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Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Ciavaldini, André
DOI	10.58863/20.500.12424/4273121
Publisher	Globethics Publications
Rights	Globethics Publications;Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	2026-11-10 14:47:16
Item License	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/4273121

17.

KNOWLEDGE DELINQUENTS AND SEX OFFENDERS: SAME DIFFERENCE?

André Ciavaldini

Abstract

The article proposed by André Ciavaldini takes us to the shores of an often little known world, that of psychoanalysis. At the end of a very detailed analysis of the psyche of the sexual pervert and the 'manipulative' plagiarist identified by Michelle Bergadaà in her research, showing the analogy of behaviours (and their sources), he reveals that academic institutions are not equipped to spot and treat these manipulators. The author tells us that "plagiarism seems to be built on this conjunction: lack of self-esteem and the impossibility of accepting the reality of it, because it is too hurtful". There is therefore no reason why our institutions of higher education should not be less trapped in these perverse games than health care or religious institutions are by paedophiles.*

* Corresponding authors: A. Ciavaldini. To quote this chapter: Ciavaldini, A., "Knowledge Delinquents and Sex Offenders: Same Difference?" in: Bergadaà, M., Peixoto, P. (Eds.), *Academic Integrity: A Call to Research and Action*, Geneva: Globethics Publications, 2023, pp.419-434, DOI: 10.58863/20.500.12424/4273121 © Globethics Publications. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Visit: https://www.globethics.net/publications

1. Introduction

As a clinical psychologist, specializing in the study and treatment of sexual offenders, it unexpectedly came to my attention while discussing matters of research with Professor Michelle Bergadaà that several of the distinctive traits she had identified in many plagiarists in her 2011 study were similar to those of the subjects that I saw in my practice, and more specifically some pedophiles.[447] Bergadaà clearly identifies four different profiles of what she calls *knowledge delinquents*.: the manipulator, the cheater, the fraudster, and the handyman.[448] In this chapter, I will only deal with the first of these types: the manipulator. I will not take into consideration the individual components of a particular delinquent but focus on the characteristics that seem—to me—to be common to all.

The same thing is true of sex offenders: there are numerous 'types', in the sense that it is difficult to compare a violent rapist and a 'gentle' pedophile.[449] However, our work has shown that, even though there is no typical profile for sex offenders, their personalities contain several permanent features that can be found consistently, but to varying degrees of organization, depending on the subject.[450]

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[447] M. Bergadaà, *Profils de plagieurs: Rapports d'analyse n° 1* (N° 2011-006) (Geneva: Université de Genève, 2011).

[448] M. Bergadaà, *Le plagiat académique: Comprendre pour agir* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2015)

[449] For these distinctions between pedophiles, see D. Bouchet-Kervella, 'Pour une différenciation des conduites pédophiliques', *L'Évolution psychiatrique*, 61(1) (1996), 55-73.

[450] C. Balier, 'Pédophilie et violence. L'éclairage apporté par une approche criminologique', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 57(2) (1993), 573-89; A. Ciavaldini, *Psychopathologie des agresseurs sexuels* (original edition published in 1999) (Paris: Editions Masson, 2001); A. Ciavaldini, 'L'agir violent sexuel', in *Psychopathologie des limites,* ed. by C. Chabert (Paris: Dunod, 2009), pp. 233-79.

Thus, the 'manipulator plagiarist' identified by Bergadaà is an individual who moves about in disguise. They come up with multiple ruses and stratagems to craft their objects (plagiarism). Some seem to hide their missteps under a kind of arrogance. When their acts are discovered, they deny. They know how to surround themselves with a little court that they have personally enthroned and that ensures them a kind of immunity. They disdain common morals and shared ethics, preferring to make up their own rules, which they use and abuse, to the detriment of victims they practically never admit to having wronged.

It seems that, with this type of knowledge delinquent, as with sex offenders, we are facing the typology of people who build their identities on perverse modes of preservation and for whom division and denial reign supreme. That explains the incredible confidence of these subjects, who are hardly ever guilty of their crimes, which, in their view, should not even be defined as such, even though they may very well take part in denouncing them when other people are the offenders.

