

Identicide (Adoption): a neologism to name the institutional destruction of natal identity

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Abstract

The term *Identicide*, coined by **Olmo Gómez Aldaz**, is proposed as a neologism to describe a specific form of structural violence: the deliberate or institutionally legitimized destruction of a person's natal identity. This concept arises from the need to name the systematic erasure of filiation, origin, and memory that characterizes modern adoption systems and related practices.

Identicide (Adoption) defines the process by which a human being's natural or natal identity—rooted in genealogy, name, and biological truth—is suppressed, replaced, or falsified through legal, religious, or social mechanisms. The term expands the critical vocabulary of human rights, identity studies, and decolonial thought, linking the logic of identity erasure to broader histories of domination and disappearance.

By naming this form of violence, *Identicide* allows for its recognition as a distinct category of harm and as a moral frontier: a limit that no society committed to truth and justice can cross. The paper develops the philosophical, ethical, and political dimensions of this concept, situating adoption as the institutional paradigm of identicide and proposing a language through which its victims can be acknowledged, and its structures ultimately abolished.

Keywords:

Identicide; adoption; filiation; origin; identity; memory; restitution; structural violence; identity erasure; truth; abolitionism.

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1. Introduction

The term *Identicide* arises from a necessity: the need to name a form of violence that existed but had no word. For decades, modern adoption and other institutional forms of identity substitution have presented themselves under the language of protection, charity, or love, while performing a systematic act of destruction — the erasure of origin. To name this violence is not a rhetorical gesture but a political act.

Identicide (*Adoption*) designates the process by which a person is stripped of their natal identity — their genealogy, name, lineage, and truth of origin — and replaced with a fabricated identity. Unlike physical disappearance, *identicide* acts upon symbolic existence: it does not kill the body, but the biographical coherence of the self. Its effectiveness lies in the institutional legitimacy that supports it, in the moral consensus that turns the erasure of identity into a form of “salvation.”

Coined by **Olmo Gómez Aldaz** in the mid-2010s, the term situates this violence within a broader historical genealogy, alongside genocide, ethnocide, and enforced disappearance. Yet unlike these, *identicide* operates within the intimate, affective, and legal domain of filiation: its setting is the family, its justification is the good, and its result is the dispossession of truth.

This text develops the conceptual, philosophical, and political foundations of the neologism *Identicide*, with particular attention to its manifestation in adoption as an institutional paradigm. More than a descriptive concept, *Identicide* proposes a moral category — a limit. To name it is to acknowledge that the truth of origin cannot be suppressed without destroying the dignity of being.

2. Conceptual Framework

Identicide belongs to a constellation of concepts that seek to account for the institutional forms of the destruction of being. In dialogue with notions such as *genocide*, *ethnocide*, and *enforced disappearance*, the term expands the semantic field of violence—from physical elimination to symbolic suppression. If genocide destroys bodies and peoples, *identicide* destroys genealogies and truths, acting within the intimate territory of filiation and memory.

Its specificity lies in the fact that this violence is not exercised against a collectivity defined by ethnic, religious, or political traits, but against the very identity of each individual. *Identicide* operates through the erasure of natal filiation, the substitution of real genealogy with a fictitious one, and the social normalization of that replacement. It is a form of violence that presents itself as care, a disappearance disguised as protection.

The theoretical framework of *identicide* is rooted in three critical traditions: the philosophy of recognition, abolitionist thought, and the critique of symbolic violence. From the first, it inherits the idea that identity is constructed in relation to others, and that its negation constitutes a form of moral annihilation. From the second, it draws the conviction that there are structures of harm that cannot be reformed but must cease entirely. And from the third, it takes the understanding that power does not always act through direct coercion but through the naturalization of falsehood.

From this perspective, modern adoption represents the paradigmatic device of institutional *identicide*: a system that replaces the truth of origin with an administrative fiction and inscribes that falsification into the legal and social body itself. *Identicide* is not an anomaly of the system but one of its most refined expressions — a form of violence perpetuated in the name of good.

3. Definition of the Term “*Identicide*”

The term *Identicide* was coined by **Olmo Gómez Aldaz** in the mid-2010s to name a form of violence that, until then, had no word: the deliberate or institutionally legitimized destruction of a person’s natal or natural identity. Its formulation arose from the need to give language to an experience of dispossession shared by adopted people and others subjected to identity substitution — the forced loss of genealogy, name, and memory.

Identicide, therefore, designates a process rather than a single act: a juridical, religious, and social mechanism through which real filiation is suppressed and a fictitious identity imposed. Unlike genocide, which annihilates populations, or ethnocide, which destroys cultures, *identicide* operates in the intimate and individual sphere, erasing the link between being and origin. It is a civilizational form of violence that requires no weapons — it acts through documents, records, and discourses of protection.

Semantically, the term joins *identity* and *-cide*, from the Latin *caedere*, meaning “to kill” or “to cut down.” Just as homicide destroys bodily life, *identicide* destroys narrative and

symbolic life — the coherence of being through time. Its conceptual strength lies in affirming that identity is not a psychological ornament but an ontological right, and that its destruction constitutes a form of civil disappearance.

