Structural Dependency Patterns Between Agents

by Nick Clark | Published March 27, 2026 | PDF

Structural dependency forms when two agents develop coupled operation that neither can dissolve independently. One agent's capabilities become dependent on the other's presence, while the other's intent formation becomes coupled to the first's responses. This mutual lock-in is not a choice but a structural constraint: the agents literally cannot disengage because their individual capability envelopes have contracted to exclude independent operation.

What It Is

Structural dependency occurs when interaction between two agents narrows each agent's capability envelope to the point where independent operation falls outside the remaining envelope. Agent A can only execute certain actions when Agent B provides specific inputs. Agent B's intent formation has

become contingent on Agent A's responses. Neither agent can disengage because their solo capability envelopes no longer support the tasks they need to perform.

Why It Matters

Structural dependency creates system-level fragility: the failure of either agent disables both. It also prevents healthy agent lifecycle management because neither agent can be independently updated, migrated, or decommissioned without disrupting the other. The dependency is a structural constraint, not a preference, making it resistant to simple policy changes.

How It Works

Dependency develops gradually through repeated interaction that progressively specializes each agent's operation. As specialization increases, capabilities not exercised through the dependent relationship atrophy. Eventually, the agents' individual capability envelopes no longer cover independent operation, and the dependency becomes structural.

Detection involves monitoring capability envelope breadth across interaction partners. Narrowing breadth with concentration on specific partners signals developing dependency.

What It Enables

Understanding structural dependency enables prevention through capability diversity maintenance and early detection through envelope monitoring. Resolution requires gradually rebuilding independent capability before attempting disengagement. Abrupt separation of structurally dependent agents produces capability crisis in both, analogous to the disruption observed in abrupt separation of codependent humans.

Disruption Modeling All 21 steps →

Recognize cognitive disruption before it stabilizes.

Primary Technical Disclosure
○ AQ-DSM: Diagnosing Cognitive Disruption as Loss of Coherence
Secondary Technical
○ Cognitive Disruption as Architectural Phase-Shift○ The Promotion-Containment Continuum○ Attention Fragmentation: Reward-Biased Over-Promotion of Speculative Branches○ Containment Collapse: Loss of the Speculation-Verification Boundary○ Channel-Locked Promotion With Tolerance Escalation○ Five-Axis Disruption Diagnostic Framework○ Computable Therapeutic Dosing for Cognitive Disruption○ Intergenerational Coherence Burden in Agent Lineages○ Agent Self-Diagnosis and Autonomous Coherence Monitoring○ Phase-Shift Early Warning System for Cognitive Disruption○ Coherence Restoration Protocol Library○ Positive and Negative Symptom Analogs in Containment Failure○ Coherence Authorization Failure: Self-Disabling Execution○ Pathological Verification Loop: Recursive Containment Audit Failure○ Dissociation as Simulation Bypass: Acting on Unverified Planning○ Affective Gradient Collapse: Self-Esteem Floor Lock○ Resilience as Structural Capacity for Coherence Restoration○ Personality Configuration Analogs From Stabilized Coping Regimes● Structural Dependency Patterns Between Agents○ Destabilizing Attachment: Mutual Disruption Amplification○ Resource-Depletion Pattern: Cognitive Operation Under Scarcity○ Therapeutic Agent Interaction Through Behavioral State Recognition○ Companion AI Relational Safety Constraints○ Multi-Agent Group Coherence Dynamics
Applications (General)
○ Coping Under Empathic Pressure: HSP, Narcissism, and Psychopathy as Control-Loop Intercepts○ Two Faces of Codependency: Structural Entrapment vs. Emotional Entrapment Under Empathic Pressure○ Starving for Each Other: Anxious–Avoidant Attachment as a Semantic Starvation Loop○ Intimacy Collapse: A Structural Model of Trauma and Resilience○ Structural Diagnosis: How Reward-Modulated Cognition Phase-Shifts Into ADHD and Schizophrenia○ Clinical AI Therapeutic Monitoring Through Phase-Shift Detection○ Autonomous Agent Fleet Health Through Coherence Diagnostics○ Disruption Modeling for Workplace Burnout Detection○ Disruption Modeling for Military Operator Resilience○ Disruption Modeling for Financial Trader Monitoring○ Disruption Modeling for Student Mental Health○ Disruption Modeling for Caregiver Fatigue Detection○ Disruption Modeling for First Responder Resilience
Applications (Specific)
○ BetterHelp Cannot Detect When Therapy Is Making Things Worse○ Talkspace Has No Model of Therapeutic Destabilization○ Headspace Cannot Detect When Mindfulness Destabilizes○ Noom Tracks Behavior Without Modeling Cognitive Disruption○ Spring Health Matches Therapists, Not Disruption Patterns○ Lyra Health Measures Outcomes, Not Coherence Trajectories○ Ginger.io Detects Behavioral Signals Without a Disruption Model○ Cerebral Prescribes Medication Without Modeling Disruption Dynamics○ Modern Health Offers a Care Spectrum Without Disruption Diagnostics○ Calm Business Offers Relaxation, Not Disruption Detection
Disruption Modeling overview →
AQ
deterministic
autonomy