In the following sections, I will use my clinical experience with sex offenders to develop some suggestions for reading the psychic organization of manipulator plagiarists.

2. Wounded narcissism: the main (and hidden) flaw of self-esteem

The first thing one needs to understand is that manipulator plagiarists—like sex offenders—seem to have experienced a historical psychic development that has weakened them in their own narcissism, what is commonly known today as their 'self-esteem'. Plagiarists neither love nor respect themselves. The reason they plagiarize is so they can be loved by their own narcissism. To make it simpler, let us say that they plagiarize in order to be able to love themselves. They respect 'the greats' (researchers) and the 'intellectuals', and wish they belonged and had access to this world that they have idealized. To be precise, they

would like to be esteemed and looked at (for looking is a very important element of plagiarism: it is about *seeing* perceptual material, even music) the way *they* look at 'the greats': with admiration. But they feel they lacks the competence. Let us emphasize how internal and silent the wound is, skillfully hidden under a narcissistic 'shell' that often amounts to a false-self personality. Plagiarists play pretend; they are counterfeiters of their own lives. They embellish their story by stealing from others what they believe they do not have.

Like a child seducer, a plagiarist does not like the adult he has become. Pedophiles, for instance, only feel good around children. They adorn them with imaginary qualities from a green and infantile Eden: purity, charity, equity, lack of conflict, gentleness, beauty, etc. The child becomes their fetish.[451] Reality, however, is quite different. These subjects feels terribly ill at ease in the adult world, unable to find their place. They will therefore find a place where children become daily companions, objects of their environment: activity leader, youth worker, teacher, or even priest. The world of childhood is sought after because this is where pedophiles feel they belong, not noticing in any way that this feeling of belonging is due mainly to an adult-child asymmetry (which they deny), that puts children in a relationship of subjection they are not aware of, even though a pedophile will make every effort to seduce 'the little ones'. They act, and through their actions they counterfeit the child, and the children are thrilled by the subterfuge, seeing a grown-up giving up his adult status to come down to their level. This is all masked by the reality of physical asymmetry that continues to affect the perceptual level (he is big, and strong, and an adult) and makes it impossible for the child to denounce the absurdity or funniness of certain situations of juvenile games that often end up in violent acts of a sexual nature (sexual touching, aggression, rape).[452]

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[451] Balier, 'Pédophilie et violence'.

[452] Ciavaldini, 'L'agir violent sexuel'.

Manipulator plagiarists are therefore wounded in their narcissism, in two different ways. While one part of them says that they are not competent enough to do what is expected of them—this relates to the wounded narcissism –this very narcissism (the omnipotent part of it) despises them without their knowledge, expecting them to keep in line with the way they see themselves in the eyes of others. Plagiarism seems to be built out of this conjunction: a lack of self-esteem and the inability to accept the reality of the situation, which is too hurtful and therefore leads plagiarists to resort to something that will increase their self-esteem, that is to say plagiarism, data theft, and counterfeiting and, through that, the imaginary monopolizing of what other people are likely to possess, but not plagiarists, as they are deprived of part of their self-esteem.

3. Visual perception and self-esteem

In plagiarism, the question of sight seems to be at the center of the issue. In order to understand that, one needs to remember that the construction of narcissism is in thrall to visual perception. The way a parent looks at her child validates the child in his identity. The less this gaze bears the child's identity, which is still under construction, the more the child experiences this failure as linked to a flaw in himself. He thinks he is not 'good enough' to deserve the parent's commitment and his narcissism is built on a double modality. On the one hand, he feels hurt (he is not good enough to deserve a supportive parental gaze), and on the other hand, this very narcissism (etymologically linked to the myth of Narcissus, who died because he loved himself too much and got lost in his own image, an ideal vision of himself) produces a cruel defense mechanism: it demands that the subject be precisely what he cannot be, that is to say, what he 'imagines' (fantasy) he should be to attract the parental gaze. This puts us at the heart of an aporetic system where these subjects' narcissism is crushed by the expectations they

have of themselves and that they will ultimately transmit to others. The same is true of perverts. If they move about in disguise, it is simply that they cannot bear their internal wounds, with the 'insane' belief that if they are discovered, they will forever be banned from emotional connections and rejected by the world.

