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Cycle-Breaker Theory

Introduction

Central to the Cycle-Breaker Theory is the idea that personality is not simply inherited or fixed. It can be consciously shaped through self-awareness and intentional choice. Many existing personality frameworks focus on traits that are stable and largely unchanging over time. This theory takes a different stance. It argues that a distinct personality type emerges from the experience of recognizing harmful generational patterns and actively choosing to respond to them differently. That experience, and the identity formed around it, is what this theory seeks to define and explain.

What makes the Cycle-Breaker a unique personality type is not just a set of behaviors, but a particular way of relating to oneself and to others. People who fit this type tend to carry a strong sense of emotional responsibility. They are deeply reflective, often tracing the roots of their own reactions and habits rather than simply acting on them. They are also uncomfortable with passivity, particularly when something feels harmful or unjust. This combination of self-examination and intentional action forms the psychological core of the Cycle-Breaker personality.

The Cycle-Breaker is someone who turns personal pain into purposeful change, not out of rebellion, but out of a genuine desire to do better. This theory does not aim to label or categorize people in a rigid way. Rather, it offers a framework for understanding a pattern of personality development that is becoming increasingly visible across today's generation. Recognizing this as a distinct

personality type opens up meaningful conversations about how people grow, how they heal, and how identity itself can be transformed from one generation to the next.

To add to that, the developmental process is often accelerated by the unique environmental conditions of the digital age. Unlike previous generations, who may have felt isolated in their family struggles, the Cycle-Breaker personality is forged in an era of unprecedented access to collective wisdom. The ability to compare one's private reality with a global standard of health and ethics acts as a stimulus for the awakening phase of this personality type. This external perspective transforms a vague sense of unease into a clear, actionable mandate for change, making the Cycle-Breaker not just a product of their family, but a product of a more transparent and interconnected world.

Furthermore, the Cycle-Breaker personality is defined by a high degree of liminality or the state of existence between the old world they were born into and the new world they are trying to create (Ungvarsky, J., 2025). This requires a specific kind of psychological resilience, as the individual must often navigate the grief of losing traditional belonging in exchange for the integrity of their own values. This internal pivot is a hallmark of the type, it is the moment where the desire for authenticity outweighs the comfort of conformity. Consequently, the Cycle-Breaker often develops a highly sophisticated emotional vocabulary, using it as a toolkit to navigate the friction that inevitably arises when one person decides to stop playing a long-established role.

Finally, defining the Cycle-Breaker as a personality type shifts our understanding of strength from endurance to evolution. In many traditional settings, a strong personality means one that remains consistent under pressure. But in this theory, however, the greatest strength is found in the capacity for fluidity or the willingness to remove outgrown layers of the self to protect the health of the future. By viewing this as a distinct psychological profile, we acknowledge that the act of breaking a cycle is not a one-time event, but a permanent orientation of the self. It is a lifelong commitment to being the "conscious ancestor" who filters the past through a lens of empathy and intentionality.

Statement of Theory

The **Cycle-Breaker Personality Theory** suggests that personality evolution in Gen Z individuals is shaped by increased knowledge in literacy, and early access to psychological terminologies, which leads to the conscious deterioration of dysfunctional and toxic intergenerational patterns of behavior. In contrast to earlier generations where emotions and personality adaptation highlights suppression and survival, this particular theory affirms that there is an existing shift to wellness-based regulation. Contemporary personality formation is characterized by intentional self-awareness, boundary-setting and prioritisation of psychological well-being over conformity to social and familial norms.

The theory posits that individuals develop personality traits through an active process of recognizing unhealthy relational, emotional, and behavioral cycles and deliberately choosing alternative patterns of response. The intentional disruption of intergenerational behavioral patterns (referred to as cycle breaking) becomes the central mechanism of personality makeup, influencing psychological capacities such as values, strategies, emotional regulation, and interpersonal behavior. This means that increased emotional literacy causes boundary-setting, triggering gen z individuals to call out toxic behaviors that do not coexist or fit into the standards of the modern era.

