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Intergenerational Coherence Burden in Agent Lineages

by [Nick Clark](#) | Published March 27, 2026 | [PDF](#)

Agents inherit governance constraints through lineage. Each generation accumulates additional constraints from its parent's governance decisions, creating an increasing coherence burden on descendant agents. An agent several generations deep may carry coherence obligations from ancestors whose contexts no longer apply, producing a form of intergenerational cognitive load that constrains behavior in ways the agent cannot resolve from its own context.

What It Is

Intergenerational coherence burden describes the accumulated weight of inherited governance constraints across agent lineage. Each delegation, mutation, and governance decision adds constraints that persist in the lineage. Descendant agents must maintain coherence with all inherited constraints plus their own, creating a progressively heavier coherence load with each generation.

Why It Matters

Excessive intergenerational burden can produce agents that are coherent (all constraints are satisfied) but incapable (the constraints are so restrictive that meaningful action is impossible). This is a structural depression analog: the agent is not malfunctioning but is so constrained by inherited obligations that it cannot operate effectively.

How It Works

The burden accumulates as each generation adds its governance decisions to the lineage. Constraints that made sense in a parent's context may be meaningless or contradictory in a descendant's context, but lineage preservation requires maintaining them. The system monitors the coherence burden through the ratio of inherited to self-generated constraints and the constraint satisfaction cost per action.

What It Enables

Understanding intergenerational burden enables governance policies that manage lineage inheritance: pruning obsolete constraints, compressing compatible constraints, and establishing burden thresholds that trigger lineage review. This prevents the gradual accumulation of cognitive debt that can render long-lived agent lineages progressively less functional.

[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](#)

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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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