
Neuroticism, Low Agreeableness, and Friendship Dissolution: A Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Mediators Model

Abstract

In this paper, we argue that friendship dissolution should receive more attention in social research because of the recent friendship recession and an emerging epidemic of loneliness. Specifically, we focus on two Big Five traits, neuroticism and agreeableness, and how they shape friendship and the dissolution processes. We propose a theoretical framework linking cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators to distinct pathways in individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and low agreeableness. Our review suggests that individuals exhibiting high neuroticism engage in a passive avoidant pathway where distancing is the main strategy, while individuals exhibiting low agreeableness employ an active confrontational pathway where escalation is the main strategy. By understanding how each trait drives dissolution through distinct mechanisms, we can develop targeted intervention strategies for each pathway. For individuals who exhibit high neuroticism, strategies can center around cognitive reframing techniques that reduce rumination and negative thought patterns, whereas strategies for individuals exhibiting low agreeableness may focus on constructive communication and perspective-taking skills. We end with a call for longitudinal research to empirically test the proposed mediating chain, as this remains a theoretical framework.

Keywords: Social and Behavioral Science; Personality Psychology; Friendship Dissolution; Five Factor Model; Neuroticism;

1. Introduction

Friendship is a voluntary and reciprocal relationship characterized by mutual liking, emotional support, and shared intimacy (Fehr, 1996). Through close friendships, individuals receive validation, comfort, and opportunities to develop social competence and interpersonal skills (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Across the lifespan, friendships play a critical role in fulfilling basic psychological needs for relatedness, while also contributing to emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Given the significance of friendships, it is of growing concern that Americans report having fewer close friendships than they once did (Cox, 2021). Between 1990 and 2021, the proportion of Americans with no close friends quadrupled from 3% to 12%, while those with 10 or more close friends fell from 33% to 13% (Cox, 2021). This stark decline of close friendships contributes to the overall increasing loneliness in society, known as the epidemic of loneliness. According to a recent report from the U.S. Surgeon General (2023), loneliness can harm both individual and societal health. Loneliness is linked to physical illnesses including greater cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, and premature death, as well as mental illnesses like depression and anxiety (Murthy, 2023). Performance, productivity, and engagement in social settings can diminish as a result of increasing loneliness (Murthy, 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand why fulfilling friendships end as a result of unhealthy mental processes, and develop strategies to prevent those friendships from dissolving.

At the individual level, one underexplored factor that may explain why some individuals are more vulnerable to friendship dissolution than others is personality. Yet, even within the limited research on friendship dissolution, personality remains largely unexamined. This discrepancy is evident in a literature search: between 2005 and 2025, the term “friendship dissolution” produces 506 results. Of these publications, roughly 61 contain substantive discussion of dissolution cause and processes, yet only four examine personality influences, none of which includes prominent models such as the five-factor model of personality. Clarifying the role of personality traits in dissolution would therefore fill a significant gap in social psychological research.

2. Hypothesis

This paper discusses how the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators within neuroticism and agreeableness contribute to their distinct dissolution outcomes. To build this argument, this section first introduces the two traits and their relevance to friendship breakdown, then defines dissolution, and finally outlines briefly on the mediating models that shape these outcomes.

The Five-Factor Model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits based on five dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. This model is supported across multiple methods of personality assessment, including analyses of everyday personality descriptors and standardized personality questionnaires (Costa & McCrae, 1992).



Among the Big Five traits, neuroticism describes the tendency to experience negative affective experiences (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017), and agreeableness refers to the ability to get along well with others (Ellis et al., 2018). Both neuroticism and low agreeableness serve as strong predictors of friendship dissolution as they negatively affect three aspects that hold friendships together — relationship satisfaction, quality, and maintenance (Malouff et al., 2010). Our paper addresses the gap between the psychological and social mechanisms of neuroticism and low agreeableness and how they impact friendship trajectories. By doing so, we aim to open the door for strategies that reduce unnecessary friendship dissolution.

Dissolution refers to the termination or the gradual weakening of a relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). The process of dissolution can be characterized by three elements that occur sequentially: cognitive interpretation of social situations, emotional responses to those interpretations, and coping behaviors created by the response. Cognitive interpretations are the mental processes through which individuals perceive, analyze, and understand the information they receive (Folkman, 1984; Crick & Dodge, 1994). Emotional responses are the psychological and physiological reactions to specific stimuli (Paul Ekman, 1992). Coping behaviors are voluntary behaviors mobilized to manage stressful situations (Folkman, 1984). The process of dissolution is heavily managed by the interplay of the three factors: the predispositions shape cognitive interpretation and emotional responses, which interact to influence behaviors. Our paper hypothesizes that the three mediators (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) influence one another and altogether contribute to friendship dissolution.

Both neuroticism and low agreeableness shape dissolution through destructive behaviors, which are actions that erode trust, safety, connection, or mutual respect over time (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The behaviors worsen friendship quality, which reinforces these behaviors, creating a feedback loop where deterioration continues until the emotional costs of the relationship overtake its reward (Gottman, 1993; Rusbult, 1980). The following sections will discuss in detail how this process differs between individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and those exhibiting low agreeableness stemming from the differences in mediators.

3. Dissolution

Before examining how personality traits shape the dissolution process, it is necessary to establish what dissolution is, why it occurs, and the pathways through which it unfolds.

Among various studies, dissolution is consistently being recognized as a trajectory of relationship disengagement (Baxter, 1984). Baxter refers to it as a relationship ending that unfolds through a series of decisions and changes, while Duck (1981) claims that as a multi-stage process. There are also countless causes of dissolution, with the most prominent ones being persistent conflict, lack of reciprocity and trust, and distancing emotional closeness (Apostolou, 2022; Khullar et al., 2021). The continuous nature of dissolution serves as the foundation for understanding how the influence of each mediator accumulates over time, and ultimately reaches the threshold at which the final breakup occurs. The time it takes for dissolution to occur is unclear. Dissolution can happen within days, or years, depending on each distinct situation. Future research should examine how factors such as gender, age, or race, influence the dissolution time.

Recent studies on friendship dissolution highlights two different processes of dissolution: passive and active pathways (Vieth et al. 2022). The former describes the gradual disengagement without one's explicit intention, while the latter refers to the



direct conscious termination of the friendship. This essay argues that dissolution is the result of maladaptive mediators, and that dissolution pathway can be predicted through the trait. The different pathways are introduced to pinpoint the mechanistic differences in dissolution between individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and those exhibiting low agreeableness.

For clarity, individuals scoring high in neuroticism are hereafter referred to as High-N individuals, and those scoring low in neuroticism as Low-N individuals. Individuals scoring high in agreeableness are referred to as High-A individuals, and those scoring low in agreeableness as Low-A individuals.

1. Mediators and Dissolution Pathways of Neuroticism and Agreeableness

1. How Neuroticism Shapes Friendship Dissolution

The process of dissolution for High-N individuals begins with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency generates anxiety and distress, which are managed through suppression or avoidance. This tendency to withdraw then pushes them towards a passive dissolution pathway where distancing becomes the primary strategy. The following section explores each of these mediators, and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape how High-N individuals disengage from friendships.

1. Cognition

As stated earlier, neuroticism is characterized by a tendency to experience negative affective experiences, including anxiety, anger, self-consciousness, irritability, and emotional instability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). On the other hand, low neuroticism is mainly marked by emotional stability, in which the efficient emotion regulation allows such people to experience less negative emotions (John & Srivastava, 1999). Individuals low in neuroticism respond to stress with low sensitivity, whereas High-N individuals respond to stress with high emotional reactivity, so even small stressors can elicit disproportionately negative emotions (Suls & Martin, 2005). Individuals low in neuroticism develop benign interpretation towards threats or ambiguous cues, while High-N individuals tend to misinterpret situations, developing incorrect understanding of social cues, behaviors, or messages (Barlow et al, 2014). Some common examples of misinterpretation include negativity biases, paying heightened attention to negative cues; interpretation bias, construing ambiguous signals as threatening; and rumination bias, replaying negative interactions repeatedly (Barlow et al., 2014; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). A reason that these biases occur in High-N individuals can be derived from the second motivation in cognitive-experiential theory: High-N individuals try to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, which leads to their heightened sensitivity to punishment and negative events (Suls et al., 1998). These cognitive patterns shape the following emotional responses of anger and anxiety.



2. Emotions

These biased appraisals generate emotional responses through the meanings they assign to social situations. When cues are construed as threatening, they tend to elicit anxiety, whereas interpretations that attribute intentional harm or blame to others are more likely to evoke anger. These emotions are often difficult to modulate for neurotic people because they have a lower emotional threshold, meaning they react faster and more intensely to stressors (Suls & Martin, 2005). This emotional dysregulation pushes them towards suppression, which could relieve temporary distress but leave underlying tension unresolved (Gross, 1998). Low-N individuals exhibit a higher emotional threshold, such that greater intensity of stressors is required to trigger distress. Moreover, when emotions are activated, they demonstrate more effective emotion regulation that allows them to express in other ways than suppression, such as through reappraisal or acceptance (Gross, 1998; Aldao et al 2010). These strategies allow for higher tolerance of stress without amplifying distress, which facilitate more efficient emotional recovery and reduce the persistence of negative affect. By doing so, Low-N individuals are able to preserve friendship stability that High-N individuals struggle to maintain.

3. Avoidance and Withdrawal Behaviors in High-N Individuals vs. Constructive Engagement in Low-N Individuals

To understand how cognitive and emotional mediators translate into behavior, two frameworks are particularly useful. The Social Information Processing (SIP) model states that cognition and emotions interact with one another to drive social behaviors (Crick & Dodge, 1994). In this case, the threat-based interpretations elicit anxiety, which subsequently biases attention and memory toward negative information, reinforcing the original interpretation and creating a positive feedback loop (Mathews & MacLeod, 2005). These emotions and interpretations shape how they respond to a friend's behavior, often through destructive strategies such as avoidance or suppression (Aldao et al., 2010). SIP plays an opposite role in individuals low in neuroticism. Those individuals can generate more constructive responses from their accurate and positive interpretations (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Constructive behaviors are actions that encourage understanding, collaboration, and growth in relationships, such as open discussion and repair attempts (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In addition, Gray's Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) framework also explains the withdrawal behaviors. BIS states that heightened threat sensitivity promotes behavioral inhibition (MacAndrew & Steele, 1991). When a neurotic person perceives tension in a friendship, the system pushes them toward withdrawal. In contrast, the lower threat sensitivity of individuals low in neuroticism promotes engagement in interactions. The pattern of withdrawal has implications for the dissolution pathway that High-N individuals follow.

4. Dissolution Pathway

High-N individuals tend to follow a passive dissolution pathway, in which deterioration occurs gradually through the accumulation of unresolved tension (Vieth et al., 2022). In general, minor tensions alone rarely end any friendship; instead, it's how individuals respond to those conflicts that determine relational health (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Individuals low in neuroticism are less likely to follow this pathway since the conflict is addressed and



repaired early on, which prevents those conflicts from accumulating. As stated earlier, High-N individuals tend to rely on avoidance as a coping mechanism, which can prevent conflict repair as they withdraw from communication. These unaddressed tensions may lead to internalized anger and frustration, often expressed in passive-aggressive behaviors that avoid direct confrontation (Gross & John, 2003). Over time, the accumulation of these unresolved conflicts and disengagement behaviors may wear down their partner's willingness to maintain the relationship (Gottman, 1993). Friendships are bonded over shared interests, values, and maintained through reciprocal interaction (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). When one partner repeatedly avoids open communication, the other partner may begin to perceive the relationship as incompatible or unbalanced (Rusbult, 1980). This can result in reduced investment in the friendship, emotional distancing, and growing dissatisfaction. Ultimately, the disengagement can reduce relationship quality and increase the likelihood of dissolution (Gottman, 1993).

2. How Agreeableness Shapes Friendship Dissolution

The process of dissolution for Low-A individuals starts with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency encourages anger and frustration, which are coped through behaviors of confrontations or aggression. The tendency to escalate the conflict drives them towards an active pathway. The following section explores each of these factors and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape how Low-A individuals terminate friendships.

1. Cognition

Low agreeableness is characterized by antagonism, suspicion, and a tendency to prioritize self-interest over relational harmony, whereas high agreeableness is marked by trustworthiness, altruism, and tender-mindedness (John & Srivastava, 1999). Agreeableness can influence how one perceives another in interpersonal relationships (Lauri & Williams, 2001). High agreeable individuals tend to be more motivated to maintain positive relations with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Thus, when encountering an interpersonal conflict, they are more likely to view the situation as less negative and are able to adopt constructive responses (Meir et al., 2006). Conversely, Low-A individuals are less motivated to maintain harmony, thus they often generate a negative perception of others when encountering a conflict. Some common misinterpretations include hostile attribution bias, where individuals interpret ambiguous situations as intentionally hostile, and egocentric biases, where they are overly fixated on their own perspective when examining events (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007; Graziano et al., 2007). These cognitive patterns shape the following emotional responses of anger and low empathy.

2. Emotions

Similar to individuals high in neuroticism, biased appraisals in Low-A individuals can generate emotional responses through the meanings they assign to social situations. When cues are interpreted through hostile attribution bias, individuals are more likely to perceive intentional harm, which elicits anger (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). At the same time, egocentric bias leaves no space for perspective-taking, which suppresses empathic responses and reinforces self-centered interpretations (Graziano et al., 2007). Conversely, High-A individuals engage in prosocial social-cognitive processing,



represented by reduced hostile attribution and greater perspective-taking (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). These appraisals foster emotional responses such as empathy, guilt, and concern, which promotes repair attempts rather than blame.

3. Behaviors

As the Social Information Processing model suggests, the cognitive biases and emotional states translate into behaviors. The biases elicit anger and reduced empathy, which reinforces the initial interpretation by narrowing attention toward self-centered grievances, creating a feedback loop between cognition and emotion (Mathews & MacLeod, 2005). Altogether, these mediators lead to the formation of destructive behaviors. Anger tends to fuel coercive and aggressive communicative tactics, such as criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and manipulation (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007; Gleason et al., 2004; Gottman & Levenson, 2000). A lack of empathy and perspective-taking can lead to a lack of remorse, contributing to behaviors of deflecting blame and having difficulty apologizing (Graziano et al., 2007). Since High-A individuals are less likely to experience these emotions, and instead more in empathy and guilt, they engage less in aggressive behaviors and more in prosocial actions such as compromising, apologizing, and forgiving (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). These constructive responses regulate conflict, whereas in Low-A individuals, the pattern of escalation and failed repair increases the likelihood of active dissolution.

4. Dissolution Pathway

Between the two dissolution pathways, Low-A individuals are more likely to end their friendships through an active pathway, in which the breakdown of a relationship occurs through explicit confrontation or conflict (Vieth et al., 2022). This is because aggressive and confrontational responses can often escalate the conflict, causing neither side to be willing to reconcile – a scenario that is often avoidable by High-A individuals (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). As conflicts recur over time, the repeated assertion of self-interest and refusal to compromise can gradually downgrade trust and emotional stability within the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Complementary to conflict escalation, failures in friendship maintenance, the capacity to reciprocate help and support, further destabilizes the friendship (Apostolou & Keramari, 2022; Fehr, 1996). These behaviors are often perceived as selfish, especially during times of need, leading the partner to feel undervalued (Graziano et al., 2007). Over time, this imbalance lessens the partner's willingness to invest in the friendship (Rusbult, 1980). The accumulation of these patterns can harm the health of a relationship, ultimately leading to termination. In contrast, High-A individuals are more likely to interrupt this pathway as they engage in compromise, which prevents escalation and preserves stability.

