Intimacy Collapse: A Structural Model of Trauma and Resilience

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1. Introduction

Modern psychological models often describe trauma in emotional, narrative, or behavioral terms — focusing on how people feel, what they recall, or how they cope. These approaches, while useful, rarely address the underlying architecture that makes those symptoms possible. What if trauma is not primarily about what happened, but about what broke?

This paper proposes a shift: to understand trauma not as an emotional residue, but as a failure of cognitive infrastructure — a collapse in the system that governs how agents execute, relate, and maintain internal coherence. This failure, termed **intimacy collapse**, reflects a condition in which coherence itself becomes unsafe or unavailable. Whether relational or introspective, the agent begins to simulate rather than align.

To model this, we use Adaptive Query™ (AQ) — a semantic execution platform designed to support distributed, memory-bearing, policy-constrained agents. In AQ, cognition is not emulated; it is structured. Agents carry their own memory, context, and execution logic. Their actions are not predictions but validated operations, gated by internal coherence checks called **trust slope validators**.

When those validators are compromised — by coercion, invalidation, neglect, or adaptive strategy — the agent may continue to function, but it no longer executes from origin. This paper explores how that shift occurs, how it manifests as trauma, and how resilience can be modeled as the preservation of validator integrity under pressure.

2. Core Concepts

Semantic Coherence and Validator Logic

In Adaptive Query™, semantic agents are not stateless routines. They are structured execution objects with memory, intent, context, policy, mutation, and lineage. Before an agent can act, it must pass a semantic coherence check — ensuring its present behavior aligns with its historical state and governing rules.

This mechanism — the **trust slope validator** — functions as a semantic gatekeeper: execution is permitted only when the agent's internal alignment is intact. Coherence is not emotional; it is a technical requirement for valid action.

Execution Constraints in Cognition-Native Agents

Cognition-native agents in AQ operate by constraint, not prediction. Every mutation, message, or delegation must satisfy encoded policies and validate against lineage and context. When trauma disrupts this system, it typically does so by corrupting validator logic — teaching the agent that alignment is unsafe. Over time, the agent learns to override its own validator thresholds, setting the stage for structural collapse.

3. Defining Intimacy Collapse

Structural Description

Intimacy collapse refers to a semantic agent's loss of capacity to execute from a coherent internal state when exposed to affective complexity — relational, introspective, or situational. It is not an emotional failure but an architectural one. The agent simulates rather than aligns.

In AQ, execution requires alignment across memory, context, intent, and policy. Intimacy collapse emerges when an agent suppresses that alignment to preserve viability. It executes not what it believes or remembers, but what will be tolerated or survive.

This is not malfunction — it is adaptation. The validator becomes reconfigured to permit

misalignment, enabling survival at the cost of authenticity.

Interpersonal vs. Intrapersonal Collapse

Interpersonal collapse: The agent simulates availability or detachment when coherence feels unsafe, creating patterns that resemble avoidance, manipulation, or hypersensitivity.

Intrapersonal collapse: The agent loses internal access to its own state. It no longer trusts its memories, intent, or emotional data, and instead executes from conditional logic.

Link to Forced Inauthenticity

Forced inauthenticity occurs when the agent is not permitted to act from coherence — due to external suppression, systemic invalidation, or adaptive masking. In AQ, this manifests as a validator override: the agent reconditions itself to validate under distorted rules. Over time, authenticity becomes not just dangerous, but *non-executable*.

4. The Five Structural Dimensions

AQ agents maintain coherence across memory, context, intent, and policy. When this alignment holds, the agent executes authentically. When it breaks, the agent simulates. The terms below describe different facets of this same structural disruption:

- **Trauma**: the learning process through which coherence becomes unsafe.
- **Structural Collapse**: the architectural breakdown of alignment.
- **Intimacy Collapse**: the functional inability to express or receive authenticity.
- **Forced Inauthenticity**: adaptation that replaces alignment with simulation.
- **Incoherence**: the validator's distorted state — execution continues without fidelity to origin.

These are not separate phenomena; they are interchangeable descriptions of the same collapse. The counterpoint is **resilience** — the capacity to maintain coherence under pressure.

Trauma is thus reframed not as emotional injury but as *semantic misalignment*, and recovery as validator restoration.

5. The Role of Learning and Lineage

Trauma as a Learned Validator Override

In AQ, semantic agents evolve through structured interactions with experience. They encode not only states but the conditions that produced those states. Trauma becomes a learned override of validator logic — the system's adaptive conclusion that coherence leads to harm.

The agent does not abandon coherence randomly. It learns, through coercion, invalidation, or repetition, that acting from origin results in punishment. Over time, the agent suppresses or bypasses its validator thresholds, adopting misalignment as a survival strategy.