The dimension of abandonment is an element of the utmost importance for these subjects and is at the heart of plagiarists' anxiety and fears. For the sake of convenience, at some point in their journey, they resort to plagiarism. In so doing, they get to retain their rank, and their narcissism can tolerate this infringement of ethical and deontological rules, thus allowing them to continue their career, easily confessing to plagiarizing if they are exposed (for the *handyman* type). If they realize what is going on, they may be assimilated to the *occasional delinquent* mentioned by Enrico Ferry.[453] If, on the contrary, they intensify that quest to be seen and their search for power, they will become *manipulators*. If they are not exposed, they will offend again and a sense of impunity will gradually set in, not unlike what happens with sex offenders. The manipulator plagiarist will then develop a sense of omnipotence.

Bergadaà cites some excellent examples and accurately describes this assertion and the development these plagiarists are capable of, creating a true network of people who are in their debt and who will protect them, sometimes bordering on Mafia-like practices.[454] This exact same profile can be found in some sex offenders, particularly

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[453] Enrico Ferry, like Cesare Lombroso and Raffaele Garofalo, was one of the founders of modern criminology. In his categorizations, which are no longer used today, except for historical background, he presented five classes of criminals: the *madman,* the *criminal by birth,* the *criminal by habit,* the *criminal by passion,* and the *occasional criminal.* Criminals in the last class only commit a crime if temptations arise; E. Ferry, *La sociologie criminelle* (trans. L. Terrier) (Paris: Éditions Alcan, 1893; 2nd edition, 1914).

[454] Bergadaà, *Le plagiat académique* (pp. 117-22).

pedophiles, who know how to make themselves indispensable to the families whose children they will then abuse—so indispensable, in fact, that the parents will not be able to reveal the delinquent acts for a long time. Many of these offenders have been incorporated into social networks where they hold key positions, thus giving them means to pressure people, granting them access to young victims, and allowing them to muzzle those who could disclose their pathological and delinquent deeds.

4. The silence of institutional shame

Another element that seems to be very significant is the institution's reluctance to disclose and denounce. Is it possible that there is some kind of shame in revealing this delinquency of knowledge? Shame, which has a strong narcissistic component that every clinician is aware of, points to the fact that institutions—in this case academic institutions—may well be trapped in the same snare as educational, health care, and religious institutions when it comes to revealing the sexual aggressions that take place within their midst. Disclosure would mean agreeing to show the failures of such institutions in broad daylight, where human failure is often called connivance. Within these institutions, everyone knows that *Mr. So and So* engages dubious, questionable practices with children, but everyone keeps quiet. To keep quiet is to *close your eyes.* Once more, it is about visual perception, or in this case the lack of it: *pas vu, pas pris*.[455] Disclosure means having to confess what you have seen, and that means explaining, putting things into words; it implies picturing what will have to be said.

This is where the 'slippery slope' sets in, for where will the subject find the components for this representation, if not in his own personal

[455] A French expression that literally means 'if no one sees you, you won't get caught'.

repertoire, that is to say his life? This is an operation of nominative translation, from sight to spoken words, which amounts to dressing up the abuse with a personal story, making use of one's own psychological construct that has developed with the support of one's fantasies—not the fantasies of the adult one has become but the infantile fantasy world. Our psyche starts to shape itself as soon as we are born; infantile sexuality is not a myth. Freud and his numerous successors have shown the reality and efficiency of processuality in psychological construction. In our psyche, nothing is forgotten. The little 'polymorphous pervert' that each and every one of us has once been keeps popping up.[456] Therefore, the revelation of sexual abuse confronts the denouncer with her own infantile fantasy life, where different positions collide: dominant/submissive, child/adult, molester/victim. This is first and foremost what those who see and keep quiet want to escape from. Then, of course, there is the disbelief of the people around them, which, in the end, is based on similar arguments.

