

## **'SECRETS AND LIES': THINKING ABOUT THE IMPACT OF INSTITUCIONAL DELINQUENCE IN ADOPTION**

**Anne-Marie Crine**

**Comité Consultatif du Délégué de la Communauté Française aux Droits de l'Enfant (DGDE) Brussels, Belgium.  
anne-marie.crine@cfwb.be**

*Why was I abandoned? Why me? GAT did I do to deserve this? Won't these people leave me again? I feel like a nothing. How can they say that they love me? I'm not worth the trouble, I don't deserve all this!*

This is the style of the questions that are linked to adopted children. To live with such interrogations and emotions requires psychic and affective elaboration which needs to be talked about. This process of elaboration depends obviously on the adopted person. It also depends, in part, on the adoptive parents, the real tutors of their child's resilience. But it is also under the influence of those inevitable actors of the adoption who are third parties. Their part is fundamental. It must develop throughout the adoption process, from the beginning until the post-adoptive follow up, in a professional, multidisciplinary and bilateral way, both at the level of the birth parents and of the children, and also at the level of the candidates for adoption and the adoptive families.

Such a task is difficult, at times almost utopian, due to the frequent insufficiency of institutional resources, materials and human, above all in the countries of origin, but at times also in the foster countries. But will these be the only obstacles that hinder the good development of the tasks of third parties? Unfortunately there are other motives, less confessable that in general tend to be less appreciated, even ignored, by still a great number of university investigators who carry out studies on follow ups for adoptions. Those motives should be contemplated within the framework of the social-institutional context of adoption.

In the past few years, the demand for adoptions by the European and North American countries does not stop growing, when the possibilities of adoption do not evolve in the same proportion, increasing the gap between the two. In this context of imbalance North-South and West-East, the volume of demand weighs more from the foster countries towards those of origin for them to authorize the exit of children who respond to the expectations of the applicants. And this promotes practices that are more or less arguable or frankly abusive, that go from accelerating the processes, omitting or avoiding certain legal dispositions, paying services disproportionate with the local cost of life, dissimulating or falsifying documents, obtain consents and decisions via financial benefit, pressurising and/or abuse the parents of origin in different ways.

In some more serious cases, practices can be reached belonging to organised crime and to the trafficking of human beings, such as kidnapping children or paying for the procreation of others, menace and attempt against human lives. And the most amazing things is that such practices are almost always carried out in the name of love and interest of the children who "anyway will always be better off in a good family in our countries than staying there".

Further to violations to the letter and spirit of the laws, to ethics, we should ask what will be the effects of such institutional delinquency instigated by private third parties with the complicity, more or less actively by public third parties and the competent authorities in the countries of origin and the fostering ones, in the development of the main protagonists of adoption. If to prepare a child for adoption, to work to make him/her adoptable "in his head" consists in restituting a history, a family line, letting him/her position himself/herself so that he/she can be separated, that he/she is separated to be able to project in another place, another

family, another family line, another history how can this be possible in the conditions described previously? How to feel attached to and confidence in adults who lie? How not to go mad, when adults who pamper and protect tell their child very often without knowing, a history completely opposed the one lived until then?

When the psychoanalysts describe in all the adopters the great frequency of fantasies of kidnapping of the adopted child, what happens when reality is reached and goes further than the phantom? How to arrange it when the quantity of money invested reaches to cause doubts about how well founded is the process? How to feel the "real parent" of a child when one met up with the poor birth parents crying for the departure of their child? How to talk to the child about his/her history and help him/her to elaborate it, when one fears that he/she will discover the turbid elements of the adoption and leave the adoptive parents to return to those of origin?

One of the characteristics of all the children who come from adoption is that because of the history of rupture they have lived previously, they find it difficult to confide in the stability of the new parental "bridge" that is presented to them and therefore need to test and shake it. The adoptive parents are naturally not equipped to decipher this behaviour and reactions. But when the meeting between the two occurs in a context that puts serious suspicions on the legitimacy of the process, mistrust, "shake ups", testing run the risk of being even stronger on the one hand, the indispensable confidence, stability and trust run the risk of being broken on the other.

"Secrets and lies", both in adoption and in other contexts, tend to undermine the area where relationships between the principal protagonists should be established and developed. They prejudice the creation of bonding between parents and children and in consequence the construction of the identity of the adopted child. Sooner or later, they tend to reappear under the form of different symptoms. Shouldn't we ask if the behaviour problems and the delinquent actions traditionally described in a large number of adopted people don't sound like an echo of the delinquent practices that we, third parties, have permitted or promoted the processes that lead to adoption? Shouldn't we ask if our action as third parties in the adoption really helps those we intend to help, that is not only the children but also the parents who have adopted them?