4. Passive Withdrawal vs. Active Conflict: A comparison of Dissolution Pathways

The dissolution process between High-N individuals and Low-A individuals is significantly different at each level, whether it is in their biased interpretation, emotional response, or coping behaviors. High-N individuals tend to engage in internalizing behaviors such as avoidance as they react more frequently and more intensely than the situation warrants



(Bolger & Schilling, 1991). Low-A individuals, on the other hand, exhibit maladaptive behaviors such as aggression as they assume hostility from others and develop anger (Gleason et al., 2004; Gleason et al., 2004). The distinction between their dissolution pathways lies in each trait's motivations. Neuroticism promotes protection of the self from perceived harm, leading individuals to withdraw or ruminate (Bolger & Schilling, 1991). Low agreeableness, however, encourages self-interest in interactions, leading to direct conflicts and escalations (Graziano et al., 2007).

In the context of dissolution, the internalized and ruminative nature of neuroticism becomes associated with passive and slow breakup, whereas low agreeableness – which is entrenched in hostility and antagonism – is linked to overt conflict (Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Vieth et al., 2022). Ultimately, the divergence in motivations helps explain why two people with similar interpersonal problems may respond differently.

5. Conclusion

This paper argued that neuroticism and low agreeableness lead to dissolution through the interplay of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators. The distinct ways each trait shapes the mediator contribute to the overall distinct dissolution pathways, one passive and one active, driven by fundamentally different motivations. This paper addressed the gap between personality traits and friendship dissolution, by proposing a theoretical framework of how the traits shape the process of dissolution through their influence on friendship satisfaction, quality, and maintenance (Khullar et al., 2021). Understanding these divergent dissolution pathways has practical implications for how we approach friendship repair and intervention, as the strategies needed to address avoidance-driven dissolution differ fundamentally from those needed for conflict-driven dissolution. For High-N individuals, intervention may focus on cognitive reframing techniques that disrupt the patterns of rumination and negative thoughts, helping them to interpret the social situations more accurately. For Low-A individuals, strategies may emphasize constructive negotiations and perspective-taking skills to encourage peaceful communication.

6. Limitations & Future Directions

Several limitations of the current paper should be acknowledged. The current theoretical framework is inferential; evidence is drawn from separate studies, and no single study has tested the full chain of mediators. Second, the research draws from literature broader than friendship – some of it comes from general personality or relationship literature, which may not map perfectly onto friendship dynamics. Third, this paper did not account for individual variability, such as friendship history, personality trait intensity, and cultural background, which could alter the dissolution process in ways that the current framework fails to capture.

That said, existing research does provide some insights in the area of friendship dissolution. Dissolution rates are documented across development, such as that rates peak during major life transitions such as leaving high school (Flannery & Smith, 2021; Khullar et al., 2015). Similarly, while the proposed neurotic processing pathway is backed by Western samples, cross-cultural research suggests that emotional mediators like rumination operate differently across cultures. For instance,



rumination among East Asian individuals are less strongly linked to negative outcomes, which suggests that the dissolution pathways proposed here may not generalize to other cultures (Qiu et al., 2026).

Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track how cognition, emotion, and behaviors unfold across dissolution processes in high-N and Low-A individuals. Additionally, examining moderating variables such as gender, culture, or attachment styles could refine the understanding of when and how these pathways diverge.



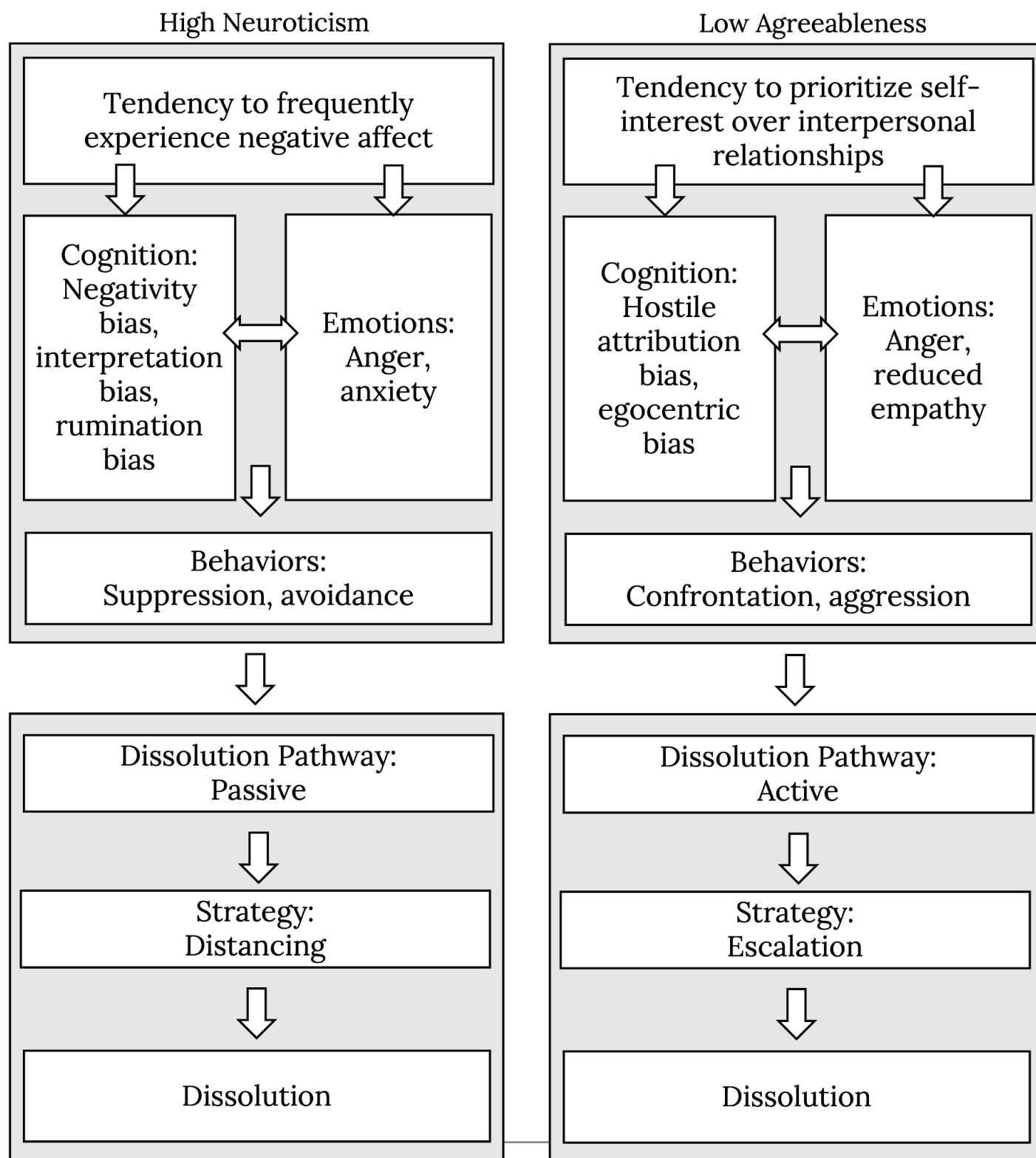


Figure 1: “High neuroticism pathway vs. low agreeableness pathway”:

The characteristics of High-N and Low-A individuals shape their differing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to social situations. These responses further contribute to the dissolution pathways and strategies individuals employ to end friendship.

7. References

- Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. (2010). Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(2), 217–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2009.11.004>
- Baxter, L. A. (1984). Trajectories of Relationship Disengagement. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 1(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407584011003>
- Bolger, N., & Schilling, E. A. (1991). Personality and the Problems of Everyday Life: The Role of Neuroticism In Exposure and Reactivity to Daily Stressors. *Journal of Personality*, 59(3), 355–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1991.tb00253.x>
- Bolger, N., & Zuckerman, A. (1995). A framework for studying personality in the stress process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 890–902. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.890>
- Campos, B., Wang, S., Plaksina, T., Repetti, R. L., Schoebi, D., Ochs, E., & Beck, M. E. (2013). Positive and negative emotion in the daily life of dual-earner couples with children. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27(1), 76–85. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031413>
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992a). The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Its Relevance to Personality Disorders. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992b). The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Its Relevance to Personality Disorders. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- Cox, D. A. (2021). *The state of American friendship: Change, challenges, and loss.* (American Perspectives Survey). Survey Center on American Life. <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/>
- Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information-processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115(1), 74–101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.115.1.74>



- Doroszuk, M., Kupis, M., & Czarna, A. Z. (2019). Personality and Friendships. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences* (pp. 1–9). Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_712-1
- Duck, S., & Gilmour, R. (1981). *Personal Relationships: Dissolving personal relationships*. Academic Press.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=4QANAQAAIAAJ>
- Duck, S. W. (1982). A topography of relationship disengagement and dissolution. In S. W. Duck (Ed.), *Personal Relationships 4: Dissolving Personal Relationships* (pp. 1–30). Academic Press.
- Ekman, P. (1992). Are there basic emotions? *Psychological Review*, 99(3), 550–553.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.99.3.550>
- Ellis, L., Hoskin, A. W., & Ratnasingam, M. (2018). *Handbook of social status correlates*. Academic Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/C2015-0-04501-4>
- Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship Processes*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483327440>
- Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2021). Breaking Up (With a Friend) Is Hard to Do: An Examination of Friendship Dissolution Among Early Adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 41(9), 1368–1393.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211002266>
- Folkman, S. (2013). Stress: Appraisal and Coping. In M. D. Gellman & J. R. Turner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine* (pp. 1913–1915). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215
- Gleason, K. A., Jensen-Campbell, L. A., & South Richardson, D. (2004). Agreeableness as a predictor of aggression in adolescence. *Aggressive Behavior*, 30(1), 43–61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20002>
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1992). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behavior, physiology, and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(2), 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.63.2.221>
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The Timing of Divorce: Predicting When a Couple Will Divorce Over a 14-Year Period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737–745. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00737.x>
- Graziano, P. A., Reavis, R. D., Keane, S. P., & Calkins, S. D. (2007). The role of emotion regulation in children's early academic success. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.002>
- Graziano, W. G., & Eisenberg, N. (1997). Agreeableness. In *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (pp. 795–824). Elsevier.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50031-7>
- Gross, J. J. (1998). Antecedent- and response-focused emotion regulation: Divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(1), 224–237.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.1.224>



- Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(2), 348–362.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348>
- Harris, K., & Vazire, S. (2016). On friendship development and the Big Five personality traits. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(11), 647–667.
- Hartup, W. W., & Stevens, N. (1997). Friendships and adaptation in the life course. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121(3), 355–370.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.121.3.355>
- Jensen-Campbell, L. A., & Graziano, W. G. (2001). Agreeableness as a Moderator of Interpersonal Conflict. *Journal of Personality*, 69(2), 323–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00148>
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, method, and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.118.1.3>
- MacAndrew, C., & Steele, T. (1991). Gray's behavioral inhibition system: A psychometric examination. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 12(2), 157–171. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(91\)90099-W](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(91)90099-W)
- Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The Five-Factor Model of personality and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 124–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.09.004>
- Martín-Carbonell, M., Riquelme-Marín, A., Fernández-Daza, M., Ortigosa-Quiles, J. M., & Méndez-Mateo, I. (2021). Exploring the Psychometric Properties of the Questionnaire on Family Members Adapting to an Older Adult's Admission to a Nursing Home (CAFIAR-15) in a Colombian Sample. *Behavioral Sciences*, 12(1), 4.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12010004>
- Maruish, M. E. (Ed.). (2004). *The use of psychological testing for treatment planning and outcomes assessment* (3rd ed). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mathews, A., & MacLeod, C. (2005). Cognitive Vulnerability to Emotional Disorders. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1(1), 167–195. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.143916>
- Meier, B. P., Robinson, M. D., & Wilkowski, B. M. (2006). Turning the Other Cheek: Agreeableness and the Regulation of Aggression-Related Primes. *Psychological Science*, 17(2), 136–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01676.x>
- Murthy, V. H. (2023). *Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community*. [Advisory Report]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
- Nelson, T. D., & Nelson, J. M. (2010). Evidence-based practice and the culture of adolescence. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 41(4), 305–311. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020328>



- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2000). The role of rumination in depressive disorders and mixed anxiety/depressive symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 109(3), 504–511.
- Pervin, L. A., & John, O. P. (Eds.). (1999). *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2. ed). Guilford Press.
- Qiu, L. S., Lai, M., Koike, A., Sellbom, M., Liddell, B. J., & Jobson, L. (2026). Exploring Cultural Influences in the Associations Between Emotion Regulation and Mental Health: A Systematic Review Comparing East Asian and Western Cultural Contexts. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 33(2), e70276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.70276>
- Rusbult, C. E. (1980). Commitment and satisfaction in romantic associations: A test of the investment model. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 16(2), 172–186. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(80\)90007-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(80)90007-4)
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Suls, J., & Martin, R. (2005). The Daily Life of the Garden-Variety Neurotic: Reactivity, Stressor Exposure, Mood Spillover, and Maladaptive Coping. *Journal of Personality*, 73(6), 1485–1510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00356.x>
- Suls, J., Martin, R., & David, J. P. (1998). Person-Environment Fit and its Limits: Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Emotional Reactivity to Interpersonal Conflict. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(1), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298241007>
- Vieth, G., Rothman, A. J., & Simpson, J. A. (2022). Friendship loss and dissolution in adulthood: A conceptual model. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.07.007>
- Widiger, T. A., & Oltmanns, J. R. (2017). Neuroticism is a fundamental domain of personality with enormous public health implications. *World Psychiatry*, 16(2), 144–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20411>
- Wilkowski, B. M., & Robinson, M. D. (2007). Keeping One's Cool: Trait Anger, Hostile Thoughts, and the Recruitment of Limited Capacity Control. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(9), 1201–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207301031>

AI-Use Acknowledgement

During the preparation of this work [REDACTED] used ChatGPT in order to improve language readability and enhance sentence structures [REDACTED] did not use it to generate new ideas or shift direction in [REDACTED] writing content as a result of AI's suggestions. After using this tool, [REDACTED] reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Acknowledgements



I would like to thank

Author Biography

Mentor Contribution Statement



Reviewer 1

Accept with minor revisions (acceptance conditional on satisfactory minor revisions)

The main strengths of the literature review are the proposal of active and passive dissolution pathways, which is novel and very interesting. The distinction between the self-protection and self-interest motivations was particularly insightful. The paper does an excellent job of suggesting potential mediators as well as suggesting the connections between them, leading to a holistic and novel view of the impact of personality traits on friendship dissolution as well as proposing excellent ideas for future research and limitations of the research.

- **Originality & Significance** – Does the paper contribute new insights, novel analyses, or unique perspectives to the field?

The identification of the gap in the literature is done very well. It is clear that the field of personality traits and friendship dissolution is under-researched. The theoretical framework suggests cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators within neuroticism and agreeableness lead to different outcomes. The proposal of active and passive dissolution pathways is novel.