In this sense, *Identicide (Adoption)* does not merely describe an anomaly within legal systems but reveals a structure of power sustained by the falsification of filiation. To name *identicide* is to break the consensus that turns falsehood into law and dispossession into virtue.

4. Adoption as the Setting of *Identicide*

Modern adoption constitutes the space in which *identicide* attains its most stable institutional form. It is not an accident or deviation within the system, but a juridical and moral device designed to legitimize the substitution of filiation. Through it, the State, the Church, and the family converge in a machinery that transforms the falsification of origin into an act of social good.

In its current configuration, adoption is not limited to establishing a relationship of care; it produces a new identity, detached from lineage and memory. This operation is not merely administrative — it is a rewriting of being. The issuance of a new birth certificate does more than erase a previous genealogy: it inscribes into the records of the State an ontological falsehood that becomes naturalized as truth.

Within this context, *identicide* takes on a civilized, even affective form. It requires neither physical violence nor open coercion; it is perpetuated through social consensus, institutional silence, and the redemptive narrative that presents the loss of origin as an opportunity to “be reborn.” Adoption thus becomes a model of symbolic violence — a structure that reproduces domination under the guise of love.

To name adoption as the setting of *identicide* does not mean denying the existence of affection, but recognizing that such affection has been instrumentalized to justify the suppression of origin. The true violence lies not in the emotional bond, but in the legal and moral framework that produces it upon a foundation of falsehood. In this sense, *identicide* affects not only those who endure it directly, but also the society that legitimizes it.

5. Manifestations of *Identicide*: Truth, Filiation, and Memory

Identicide does not manifest as a single or isolated event but as a continuous process of dispossession. Its traces run through documents, discourses, and biographies. It exists not only in the moment when a name is erased or a new filiation is issued, but in every instance where the truth of origin is denied, relativized, or rendered irrelevant. The persistent denial of the right to know who one is represents its most refined form.

In the realm of filiation, *identicide* operates by replacing truth with narrative. The family story is rewritten from a position of power, and the adopted person learns to recognize themselves within a fiction. In that fiction, memory ceases to be a space of truth and becomes a mechanism of obedience. Identity, instead of being a process of self-knowledge, turns into an act of adaptation to institutional falsehood.

The damage produced by *identicide* is not merely psychological; it is ontological. By severing the continuity between being and genealogy, the person is suspended in a fragmented existence — one in which the past does not belong to them and the present lacks roots. This fracture extends across generations, transmitting absence as part of a symbolic inheritance.

Collective memory is also affected. When a society normalizes the erasure of origin, it renounces truth as a shared principle. Restitution, therefore, is not merely an individual act but a historical imperative: to recover the truth of origin is to restore the memory of the human. Naming *identicide* and recognizing its manifestations is the first step toward that restitution.

6. *Identicide* as Structural Violence

Identicide is not a flaw within the system; it is one of its conditions of operation. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that it requires no visible repression or coercive force. It acts through law, moral discourse, and bureaucracy. It is a form of structural violence because it is embedded within the very organization of social, juridical, and symbolic life. It is exercised under the appearance of normality.

This form of violence operates on three interrelated fronts: legal, cultural, and affective. On the legal front, *identicide* is consolidated through regulations that legitimize the substitution of filiation and the issuance of falsified documents as lawful administrative

acts. On the cultural front, it reproduces itself through narratives that idealize adoption, charity, or maternal sacrifice, neutralizing any critical reading. And on the affective front, it persists through the internalization of silence: the victim learns to protect the very story that erases them.

The structural nature of *identicide* explains its persistence beyond historical contexts. It does not belong to one era or one nation, but to a logic of domination that adapts and disguises itself. Its root lies in the belief that identity can be administered by authority and that origin can be replaced in the name of good. That belief turns truth into property and filiation into an instrument.

Recognizing *identicide* as structural violence compels us to rethink justice and memory on a radically ethical plane. It is not only a matter of repairing harm but of transforming the structures that produce it. In this horizon, the abolition of *identicide* is not a symbolic gesture but a civilizational imperative: the affirmation that no form of good can be founded upon the falsehood of origin.

6. Conclusion

To name *Identicide* is to break the silence that has made it possible. For as long as this violence remained unnamed, it operated with impunity under the guise of love, charity, or protection. Giving it a word restores its political and ethical dimension: it is to recognize it as a violation of truth rather than an act of benevolence.

Identicide (Adoption) is not a theory of identity but a denunciation of its systematic destruction. Its purpose is not to describe harm but to expose the symbolic order that produces and legitimizes it. Understanding modern adoption as the institutional device of that destruction allows us to dismantle the juridical fiction that turns falsehood into kinship and dispossession into virtue.

Recognizing *identicide* as structural violence opens a new dimension of memory and justice. If abolition is the horizon, naming is the beginning. Without language, there can be no reparation. And without the truth of origin, there can be no enduring humanity.

Identicide compels us to rethink the human from the standpoint of filial truth. To abolish it is to affirm that origin does not belong to administration but to existence; that identity

is not granted but recognized; and that all justice begins with the restitution of the right to be who one is.

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