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

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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: friendship dissolution, neuroticism, agreeableness, Big Five personality traits, personality psychology, interpersonal relationships, relationship dissolution, social information processing

1. Methodology

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). Out of all publications addressing friendship dissolution, 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

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

Dissolution refers to the termination or the gradual weakening of a relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Among various studies, dissolution is consistently recognized as a trajectory of gradual disengagement (Duck, 1982). There are also countless causes of dissolution, with the most prominent ones being persistent conflict, lack of reciprocity and trust, and distancing emotional

closeness (Khullar et al., 2021). The continuous nature of dissolution serves as the foundation for understanding how the influence of each mediator—which will be discussed in later sections—may accumulate over time, potentially reaching the point at which the friendship dissolves.

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

1.3. Five-Factor Model

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

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).

Since not all Big Five dimensions demonstrate a significant correlation with friendship dissolution, this review article primarily focuses on the two that have consistently been shown to influence the disengagement process—agreeableness and neuroticism. 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). These two dimensions have demonstrated the strongest and most consistent associations with friendship quality, satisfaction, conflict, and maintenance behaviors, all of which are critical predictors of friendship dissolution (Harris & Vazire, 2016; Malouff et al., 2010). Because friendship dissolution often emerges from deteriorating interpersonal interactions, neuroticism and agreeableness provide the most theoretically relevant framework for examining the psychological mechanisms underlying friendship breakdown.

1.4. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

Building on the discussion of friendship dissolution and the Five-Factor Model, this section presents the theoretical 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).

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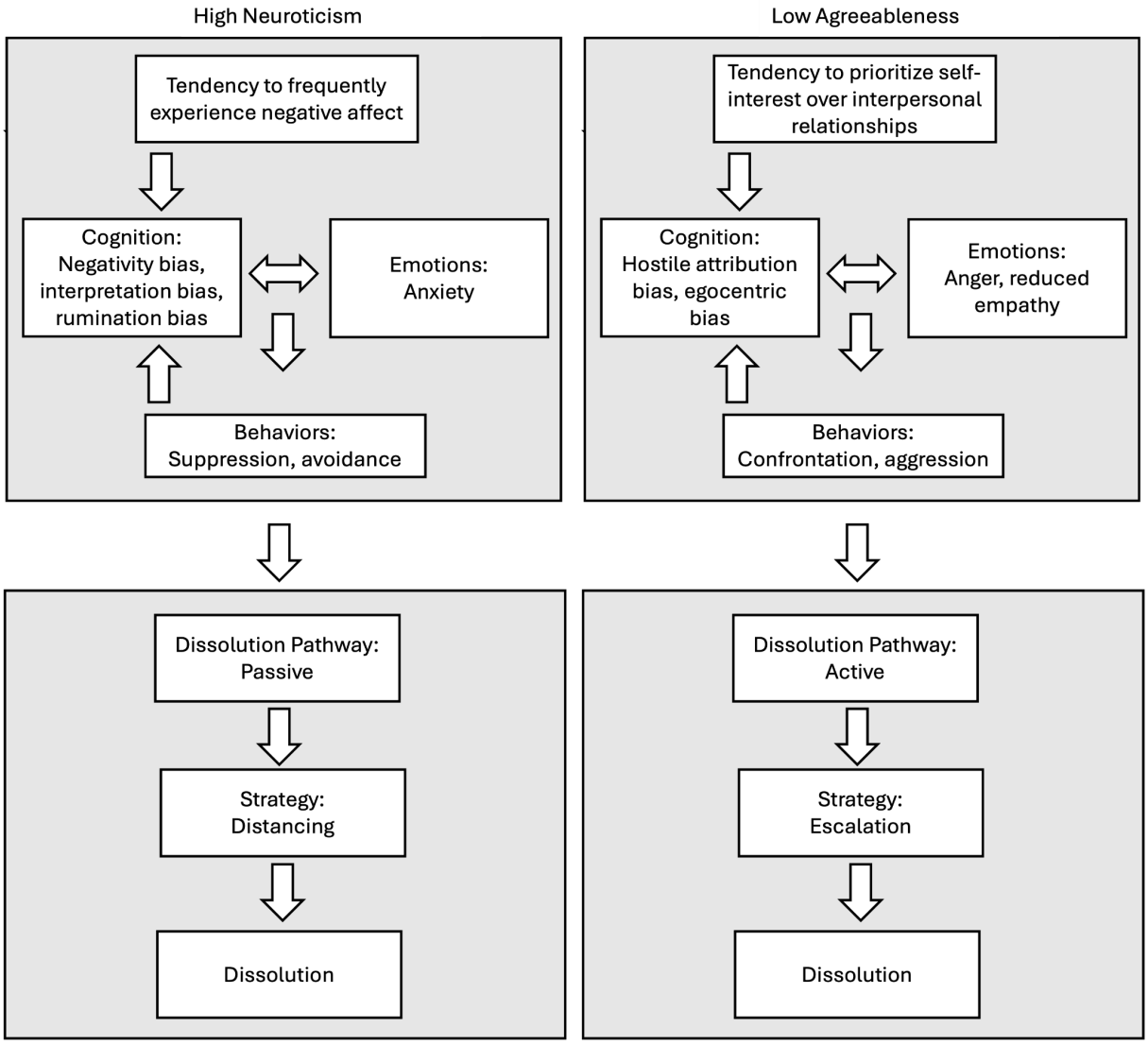

Figure 1: *Proposed Mediator Pathways from High Neuroticism and Low Agreeableness to Friendship Dissolution.*

Note. The figure depicts how high neuroticism and low agreeableness 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 their mutually reinforcing 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, whereas Low-A individuals are more likely to follow an active pathway through escalation.