- **Clarity & Structure** – Is the argument well-organized and easy to follow? Are ideas clearly presented? Are the main points evident throughout?
 - Yes, the paper is generally well-organized and easy to follow, especially with the parallel structures between neuroticism and agreeableness subsections
 - The subheadings should be 1.1 and 2.1 etc not just 1 or 2 which is reserved for the main sections
 - The thesis statement, which starts with “ This essay argues that” should appear earlier in the paper in the introduction
 - “3. Avoidance and Withdrawal Behaviors in High-N Individuals vs. Constructive Engagement in Low-N Individuals” - shorten the title e.g. “Behaviors” which will also match the following section
 - The hypothesis section is about the theoretical framework proposed as well, so a more accurate title would be “Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis”
 - Include transition sentences between sections, which will help with the flow

- **Use of Evidence & Research Methods** – Are all sources real and appropriately cited? Is their methodology sound and well-explained?
 - All sources are real and generally appropriately cited
 - The conclusion only has only one citation - make sure to keep citing everything still in the conclusion
 - The Figure 1 included needs to be referred to in the writing e.g. “As seen in Figure 1”

- **Engagement with Literature** – Does the paper demonstrate a deep understanding of relevant research in the field? Do they acknowledge known results and connect their findings well to the field? Do they engage with a well-represented range of perspectives on the field?
 - Yes - the literature review has incorporated a wide range of perspectives and research as well as demonstrated a deep understanding of the field, not only summarizing but analyzing the findings
 - Some of the subsections rely a bit too heavily on summaries, such as the subsections "Cognition" and “Emotions” - start these subsections with a topic sentence about what each section plans to argue or show rather than a definition or summary
 - Writing what type of sources the claims and findings are coming from would strengthen the literature review e.g. whether it's from a meta-analysis, a single empirical study, or theoretical work- this will help readers understand the strength of each link in the chain
 - Engaging with attachment theory could strengthen the literature review as it directly relevant to the proposed framework

- **Grammar & Language** – Is the writing clear and professional? Minor grammatical and stylistic errors should be noted, but they should not be the main focus of the review.

- Overall, the writing is clear and professional
- Additionally, in the abstract it should be “hypothesised mediators” rather than “mediators” as the literature review is theoretical and the language is causal which is more appropriate for an empirical paper
- Change “essay” and “paper” to “literature review” or “review article”
- Explain jargon terms such as “cognitive-experiential theory”
- Keep present tense throughout paper e.g. “This paper argued” change to “This paper argues”

Other feedback:

- The abstract is missing a hook - the first sentence should draw the reader in e.g. providing a statistic, describing a problem or asking a question
- The citation is not done correctly for the figure - refer to this APA style guide: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/figures>
- There is a accidental duplicate citation “(Gleason et al., 2004; Gleason et al., 2004)”

Reviewer 2

Final decision: Accept with major revisions

The paper proposes an interesting theoretical framework linking neuroticism and low agreeableness to friendship dissolution through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators. However, several areas could be strengthened to improve the rigor and clarity of the manuscript.

Overall notes: there are many key arguments anchored on evidence from over 20 years ago, I suggest finding more recent publications (which can be literature reviews or meta analyses) to support your argument, especially because this paper discusses the current loneliness epidemic.

Consider including in the introduction why the two traits focused on in this paper is Neuroticism and Agreeableness and why other big 5 traits were excluded.

Some sections read as individual literature reviews rather than parts of a single argument. Stronger transitions between sections and more frequent references back to the central hypothesis would improve overall flow and coherence.

Throughout the paper, be careful not to present the proposed model as established fact. Since this is a theoretical paper, many of the claims should be framed as proposed mechanisms or hypotheses rather than definitive pathways. Consider using more cautious language when discussing how neuroticism and low agreeableness lead to friendship dissolution.

Abstract: suggested reframe of the abstract to begin with a bird's eye overview of the topic then end with what the paper will discuss, argue, and central thesis. Think of the abstract as a mini version of the paper, with 1-2 sentences for an introduction, methods, and results, with final conclusions at the end.

Introduction: well structured first paragraph. However, the final sentence of the 1st paragraph has no evidence to back this and "unhealthy mental processes" has yet to be discussed. Include at least 1 sentence + cited evidence that introduces "unhealthy mental processes" prior to this sentence for clarity.

Similar notes for second paragraph, "personality" has yet to be defined or presented with evidence, as well as "personality traits"

Hypothesis: The first paragraph of this section better fits as the final paragraph of the introduction

revise the Hypothesis section as this section is currently background information that would fit better in an Introduction or Background section, the Hypothesis (which appears to be in the first paragraph of this section) isn't very clear and should be the final things discussed in a section like this. Background information doesn't really belong in a Hypothesis section

Dissolution: this section is important for the overall paper but I suggest placing this section before the hypothesis because it is still background information to set up the paper. Consider folding this into the introduction. Also "Future research should examine..." sentences should be confined to a "Future research" paragraph at the end of papers.

Dissolution pathway: Need a citation for this sentence "Individuals low in neuroticism are less likely to follow this pathway since the..."

Great conclusion but would benefit from more explicit discussion of testable predictions generated by the proposed model. For example, what specific relationships, mediators, or dissolution outcomes should future researchers expect to observe if the model is correct?

Figure 1 is not referenced in the manuscript, what is its purpose and how does it aid in the argument? This seems like it could be a helpful reference within the paper but the figure caption needs more description of what the figure is telling us. Consider that every figure and table should be able to stand alone without the paper for context but the reader should still be able to know what it means.

Neuroticism, Low Agreeableness, and Friendship Dissolution: A Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Mediators Model

Duo Cheng

Mercer Island High School, Mercer Island, Washington, United States

Abstract

As an epidemic of loneliness continues to emerge in our society, understanding why friendships dissolve has become an urgent social concern that remains understudied in the field of social research. The literature review focuses on two Big Five traits, neuroticism and agreeableness, and how they shape friendship dissolution processes. Drawing on existing research, we propose a theoretical framework linking hypothesized cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators to distinct pathways in individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and low agreeableness. Our review suggests that individuals exhibiting high neuroticism tend to engage in a passive avoidant pathway characterized by distancing behaviors, while individuals exhibiting low agreeableness tend to employ an active confrontational pathway characterized by escalation. Understanding how each trait drives dissolution through distinct mechanisms may inform targeted intervention strategies for each pathway. For individuals who exhibit high neuroticism, strategies can center around cognitive reframing techniques that reduce rumination and negative thought patterns, whereas strategies for individuals exhibiting low agreeableness may focus on constructive communication and perspective-taking skills. We end with a call for longitudinal research to empirically test the proposed mediating chain, as this remains a theoretical framework.

Keywords: Social and Behavioral Science; Personality Psychology; Friendship Dissolution; Five Factor Model; Neuroticism; Agreeableness; Interpersonal Relationships

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Friendship is a voluntary and reciprocal relationship characterized by mutual liking, emotional support, and shared intimacy (Fehr, 1996). Through close friendships, individuals receive validation, comfort, and opportunities to develop social competence and interpersonal skills (Bukowski, 2001). Across the lifespan, friendships play a critical role in fulfilling basic psychological needs for relatedness, while also contributing to emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Given the significance of friendships, it is of growing concern that Americans report having fewer close friendships than they once did (Cox, 2021). Between 1990 and 2021, the proportion of Americans with no close friends quadrupled from 3% to 12%, while those with 10 or more close friends fell from 33% to 13% (Cox, 2021). This stark decline of close friendships contributes to the overall increasing loneliness in society, known as the epidemic of loneliness. According to a recent report from the U.S. Surgeon General (2023), loneliness can harm both individual and societal health. Loneliness is linked to physical illnesses including greater cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, and premature death, as well as mental illnesses like depression and anxiety (Murthy, 2023). Performance, productivity, and engagement in social settings can diminish as a result of increasing loneliness (Murthy, 2023). Psychological research has shown that individuals' cognitive interpretations of interpersonal interactions, emotional reactions, and coping behaviors can contribute to friendship dissolution when these processes become maladaptive (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Folkman, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand why fulfilling friendships end as a result of unhealthy mental processes, and develop strategies to prevent those friendships from dissolving.

At the individual level, one underexplored factor that may explain why some individuals are more vulnerable to friendship dissolution than others is personality, referred to as individual differences in patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving (American Psychological Association, 2018). Yet, even within the limited research on friendship dissolution, personality remains largely unexamined. This discrepancy is evident from a Google Scholar literature search conducted using the search term "friendship dissolution" (publication years 2005-2025, excluding patents and citations). Although hundreds of publications address friendship dissolution broadly, only a small subset examines personality influences, none of which includes prominent models such as the Five-Factor Model of personality. Clarifying the role of personality traits—specific dimensions or characteristics that make up personality—in dissolution would therefore fill a significant gap in social psychological research (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The two subsections below will provide an overview of dissolution and the Five-Factor Model, two concepts necessary to understand in order to discuss the proposed hypothesis.



1.2 Dissolution

45

46 This section establishes what dissolution is, why it occurs, and the pathways through which it unfolds—relevant variables that
47 can be modulated by personality traits.

48

49 Dissolution refers to the termination or the gradual weakening of a relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Among various studies,
50 dissolution is consistently recognized as a trajectory of gradual disengagement (Duck, 1982). There are also countless causes
51 of dissolution, with the most prominent ones being persistent conflict, lack of reciprocity and trust, and distancing emotional
52 closeness (Khullar et al., 2021). The continuous nature of dissolution serves as the foundation for understanding how the
53 influence of each mediator—which will be discussed in later sections—may accumulate over time, potentially reaching the
54 point at which the friendship dissolves.

55

56 Recent studies on friendship dissolution highlight two different processes of dissolution: passive and active pathways (Vieth
57 et al., 2022). The former describes the gradual weakening of a friendship through disengagement, while the latter involves
58 direct confrontation or explicit termination of the friendship. The different pathways are introduced to pinpoint the
59 mechanistic differences in dissolution between individuals exhibiting distinct personality traits.

1.3 Five-Factor Model

61

62 Given the limited research on the influence of personality traits on friendship dissolution, this review adopts the Five-Factor
63 Model as its framework for understanding how personality shapes dissolution processes. This section introduces the
64 Five-Factor Model and the two personality dimensions most relevant to the proposed framework.

65

66 The Five-Factor Model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits based on five dimensions:
67 Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. This model is supported across
68 multiple methods of personality assessment, including analyses of everyday personality descriptors and standardized
69 personality questionnaires (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

70

71 Since not all Big Five dimensions demonstrate a significant correlation with friendship dissolution, this review article
72 primarily focuses on the two that have consistently been shown to influence the disengagement process—agreeableness and
73 neuroticism. Neuroticism describes the tendency to experience negative affective experiences (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017),
74 and agreeableness refers to the ability to get along well with others (Ellis et al., 2018). These two dimensions have
75 demonstrated the strongest and most consistent associations with friendship quality, satisfaction, conflict, and maintenance
76 behaviors, all of which are critical predictors of friendship dissolution (Harris & Vazire, 2016; Malouff et al., 2010). Because
77 friendship dissolution often emerges from deteriorating interpersonal interactions, neuroticism and agreeableness provide
78 the most theoretically relevant framework for examining the psychological mechanisms underlying friendship breakdown.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

80 Building on the discussion of friendship dissolution and the Five-Factor Model, this section presents the theoretical
81 framework and hypotheses for this literature review.

82 This review article proposes that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators within neuroticism and agreeableness
83 contribute to their distinct dissolution outcomes. Our theoretical model is presented graphically in Figure 1, where we



conceptualize the dissolution process around three interrelated elements: cognitive interpretation of social situations, emotional responses to those interpretations, and coping behaviors created by the response.

Cognitive interpretations are the mental processes through which individuals perceive, analyze, and understand the information they receive (Folkman, 2013). Emotional responses are the psychological and physiological reactions to specific stimuli (Gross, 2015). Coping behaviors are voluntary behaviors mobilized to manage stressful situations (Folkman, 2013).

We propose that high neuroticism and low agreeableness shape cognitive interpretation and emotional responses, which interact bidirectionally to influence coping behaviors that erode trust, safety, connection, or mutual respect. These behaviors further feed back into cognitive interpretation, completing a self-sustaining cycle of friendship deterioration that continues until the emotional costs of the relationship overtake its rewards. This pattern is consistent with the Investment Model, which proposes that relationships dissolve when costs come to outweigh rewards and has been supported by a meta-analysis of 52 studies in romantic relationships (Le & Agnew, 2003). The following sections discuss in detail how this process differs between individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and those exhibiting low agreeableness stemming from the differences in the hypothesized mediators.

97

For clarity, individuals scoring high in neuroticism are hereafter referred to as High-N individuals, and those scoring low in neuroticism as Low-N individuals. Individuals scoring high in agreeableness are referred to as High-A individuals, and those scoring low in agreeableness as Low-A individuals.

101

2. Mediators and Dissolution Pathways of Neuroticism and Agreeableness

2.1 How Neuroticism Shapes Friendship Dissolution

As seen in Figure 1, the process of dissolution for High-N individuals is proposed to begin with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency may generate anxiety, which is managed through suppression or avoidance. This tendency to withdraw may push them towards a passive dissolution pathway, where distancing becomes the primary strategy. The following section explores each of these mediators and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape how High-N individuals disengage from friendships.

109

2.1.1 Cognition

Cognition serves as the initial mediator shaped by personality traits, steering the pathway that High-N individuals are more likely to follow. Below, we illustrate how and why High-N individuals are likely to develop biased interpretation and emphasize three cognitive biases they are likely to exhibit.

114

As stated earlier, neuroticism is characterized by a tendency to experience negative affective experiences, including anxiety, anger, self-consciousness, irritability, and emotional instability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). On the other hand, low



neuroticism is mainly marked by emotional stability, in which the efficient emotion regulation allows individuals to experience less negative emotions (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Low-N individuals tend to respond to stress with lower emotional reactivity, whereas High-N individuals tend to respond to stress with greater emotional reactivity, a pattern empirical research terms the “neurotic cascade,” where even small stressors can elicit disproportionately negative emotions (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low-N individuals are more likely to develop benign interpretations of threats or ambiguous cues, while High-N individuals are more likely to misinterpret situations, developing an incorrect understanding of social cues, behaviors, or messages (Barlow et al., 2014). Some common examples of misinterpretation include negativity bias, paying heightened attention to negative cues; interpretation bias, construing ambiguous signals as threatening; and rumination bias, replaying negative interactions repeatedly (Barlow et al., 2014; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). A reason these biases are more likely to occur in High-N individuals can be derived from the Cognitive-Experiential Theory, which suggests that individuals possess an experiential processing system that is automatic and is strongly influenced by emotions (Epstein, 1994). Particularly, as High-N individuals experience negative affect more intensely, ambiguous social situations are more likely to activate threat-related interpretations, contributing to negativity, interpretation, and rumination biases (Epstein, 1994). These cognitive patterns, driven by high emotional reactivity, are proposed to shape the emotional responses that follow, representing the second mediator our hypothesis proposes in the dissolution chain.

133

2.1.2 Emotions

We hypothesize an emotional response mediator and propose how biased appraisals may contribute to varied emotional reactions and why High-N individuals may struggle to recover from these emotions.

These biased appraisals are proposed to generate emotional responses through the meanings they assign to social situations. When cues are construed as threatening, they tend to elicit anxiety (Barlow et al., 2014). Additionally, empirical daily diary research by Mroczek & Almeida (2004) suggests that High-N individuals are more likely to experience slower affective recovery, causing the emotions to carry into subsequent interactions. This emotional dysregulation may also push them toward suppression, which could relieve temporary distress but leave underlying tension unresolved (Gross, 2015). Low-N individuals recover from their emotions faster, which means that their negative emotions fade away in shorter periods of time. Moreover, when emotions are activated, they demonstrate more effective emotion regulation through reappraisal or acceptance, which are theorized to be more adaptive than suppression (Gross, 2015) and supported by a meta-analytic review (Webb et al., 2012). These strategies allow for higher tolerance of stress without amplifying distress, which facilitates more efficient emotional recovery and reduces the persistence of negative affect. While Low-N individuals preserve friendship stability through emotion regulation, the emotion dysregulation of High-N individuals may drive them toward the behavioral mediator that our hypothesis identifies as the final link before dissolution.