Is the situation the same in the academic field? Is keeping quiet about what one has witnessed repeatedly for many long years (sometimes with embarrassment) based on individual motives shared by all? Not that every researcher wants to steal the work of others in order to enjoy an easily earned reputation and become, in the eyes of their peers, '*His Majesty the baby*', the idolized child, the product of combined parental narcissisms.[457] No, this would be nothing but confabulation, except if, once again, the little polymorphous pervert present in each and every researcher (and in every human in general) stuck his little nose in (and everyone knows that to make it bigger, he

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[456] S. Freud, *Œuvres complètes Psychanalyse, Vol. VI: 1901–1905, Trois essais sur la vie sexuelle—Fragment d'une analyse d'hystérie—Autres textes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), pp. 59-182.

[457] S. Freud, 'Pour introduire le narcissisme', in *La vie sexuelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), pp. 81-105.

just needs to lie). The fact remains that plagiarism is a crime committed in aggravating circumstances as it always takes the victim by surprise. Most of all, it involves being 'big' without having been small, flying with somebody else's wings. This wounding aspect of plagiarism cannot be resolved by the delinquent's will alone. Just as the pedophile's act injures the child he approaches in the guise of love, the plagiarist loves and/or despises the plagiarized, depending on the latter's rank. Therefore, the mechanisms are in place and plagiarism becomes to the university what sexual abuse is to society as a whole.

5. Denial and division

This question of a narcissism that is poorly integrated and divided into two parts—one that attacks the ego in its own esteem and the other that demands that this 'loss' be repaired—is another characteristic of the sexual aggressor. All sex offenders build their personality with psychic defense mechanisms composed of denial, division, and projection.

Understanding this involves going back in time in the history of offenders' psychological construction, probably long before their first years at university. Without delving deeper into this subject, which I have already outlined earlier, let us simply point out that it is the story of the construction of an internal gaze that is discovered here: a gaze that is absent at first, and that then becomes accusatory and tyrannical as the child lives and grows. Hence, delinquent acts (including plagiarism included) both mask and are the products of a psychological wound.[458] This leads us to state that the plagiarist's psychic organization seems to present similarities to the construction and defense of the sex offender and its perverse organization.

[458] In this respect, plagiarism can be considered as a pathological act, like confabulation, mythomania, and sexual violence of a perverse nature, which is a component of paraphilias.

The first element that is worth noting in this denial is these subjects' assurance: they have *not* committed the crime they are accused of. *They* are the victims, it is a conspiracy, etc. When they are presented with the facts, they deny. Bergadaà wrote that it is evidence of a real weakness in their psychic apparatus that must be perceived here.[459] One day, when faced with the task of writing something that is simply too complicated, they cannot bring themselves to publicly admit their limitations. This denial generates the split that leads the left hand to ignore what the right hand undertakes. One day, these individuals denounce those who commit the same crime as they have and another day they commit it themselves, without experiencing the slightest remorse.

If we rely on this kind of profile, the act of plagiarism, like the act of sexual aggression, comes at a point in the subject's life when he feels he is in danger, for reasons that may well be unknown to him and that are expressed in the thought that he will not be able to do what is expected of him. The offense then appears to calm the subject: once the dissertation, essay, thesis, article, or publication is handed in, the author can regain a form of inner peace. He has just escaped the worst: losing face in light of his narcissism, the reflection of which he can see in the eyes of others. This is where the projective activity of these subjects can be detected. How others see them is simply a projection of how they see themselves. This 'seeing' is distorted by the intransigence of their narcissism. Simultaneously, a feeling of exaltation fleetingly sets in: they have not been caught, and they have submitted their work. And yet, whenever a new request is made (and one surely will, since they are common in the academic world, with its evaluation requirements, as Bergadaà judiciously noted), the same feeling of dread will reappear. The same disease calls for the same remedy, which will again provide relief. If left unpunished, the feeling of omnipotence will, once again, pay tribute to narcissism. And so on and so forth in a never-ending spiral

[459] Bergadaà, *Le plagiat académique.*

that did not go unnoticed by Bergadaà, who mentions her subjects' apparent addiction to their acts of delinquency, heightened by the relative impunity surrounding this particular delinquent activity, which will pull the plagiarist deeper into the zone of self-reinforcement.