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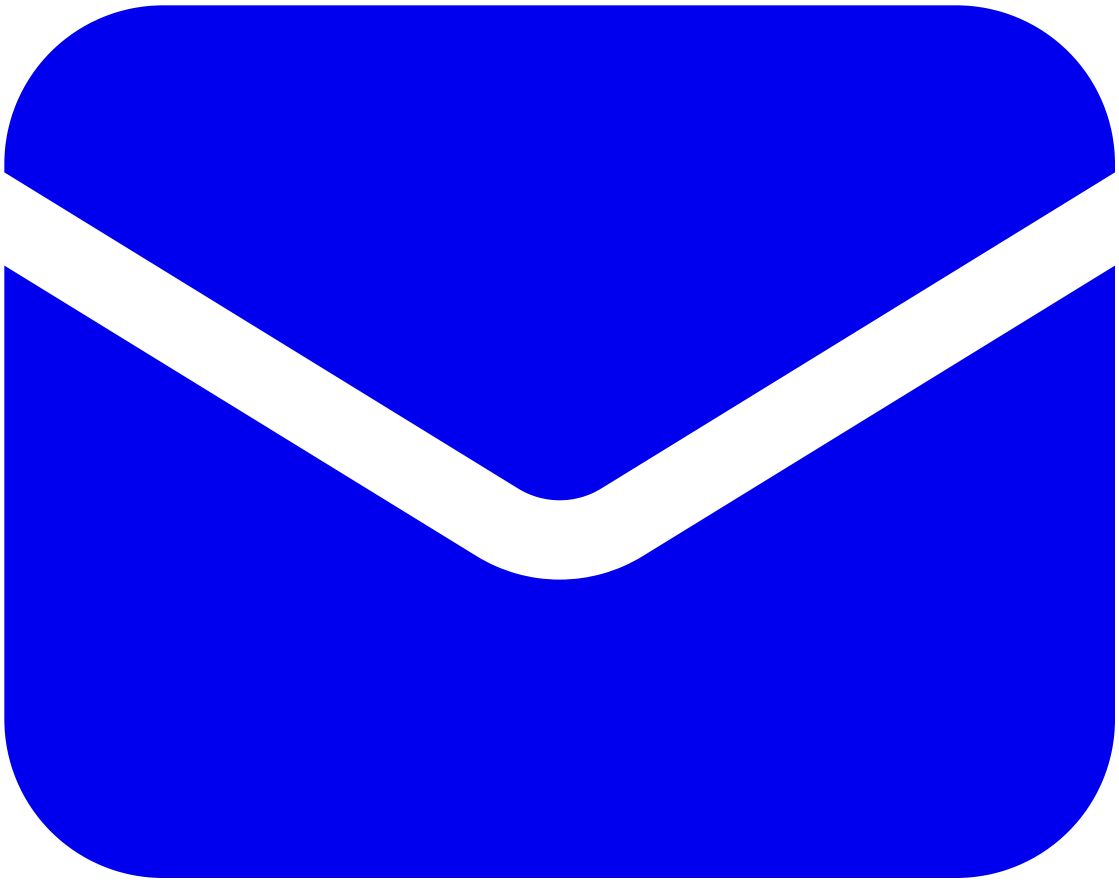

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