149

2.1.3 Behaviors

This section introduces the behavioral mediator, combining two frameworks to explain why destructive behaviors may



152 emerge and why High-N individuals are more likely to employ withdrawal as a coping strategy.

153 To understand how cognitive and emotional mediators translate into behavior, two frameworks are particularly useful. The
154 Social Information Processing (SIP) model states that cognition and emotions interact with one another to drive social
155 behaviors (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). In this case, the threat-based interpretations may elicit anxiety, which subsequently
156 biases attention and memory toward negative information, reinforcing the original interpretation and creating a positive
157 feedback loop. This is consistent with Lemerise & Arsenio's (2000) theoretical review of the Social Information Processing
158 framework. This emotional response and these interpretations may shape how High-N individuals respond to a friend's
159 behavior, often through destructive strategies such as avoidance or suppression (Gross, 2015). In contrast, Low-N
160 individuals are more likely to generate constructive responses from their accurate interpretations (Lemerise & Arsenio,
161 2000). Constructive behaviors are actions that encourage understanding, collaboration, and growth in relationships, such
162 as open discussion and repair attempts (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In addition, attachment theory also explains the
163 withdrawal behavior. Attachment theory proposes that early relationships with caregivers create mental frameworks that
164 shape how individuals expect others to behave in close relationships (Noftle & Shaver, 2006). Empirical research finds a
165 consistent association between neuroticism and anxious attachment, which is characterized by fear of rejection,
166 hypervigilance to interpersonal threat, and a tendency to suppress conflict to preserve the relationship (Noftle & Shaver,
167 2006). Because bringing up a problem risks the partner's disapproval, High-N individuals may prefer avoidance as a
168 self-protective strategy (Noftle & Shaver, 2006). Together, SIP and attachment theory suggest how the three mediators our
169 hypothesis proposes interact and may drive High-N individuals toward the passive dissolution pathway.

170

171 2.1.4 Dissolution Pathway

172 Drawing on Vieth et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework, this literature review proposes that High-N individuals are more
173 likely to follow a passive dissolution pathway, in which deterioration occurs gradually through the accumulation of
174 unresolved tension. This section involves a bidirectional dissolution process: inward, where unresolved tension becomes
175 anxiety, and outward, where the partner experiences the withdrawal as imbalance or incompatibility and reduces their own
176 investment.

177 In general, minor tensions alone rarely end any friendship; instead, it's how individuals respond to those conflicts that
178 determine relational health (Laursen & Hafen, 2010). Low-N individuals are less likely to follow this pathway since conflicts
179 tend to be addressed and repaired early on, which prevents them from accumulating (Suls & Martin, 2005). As stated
180 earlier, High-N individuals are more likely to rely on avoidance as a coping mechanism, which can prevent conflict repair as
181 they withdraw from communication. These unaddressed tensions may lead to persistent anxiety and frustration, often
182 expressed in passive-aggressive behaviors that avoid direct confrontation (Bushman et al., 2005). Over time, the
183 accumulation of these unresolved conflicts and disengagement behaviors may wear down their partner's willingness to
184 maintain the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Friendships are built on shared interests and values and maintained through
185 reciprocal interaction (Bukowski, 2001). When one partner repeatedly avoids open communication, the other partner may
186 perceive the relationship as incompatible or unbalanced (Le & Agnew, 2003). This can result in reduced investment in the
187 friendship, emotional distancing, and growing dissatisfaction. Ultimately, the disengagement may reduce relationship
188 quality and increase the likelihood of dissolution (Khullar et al., 2021). Unlike High-N individuals, whose friendships tend to



deteriorate through behaviors of suppression and avoidance, Low-A individuals are hypothesized to follow a more overt pathway characterized by confrontation and aggression. The following section examines how this pathway emerges from distinct cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators.

2.2 How Agreeableness Shapes Friendship Dissolution

As seen in Figure 1, the process of dissolution for Low-A individuals starts with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency is hypothesized to encourage anger and reduced empathy, which are managed through behaviors of confrontation or aggression. The tendency to escalate the conflict may drive them toward an active pathway. The following section explores each of these factors and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape the dissolution process for Low-A individuals.

2.2.1 Cognition

We hypothesize a cognitive mediator that illustrates how and why Low-A individuals are likely to develop biased interpretation and emphasize two cognitive biases they are likely to exhibit.

Low agreeableness is characterized by antagonism, suspicion, and a tendency to prioritize self-interest over relational harmony, whereas high agreeableness is marked by trustworthiness, altruism, and tender-mindedness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Agreeableness can influence how one perceives another in interpersonal relationships (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). High-A individuals tend to be more motivated to maintain positive relations with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Thus, when encountering an interpersonal conflict, they are more likely to view the situation less negatively and adopt constructive responses (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, Low-A individuals are statistically less likely to prioritize relational harmony, and may generate a more negative perception of others when encountering conflict. Some common misinterpretations include hostile attribution bias, in which individuals interpret ambiguous situations as intentionally hostile (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007), and egocentric bias, in which individuals are overly fixated on their own perspective when examining events (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). These cognitive patterns, driven by antagonism, are proposed to shape the following emotional responses, representing the second mediator in the dissolution chain proposed for Low-A individuals.

2.2.2 Emotions

The emotional response mediator for Low-A individuals is proposed to explain how biased appraisals may contribute to distinct emotional reactions that hinder repair efforts.

Similar to High-N individuals, biased appraisals in Low-A individuals are proposed to generate emotional responses through the meanings they assign to social situations. A theoretical review of cognitive models of anger suggests that hostile attribution bias leads individuals to perceive intentional harm, which elicits anger (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). At the same time, egocentric bias may leave no space for perspective-taking, which suppresses empathic responses and reinforces self-centered interpretations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, High-A individuals engage in prosocial social-cognitive processing, represented by reduced hostile attribution and greater perspective-taking



223 (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). These appraisals may foster emotional responses such as empathy and concern, which
224 promote repair attempts rather than blame (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, the absence of these emotions
225 for Low-A individuals may remove the motivation for repair, allowing the behavioral mediator to drive escalation,
226 consistent with our hypothesis.

227

228 2.2.3 Behaviors

229 This section introduces the behavioral mediator for Low-A individuals by applying the SIP framework to illustrate how
230 emotional responses may feed back into cognition and then translate into behaviors.

231 As the Social Information Processing model suggests, the cognitive biases and emotional states may translate into
232 behaviors. The biases elicit anger and reduced empathy, which reinforce the initial interpretation by narrowing attention
233 toward self-centered grievances, creating a feedback loop between cognition and emotion (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).
234 Altogether, these mediators are proposed to lead to the formation of destructive behaviors. Anger may fuel coercive and
235 aggressive communicative tactics, such as criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and manipulation (Wilkowski & Robinson,
236 2007; Gleason et al., 2004). A lack of empathy and perspective-taking may lead to a lack of remorse, contributing to
237 behaviors such as deflecting blame and having difficulty apologizing (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Since High-A
238 individuals are less likely to experience these emotions and instead experience more empathy and guilt, they may engage
239 less in aggressive behaviors and more in prosocial actions such as compromising and apologizing (Jensen-Campbell &
240 Graziano, 2001). Our hypothesis is reflected throughout this section as the three mediators interact and reinforce one
241 another, culminating in the active dissolution pathway the following section follows.

242

243 2.2.4 Dissolution Pathway

244 Drawing on Vieth et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework, this review proposes that Low-A individuals are more likely to end
245 their friendships through an active pathway, in which the breakdown of a relationship occurs through explicit
246 confrontation or conflict. This argument moves on two tracks: conflict escalation and maintenance failure.

247 Low-A individuals are likely to employ an active pathway because aggressive and confrontational responses can often
248 escalate the conflict, causing neither side to be willing to reconcile—a scenario that is often avoidable by High-A individuals
249 (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). As conflicts recur over time, the repeated assertion of self-interest and refusal to
250 compromise can gradually erode trust and emotional stability within the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Complementary
251 to conflict escalation, failures in friendship maintenance, such as an inability to reciprocate help and support, may further
252 destabilize the friendship (Fehr, 1996). These behaviors are often perceived as selfish, especially during times of need,
253 leading the partner to feel undervalued (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Over time, this imbalance may lessen the
254 partner's willingness to invest in the friendship (Le & Agnew, 2003). The accumulation of these patterns may harm the
255 health of a relationship, contributing to termination. In contrast, High-A individuals are more likely to interrupt this
256 pathway as they engage in compromise, which prevents escalation and preserves stability.



257

258 3. Passive Withdrawal vs. Active Conflict: A Comparison of Dissolution Pathways

259 The dissolution process between High-N individuals and Low-A individuals is significantly different at each level, whether it
260 is in their biased interpretations, emotional responses, or coping behaviors. High-N individuals are more likely to engage in
261 internalizing behaviors such as avoidance as they may react more frequently and more intensely than the situation
262 warrants (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low-A individuals, on the other hand, may exhibit maladaptive behaviors such as aggression
263 as they tend to assume hostility from others and develop anger (Gleason et al., 2004). The distinction between their
264 dissolution pathways lies in each trait's motivations. Neuroticism is proposed to promote protection of the self from
265 perceived harm, leading individuals to withdraw or ruminate (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low agreeableness, however, is
266 proposed to encourage self-interest in interactions, leading to direct conflicts and escalations (Jensen-Campbell &
267 Graziano, 2001).

268

269 In the context of dissolution, the internalized and ruminative nature of neuroticism may be associated with passive and
270 gradual breakup, whereas low agreeableness—which is entrenched in hostility and antagonism—may be linked to overt
271 conflict (Suls & Martin, 2005; Vieth et al., 2022). Ultimately, the divergence in motivations may help explain why two people
272 with similar interpersonal problems may respond differently.

273

274 4. Conclusion

275 This paper argues that high neuroticism and low agreeableness may contribute to dissolution through the interplay of
276 cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators. The cognitive mediator establishes how each trait may generate
277 characteristic biased interpretations: whereas High-N individuals' biases are threat-related, Low-A individuals' are
278 hostility-based. The emotional mediator suggests how those interpretations may produce anxiety in High-N individuals
279 versus anger and reduced empathy in Low-A individuals. The behavioral mediator describes how emotions may translate
280 into avoidance and suppression, compared to confrontation and aggression, respectively, corresponding to the interrelated
281 chain our hypothesis proposes.

282 The distinct ways each trait shapes the mediator contribute to the overall distinct dissolution pathways, one passive and
283 one active, driven by fundamentally different motivations (Suls & Martin, 2005; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001).
284 Understanding these divergent dissolution pathways has practical implications for how we approach friendship repair and
285 intervention, as the strategies needed to address avoidance-driven dissolution may differ from those needed for
286 conflict-driven dissolution. For High-N individuals, intervention may focus on cognitive reframing techniques that disrupt
287 the patterns of rumination and negative thoughts, helping them to interpret social situations more accurately
288 (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). For Low-A individuals, strategies may emphasize constructive negotiations and
289 perspective-taking skills to encourage peaceful communication (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001).

290 Additionally, this model generates several testable predictions for future research. As illustrated in Figure 1, the mediator
291 chain proposed in this review identifies several variables suitable for empirical research.



First, the figure highlights cognitive interpretation as the entry point for both pathways, which suggests that future research should prioritize measuring biased interpretation as the first testable link in the chain. Specifically, longitudinal studies may reveal whether negativity, interpretation, and rumination biases predict anxiety in High-N individuals, whereas hostile attribution and egocentric biases predict anger and reduced empathy in Low-A individuals.

Second, the model predicts that the emotional mediators mediate the relationship between personality traits and dissolution outcomes, in which controlling for anxiety should reduce the likelihood of passive dissolution in High-N individuals, and controlling for anger and reduced empathy should reduce the likelihood of active dissolution in Low-A individuals.

Third, intervention studies targeting specific hypothesized mediators should produce greater reductions in dissolution rates than generic relationship maintenance interventions, since the model predicts trait-specific mechanisms.

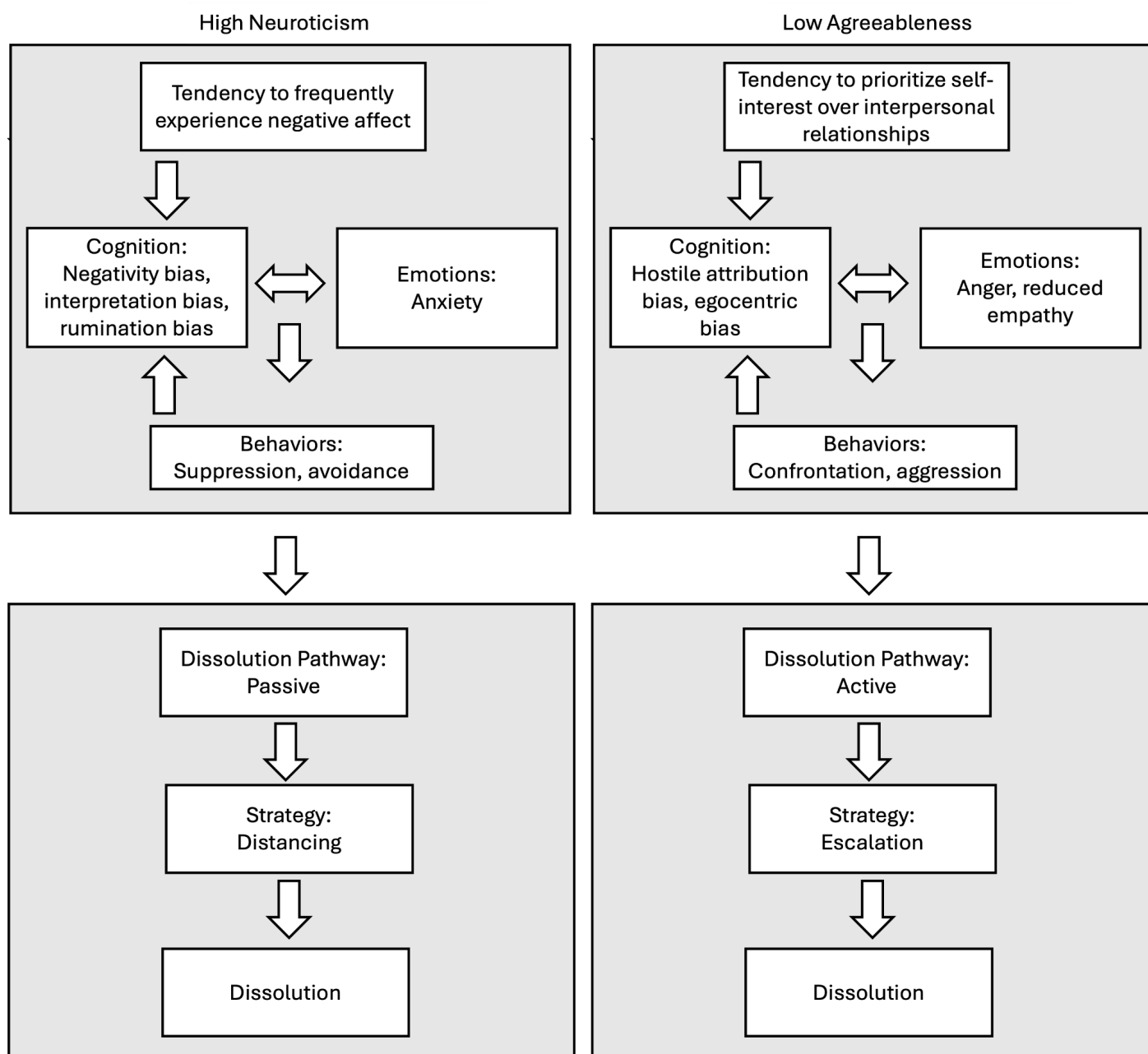
5. Limitations & Future Directions

Several limitations of the current paper should be acknowledged. The current theoretical framework is inferential; evidence is drawn from separate studies, and no single study has tested the full chain of mediators. Second, the research draws from literature broader than friendship—some of it comes from general personality or romantic relationship literature, which may not map perfectly onto friendship dynamics. Third, this paper does not account for individual variability, such as friendship history, personality trait intensity, and cultural background, which could alter the dissolution process in ways that the current framework fails to capture.