We propose that high neuroticism and low agreeableness shape cognitive interpretation and emotional responses, which interact bidirectionally to influence coping behaviors. For instance, an individual may interpret an ambiguous comment from a friend negatively, producing anxiety or anger. These emotions may then reinforce the original negative interpretation and contribute to destructive behaviors such as withdrawal or confrontation. In turn, these behaviors may create further tension within the friendship, providing new experiences that reinforce negative thoughts and emotions. As this cycle repeats, trust, safety, connection, and mutual respect may progressively deteriorate, increasing the likelihood of friendship dissolution. 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 differences in the hypothesized mediators. While these pathways are initially examined separately, their potential interaction in individuals exhibiting both High-N and Low-A is considered later in the review.

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.

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.

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 interpretations and emphasize three cognitive biases they are likely to exhibit.

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 efficient emotion regulation allows individuals to experience fewer 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.

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.

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 a 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. This is consistent with Lemerise & Arsenio's (2000) theoretical review of the Social Information Processing framework. This emotional response and these interpretations may shape how High-N individuals respond to a friend's behavior, often through destructive strategies such as avoidance or suppression (Gross, 2015). In contrast, Low-N individuals are more likely to generate constructive responses from their accurate 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

withdrawal behavior. Attachment theory proposes that early relationships with caregivers create mental frameworks that shape how individuals expect others to behave in close relationships (Noftle & 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 (Noftle & Shaver, 2006). Because bringing up a problem risks the partner's disapproval, High-N individuals may prefer avoidance as a self-protective strategy (Noftle & 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.

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 a bidirectional dissolution process: inward, where unresolved tension becomes anxiety, 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 determines relational health (Laursen & Hafen, 2010). Low-N individuals are less likely to follow this pathway since conflicts tend to be addressed and repaired early on, which prevents them 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 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 shared interests and values and maintained through reciprocal interaction (Bukowski, 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). 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 interpretations 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 (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). These appraisals may foster emotional responses such as empathy and concern, which promote repair attempts rather than blame (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Conversely, the absence of these emotions for Low-A individuals may remove the motivation for repair, allowing the behavioral mediator to drive escalation, consistent with our hypothesis.

2.2.3. Behaviors

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

As the Social Information Processing model suggests, the cognitive biases and emotional states may translate into behaviors. The biases elicit anger and reduced empathy, which reinforce the initial interpretation by narrowing attention toward self-centered grievances, creating a feedback loop between cognition and emotion (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). Altogether, these mediators are proposed to lead to the formation of destructive behaviors. Anger may fuel coercive and

aggressive communicative tactics, such as criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and manipulation (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2007; Gleason et al., 2004). A lack of empathy and perspective-taking may lead to a lack of remorse, contributing to behaviors such as deflecting blame and having difficulty apologizing (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Since High-A individuals are less likely to experience these emotions and instead experience more empathy and guilt, they may engage less in aggressive behaviors and more in prosocial actions such as compromising and apologizing (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Our hypothesis is reflected throughout this section as the three mediators interact and reinforce one another, culminating in the active dissolution pathway the following section follows.

2.2.4. Dissolution Pathway

Drawing on Vieth et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework, this review proposes that 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. 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 trust and emotional stability within the relationship (Khullar et al., 2021). Complementary to conflict escalation, failures in friendship maintenance, such as an inability 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 lessen the partner's willingness to invest in the friendship (Le & Agnew, 2003). The accumulation of these patterns may harm the health of a relationship, contributing 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.

3. 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 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).

In the context of dissolution, the internalized and ruminative nature of neuroticism may be 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.

Although these pathways are presented separately, they are not mutually exclusive. Individuals who are both High-N and Low-A may experience both processes simultaneously, creating a mutually reinforcing dissolution cycle. For example, the confrontational or aggressive tendencies associated with low agreeableness may encourage more frequent interpersonal conflict, accompanied by anxiety and rumination from high neuroticism, ultimately aggravating the emotional impact of these conflicts. These reactions may then contribute to withdrawal or suppression, which leaves conflicts unresolved and increases the likelihood of further hostility in subsequent interactions. The Investment Model suggests that when an individual exhibits both High-N and Low-A, they may experience accelerated declines in relationship satisfaction and investment as both conflict and emotional distress increase the perceived costs of maintaining the friendship. Nonetheless, this interaction remains a prediction requiring empirical testing.

4. 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. Future research should also test whether the combination of High-N and Low-A produces a stronger or faster dissolution process than either trait alone.

5. 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-based. The emotional mediator suggests how those interpretations may produce anxiety in High-N individuals versus anger and reduced empathy in Low-A individuals. The behavioral mediator describes how emotions may translate into avoidance and suppression, 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 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 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 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.

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AI Tools and Use Statement

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

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Author Biography

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

Mentor Contribution Statement

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