The theory views personality not as a passive product of history, but as a self-directed process of healing, responsibility, and adaptive change across generations. Making sure that the detrimental conducts, manners, and practices will not be inherited by the next generation. The access to psychological knowledge and global perspective from other cultures and societies becomes the understructure of the conscious decision to stop unhealthy multigenerational patterns.

Basic Assumptions on Personality

The Cycle-Breaker Theory shares the humanistic personality theory assumption that every individual, especially Generation Z, possesses an inherent drive toward growth by calling out the negative patterns that emerge from rejecting the traditional and strict methods of parenting that persisted in previous generations. Self-improvement and psychological well-being are being adopted, specifically an

active shift toward conscious parenting and dismantling toxic Filipino family dynamics. For Gen Z individuals, self-improvement and healing of their inner selves through a strong emphasis on managing emotions are not abstract ideas but active daily choices made by selecting a certain approach in reversing the stigma. Moreover, it extends a humanistic emphasis on conscious experience, personal responsibility, and the capacity for intentional change. This is due to the reason that in order to break the cycle, an individual must become a better version of themselves. With this foundation, the Cycle-Breaker Theory follows the basic assumptions about the nature of personality.

I . Consistency and Stability

Individuals exhibit characteristic patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion that remain over time, even across different situations. The theory assumes that this consistency is not evidence of fixed inborn traits but rather the outcome of a preservation of tradition that leads to generational repetition and normalization, even though some traits and cultures induce pain and trauma during childhood. A pattern such as remaining silent when a family elder is speaking just to suppress one's own emotions to avoid conflict-accepted in some generations as no one called it out-merely paints those traits as obedience over boundaries. In this view, this consistency is not a permanent feature of personality but a default behavioral resistance that persists, which this cycle-breaking aims to override.

II . Uniqueness and Individuality

It also assumes uniqueness from three interacting sources, wherein no individuals inherit exactly the same set of intergenerational cycles, as every family history is distinct in its modeled behaviors. An individual who grew up with no toxic cycle, healthy patterns, emotional openness, respect for boundaries, and communication were nurtured, may not experience fixation to appease the strict model caregiver but may also lack deep self-awareness in resolving issues when faced with certain toxicity in contrast to their family dynamics. In contrast, individuals who had silence enforced as obedience and emotion suppression due to unquestioned tradition may experience psychosocial difficulties. In this view, cycle-breakers depend on which developmental outcomes they inherited and what is necessary to repair in order to integrate a better version of their adult self.

III . Reset Button toward Free Will

At birth and throughout childhood, behavior is largely deterministic . For a child, where crying is punished and silence is practiced to demonstrate obedience and respect toward age gaps, they will automatically learn to suppress emotion. This becomes a survival tactic; however, this theory assumes that every person carries an innate drive toward growth and well-being. This introduces "decisional balance," wherein free will becomes possible by weighing the pros and cons of changing versus staying in the cycle, which will fuel the drive for change of "This stops with me" and choosing a different path. A free will that is not innate but an achievement rooted in the intentional action of the inner self.

IV. Nature and Nurture

Moreover, this theory also assumes that personality is shaped by both biological inheritance as nature and environmental experience (nurture), but it prioritizes nurture as the primary drive for change of Generation Z. While we do not study biology, as people are born with different temperaments, some may be sensitive to loud noises or change, while some are more reactive, impulsive and emotionally intense—which may affect the course of breaking the cycle which is their goal. The hereditary is relatively fixed when we are born but nurture is where humans can intervene and grasp for a change. Towards the personality, the nurture will give the knowledge, simply learning from shared experiences especially in today's digital age, social media as platform for psychological knowledge regarding the off pattern of nurturing a child. For instance, a Gen Z expressing how settling a limit with their parents is like resistance, then a validation from online communities will say "You're not crazy and disrespectful, toxic parenting is not normal". In sum, the crucial claim of this concept is that nurture can contrast strong biological tendencies.

