satisfaction do evidence a significant positive relationship. Perhaps the strongest demonstration of this effect comes from work looking at large panel studies from Australia and the United Kingdom, which found consistent support for the claim that conscientious adults have greater relationship satisfaction, even when one accounts for the role of partners’ Conscientiousness (Dyrenforth, Kashy, Donnellan, & Lucas, 2010). Similar findings have been evidenced for self-reported Conscientiousness on marital quality (e.g., Claxton, O’Rourke,

Smith, & DeLongis, 2012; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004), even when controlling again for partners' Conscientiousness levels (Barelds, 2005). Moreover, although work is sorely needed on the role of specific facets, one study at least suggests that multiple facets of Conscientiousness may be beneficial (Nofhle & Shaver, 2006), including competence, dutifulness, achievement-striving, self-discipline, and deliberation.

Second, having a conscientious partner also appears to lead to a more positive relationship. Indeed, meta-analytic work suggests that Conscientiousness correlates with greater reported relationship satisfaction by one's partner (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010). Moreover, this effect was similar across males' and females' reports of satisfaction, and across cross-sectional or longitudinal study designs. In addition, some of the work described above also found significant effects for partner Conscientiousness, when controlling for self-reported Conscientiousness (Dyrenforth et al., 2010), although this unique prediction effect does not always hold (Barelds, 2005).

In addition, researchers have examined the potential for self and partner personality to predict relationship satisfaction in nonadditive ways. For one, research has found little evidence that self-partner similarity plays a significant unique role in predicting relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010), although moderators of these similarity effects may exist (e.g., Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007). Moreover, one study even found that greater similarity on Conscientiousness actually led to more negative changes in marital satisfaction in midlife (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). Another approach is to examine whether the effects of Conscientiousness are dependent on the partner's personality. Although such effects have been found for Extraversion and Agreeableness, Self  $\times$  Partner interactions were not evidenced for Conscientiousness (Barelds, 2005). Conscientiousness thus predicts greater relationship satisfaction both when with a conscientious and nonconscientious partner. Finally, holding a positive perception of a spouse's Conscientiousness may lead to greater marital or relationship satisfaction (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007; Claxton et al., 2012). Put differently, spouses who "exaggerate" their partners' Conscientiousness, when comparing self-to spouse ratings, tend to be happier in their relationship.

**Relationship Status and Length.** Another outcome that should demonstrate the implementing effects of Conscientiousness is relationship status and length, as actively working toward a better relationship should lead to a longer and more intact one. With respect to current marital and relationship status, meta-analytic work does find that Conscientiousness predicts lower divorce rates (Roberts et al., 2007). Even prospective work demonstrates that earlier Conscientiousness influences later risk of divorce; for instance, one study found that teacher and parent reports of Conscientiousness made in childhood predicted the targets' likelihood of divorce in adulthood (Tucker, Kressin, Spiro, & Ruscio, 1998). Moreover,

with respect to the facet level, one study found that higher levels of social responsibility among women longitudinally predicted a decreased likelihood of being divorced later in life (Roberts & Bogg, 2004). However, it is interesting to note that a separate meta-analysis found no effect of Conscientiousness for predicting the dissolution of nonmarital relationships (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010). Although further research is needed on this front, as that work only found four studies on the topic, it does suggest the potential for implementing effects to operate differently between marital versus nonmarital couples.

Less research has examined the role of Conscientiousness on relationship duration, presumably in part due to the fact that several studies only include partners who have been together for a certain period of time. However, the extant findings are somewhat mixed. On one hand, the longitudinal study of divorce mentioned above also demonstrated that if participants did end up divorcing, conscientious divorcees tended to stay in the relationship longer prior to dissolution (Tucker et al., 1998), suggesting a positive effect for Conscientiousness on duration. However, another study of university students found that Conscientiousness failed to predict the likelihood of staying in a social relationship, a broader category that included romantic partnerships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). Accordingly, although further research is needed on whether conscientious individuals are more likely to "stick it out" in premarital relationships, the most substantial evidence that conscientious partners stay together comes from the work on divorce.

### **Immunizing Against Relationship Problems**

**Conscientiousness and Infidelity.** Next, we consider the ability for conscientious individuals to immunize themselves against relationship issues, by avoiding potentially destructive temptations toward infidelity or revenge. One would anticipate that Conscientiousness should predict greater fidelity, if people high on the trait tend to be more responsible and maintain their promises. Although there are obvious issues inherent in studying unfaithful acts (e.g., self-report biases), a number of sources have supported this general claim. For one, research with couples in their first year of marriage suggests that conscientious partners are rated as less likely to engage in unfaithful actions (from flirting with others to engaging in a serious affair) by their spouse (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). In addition, Conscientiousness predicted participants' reports of their own likelihood for infidelity among wives. These latter findings have been extended in a recent multinational study, showing that conscientious individuals are less likely to describe themselves with traits indicative of infidelity (i.e., adulterous, polygamous, unfaithful) and promiscuity (loose, promiscuous), which holds for both males and females (Schmitt, 2004). Therefore, conscientious partners are perceived as more likely to refrain from betraying their spouses, and even report a decreased likelihood to cheat on their partners.

