

Oedipus Complex and Spiritual Intelligence: Are Men Less Spiritual than Women? Part I¹

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Abstract: This article is part one of two. Its subject matter arose out of reading and research during the Covid-19 pandemic which had a threefold impact on the psychological, social, and spiritual lives of men and women under lockdown conditions. Studies show that men were likely to be more adversely impacted than women on all three accounts. This led this researcher to ask whether men were less spiritually intelligent or adept than women. I initially the research targeted colleagues and their students at tertiary institutions but after a slow uptake, it was extended to friends on Facebook and social media. Using a mixture of purposive sampling and random sampling from social media, the research set out to corroborate or contradict the view that men were less religious or spiritual than women by asking two questions: “Do you agree with the hypothesis that men are less religious or spiritual or that they have less spiritual intelligence than women? What in your own view constitutes spiritual intelligence?” The question in the sub-title, meant existentially or phenomenologically, is deliberately framed in binary terms to elicit debate. This work explains the putative lack of spiritual intelligence in men using Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus complex through an illustration from the Afikpo village-group of Nigeria. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with psychosocial-spiritual dynamics and their relationship to *Homo sapiens*’ or even *Homo religiosus*’ existential being-in-the-world leading to self-transcendence. Part I deals with the theoretical issues underpinning and arising out of my research on spiritual intelligence while Part II deals with the results of the research and the ensuing discussion.

Key Words: *Religare*; spiritual; intelligence; capital; power; Oedipus, Electra

I. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1. *Spiritual Intelligence*

According to Richard Griffiths, “Spiritual intelligence is a higher dimension of intelligence that activates the qualities and capabilities of the authentic self (or the soul), in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity, and peace. Spiritual intelligence results in a sense of deeper meaning and purpose, combined with improvements in a wide range of important life skills and work skills” (Griffiths 2021 internet source).

2. *Spiritual Capital*

Spiritual Capital, either individual or collective, refers to a clear and transcendent value system, a personal vision, an ethos, and motivation to transcend limitations and accountability to higher standards and fundamental purposes. The concept has been linked to improved personal,

interpersonal and leadership skills and ethical comportment. Some of its organisational benefits include increased levels of economic performance, longevity, and sustainability.

3. *Oedipus Complex*

In Freudian theory, Oedipus complex refers to a set of emotions aroused in a young child, typically around the age of four, by an unconscious sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex and wish to exclude the parent of the same sex.

4. *Oedipus Rex*

Oedipus Rex, is Greek play by Sophocles, performed sometime between 430 and 426 BCE. It marks the summit of classical Greek drama’s formal achievement, known for its tight construction, mounting tension, and perfect use of the dramatic devices of recognition and discovery. It examines the story of Oedipus, who, in attempting to flee from his fate, rushes headlong to meet it by killing his own father and marrying his mother.

5. *Electra Complex*

The Electra complex is a term used to describe the female version of the Oedipus complex. It involves a girl, aged between three and six, becoming subconsciously sexually attached to her father and increasingly hostile toward her mother. Carl Gustav Jung developed the theory in 1913.

II. OEDIPUS COMPLEX AND SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: ARE MEN LESS SPIRITUAL THAN WOMEN? PART I

1. *Introduction and Research Background*

This researcher first became aware of the curious phenomenon of men appearing to be less interested in religion than women, when as an eleven-year-old boy, his mother dragged him along to the baptism of his three-month-old brother in 1968. There were about thirty women at the quintessentially Catholic ritual presided over by an African male Catholic priest ordained just after the end of the Second Vatican Council. There were no other men among the participants and as a precocious eleven-year-old, he was simply a curious bystander who just happened to have served at Mass as an altar boy that Saturday morning. This phenomenon of men putatively being less religious or spiritual than women, has since occupied his academic curiosity ever since.

In stating this view, there is a deliberate exaggeration for poetic license as well as to provoke debate. Some men are clearly more spiritually intelligent than women but not the majority for whom religion is but a power trip. One thinks of spiritually intelligent men or men with high SQs such as Jesus Christ, St Francis of Assisi, Gautama Buddha, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Thomas Merton as demographic exceptions and an endangered species, despite the plethora of men saints, especially in the Catholic Church. For the majority less worthy of hagiographic canonisation, the main reason for spirituality or religion is patriarchal exercise of the aphrodisiac better known as power, especially of the trousered ape variety. In this spiritually unintelligent galaxy, one thinks of leaders like Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom, Vladimir Putin of Russia, Donald Trump of the United States of America, Viktor Mihály Orbán of Hungary, Rodrigo Roa Duterte of the Philippines, Edgar Chagwa Lungu of Zambia, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Jacob Zuma of South Africa and the proverbial icing on the cake, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus. Readers might want to add their own preferred anti-hero.