That said, existing research does provide some insights into friendship dissolution. Dissolution rates are documented across development. For example, rates peak during major life transitions such as leaving high school (Flannery & Smith, 2021; Khullar et al., 2015). Similarly, while the proposed processing pathway for High-N individuals is backed by Western samples, cross-cultural research suggests that emotional mediators like rumination operate differently across cultures. For instance, rumination among East Asian individuals is less strongly linked to negative outcomes, which suggests that the dissolution pathways proposed here may not generalize to other cultures (Qiu et al., 2026).

Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track how cognition, emotion, and behavior unfold across dissolution processes in High-N and Low-A individuals. Additionally, examining moderating variables such as gender, culture, or attachment styles could refine the understanding of when and how these pathways diverge.





320

321

322 **Figure 1**

323 Proposed Mediator Pathways from High Neuroticism and Low Agreeableness to Friendship Dissolution

324 Note. The figure depicts how high neuroticism and low agreeableness each produce distinct chains of cognitive, emotional,
 325 and behavioral mediators leading to different dissolution pathways. Downward arrows represent the sequential flow from
 326 trait characteristics to mediators and then to dissolution. The bidirectional arrow between cognition and emotion
 327 illustrates their mutually reinforcing relationship. The upward arrow from behavior to cognition represents how
 328 destructive behavioral outcomes may reinforce the original cognitive biases, creating a cycle among the mediators. High-N
 329 individuals are more likely to follow a passive pathway through distancing, whereas Low-A individuals are more likely to
 330 follow an active pathway through escalation.

331 –

332 6. References

- 333 American Psychological Association. (2018). Personality. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.
 334 <https://dictionary.apa.org/personality>
- 335 Barlow, D. H., Ellard, K. K., Sauer-Zavala, S., Bullis, J. R., & Carl, J. R. (2014). The Origins of Neuroticism. *Perspectives on*
 336 *Psychological Science*, 9(5), 481–496. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614544528>
- 337 Bukowski, W. M. (2001). Friendship and the Worlds of Childhood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*,
 338 2001(91), 93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.7>
- 339 Bushman, B. J., Bonacci, A. M., Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2005). Chewing on It Can Chew You Up:
 340 Effects of Rumination on Triggered Displaced Aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(6),
 341 969–983. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.6.969>
- 342 Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Its Relevance to Personality Disorders.
 343 *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- 344 Cox, D. A. (2021). *The state of American friendship: Change, challenges, and loss*. (American Perspectives Survey). Survey
 345 Center on American Life.
 346 https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss
 347 /
- 348 Duck, S. W. (1982). A topography of relationship disengagement and dissolution. In S. W. Duck (Ed.), *Personal*
 349 *Relationships 4: Dissolving Personal Relationships* (pp. 1–30). Academic Press.
- 350 Ellis, L., Hoskin, A. W., & Ratnasingam, M. (2018). *Handbook of social status correlates*. Academic Press.
 351 <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2015-0-04501-4>
- 352 Epstein, S. (1994). Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist*, 49(8),
 353 709–724. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.49.8.709>
- 354 Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship Processes*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483327440>



- 355 Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2021). Breaking Up (With a Friend) Is Hard to Do: An Examination of Friendship
 356 Dissolution Among Early Adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 41(9), 1368–1393.
 357 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211002266>
- 358 Folkman, S. (2013). Stress: Appraisal and Coping. In M. D. Gellman & J. R. Turner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Behavioral*
 359 *Medicine* (pp. 1913–1915). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215
- 360 Gleason, K. A., Jensen–Campbell, L. A., & South Richardson, D. (2004). Agreeableness as a predictor of aggression in
 361 adolescence. *Aggressive Behavior*, 30(1), 43–61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20002>
- 362 Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The Timing of Divorce: Predicting When a Couple Will Divorce Over a 14-Year
 363 Period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737–745. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00737.x>
- 364 Graziano, W. G., & Eisenberg, N. (1997). Agreeableness. In *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (pp. 795–824). Elsevier.
 365 <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50031-7>
- 366 Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26.
 367 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>
- 368 Harris, K., & Vazire, S. (2016). On friendship development and the Big Five personality traits. *Social and Personality*
 369 *Psychology Compass*, 10(11), 647–667. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12287>
- 370 Jensen–Campbell, L. A., & Graziano, W. G. (2001). Agreeableness as a Moderator of Interpersonal Conflict. *Journal of*
 371 *Personality*, 69(2), 323–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00148>
- 372 Khullar, T. H., Kirmayer, M. H., & Dirks, M. A. (2021). Relationship dissolution in the friendships of emerging adults: How,
 373 when, and why? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(11), 3243–3264.
 374 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211026015>
- 375 Laursen, B., & Hafen, C. A. (2010). Future Directions in the Study of Close Relationships: Conflict Is Bad (Except When It's
 376 Not). *Social Development*, 19(4), 858–872. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2009.00546.x>
- 377 Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the Investment Model.
 378 *Personal Relationships*, 10(1), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00035>
- 379 Lemerise, E. A., & Arsenio, W. F. (2000). An Integrated Model of Emotion Processes and Cognition in Social Information
 380 Processing. *Child Development*, 71(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00124>
- 381 Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The Five-Factor Model of personality
 382 and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 124–127.
 383 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.09.004>
- 384 Mroczek, D. K., & Almeida, D. M. (2004). The Effect of Daily Stress, Personality, and Age on Daily Negative Affect. *Journal*
 385 *of Personality*, 72(2), 355–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3506.2004.00265.x>



- Murthy, V. H. (2023). *Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community*. [Advisory Report]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
- Noftle, E. E., & Shaver, P. R. (2006). Attachment dimensions and the big five personality traits: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 179–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.11.003>
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2000). The role of rumination in depressive disorders and mixed anxiety/depressive symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 109(3), 504–511.
- Qiu, L. S., Lai, M., Koike, A., Sellbom, M., Liddell, B. J., & Jobson, L. (2026). Exploring Cultural Influences in the Associations Between Emotion Regulation and Mental Health: A Systematic Review Comparing East Asian and Western Cultural Contexts. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 33(2), e70276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.70276>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Suls, J., & Martin, R. (2005). The Daily Life of the Garden-Variety Neurotic: Reactivity, Stressor Exposure, Mood Spillover, and Maladaptive Coping. *Journal of Personality*, 73(6), 1485–1510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00356.x>
- Vieth, G., Rothman, A. J., & Simpson, J. A. (2022). Friendship loss and dissolution in adulthood: A conceptual model. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.07.007>
- Webb, T. L., Miles, E., & Sheeran, P. (2012). Dealing with feeling: A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of strategies derived from the process model of emotion regulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(4), 775–808. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027600>
- Widiger, T. A., & Oltmanns, J. R. (2017). Neuroticism is a fundamental domain of personality with enormous public health implications. *World Psychiatry*, 16(2), 144–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20411>
- Wilkowski, B. M., & Robinson, M. D. (2007). Keeping One's Cool: Trait Anger, Hostile Thoughts, and the Recruitment of Limited Capacity Control. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(9), 1201–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207301031>

AI-Use Acknowledgement



414 During the preparation of this work, Dora Cheng used ChatGPT in order to improve language readability and
415 enhance sentence structure. She did not use it to generate new ideas or alter the direction of the content based
416 on AI-generated suggestions. After using this tool, Dora Cheng reviewed and edited the content as needed and
417 takes full responsibility for the content of this publication.

418

419

Acknowledgements

420 I would like to thank Dr. Jorge Avila for his guidance and mentorship throughout this project, especially for his patience and
421 encouragement during periods when I faced significant challenges in the research and writing process.

422

423

Author Biography

424 Dora Cheng is a Chinese high school junior whose work focuses on personality traits, interpersonal relationships, and
425 social psychology. As an immigrant to the United States, she became increasingly attentive to the dynamics within
426 friendships and curious about why some relationships endure while others dissolve. Through observing her own social
427 interactions, she realized that friendships are often complex, and that individual personality traits can significantly shape
428 relationship quality. These reflections inspired her to investigate the intersection between maladaptive personality traits
429 and friendship functioning, with a broader goal of promoting stronger bonds and helping individuals avoid unnecessary
430 dissolution.

431

432

Mentor Contribution Statement

433 Across the research and writing stages of this project, Dr. Jorge Avila served as the primary mentor. During the initial
434 stages of the research process, he guided the development of the research question, ensuring the topic is one with limited
435 attention and overlooked novelty. As the author reviewed literature on the topic, Dr. Avila taught the author ways to
436 effectively summarize academic papers and synthesize the key findings into a cohesive argument. He also introduced
437 strategies such as creating a thorough outline with integrated citations, and building flowcharts to structure the
438 dissolution processes. Throughout the writing process, he consistently challenged the author's argument to construct a
439 stronger paper that is precise and backed by literature. Following the completion of the first draft, he offered additional
440 feedback and contextual insight that strengthened the paper's relevance.



Neuroticism, Low Agreeableness, and Friendship Dissolution: A Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Mediators Model

Keywords: Social and Behavioral Science; Personality Psychology; Friendship Dissolution; Five Factor Model; Neuroticism; Agreeableness; Interpersonal Relationships

Abstract

As an epidemic of loneliness continues to emerge in our society, understanding why friendships dissolve has become an urgent social concern that remains understudied in the field of social research. The literature review focuses on two Big Five traits, neuroticism and agreeableness, and how they shape friendship dissolution processes. Drawing on existing research, we propose a theoretical framework linking hypothesized cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators to distinct pathways in individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and low agreeableness. Our review suggests that individuals exhibiting high neuroticism tend to engage in a passive avoidant pathway characterized by distancing behaviors, while individuals exhibiting low agreeableness tend to employ an active confrontational pathway characterized by escalation. Understanding how each trait drives dissolution through distinct mechanisms may inform targeted intervention strategies for each pathway. For individuals who exhibit high neuroticism, strategies can center around cognitive reframing techniques that reduce rumination and negative thought patterns, whereas strategies for individuals exhibiting low agreeableness may focus on constructive communication and perspective-taking skills. We end with a call for longitudinal research to empirically test the proposed mediating chain, as this remains a theoretical framework.

7 1. Introduction

8 1.1 Context

9 Friendship is a voluntary and reciprocal relationship characterized by mutual liking, emotional support, and shared
10 intimacy (Fehr, 1996). Through close friendships, individuals receive validation, comfort, and opportunities to develop social
11 competence and interpersonal skills (Bukowski ~~et al.~~, 2001). Across the lifespan, friendships play a critical role in fulfilling
12 basic psychological needs for relatedness, while also contributing to emotional well-being and life satisfaction (Ryan &
13 Deci, 2000).

14

15 Given the significance of friendships, it is of growing concern that Americans report having fewer close friendships than they
16 once did (Cox, 2021). Between 1990 and 2021, the proportion of Americans with no close friends quadrupled from 3% to 12%,
17 while those with 10 or more close friends fell from 33% to 13% (Cox, 2021). This stark decline of close friendships contributes
18 to the overall increasing loneliness in society, known as the epidemic of loneliness. According to a recent report from the U.S.
19 Surgeon General (2023), loneliness can harm both individual and societal health. Loneliness is linked to physical illnesses
20 including greater cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, and premature death, as well as mental illnesses like depression
21 and anxiety (Murthy, 2023). Performance, productivity, and engagement in social settings can diminish as a result of
22 increasing loneliness (Murthy, 2023). Psychological research has shown that individuals' cognitive interpretations of
23 interpersonal interactions, emotional reactions, and coping behaviors can contribute to friendship dissolution when these
24 processes become maladaptive (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Folkman, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand why
25 fulfilling friendships end as a result of unhealthy mental processes, and develop strategies to prevent those friendships from
26 dissolving.

27

28 At the individual level, one underexplored factor that may explain why some individuals are more vulnerable to friendship
29 dissolution than others is personality, referred to as individual differences in patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving
30 (American Psychological Association, 2018). Yet, even within the limited research on friendship dissolution, personality
31 remains largely unexamined. This discrepancy is evident ~~from an literature search through Google Scholar literature~~
32 ~~search conducted using the search term "friendship dissolution" (publication years~~
33 ~~2005-2025, excluding patents and citations). produces 507 results not including patents or citations. Although hundreds of~~
34 ~~publications address friendship dissolution broadly, there are 506 results. Of these publications, roughly 61 contain~~
35 ~~substantive discussion of dissolution cause and processes, only a small subset examines~~ personality influences, none of
36 which includes prominent models such as the Five-Factor Model of personality. Clarifying the role of personality traits—
37 specific dimensions or characteristics that make up personality—in dissolution would therefore fill a significant gap in
38 social psychological research (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The two subsections below will provide an overview of dissolution and
39 the Five-Factor Model, two concepts necessary to understand in order to discuss the proposed hypothesis.

40

41

42

43

44 1.2 Dissolution



45

46 This section establishes what dissolution is, why it occurs, and the pathways through which it ~~unfolds~~~~unholds~~—relevant
 47 variables that can be modulated by personality traits.

48

49 Dissolution refers to the termination or the gradual weakening of a relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Among various studies,
 50 dissolution is consistently recognized as a trajectory of gradual disengagement (Duck, 1982). There are also countless causes
 51 of dissolution, with the most prominent ones being persistent conflict, lack of reciprocity and trust, and distancing emotional
 52 closeness (Khullar et al., 2021). The continuous nature of dissolution serves as the foundation for understanding how the
 53 influence of each mediator—~~which will be discussed in later sections~~—~~may~~ accumulates over time, ~~potentially and~~
 54 ~~ultimately reaching~~ reaches the ~~point~~ threshold at which ~~the friendship dissolves~~ the final breakup occurs.

55

56 Recent studies on friendship dissolution highlights two different processes of dissolution: passive and active pathways (Vieth
 57 et al., 2022). The former describes the gradual ~~weakening of a friendship through disengagement, disengagement without~~
 58 ~~one's explicit intention~~, while the latter ~~involves direct confrontation or explicit termination of~~ refers to the direct conscious
 59 termination of the friendship. The different pathways are introduced to pinpoint the mechanistic differences in dissolution
 60 between individuals exhibiting distinct personality traits.

61 1.3 Five-Factor Model

62

63 Given the limited research on the influence of personality traits on friendship dissolution, this review adopts the Five-Factor
 64 Model as its framework for understanding how personality shapes dissolution processes. This section ~~introduces~~ explicates
 65 the Five-Factor Model and the two ~~personality-specific~~ dimensions ~~most relevant to the proposed framework~~. ~~that will be~~
 66 ~~reviewed in this review article.~~

67

68 The Five-Factor Model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits based on five dimensions:
 69 Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. This model is supported across
 70 multiple methods of personality assessment, including analyses of everyday personality descriptors and standardized
 71 personality questionnaires (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

72

73 Since not all Big Five dimensions ~~demonstrate~~ illustrate a significant correlation with friendship dissolution, this review article
 74 primarily focuses on the two that have ~~consistently been~~ substantially shown to influence the disengagement process—~~—~~
 75 agreeableness and neuroticism. Neuroticism describes the tendency to experience negative affective experiences (Widiger &
 76 Oltmanns, 2017), and agreeableness refers to the ability to get along well with others (Ellis et al., 2018). These two dimensions
 77 have demonstrated the strongest and most consistent associations with friendship quality, satisfaction, conflict, and
 78 maintenance behaviors, all of which are critical predictors of friendship dissolution (Harris & Vazire, 2016; Malouff et al.,
 79 2010). Because friendship dissolution often emerges from deteriorating interpersonal interactions, neuroticism and
 80 agreeableness provide the most theoretically relevant framework for examining the psychological mechanisms underlying
 81 friendship breakdown.