In addition to ratings of potential infidelity, one study of college students found that Conscientiousness did predict a decreased tendency to cheat on a partner, either physically or emotionally (Barta & Kiene, 2005). Moreover, this effect size was larger than any of the other Big Five traits ( $d = .52$ ). Among individuals who did cheat, Conscientiousness did not significantly predict any of the examined motives for infidelity (dissatisfaction, neglect, anger, or sex). Therefore, conscientious individuals were less likely to cheat, and the trait is unrelated to potential motives for cheating.

**Conscientiousness and Revenge.** One potential motivation for infidelity is to seek revenge against the partner for a previous transgression. Broadly speaking, the ability to forgive a partner, and release oneself from revenge motivation, appears to be an important attribute for relationship success (e.g., Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich, & Fincham, 2007; Braithwaite, Selby, & Fincham, 2011; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004). As such, it is worth noting that literature reviews have demonstrated a negative relationship between Conscientiousness and revenge (Mullet, Neto, & Rivière, 2005) but a positive one between the trait and a dispositional tendency to forgive (Balliet, 2010). Such a connection provides another potential immunization pathway for conscientious individuals, particularly given the frequent suggestion that the primary function of forgiveness is to “attenuate the bad” (e.g., Allemand, Hill, Ghaemmghami, & Martin, 2012; Allemand, Job, Christen, & Keller, 2008).

## Summary

In sum, it appears that Conscientiousness does predict better relationship health, and that these benefits occur because conscientious individuals enact both implementing and immunizing behaviors. The next question to ask is whether doing so helps explain the health benefits of Conscientiousness, given the potential for relationship variables to predict physical health (e.g., Loving & Slatcher, in press). We turn next to an initial empirical test of this question, focusing on whether marital satisfaction helps explain the effects of Conscientiousness on other forms of health.

## EXPLAINING THE BENEFITS OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS USING MARITAL SATISFACTION

The value of our proposed framework is its ability to suggest multiple pathways through which Conscientiousness can influence health in any one domain, which in turn can promote other areas of health in the long term. Below we discuss an initial test of one potential pathway, namely, that conscientious individuals will work on their relationships in order to promote marital satisfaction, which then will predict markers of health.

Toward this end, we employed a cross-sectional nationwide sample of adults to test three primary questions of interest. First, do all facets of Conscientiousness predict relationship satisfaction similarly? Second, does relationship satisfaction predict all aspects of health similarly? Moreover, we asked whether these effects hold even when controlling for Neuroticism, which has a known effect on marital quality (see Karney & Bradbury, 1995) and physical health (Hampson, 2012). Third, does relationship satisfaction help explain the linkages between Conscientiousness and different health outcomes? Although a cross-sectional sample is far from ideal for testing mediation, we have included these results primarily for pedagogical purposes, to alert researchers as to whether and when our framework may receive better or worse evidence. The data set employed has been discussed in greater detail elsewhere (see Hill & Roberts, 2011), and we direct the reader to that previous work for a more formal presentation of the methodology.

## Abbreviated Method

The current analyses employed a subset of the original sample who indicated they currently were in a marital relationship ( $n = 1,040$ ; 51% male; 83% Caucasian;  $M_{\text{age}} = 52.5$  years). These participants completed a questionnaire that asked them how satisfied they were in their marriage, using a 43-item forced-choice scale based on work by Jones, Adams, Monroe, and Berry (1995;  $\alpha = .96$ ), including items such as “I’ve gotten more out of marriage than I expected” and “I usually feel that my marriage is worthwhile.” All participants completed this marital satisfaction measure, in addition to the personality and health measures described below, as part of a nationwide online survey of adults.

## Conscientiousness and Marital Satisfaction

We first sought further evidence that conscientious individuals do experience greater marital satisfaction. Table 1 presents the correlations between marital satisfaction and six facets of Conscientiousness (see Hill, Payne, Jackson, Roberts, & Stine-Morrow, in press; Hill & Roberts, 2011, for scale

**Table 1** Correlations Between Conscientiousness Facets and Marital Satisfaction, Both Before and After Controlling for Neuroticism

Facet	$r$ With Marital Satisfaction	$r$ Control for Neuroticism
Order	.07*	.07*
Virtue	.20*	.15*
Traditionalism	.14*	.12*
Self-control	.15*	.09*
Responsibility	.18*	.12*
Industriousness	.13*	.08*

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

details): order (being organized vs. sloppy), industriousness (hardworking vs. lazy), self-control (cautious vs. impulsive), traditionalism (conventional vs. unconventional), responsibility (dependable vs. unreliable), and virtue (sincere vs. dishonest). All facets of Conscientiousness were positively related to marital satisfaction, and at magnitudes in line with the previous research. Although all effects were similar, the strongest effects were for virtue ( $r = .20$ ) and responsibility ( $r = .18$ ), which is intuitive, insofar that reliable and sincere partners should be most successful in their relationships.