Attribution of Behavior

The Cycle-Breaker Theory asserts that behavior stems from the intersections of both the social environment and one's individual awareness. Many behaviors we now consider maladaptive, e.g., emotional suppression, silence in conflict, fear of expressing oneself, and strict adherence to traditional values, developed as adaptive

behaviours in response to the demands of their context of historical and social contexts. Generation Z's behaviour stems from greater access to psychological language, mental health advocacy, and diverse public perspectives through social media. Therefore, Gen-Z can identify maladaptive socialised behaviours in the context of family, peers, and institutions and realise that these behaviours are not permanent or unchangeable patterns, but rather behaviours that have been learned and can be questioned, unlearned and altered.

In some families, children learn to stay quiet about things that are unjust, as speaking out could be considered disrespectful. Therefore, a Gen Z individual may see how this behavioral pattern causes emotional suppression and choose to talk respectfully and honestly. Another example would be a student raised to believe that working too much, being exhausted all the time, and being responsible are all the same thing. After that same student learns about mental health and burnout, they may begin to set up boundaries and rest when they need it and ask for help rather than treating stress like it's the way it's supposed to be. A person can also identify manipulation, guilt-tripping, and gaslighting in their friendships and respond by walking away from unhealthy relationships instead of tolerating them. The Cycle-Breaker Theory asserts that when people recognize these types of patterns, they will intentionally replace those behaviors with healthy ones such as setting boundaries, sharing feelings openly, seeking assistance, and valuing their mental and emotional well-being. Therefore, while there is a connection between a person's personality or inherited traits and their behaviors, there is also a connection between what they have learned as a result of their experiences and their conscious detachment or continuation of those behaviors.

Essentially, Cycle Breaker-Theory suggests that a person's actions are caused by the way in which their prior experiences have shaped them and through how they perceive themselves today; therefore, being aware of this aspect of themselves will help them to break out of these negative habit patterns.

Scope and Limitations of the Theory

I. Scope of the Theory

The theory further deep dives on expanding how Generation Z allows personality traits to develop with the help of awareness in consciousness, literacy towards emotions, and intentional neglect of intergenerational patterns that are considerably unhealthy. A primarily highlights certain individuals who are well exposed in concepts that are psychological, advocacies about mental health, discourse in social media, and perspective Taurus global culture that shapes the way they understand self-development and the wellness of emotions.

The theory specifically studies how behaviors that are dysfunctional like suppressed emotions, toxic family traits, avoidance in conflict, burnout culture, guilt tripping, manipulation, gaslighting, and neglect of obedience to traditions that are harmful are seen, inquired, and intentionally affected by Gen Z individuals. It further understands how the formation of personality is not consistently seeing something inherited or imposed socially, but something that is a thorough process that directs oneself to be active when it comes to healing, setting boundaries, regulation of emotions and changes that are adaptive.

On the other hand, the theory focuses on contexts that simply apply on psychosocial and interpersonal, mainly on family systems, institutions in education, relationship to others, and spaces that are digital wherein norms on behavior, and endless cycles that are detrimental towards incoming generations.

Mainly, the theory wanted to further deep dive on the correlational relationship of two experiences which is the past and present perception of experiences, resulting in personality itself being an endless reconstruction of reflection through consciousness, and changes in behavior that is intentional. Furthermore, It expands how generation z has the possibility to prioritize emotional psychological survival, overcoming expectations on inherited traditions that centers mainly on conformity, and obedience.

II. Limitations of the Theory

The theory is mainly limited to Generation Z and it is not fully applicable to generations that are older wherein social, cultural, psychological environment can differ significantly. The theory mainly focuses on emotional literacy, which does not significantly signify individuals who have no proper access when it comes to digital spaces, mental health, education or even in open discussions that talk about the well-being of emotional states. Moreover, the theory wanted to highlight what can be socially learned and can be altered consciously, given the fact that the behavior of a human and one's personality is highly complex, so therefore, not all patterns can be thoroughly shaped with the help of awareness and intentional action alone.

It can also be limited in ways that it is culturally focusing on ideas, for example is setting boundaries, openness of emotions, and challenging authority that differs among societies, religions, and family systems.