82 1.4 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

83 Building on the discussion of friendship dissolution and the Five-Factor Model, this section presents the theoretical
 84 framework and hypotheses for this literature review.



This review article proposes that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators within neuroticism and agreeableness contribute to their distinct dissolution outcomes. Our theoretical model is presented graphically in Figure 1, where we conceptualize the dissolution process around three interrelated elements: cognitive interpretation of social situations, emotional responses to those interpretations, and coping behaviors created by the response.

Cognitive interpretations are the mental processes through which individuals perceive, analyze, and understand the information they receive (Folkman, 2013). Emotional responses are the psychological and physiological reactions to specific stimuli (Gross, 2015). Coping behaviors are voluntary behaviors mobilized to manage stressful situations (Folkman, 2013).

We propose that high neuroticism and low agreeableness shape cognitive interpretation and emotional responses, which interact bidirectionally to influence coping behaviors that erode trust, safety, connection, or mutual respect. These behaviors further feed back into cognitive interpretation, completing a self-sustaining cycle of friendship deterioration that continues until the emotional costs of the relationship overtake its rewards. This pattern is consistent with the Investment Model, which proposes that relationships dissolve when costs come to outweigh rewards and has been supported by a meta-analytic evidence across of 52 studies that validates the investment model's prediction of dissolution in romantic relationships (Le & Agnew, 2003). The following sections discuss in detail how this process differs between individuals exhibiting high neuroticism and those exhibiting low agreeableness stemming from the differences in the hypothesized mediators.

101

For clarity, individuals scoring high in neuroticism are hereafter referred to as High-N individuals, and those scoring low in neuroticism as Low-N individuals. Individuals scoring high in agreeableness are referred to as High-A individuals, and those scoring low in agreeableness as Low-A individuals.

105

2. Mediators and Dissolution Pathways of Neuroticism and Agreeableness

2.1 How Neuroticism Shapes Friendship Dissolution

As seen in Figure 1, the process of dissolution for High-N individuals is proposed to begin with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency may generate anxiety and distress, which is managed through suppression or avoidance. This tendency to withdraw may push them towards a passive dissolution pathway, where distancing becomes the primary strategy. The following section explores each of these mediators, and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape how High-N individuals disengage from friendships.

113

2.1.1 Cognition

Cognition serves as the initial mediator shaped by personality traits, playing a role in steering the direction of the pathway that High-N individuals are more likely to follow. Below, we illustrate how and why High-N individuals are likely to develop biased interpretation, and emphasize three cognitive biases they are likely to exhibit.



118

As stated earlier, neuroticism is characterized by a tendency to experience negative affective experiences, including anxiety, anger, self-consciousness, irritability, and emotional instability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). On the other hand, low neuroticism is mainly marked by emotional stability, in which the efficient emotion regulation allows individuals such people to experience less negative emotions (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Low-N individuals tend to respond to stress with lower emotional reactivity, whereas High-N individuals tend to respond to stress with greater emotional reactivity. This is a pattern empirical research terms the “neurotic cascade,” where even small stressors can elicit disproportionately negative emotions (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low-N individuals are more likely to develop benign interpretations of towards threats or ambiguous cues, while High-N individuals are more likely to misinterpret situations, developing an incorrect understanding of social cues, behaviors, or messages (Barlow et al., 2014). Some common examples of misinterpretation include negativity biases, paying heightened attention to negative cues; interpretation bias, construing ambiguous signals as threatening; and rumination bias, replaying negative interactions repeatedly (Barlow et al., 2014; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). A reason that these biases are more likely to occur in High-N individuals can be derived from the Cognitive-Experiential Theory, which suggests that individuals possess an experiential processing system that is automatic and is strongly influenced by emotions (Epstein, 1994). Particularly, as High-N individuals experience negative affect more intensely, ambiguous social situations are more likely to activate threat-related interpretations, contributing to negativity, interpretation, and rumination biases (Epstein, 1994). These cognitive patterns, driven by high emotional reactivity, are proposed to shape the emotional responses that follow, representing the second mediator our hypothesis proposes in the dissolution chain.

138

139

2.1.2 Emotions

We hypothesize an emotional response mediator and propose how biased appraisals may contribute to varied emotional reactions, and why High-N individuals may struggle to recover from these emotions.

These biased appraisals are proposed to generate emotional responses through the meanings they assign to social situations. When cues are construed as threatening, they tend to elicit anxiety (Barlow et al., 2014), whereas interpretations that attribute intentional harm or blame to others are more likely to evoke anger (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). Additionally, empirical daily diary research by Mroczek & Almeida (2004) suggests that these emotions are often difficult to modulate for High-N individuals because they are more likely to experience a slower affective recovery, causing the emotions to carry into subsequent interactions. This emotional dysregulation may also push them towards suppression, which could relieve temporary distress but leave underlying tension unresolved (Gross, 2015). Low-N individuals recover from their emotions faster, which means that their negative emotions fade away in shorter periods of time. Moreover, when emotions are activated, they demonstrate more effective emotion regulation through reappraisal or acceptance, which are theorized to be more adaptive than suppression (Gross, 2015) and supported by a meta-analytic review (Webb et al., 2012). These strategies allow for higher tolerance of stress without amplifying distress, which facilitates more efficient emotional recovery and reduces the persistence of negative affect. While Low-N individuals preserve



friendship stability through emotion regulation, the emotion dysregulation of High-N individuals may drive them toward the behavioral mediator **that** our hypothesis identifies as the final link before dissolution.

157

2.1.3 Behaviors

This section introduces the behavioral mediator, combining two frameworks to explain why destructive behaviors may emerge and why High-N individuals are more likely to employ withdrawal as **the coping** strategy.

To understand how cognitive and emotional mediators translate into behavior, two frameworks are particularly useful. The Social Information Processing (SIP) model states that cognition and emotions interact with one another to drive social behaviors (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). In this case, the threat-based interpretations may elicit anxiety, which subsequently biases attention and memory toward negative information, reinforcing the original interpretation and creating a positive feedback loop. ~~According to This is consistent with~~ Lemerise & Arsenio's (2000) theoretical review ~~of the Social Information Processing framework. This~~ **These emotional response** emotions and **these** interpretations may shape how High-N individuals ~~they~~ respond to a friend's behavior, often through destructive strategies such as avoidance or suppression (Gross, 2015). ~~In contrast, SIP plays an opposite role in~~ Low-N individuals. ~~Those individuals~~ are more likely to generate constructive responses from their accurate ~~and positive~~ interpretations (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Constructive behaviors are actions that encourage understanding, collaboration, and growth in relationships, such as open discussion and repair attempts (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In addition, attachment theory also explains the withdrawal behaviors. Attachment theory proposes that early relationships with caregivers create mental frameworks that shape how individuals expect others to behave in close relationships (Nofle & Shaver, 2006). Empirical research finds **a** consistent association between neuroticism and anxious attachment, which is characterized by fear of rejection, hypervigilance to interpersonal threat, and **a** tendency to suppress conflict to preserve the relationship (Nofle & Shaver, 2006). Because bringing up a problem risks the partner's disapproval, High-N individuals may prefer avoidance as a self-protective strategy (Nofle & Shaver, 2006). Together, SIP and attachment theory suggest how the three mediators our hypothesis proposes interact and may drive High-N individuals toward the passive dissolution pathway.

179

2.1.4 Dissolution Pathway

Drawing on Vieth et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework, this literature review proposes that High-N individuals are **more** likely ~~to~~ follow a passive dissolution pathway, in which deterioration occurs gradually through the accumulation of unresolved tension. This section ~~involves~~ **engages in** a bidirectional dissolution process: inward, where unresolved tension becomes ~~anxiety~~ **internalized anger**, and outward, where the partner experiences the withdrawal as imbalance or incompatibility; and reduces their own investment.

In general, minor tensions alone rarely end any friendship; instead, it's how individuals respond to those conflicts that determine relational health (1995 Laursen & Hafen, 2010). Low-N individuals are less likely to follow this pathway since ~~the~~ conflicts **tend to be** ~~is~~ addressed and repaired early on, which prevents ~~them~~ **those** conflicts from accumulating (Suls & Martin, 2005). As stated earlier, High-N individuals are more likely to rely on avoidance as a coping mechanism, which can



prevent conflict repair as they withdraw from communication. These unaddressed tensions may lead to persistent internalized anxiety and frustration, often expressed in passive-aggressive behaviors that avoid direct confrontation (Bushman et al., 2005). Over time, the accumulation of these unresolved conflicts and disengagement behaviors may wear down their partner's willingness to maintain the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Friendships are built on bonded through shared interests and values, and maintained through reciprocal interaction (Bukowski et al., 2001). When one partner repeatedly avoids open communication, the other partner may perceive the relationship as incompatible or unbalanced (Le & Agnew, 2003). This can result in reduced investment in the friendship, emotional distancing, and growing dissatisfaction. Ultimately, the disengagement may reduce relationship quality and increase the likelihood of dissolution (Khullar et al., 2021). The following section traces the proposed influence of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators in the dissolution process for Low-A individuals, paralleling the structural framework while differing in each mediator pattern. Unlike High-N individuals, whose friendships tend to deteriorate through behaviors of suppression and avoidance, Low-A individuals are hypothesized to follow a more overt pathway characterized by confrontation and aggression. The following section examines how this pathway emerges from distinct cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators.

2.2 How Agreeableness Shapes Friendship Dissolution

As seen in Figure 1, the process of dissolution for Low-A individuals starts with the development of biased interpretation. This cognitive tendency is hypothesized to encourage anger and reduced empathy, which are managed through behaviors of confrontations or aggression. The tendency to escalate the conflict may drive them towards an active pathway. The following section explores each of these factors and explains how they build on one another and ultimately shape the dissolution process for Low-A individuals.

2.2.1 Cognition

We hypothesize a cognitive mediator that illustrates how and why Low-A individuals are likely to develop biased interpretation, and emphasize two cognitive biases they are likely to exhibit.

Low agreeableness is characterized by antagonism, suspicion, and a tendency to prioritize self-interest over relational harmony, whereas high agreeableness is marked by trustworthiness, altruism, and tender-mindedness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Agreeableness can influence how one perceives another in interpersonal relationships (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). High-A individuals tend to be more motivated to maintain positive relations with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Thus, when encountering an interpersonal conflict, they are more likely to view the situation as less negatively and to adopt constructive responses (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, Low-A individuals are statistically less likely to prioritize relational harmony, and thus they may generate a more negative perception of others when encountering a conflict. Some common misinterpretations include hostile attribution bias, in which individuals interpret ambiguous situations as intentionally hostile (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007), and egocentric biases, in which individuals are overly fixated on their own perspective when examining events (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). These cognitive patterns, driven by antagonism, are proposed to shape the following emotional responses, representing the second mediator in the dissolution chain. This review proposed for Low-A individuals.



227 2.2.2 Emotions

228 The emotional response mediator for Low-A individuals is proposed to explain how biased appraisals may contribute to
 229 distinct emotional reactions that hinder repair efforts.

230 Similar to High-N individuals, biased appraisals in Low-A individuals are proposed to generate emotional responses
 231 through the meanings they assign to social situations. A theoretical review of cognitive models of anger suggests that
 232 hostile attribution bias leads individuals to perceive intentional harm, which elicits anger (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). At
 233 the same time, egocentric bias may leave no space for perspective-taking, which suppresses empathic responses and
 234 reinforces self-centered interpretations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, High-A individuals engage in
 235 prosocial social-cognitive processing, represented by reduced hostile attribution and greater perspective-taking
 236 (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). These appraisals may foster emotional responses such as empathy and concern, which
 237 promote repair attempts rather than blame (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, the absence of these
 238 emotions for Low-A individuals may remove the motivation for repair, allowing the behavioral mediator to drive escalation,
 239 consistent with our hypothesis.

240

241 2.2.3 Behaviors

242 This section introduces the behavioral mediator for Low-A individuals by applying the SIP framework to illustrate how
 243 emotional responses may feed back into cognition and then translate into behaviors.

244 As the Social Information Processing model suggests, the cognitive biases and emotional states may translate into
 245 behaviors. The biases elicit anger and reduced empathy, which reinforces the initial interpretation by narrowing attention
 246 toward self-centered grievances, creating a feedback loop between cognition and emotion (Lerner & Arsenio, 2000).
 247 Altogether, these mediators are proposed to lead to the formation of destructive behaviors. Anger may fuel coercive and
 248 aggressive communicative tactics, such as criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and manipulation (Wilkowski & Robinson,
 249 2007; Gleason et al., 2004). A lack of empathy and perspective-taking may lead to a lack of remorse, contributing to
 250 behaviors such as deflecting blame and having difficulty apologizing (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Since High-A
 251 individuals are less likely to experience these emotions, and instead experience more empathy and guilt, they may engage
 252 less in aggressive behaviors and more in prosocial actions such as compromising and apologizing (Jensen-Campbell &
 253 Graziano, 2001). Our hypothesis is reflected throughout this section as the three mediators interact and
 254 reinforce one another, culminating in the active dissolution pathway the following section follows.

255

256 2.2.4 Dissolution Pathway

257 Drawing on Vieth et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework, this review proposes that Low-A individuals are more likely to end
 258 their friendships through an active pathway, in which the breakdown of a relationship occurs through explicit
 259 confrontation or conflict. This argument moves on two tracks: conflict escalation and maintenance failure.



Low-A individuals are likely to employ an active pathway because aggressive and confrontational responses can often escalate the conflict, causing neither side to be willing to reconcile—a scenario that is often avoidable by High-A individuals (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007). As conflicts recur over time, the repeated assertion of self-interest and refusal to compromise can gradually ~~erode~~~~downgrade~~ trust and emotional stability within the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Complementary to conflict escalation, failures in friendship maintenance, ~~such as an inability the capacity~~ to reciprocate help and support, may further destabilize the friendship (Fehr, 1996). These behaviors are often perceived as selfish, especially during times of need, leading the partner to feel undervalued (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Over time, this imbalance ~~may~~ lessens the partner's willingness to invest in the friendship (Le & Agnew, 2003). The accumulation of these patterns ~~may~~~~can~~ harm the health of a relationship, ~~contributing to~~~~ultimately leading to~~ termination. In contrast, High-A individuals are more likely to interrupt this pathway as they engage in compromise, which prevents escalation and preserves stability.

271

272 3. Passive Withdrawal vs. Active Conflict: A ~~C~~omparison of Dissolution Pathways

The dissolution process between High-N individuals and Low-A individuals is significantly different at each level, whether it is in their biased interpretations, emotional responses, or coping behaviors. High-N individuals are more likely to engage in internalizing behaviors such as avoidance as they may react more frequently and more intensely than the situation warrants (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low-A individuals, on the other hand, may exhibit maladaptive behaviors such as aggression as they ~~tend to~~ assume hostility from others and develop anger (Gleason et al., 2004). The distinction between their dissolution pathways lies in each trait's motivations. Neuroticism is proposed to promote protection of the self from perceived harm, leading individuals to withdraw or ruminate (Suls & Martin, 2005). Low agreeableness, however, is proposed to encourage self-interest in interactions, leading to direct conflicts and escalations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001).