Plagiarizing then seems to become a way of experiencing one's relationship to the world (the academic world among others). A double life begins: a social surface where the delinquent can enjoy her omnipotence, and a dark side where she disguises her plagiarism. The more she cheats, the less respect she has for herself and the more plagiarism becomes a way for her to attempt to restore what that very action has cost her. Plagiarism creates a reassurance that is somewhat less than the damage she has inflicted on her self-esteem. This is the possible starting point of a downward spiral that, in the case of some sex offenders, leads them to more and more serious acts until they get arrested or worse: commit rape or murder. The same phenomenon seems to exist for manipulator plagiarists, who keep increasing the scope of their plagiarism. The more they plagiarize, the more their self-esteem declines and the more they attempt to expand their social surface. That is how, for some of them, a kind of rush toward the abyss often begins.

For once the plagiarism has been committed, as with the sex offender, the crime is 'forgotten', at least until the next temptation, when the demon of narcissism comes back to haunt them. These subjects thus present a more or less temporary form of denial of their psychic reality, which is reflected in the denial of their delinquent reality. Admitting their crime would mean admitting the existence of an internal wound that the crime, in its own aberrant way, seeks to relieve. Therefore, denying a part of oneself, the part that is in pain, disables the ability to recognize someone else's suffering caused by the delinquent act that was meant to ease this internal pain. This explains these subjects' lack of empathy for their victims.

6. Can plagiarism be unconscious?

It seems possible that, over the course of a researcher's career, their reading notes may blend into a personal reflection, feeding it and helping it grow, but can we really claim that plagiarism may be unconscious, as some researchers claim? In Lagueux's article on the plagiarism committed by a professor at the Sorbonne, he wrote, 'there is nothing dishonest about the practice that is denounced here; it is completely innocent because completely unconscious'.[460] How many times have I heard sex offenders say things like 'Really? I didn't know it was forbidden!' (a case of incest), or 'I swear it totally slipped my mind. I don't even remember doing it.' (sexual touching of a minor).

In this regard as well, the parallel with sex offenders can be enlightening. The argument of unconsciousness, of not knowing societal or even supernatural rules, is deplorably common. For example, the consumers or viewers of child pornography on the Internet often give the same type of justification at first. However, long-term therapeutic follow-up shows that, after therapeutic work that creates internal reassurance, an acknowledgement arises, and they can say that, in fact, they knew that it was forbidden or, in more discreetly, that it should not be done. This means that no sex offender, whatever he might claim at the time of his arrest or at the start of therapeutic treatment, is unaware of his deviation from societal rules. They all know that they have broken if not the law, at least a rule.[461]

Certainly, Freudian slips can occur, and plagiarism committed 'in good faith' must surely exist as well in a form of cryptomnesiac

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[460] M. Lagueux, 'Un défi pour la pédagogie universitaire: Le plagiat inconscient', *Pédagogiques, revue de pédagogie de l'enseignement supérieur*, 4(1) (1983), 97-103.