### Marital Satisfaction and Health

Next, we examined the role of marital satisfaction on health measures, using the commonly employed SF-36 measure of health (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992). This scale breaks down self-reported health into six components: energy, emotional well-being, social functioning, having health problems that limit participants' ability to fulfill their daily roles, physical functioning, and whether they report feeling little to no current pain ( $\alpha$ s in the current sample range from .59 to .90, with lower reliabilities evidenced for the two-item measures). Table 2 presents the correlations between marital satisfaction and the different SF-36 subscales. Marital satisfaction correlated positively with well-being across all scales, with the exception of physical functioning. The strongest effects were for emotional well-being ( $r = .41$ ) and social functioning ( $r = .28$ ), intuitive outcomes of being in a positive relationship.

Prior to testing the mediational effects, we performed all of the above correlations a second time, controlling for the effects

of Neuroticism (assessed using the AB5C Stability subscale; Goldberg, 1999;  $\alpha = .87$ ), given the known effects of this trait on both relationship and health outcomes. These results are presented in Column 3 of both Table 1 and Table 2. All significant effects remained, providing support that these pathways cannot be explained by the potential role of Neuroticism.

### Testing Marital Satisfaction as a Mediator

Finally, we sought initial evidence that marital satisfaction helps explain the positive effects of Conscientiousness on health. All tests were performed using 5,000 bootstrapped samples, following the approach proffered by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Tests predicting physical functioning were eliminated because marital satisfaction did not appear to predict this aspect of health. All variables were standardized before analysis. Given the multitude of tests performed (six conscientiousness facets  $\times$  five health aspects), and the relatively large sample size, we set an alpha threshold of .001 for significance of any single mediation test. Results are presented in Table 3.

Overall, most effects reached significance even with our more stringent alpha criterion, providing general support for our proposed framework. That said, three trends are particularly noteworthy. First, marital satisfaction appears to work best at explaining the role of Conscientiousness on emotional well-being, relative to the other aspects of health. These findings may prove fairly intuitive, given that relationship success will likely influence your daily happiness and stress levels more than physiological markers of health. Accordingly, future research may wish to examine multiple mediator models, suggesting that conscientious individuals experience better relationship satisfaction, which promotes emotional well-being and in turn physical health.

Second, marital satisfaction plays little role with respect to the link between order and health, suggesting the need to look elsewhere for explaining the benefits of orderliness. For instance, research has suggested the potential for cognitive functioning to play a mediational role between orderliness and health (see, e.g., Hill, Turiano, Hurd, Mroczek, & Roberts, 2011). In other words, being organized may benefit health because it helps to keep one's mind sharp, more than any influence it has on relationship success. These findings point to the possibility that the utility of any pathway in our model may

**Table 2** Correlations Between Dimensions of Health and Marital Satisfaction, Both Before and After Controlling for Neuroticism

Aspect	<i>r</i> With Marital Satisfaction	<i>r</i> Control for Neuroticism
Energy	.21*	.15*
Emotional well-being	.41*	.36*
Social functioning	.28*	.23*
Role limitations	-.18*	-.14*
Physical Functioning	-.01	-.03
Pain	.10*	.07*

Note. \* $p < .05$ .

**Table 3** Results of Bootstrapping Mediation Tests of the Conscientiousness–Marital Satisfaction–Health Pathway

Facet	Energy	Emotional Well-Being	Social Functioning	Role Limitations	Pain
Order	.014 [.002, .029]	.026 [.003, .051]	.017 [.002, .035]	-.010 [-.024, -.002]	.006 [.001, .017]
Virtue	.039* [.023, .059]	.070* [.046, .099]	.049* [.030, .071]	-.030* [-.049, -.016]	.020 [.008, .038]
Traditionalism	.029* [.016, .047]	.053* [.028, .080]	.036* [.019, .057]	-.022* [-.039, -.011]	.014 [.005, .028]
Self-control	.032* [.017, .052]	.056* [.032, .087]	.037* [.020, .058]	-.022* [-.038, -.010]	.014 [.005, .030]
Responsible	.031* [.018, .049]	.060* [.038, .086]	.038* [.022, .059]	-.021* [-.037, -.010]	.014 [.004, .030]
Industrious	.025* [.013, .041]	.047* [.025, .075]	.030* [.015, .051]	-.018 [-.033, -.008]	.011 [.003, .023]

Note. Indirect effect estimates are provided, along with 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals.