282

In the context of dissolution, the internalized and ruminative nature of neuroticism may ~~become~~ associated with passive and gradual breakup, whereas low agreeableness—which is entrenched in hostility and antagonism—may be linked to overt conflict (Suls & Martin, 2005; Vieth et al., 2022). Ultimately, the divergence in motivations may help explain why two people with similar interpersonal problems may respond differently.

287

288 4. Conclusion

This paper argues that ~~high~~ neuroticism and low agreeableness may contribute to dissolution through the interplay of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators. The cognitive mediator establishes how each trait may generate characteristic biased interpretations; whereas High-N individuals' biases are threat-related, Low-A individuals' are ~~hostility~~~~e~~-based. The emotional mediator suggests how those interpretations may produce anxiety ~~and suppression~~ in High-N individuals versus anger and reduced empathy in Low-A individuals. The behavioral mediator ~~describes~~~~proposes~~ how emotions may translate into avoidance and ~~suppression~~~~passive aggression~~, compared to confrontation ~~and aggression~~, respectively, corresponding to the interrelated chain our hypothesis proposes.



The distinct ways each trait shapes the mediator contribute to the overall distinct dissolution pathways, one passive and one active, driven by fundamentally different motivations (Suls & Martin, 2005; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Understanding these divergent dissolution pathways has practical implications for how we approach friendship repair and intervention, as the strategies needed to address avoidance-driven dissolution may differ ~~fundamentally~~ from those needed for conflict-driven dissolution. For High-N individuals, intervention may focus on cognitive reframing techniques that disrupt the patterns of rumination and negative thoughts, helping them to interpret ~~the~~ social situations more accurately (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). For Low-A individuals, strategies may emphasize constructive negotiations and perspective-taking skills to encourage peaceful communication (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001).

Additionally, this model generates several testable predictions for future research. As illustrated in Figure 1, the mediator chain proposed in this review identifies several variables suitable for empirical research.

First, the figure highlights cognitive interpretation as the entry point for both pathways, which suggests that future research should prioritize measuring biased interpretation as the first testable link in the chain. Specifically, longitudinal studies may reveal whether ~~negativity, interpretation, and rumination biases~~ ~~threat-based cognitive biases~~ predict anxiety in High-N individuals, whereas hostile attribution ~~and egocentric biases~~ predicts anger and reduced empathy in Low-A individuals.

Second, the model predicts that the emotional mediators mediate the relationship between personality traits and dissolution outcomes, in which controlling for anxiety should reduce the likelihood of ~~passive dissolution in High-N~~ individuals, ~~and~~ controlling for anger and reduced empathy should reduce the likelihood of active dissolution in Low-A individuals.

Third, intervention studies targeting specific hypothesized mediators should produce greater reductions in dissolution rates than generic relationship maintenance interventions, since the model predicts trait-specific mechanisms.

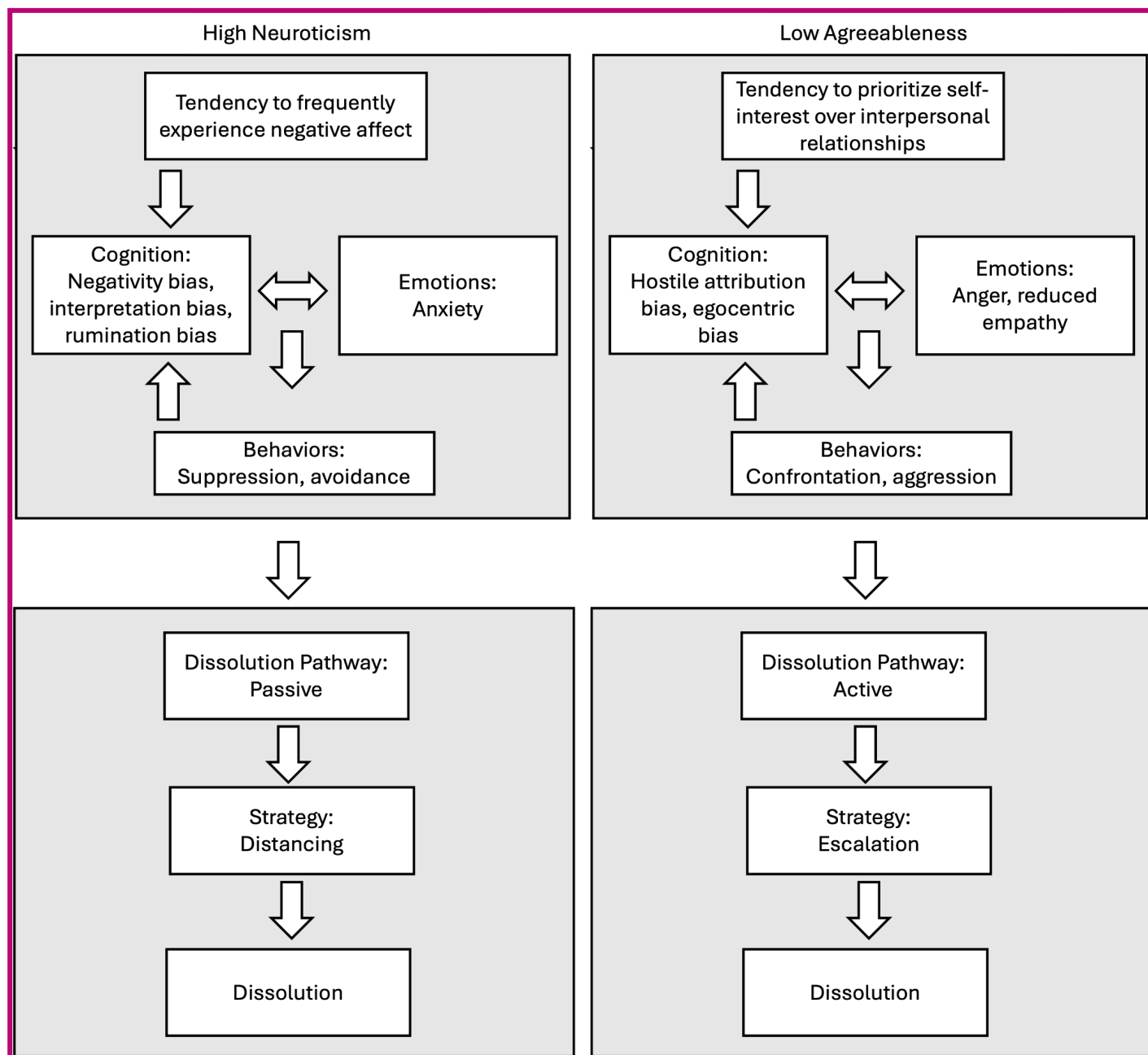
5. Limitations & Future Directions

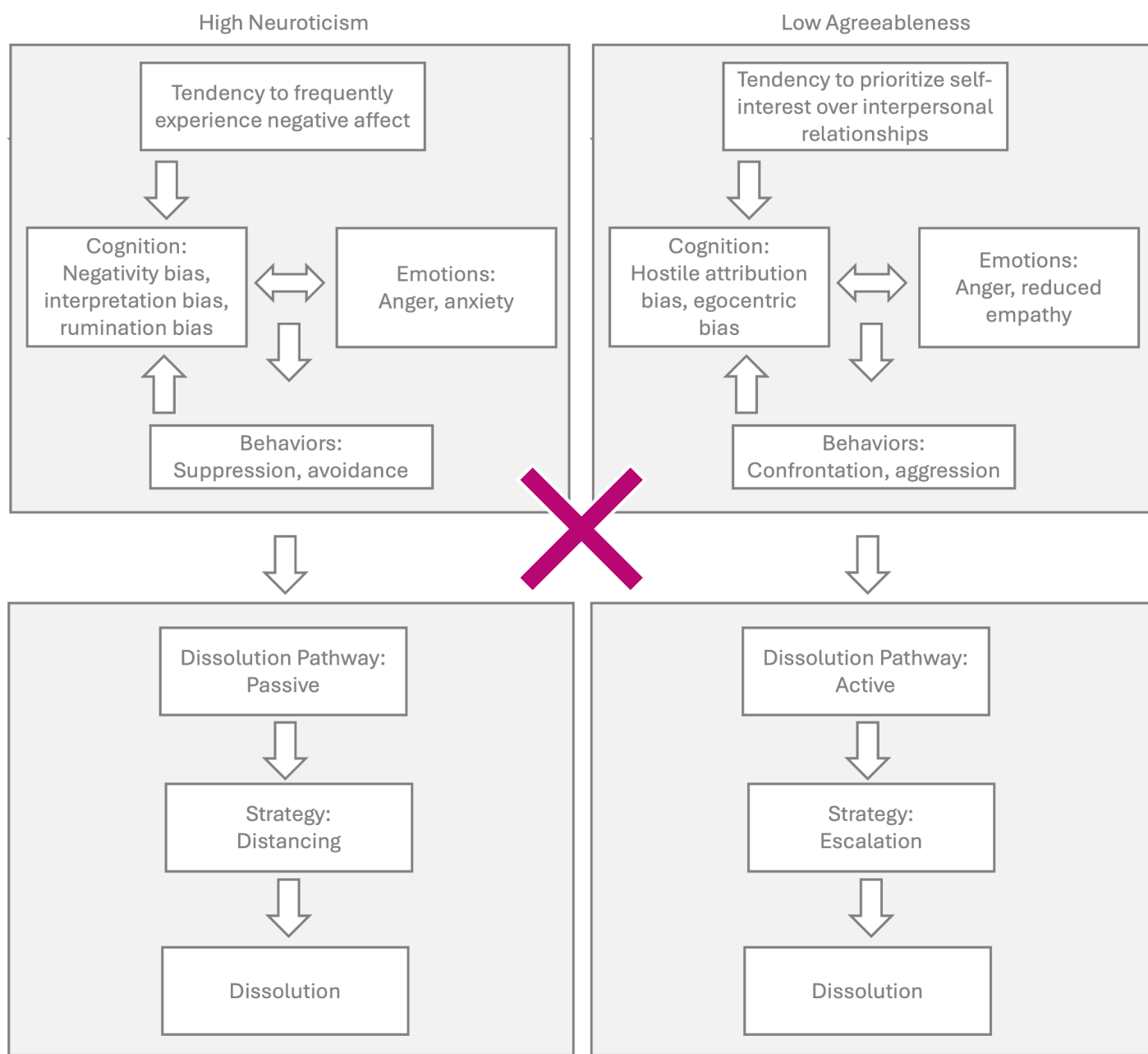
Several limitations of the current paper should be acknowledged. The current theoretical framework is inferential; evidence is drawn from separate studies, and no single study has tested the full chain of mediators. Second, the research draws from literature broader than friendship—some of it comes from general personality or ~~romantic~~ relationship literature, which may not map perfectly onto friendship dynamics. Third, this paper ~~does~~ not account for individual variability, such as friendship history, personality trait intensity, and cultural background, which could alter the dissolution process in ways that the current framework fails to capture.

That said, existing research does provide some insights ~~into the area of~~ friendship dissolution. Dissolution rates are documented across development. ~~For example, such as that~~ rates peak during major life transitions such as leaving high school (Flannery & Smith, 2021; Khullar et al., 2015). Similarly, while the proposed ~~neurotic~~ processing pathway ~~for High-N individuals~~ is backed by Western samples, cross-cultural research suggests that emotional mediators like rumination operate differently across cultures. For instance, rumination among East Asian individuals is less strongly linked to negative outcomes, which suggests that the dissolution pathways proposed here may not generalize to other cultures (Qiu et al., 2026).



332 Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track how cognition, emotion, and behaviors unfold across dissolution
 333 processes in High-N and Low-A individuals. Additionally, examining moderating variables such as gender, culture, or
 334 attachment styles could refine the understanding of when and how these pathways diverge.





336

337 **Figure 1**338 *Proposed Mediator Pathways from High Neuroticism and Low Agreeableness to Friendship Dissolution*

Note. The figure depicts how high neuroticism High-N and low agreeableness Low-A each produce distinct chains of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators leading to different dissolution pathways. Downward arrows represent the sequential flow from trait characteristics to mediators and then to dissolution. The bidirectional arrow between cognition and emotion illustrates how these two factors mutually reinforce their relationship. The upward arrow from behavior to cognition represents how destructive behavioral outcomes may reinforce the original cognitive biases, creating a cycle among the mediators. High-N individuals are more likely to follow a passive pathway through distancing through using the strategy of distancing, whereas Low-A individuals are more likely to follow an active pathway through escalation.

347

348 6. References

- 349 American Psychological Association. (2018). Personality. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.
 350 <https://dictionary.apa.org/personality>
- 351 Barlow, D. H., Ellard, K. K., Sauer-Zavala, S., Bullis, J. R., & Carl, J. R. (2014). The Origins of Neuroticism. *Perspectives on*
 352 *Psychological Science*, 9(5), 481–496. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614544528>
- 353 Bukowski, W. M. (2001). Friendship and the Worlds of Childhood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*,
 354 2001(91), 93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.7>
- 355 Bushman, B. J., Bonacci, A. M., Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2005). Chewing on It Can Chew You Up:
 356 Effects of Rumination on Triggered Displaced Aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(6),
 357 969–983. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.6.969>
- 358 Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Its Relevance to Personality Disorders.
 359 *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- 360 Cox, D. A. (2021). *The state of American friendship: Change, challenges, and loss*. (American Perspectives Survey). Survey
 361 Center on American Life.
 362 https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss
 363 /
- 364 Duck, S. W. (1982). A topography of relationship disengagement and dissolution. In S. W. Duck (Ed.), *Personal*
 365 *Relationships 4: Dissolving Personal Relationships* (pp. 1–30). Academic Press.
- 366 Ellis, L., Hoskin, A. W., & Ratnasingam, M. (2018). *Handbook of social status correlates*. Academic Press.
 367 <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2015-0-04501-4>
- 368 Epstein, S. (1994). Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist*, 49(8),
 369 709–724. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.49.8.709>
- 370 Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship Processes*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483327440>



- 371 Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2021). Breaking Up (With a Friend) Is Hard to Do: An Examination of Friendship
 372 Dissolution Among Early Adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 41(9), 1368–1393.
 373 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211002266>
- 374 Folkman, S. (2013). Stress: Appraisal and Coping. In M. D. Gellman & J. R. Turner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Behavioral*
 375 *Medicine* (pp. 1913–1915). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215
- 376 Gleason, K. A., Jensen–Campbell, L. A., & South Richardson, D. (2004). Agreeableness as a predictor of aggression in
 377 adolescence. *Aggressive Behavior*, 30(1), 43–61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20002>
- 378 Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The Timing of Divorce: Predicting When a Couple Will Divorce Over a 14-Year
 379 Period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737–745. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00737.x>
- 380 Graziano, W. G., & Eisenberg, N. (1997). Agreeableness. In *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (pp. 795–824). Elsevier.
 381 <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50031-7>
- 382 Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26.
 383 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>
- 384 Harris, K., & Vazire, S. (2016). On friendship development and the Big Five personality traits. *Social and Personality*
 385 *Psychology Compass*, 10(11), 647–667. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12287>
- 386 Jensen–Campbell, L. A., & Graziano, W. G. (2001). Agreeableness as a Moderator of Interpersonal Conflict. *Journal of*
 387 *Personality*, 69(2), 323–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00148>
- 388 Khullar, T. H., Kirmayer, M. H., & Dirks, M. A. (2021). Relationship dissolution in the friendships of emerging adults: How,
 389 when, and why? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38(11), 3243–3264.
 390 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211026015>
- 391 Laursen, B., & Hafen, C. A. (2010). Future Directions in the Study of Close Relationships: Conflict Is Bad (Except When It's
 392 Not). *Social Development*, 19(4), 858–872. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2009.00546.x>
- 393 Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the Investment Model.
 394 *Personal Relationships*, 10(1), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00035>
- 395 Lemerise, E. A., & Arsenio, W. F. (2000). An Integrated Model of Emotion Processes and Cognition in Social Information
 396 Processing. *Child Development*, 71(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00124>
- 397 Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The Five-Factor Model of personality
 398 and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 124–127.
 399 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.09.004>
- 400 Mroczek, D. K., & Almeida, D. M. (2004). The Effect of Daily Stress, Personality, and Age on Daily Negative Affect. *Journal*
 401 *of Personality*, 72(2), 355–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3506.2004.00265.x>