[461] Here, one should not include offenders with developmental disabilities, even though many do have access to a form of minimal understanding of what is forbidden.

memory—let us not question this—but, as with sexual aggressions, let us not be seduced by complicity in the attraction of denial. Even Lagueux, when writing about 'unconscious plagiarism', concluded that the plagiarist is 'the victim of a disease of our culture'. From that moment on, in his view, plagiarism becomes an ill that is inherent in university life. The manipulator plagiarist, in this case, is infected by 'vanity', which brings us back to the idea of self-destroying narcissism. Can one be vain without being aware of it? This is why this author leaves the reader with a beautiful example of Freudian slip in the final sentence of his article: 'plagiarism […] places the intoxicating illusion of thinking within everyone's reach'. Can one get intoxicated unconsciously? Is it the alcoholic who creates the intoxication or the wine that he has drunk? *In coda venenum!*

7. A breakdown in transmission

Bergadaà explains that plagiarism constitutes a crucial violation of the ethics of research, in that it creates a kind of breach in the transmission of knowledge. By the illegal appropriation of ideas, concepts, and methods, plagiarism provokes a deviation in the trajectories of the construction of knowledge inasmuch as any 'piece of knowledge' is a historical product that has a conceptual relation that is directly linked to the personal story of the person who implements it. Although it is often said that ideas do not belong to anyone, the same ideas do not appear suddenly *ex nihilo*; they are woven into the development of a thought—a thought that gives perspective to the idea, which will then allow the latter to be projected into its future development. In terms of knowledge, the past is indebted to the future. Plagiarism destroys this potential: it clips the wings of the future idea, keeping only the plumage, which will inevitably fade over time.

The great majority of plagiarized ideas will unavoidably wither, separated as they are from their vital roots, and the same applies to

sexual violence. It alters transmission, even if in itself it is already an alteration in intergenerational transmission.[462] When a pedophile harms a child, society witnesses the murder of a future life. The transmission of human values is often eternally sullied; the growth of the child is disrupted forever. There is a reason why rape is a crime that warriors of all eras have used to destroy the transmission of identities, colonizing their future from the inside. Behind these practices, we can perceive humiliation of the victims, who see themselves dispossessed of part of their identity. If we are all concerned by the future of our knowledge society, how can we say that the plagiarist is less harmful—when it comes to identities—than the rapist, less destructive to the transmissions of the future than the pedophile?

8. A provisional conclusion: is plagiarism an identity patchwork?

As we reach the end of these reflections, it appears that plagiarism is a pathological act that—like other pathological acts—reveals a person who has a malady of narcissism. The sex offender presents a story constructed from traumatizing first relationships, whose main characteristics—as I have outlined here—have altered the construction of a unified Ego. Their personality, to take an image from Michel de M'Uzan, is built on a model of patchwork, which allows us to understand the split more as the effect of an original non-unification than as a secondarily built defense.[463] It would not be incorrect to think that this is true of plagiarists as well—and not only manipulator plagiarists—but to a lesser degree. There is no plagiarism without a violation of narcissism. Thus, plagiarism signals an identity patchwork,

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[462] Ciavaldini, 'L'agir violent sexuel'.

[463] M. de M'Uzan, *La bouche de l'inconscient: Essais sur l'interprétation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).; Ciavaldini, 'L'agir violent sexuel'.

just like the personality of the plagiarist who, subconsciously, exposes his *disorder*, his unease, his pain to the world while hiding it. The plagiarist's fight—like the sex offender's—is a never-ending struggle to save himself from the wreckage of his narcissism. A silent scream. We now understand that institutional silence is the worst possible response: it is a kind of failure to assist a person in danger.[464]

Unable as I am to fully develop these remarks, which will seem terse to some readers, I have to say that our identities nowadays are more and more pulverized, atomized, as the notion of the self progressively gives way to the individual or, worse yet, the consumer. Our identities are watched permanently, in multiple ways, by communication tools and evaluation systems that have the power to assess their worth, particularly in the academic system. We are witnessing a plundering of our private lives, displayed for all the world to see on social media. We cannot live if we are not under the eyes of our peers, eyes that constitute a permanent and brutal rating system that leads us to *be* only what other people *see.* Is plagiarism not the response to this general pillaging of our private life, an aberrant way to back up our identities? Plagiarism would then be a constantly unsuccessful attempt at an identity transplant. But this idea opens up a real societal debate!

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[464] This failure is punishable by law in France, but not in most English-speaking countries, where there is no general legal duty to rescue (or render assistance to) a person whose life or safety is endangered.

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