\* $p < .001$ .

inherently depend on the facet of Conscientiousness being studied.

Third, none of the mediational tests predicting pain reached significance. One potential reason may be that pain reports result primarily from accidents or physical deterioration that results from the aging process. As such, relationship variables may necessarily play less of a role in influencing this aspect of health. Moreover, it is likely that pain may be better predicted when considering immunizing rather than implementing behaviors, and only the latter were examined in the current article. Overall, our findings point to the potential of the framework, and more broadly to the importance of examining whether its usefulness differs across facets and health dimensions.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Even though these findings provide a positive start, longitudinal research is sorely needed to better test the proposed framework. Such tests would benefit from avoiding a sole focus on physical health markers and instead also consider including measures of social and emotional health. Moreover, there is a clear need in the literature to include indicators of both implementing and immunizing behaviors in a single study, which would provide a more thorough assessment of our framework. When researchers include these variables, it would be worthwhile to test potential moderators of these pathways, such as relationship type, sex, or age. For instance, recent research suggests that the explanatory role of health behaviors for personality-to-health effects may be stronger for older adults than for younger adults (Hill, Allemand, & Roberts, 2013; Hill & Roberts, 2011). Given that emerging adulthood is a prominent period for establishing romantic relationships (e.g., Arnett, 2000), one might predict that any associated implementing or immunizing effects could be greater for younger adults than for older adults. As such, research needs to continue to examine whether the pathways by which personality affects health differ across the life course.

### **Personality Change via Feedback**

Another central direction for future research would be to examine a potential feedback loop. Namely, there is the potential for the implementing or immunizing pathways to encourage individuals toward greater Conscientiousness in the future. Once one realizes either the associated benefits in a given domain (e.g., relationship success) or the longer-term health benefits afforded by Conscientiousness, that individual may deepen or strengthen his or her conscientious tendencies. Such a prediction would follow recent work demonstrating the potential role of life satisfaction in driving changes on this trait (Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2013), insofar that greater well-being may motivate individuals toward adaptive personality changes.

Initial work along this front has already begun, focusing on the possibility for individuals to change their personality as a

result of being in a relationship. Research on premarital relationships suggests that for individuals continuing in the same relationship, individuals who report greater initial relationship security were more likely to gain more on Conscientiousness (Lehnart & Neyer, 2006). Moreover, those individuals who increased on security also tended to gain on Conscientiousness. Similar work has pointed to the possibility that young adults may gain on Conscientiousness following the transition into a romantic relationship (Neyer & Lehnart, 2007), although this increase holds true for most individuals during young adulthood (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006).

However, any relationship effects may be biased by who is rating the individual's personality. Two studies have found that Conscientiousness tends to increase for individuals in relationships when looking at self-ratings, but declines may present if you ask the partner (Jackson, Fraley, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, in press; Watson & Humrichhouse, 2006). This pattern often is referred to as the "honeymoon effect" to reflect the tendency for one to have an overly positive perception of a partner at the start of a relationship that diminishes with time. It remains a question for future work, though, whether the self-report trends do reflect a genuine tendency for individuals to deepen their conscientious dispositions, and this positive change is simply missed by partners due to their tendency to move away from their initially positive partner impressions. Therefore, when testing potential feedback effects in future research, it would be valuable to examine whether these effects hold across different responders.

### **Other Relationship Formats**

Another direction for future research is to extend these findings to non-romantic relationships. Implementing and immunizing effects should be readily evidenced across multiple arenas of life. Indeed, the potential for such benefits is underscored by work suggesting that integrating into society, as well as contributing to it, may be linked to increases in Conscientiousness (Hill, Turiano, Mroczek, & Roberts, 2012). With respect to specific domains, the workplace may prove particularly valuable to investigate, given that previous research suggests that positive and negative workplace behaviors appear linked to both Conscientiousness and changes in Conscientiousness (Hudson, Roberts, & Lodi-Smith, 2012; Roberts, Walton, Bogg, & Caspi, 2006). In other words, the evidence for a feedback loop may already exist in this domain, as well as support for both implementing and immunizing pathways.

## CONCLUSION

Our intent in the current article was threefold. First, we sought to propose a basic framework that may help to link Conscientiousness, relationships, and health across different domains. Second, we developed the foundation for this framework using previous research to build evidence for both implementing and immunizing pathways. Third, we provided initial partial

support for these claims by empirically testing whether marital satisfaction served to mediate the relationships between Conscientiousness facets and different aspects of health. Our hope is that the current framework can serve as a guide, either directly or indirectly, for advancing our understanding of how one can actively promote health across different domains, by virtue of seeking the good and avoiding the bad.

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