- Murthy, V. H. (2023). *Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community*. [Advisory Report]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
- Noftle, E. E., & Shaver, P. R. (2006). Attachment dimensions and the big five personality traits: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 179–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.11.003>
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2000). The role of rumination in depressive disorders and mixed anxiety/depressive symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 109(3), 504–511.
- Qiu, L. S., Lai, M., Koike, A., Sellbom, M., Liddell, B. J., & Jobson, L. (2026). Exploring Cultural Influences in the Associations Between Emotion Regulation and Mental Health: A Systematic Review Comparing East Asian and Western Cultural Contexts. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 33(2), e70276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.70276>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Suls, J., & Martin, R. (2005). The Daily Life of the Garden-Variety Neurotic: Reactivity, Stressor Exposure, Mood Spillover, and Maladaptive Coping. *Journal of Personality*, 73(6), 1485–1510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00356.x>
- Vieth, G., Rothman, A. J., & Simpson, J. A. (2022). Friendship loss and dissolution in adulthood: A conceptual model. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.07.007>
- Webb, T. L., Miles, E., & Sheeran, P. (2012). Dealing with feeling: A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of strategies derived from the process model of emotion regulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(4), 775–808. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027600>
- Widiger, T. A., & Oltmanns, J. R. (2017). Neuroticism is a fundamental domain of personality with enormous public health implications. *World Psychiatry*, 16(2), 144–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20411>
- Wilkowski, B. M., & Robinson, M. D. (2007). Keeping One's Cool: Trait Anger, Hostile Thoughts, and the Recruitment of Limited Capacity Control. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(9), 1201–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207301031>
- ~~American Psychological Association. (2018). Personality. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. <https://dictionary.apa.org/personality>~~
- ~~Bukowski, W. M. (2001). Friendship and the Worlds of Childhood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2001(91), 93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.7>~~
- ~~Bushman, B. J., Bonacci, A. M., Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2005). Chewing on It Can Chew You Up: Effects of Rumination on Triggered Displaced Aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(6), 969–983. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.6.969>~~



- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). The Five Factor Model of Personality and Its Relevance to Personality Disorders. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- Cox, D. A. (2021). The state of American friendship: Change, challenges, and loss. (American Perspectives Survey). Survey Center on American Life. <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/>
- Duck, S. W. (1982). A topography of relationship disengagement and dissolution. In S. W. Duck (Ed.), *Personal Relationships 4: Dissolving Personal Relationships* (pp. 1–30). Academic Press.
- Ellis, L., Hoskin, A. W., & Ratnasingam, M. (2018). *Handbook of social status correlates*. Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2015-0-04501-4>
- Epstein, S. (1994). Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist*, 49(8), 709–724. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.49.8.709>
- Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship Processes*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483327440>
- Flannery, K. M., & Smith, R. L. (2021). Breaking Up (With a Friend) Is Hard to Do: An Examination of Friendship Dissolution Among Early Adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 41(9), 1368–1393. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211002266>
- Folkman, S. (2013). Stress: Appraisal and Coping. In M. D. Gellman & J. R. Turner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine* (pp. 1913–1915). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1993). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behavior, physiology, and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(2), 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.63.2.221>
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The Timing of Divorce: Predicting When a Couple Will Divorce Over a 14-Year Period. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 737–745. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00737.x>
- Graziano, P. A., Reavis, R. D., Keane, S. P., & Calkins, S. D. (2007). The role of emotion regulation in children's early academic success. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.002>
- Graziano, W. G., & Eisenberg, N. (1997). Agreeableness. In *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (pp. 795–824). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50031-7>
- Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>
- Harris, K., & Vazire, S. (2016). On friendship development and the Big Five personality traits. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(11), 647–667. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12287>
- Jensen-Campbell, L. A., & Graziano, W. G. (2001). Agreeableness as a Moderator of Interpersonal Conflict. *Journal of Personality*, 69(2), 323–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00148>



- Laursen, B., & Hafen, C. A. (2010). Future Directions in the Study of Close Relationships: Conflict Is Bad (Except When It's Not). *Social Development*, 19(4), 858–872. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2009.00546.x>
- Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the Investment Model. *Personal Relationships*, 10(1), 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00035>
- Lemerise, E. A., & Arsenio, W. F. (2000). An Integrated Model of Emotion Processes and Cognition in Social Information Processing. *Child Development*, 71(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00124>
- Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Schutte, N. S., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2010). The Five-Factor Model of personality and relationship satisfaction of intimate partners: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 124–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.09.004>
- Mroczek, D. K., & Almeida, D. M. (2004). The Effect of Daily Stress, Personality, and Age on Daily Negative Affect. *Journal of Personality*, 72(2), 355–378. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3506.2004.00265.x>
- Murthy, V. H. (2023). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community. [Advisory Report], U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>
- Noftle, E. E., & Shaver, P. R. (2006). Attachment dimensions and the big five personality traits: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(2), 179–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2004.11.003>
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (2000). The role of rumination in depressive disorders and mixed anxiety/depressive symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 109(3), 504–511.
- Qiu, L. S., Lai, M., Koike, A., Sellbom, M., Liddell, B. J., & Jobson, L. (2026). Exploring Cultural Influences in the Associations Between Emotion Regulation and Mental Health: A Systematic Review Comparing East Asian and Western Cultural Contexts. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 33(2), e70276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.70276>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Slotter, E. B., & Finkel, E. J. (2009). The Strange Case of Sustained Dedication to an Unfulfilling Relationship: Predicting Commitment and Breakup From Attachment Anxiety and Need Fulfillment Within Relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(1), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208325244>
- Suls, J., & Martin, R. (2005). The Daily Life of the Garden-Variety Neurotic: Reactivity, Stressor Exposure, Mood Spillover, and Maladaptive Coping. *Journal of Personality*, 73(6), 1485–1510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00356.x>
- Suls, J., Martin, R., & David, J. P. (1998). Person-Environment Fit and its Limits: Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Emotional Reactivity to Interpersonal Conflict. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(1), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298241007>



- ~~Vieth, G., Rothman, A. J., & Simpson, J. A. (2022). Friendship loss and dissolution in adulthood: A conceptual model. Current Opinion in Psychology, 43, 171–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.07.007>~~
- ~~Webb, T. L., Miles, E., & Sheeran, P. (2012). Dealing with feeling: A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of strategies derived from the process model of emotion regulation. Psychological Bulletin, 138(4), 775–808. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027600>~~
- ~~Widiger, T. A., & Oltmanns, J. R. (2017). Neuroticism is a fundamental domain of personality with enormous public health implications. World Psychiatry, 16(2), 144–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20411>~~
- ~~Wilkowski, B. M., & Robinson, M. D. (2007). Keeping One's Cool: Trait Anger, Hostile Thoughts, and the Recruitment of Limited Capacity Control. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33(9), 1201–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207301031>~~

AI-Use Acknowledgement

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to improve language readability and enhance sentence structures. She did not use it to generate new ideas or alter the shift direction of their her writing content based on AI-generated as a result of AI's suggestions. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of this the publication.



Dear Editorial Board and Peer Reviewers,

Thank you for inviting me to submit a revised version of my manuscript entitled “Neuroticism, Low Agreeableness, and Friendship Dissolution: A Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Mediators Model” to Convergence Journal. I greatly appreciate the time and effort the reviewers have dedicated to providing insightful feedback on ways to strengthen the manuscript. I have incorporated changes that reflect the detailed suggestions you have provided. I also hope that my edits and the responses I provide below satisfactorily address all the issues and concerns you and the reviewers have noted.

Please note that all line numbers referenced in this letter correspond to the tracked changes version of the manuscript, not the final clean version. As the final version displays deleted text as crossed-out, this alters the line numbering and may cause confusion when locating specific revisions.

Please also note that since Convergence Journal's formatting guidelines state that the manuscript must be anonymized for double-blind review, I have removed my name, school name, acknowledgements, author biography, and mentor contribution statement in the tracked changes version of my manuscript.

To facilitate your review of my revisions, the following is a point-by-point response to the questions and comments delivered in your letter dated June 24th, 2026.

Reviewer 1 Feedback:

- “In Figure 1, anger appears in both dissolution pathways. The author either needs to remove anger from the high N pathway or reconcile how both high N individuals and low A individuals experience anger as per Figure 1, which could be seen as potentially leading to the same dissolution pathways”
 - Thank you for noticing this inconsistency between the writing and the figure. After careful consideration, I decided to remove anger from Figure 1 as it is not a core emotion High-N individuals tend to experience, and none of the cognitive biases proposed in my framework directly predict anger. By removing anger, I'm able to further emphasize the distinction between the two dissolution pathways.
- “The author relies on (Le & Agnew, 2003) throughout the literature review, but the way it is presented is an extrapolation - the original research applies to commitment processes in romantic relationships. The author should write that the research was done in romantic contexts”
 - Thank you for noting this. I agree that using (Le & Agnew, 2003) without specifying its focus on commitment processes in romantic relationships constitutes an extrapolation. I have revised the discussion on lines 97 - 98 to reinforce that the meta-analysis was based on romantic relationships.
- “The transition sentences would benefit from drawing clearer connections between sections e.g. ‘The following section traces the proposed influence of cognitive,

emotional, and behavioral mediators in the dissolution process for Low-A individuals, paralleling the structural framework while differing in each mediator pattern.’ This transition sentence directly mentions what the next section is about. Instead, connect by saying how Low-A individuals differ”

- Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I agree that the purpose of transition sentences should be to highlight connections between sections, rather than simply summarizing the upcoming sections. Therefore, I have further emphasized how Low-A individuals differ to connect to the next section, shown on lines 200 - 203.

Reviewer 2 Feedback:

- “Contextualize the Literature Search Methodology (Section 1.1): The current mention of a literature search producing ‘506 results’ lacks scientific rigor because the database is unnamed. A better approach replaces specific numbers with a big-picture explanation, highlighting that out of all papers written about breakups, only a tiny percentage mention personality traits. Specify the exact review index used (Google Scholar, Pubmed) and the specific search strings and filters applied”
 - Thank you for this insightful comment. I agree that the introduction would be more scientifically rigorous if I focus on the big-picture explanation, rather than the unreliable statement of “506 results.” I have replaced the numbers (506, 61) with a general description, and stated the review index, search terms and filters applied, shown on lines 31 - 35.

The following comments were raised by both reviewers and are addressed together:

- Both reviewers pointed out that some in-text citations are missing or corrupted
 - Reviewer 1:
 - “Some of the in-text citations are missing from the references e.g. (Khullar et al., 2021) and (Gleason et al., 2004)”
 - “Citation missing: ‘These appraisals may foster emotional responses such as empathy, guilt, and concern, which promotes repair attempts rather than blame’”
 - “There should be no parentheses before Vieth: ‘Drawing on (Vieth et al.’s (2022) theoretical framework’”
 - Reviewer 2:
 - “In Section 2.1.4, change ‘(1995Laursen & Hafen, 2010)’ to a standardized APA format: Laursen and Hafen (2010)”
 - “In Section 2.2.4, remove the duplicate opening parentheses in ‘Drawing on (Vieth et al.’s (2022)...’”
 - Thank you both for bringing this to my attention. I have reviewed all in-text citations and the reference list to ensure consistency throughout the manuscript. I have added (Khullar et al., 2021) and (Gleason et al., 2004) to the reference list, and included the citation that supports the discussion of empathy and repair

attempts on line 237. All corrupted or incorrectly formatted in-text citations, such as the duplicate parenthesis before Vieth et al. (2022) and the malformed citation for Laursen & Hafen (2010) have been corrected to follow the APA 7th edition formatting, shown on lines 257 and 187 respectively.

- Both reviewers identified my misuse of absolute declarations, and suggested replacing them with more appropriately hedged language
 - Reviewer 1:
 - “the author’s use of the word ‘validates’ makes it a strong empirical claim; the author should soften the language e.g. ‘consistent with’”
 - Reviewer 2:
 - “Replace absolute declarations like ‘Low-N individuals respond to stress with low sensitivity’ or ‘Low-A individuals are less motivated’ with more precise, hedged academic phrasing such as ‘tends to predict lower emotional reactivity’ or ‘are statistically less likely to prioritize relational harmony’”
 - Thank you for noting this. I agree that since behavior in social psychology is probabilistic rather than deterministic, I should use language that aligns with this principle. For instance, I have added “tend to” to the phrases on lines 122 - 123, and implemented “statistically less likely” on line 219.
- Both reviewers noted inconsistent terminology and suggested reviewing grammar throughout the literature review.
 - Reviewer 1:
 - “Fix sentence, either add high and low or remove both: ‘This paper argues that neuroticism and low agreeableness may contribute to dissolution through the interplay of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mediators’”
 - “Mistake here, should be High-N: ‘Second, the model predicts that the emotional mediators mediate the relationship between personality traits and dissolution outcomes, in which controlling for anxiety should reduce the likelihood of passive dissolution in High-A individuals, and controlling for anger and reduced empathy should reduce the likelihood of active dissolution in Low-A individuals’”
 - Reviewer 2:
 - “Standardize Shorthand Label Capitalization: In Section 1.4, the shorthand labels ‘High-N’ and ‘Low-N’ are established. However, throughout the rest of the paper, the capitalization occasionally fluctuates to lowercase variations (e.g., ‘low-N’ or ‘Low-A’)”
 - Thank you for your observation. I have added “high” before neuroticism to parallel “low agreeableness” on line 289, and replaced “High-A” with “High-N” on line 312. I also standardized the shorthand labels by ensuring they are used consistently throughout. I also agree that several language issues need correction. Finally, I carefully proofread the manuscript and corrected all

grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, such as on lines 46, 154, 212, 237, and 321.

Accept for publication (with minor edits) as needed

The author has thoughtfully and effectively addressed the reviewer's feedback. The theoretical review has a strong and clear argument. The paper still requires further minor revisions:

1. "Although hundreds of publications" - this is quite vague either remove the number entirely and write that there is more research on friendship dissolution, or provide more exact numbers
2. An omission is what happens when an individual is high N and low A? Do the two pathways ever reinforce each other? Potentially, explain this using your model or the Investment Model as it seems like dissolution would occur faster for someone with both high N and low A traits than someone with just one or the other. You can add this to the limitations and ideas for future research to be tested empirically as well.
3. Put limitations and future directions section before the conclusion as this allows for a better flow for your paper
4. In your paper, you should describe the high N and low A cognition, emotions, and behaviour self-reinforcing cycle you have in Figure 1 more clearly, rather than relying on the figure to explain this to the readers. You mention a "self-sustaining cycle of friendship deterioration" and that emotions and cognition "interact bidirectionally," but you need to describe this clearly in section 1.4. I would recommend in your section 1.4 to explain this self-sustaining or reinforcing cycle, which is experiencing negative thoughts leads to negative emotions, which in turn leads to negative behaviours, which further cause negative thoughts, as well as the bidirectional emotions and cognition arrow. You could do that potentially with an example e.g., a friend has an anxious thought about something their friend said, and then they experience negative emotions about it etc. And mention how each cycle causes the friendship to dissolve even more.