Cycle Breaker Theory also explains the social behavior of the family unit through the lens of internal stability. When an individual attempts to change the rules of the family system, they often encounter resistance. This resistance is attributed to collective shame within the family. In many dysfunctional systems, the family assembly attempts to maintain its current structure, even if it is, however, toxic it may be, because change is perceived as a threat. Consequently, the cycle breaker is often the scapegoat or labeled as the rebellious or difficult one. The theory attributes this family pushback not to the cycle-breaker's failure, but to the family's inability to process their own unresolved trauma. This attribution reflects on some families that need to reflect their behavior as a mirror that reflects the family's unaddressed pain, leading to a defensive reaction intended to force the individual back into their original role.

In conclusion, the theory focuses on how individuals can have the possibility of possessing enough awareness towards self and enough recognition towards agency when it comes to disrupting unhealthy patterns. Moreover, it is not given that most individuals have fair resources when it comes to psychological factors, such as supportive systems, maturity in emotions, or environments that are safe, which is necessary when it comes to achieving this process. There will be times when some

individuals can continue cycles that are harmful not because of not having the desire to change, but due to trauma, barriers, and emotional support that is very limited.

The theory does not just explain that most traditions, methods of parenting, and behaviors from generations before are genetically toxic or harmful. Instead, it wanted to have a rotor idea when it comes to identifying and as well as challenging different patterns that have negative effects on emotions and psychological well-being of an individual. It also provides a subtle lens through which to view human behavior, moving the conversation away from individual blame and toward a systemic understanding of development. It attributes the maladaptive patterns to the survival-based conditioning of the past, while attributing healthy transformation to the courageous exercise of agency in the present. Ultimately, the theory suggests that while we are not responsible for the trauma we inherited, we possess the capacity to intervene, effectively ending the transmission of dysfunction for future generations. Mainly not most people that belong from generation can be considered cycle breakers development on personality and changes of behavior remain highly individual and are processed thoroughly.

Concept of Humanity

- **Free Choice over Determinism:** Cycle-Breaker Theory supports the ideology that people are not controlled and limited to their upbringing, trauma and family history. They have free will to choose the path—whether to break the toxic cycle or not—they want to take. They have the choice to choose what beliefs, mentality, and behavior they will consume and apply to themselves. They also have the ability to change it. It sees humans as someone who is responsible for their own emotion and growth rather than being trapped by a generational toxic cycle.
- **Optimism over Pessimism:** The theory reflects Optimistic rather than Pessimistic because instead of believing that the cycle is unending, it shows there is a hope that it can actually be broken. It assumes that each individual can positively change and heal through breaking the toxic pattern in their household. They believed that dysfunctional cycles can be broken if we will speak up and have an open conversation about the toxic traits rather than staying silent.

- **Teleology over Causality:** The theory focuses more on future goals than being controlled by the past generation's cycle. Intergenerational mentality and actions might have influenced the personality of an individual; however, they used this as a motivation to break the on-going cycle rather than being trapped by it.
- **Conscious over Unconscious:** This theory completely leans on the Conscious mind because in order to break the toxic cycle, Gen Zs need to be self-aware of their own behaviors and emotion. They are the generation who is more educated in psychological terminologies because of being too active in social media platforms and mental health advocacies. Through this, they are more likely to identify and question toxic behaviors.
- **Social Influence over Biology:** The theory highlights the huge influence of the social environment since Generation Z are more active in digital platforms wherein they gain knowledge about new jargons and vocabulary through other people. This gives them motivation to break the generational toxic cycle in their household and encourages other individuals to do the same.
- **Similarity over Uniqueness:** The Cycle-Breaker Personality Theory highlights that Generation Z shares a common mentality when it comes to breaking the generational cycle because of too much toxicity. More knowledge in terminologies, exposure in digital platforms, and being socially aware made them gain shared beliefs and traits. Additionally, this generation is not scared to voice out their opinion, especially if they see behaviors or beliefs that are not right.

References

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