This article examines Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex and tries to see whether it can shade light on the religious conundrum of spiritual intelligence or its lack thereof in men. Here-in lies the two-part article's originality. This article argues that men are likely to be less spiritually or religiously intelligent than women. Admittedly, this is controversial and may well feed into the war of the sexes. From an empirical perspective, with the corroboration by the Pew Research Center's 121-page Report "The gender gap in religion around the world" and the Polish study, "Religion and faith perception in a Pandemic of COVID-19" (Kowalczyk *et al* 2020), a hermeneutic of suspicion is on *terra firma*. The Pew Research Center report found that women were generally — but not essentially or universally — more religious than men in several ways, particularly among Christians,² to which the sceptic reader might say, "So what if men are less religious or spiritual than women?" Part II answers this objection.

This research is not meant to apportion blame or to weigh in on which gender of *Homo sapiens* is better. What this article brings to the debate are the reasons given by my mainly African respondents for the presence or lack of spiritual intelligence discussed in Part II and the Freudian Oedipus complex perspective as search for power as domination broached in Part I.

2. Aim

This work examines the curious phenomenon of men appearing to be less interested in religion or spirituality which masks the widespread phenomenon why men are less religiously or spiritually inclined or intelligent than women. The author examines this through the lens of the Freudian Oedipus complex. He proposes, like Sigmund Freud that it is due to "father hunger" but not in the Freudian sexualised sense but of a power drive in men to dethrone their father. Although this research is not essentially tied to the Covid-19

pandemic, it was triggered by it. Earlier reading around religion and the pandemic indicated that men were likely to be more adversely affected than women (Kowalczyk *et al* 2020). As Alan White pointed out, "This pandemic has hit at the core of most people's existence, creating for many an existential threat to their identity and their place in the world. Classic depictions of masculinity include notions of control, independence, power over others, pride, inner strength, competitiveness, success and self-control, with a recognition of its dynamic nature, affected by personal, contextual and cultural factors, but all of which [were] impacted upon by the pandemic" (White 2020: 19). In this sense, the Covid-19 pandemic struck at the heart of spiritual intelligence.

This article shows that there is a close connection between sexuality and power, illustrated not only by the Covid-19 pandemic but also by initiation ceremonies for boys studied by Simon Ottenberg, Professor emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Washington, among the Afikpo village-group, one of about two hundred village-groups of the ten million or so Igbo people in South-Eastern Nigeria.

In each initiation form there is the symbolic death and rebirth of the initiand. Shortly after entering the bush the boy goes to meet a shrine and a sacred fire, both representing the spirit of the society. In two of the three initiation forms he does so by entering structures which symbolically resemble a vagina and/or a uterus. There is the idea of sexual penetration as well as rebirth through exiting from the shrine area. Yet the shrine spirit is said to be male, to represent male power and control over females (Ottenberg 1988: 334).

In trying to resolve their Oedipus complex, men subconsciously hate the father-figure and want to dethrone him by killing him so that they can marry their mother and commit incest, metaphorically speaking, of course, as a way of exercising power. Sigmund Freud meant the incest literally. This works understands Oedipus complex metaphorically as a hunger for power. This may well explain psychopathic leadership in people like Donald Trump of the United States of America, Rodrigo Roa Duterte of the Philippines or Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. Many commentators on Oedipus complex or even Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, often miss this: how power is obtained by men and how it is exercised, and it is this theme that connects the hypothesis of this article to Oedipus complex and religion. Applying *Oedipus Rex* to political power for instance, Charles McNulty has the following to say, words pertinent to Oedipus complex and its nexus to religion, especially as exercised by patriarchal leadership.

The title "*Oedipus Tyrannos*" is often preferred by translators to "Oedipus the King" or "*Oedipus Rex*," as the Greek word calls attention to the way power was obtained through achievement rather than heredity. It also retains for us the sense of "tyrant,"

an ever-present danger when a ruler convinces himself that his authority is unimpeachable.³

This research does not seek to compare male and female spiritualities or lack thereof *in se* but assumes such differences. It relies on others who have done just that, such as Alyssa Bryant (2007). She used a national and longitudinal sample of about four thousand college male and female students. She surveyed and examined gender differences in religiosity using thirteen spiritual characteristics or metrics and explored the personal and educational trajectories associated with changes in spirituality during college years. The results showed marked gender differences in spiritual qualities, and gendered patterns of spiritual development (Bryant 2007: 835–846). What this research seeks is a corroboration or contradiction of whether women are likely to be more spiritual than men by any psycho-social-spiritual metrics such as assumed in Frances Vaughan's (2002), Alyssa Bryant's (2007) definitions of Spirituality and the Pew Research Center Report (2016).

3. What's the Problem?

As the Apostles keep asking in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the reader may be tempted to ask apropos this research, "What's the buzz? Tell me what's-a-happening?" But as Jesus responds, "Why should you want to know? Don't you mind about the future? Don't you try to think ahead?" Just as the Jesus experience was an enigma, so is spiritual intelligence. At least the difference in its appropriation between men and women. If it can be ascertained, and many studies such as the 2016 Pew Research Center Report have, that men have less interest in religious or spiritual matters (due to their lack of spiritual intelligence, I add), then we have a problem. That's the buzz, I referred to earlier. It then stands to reason that many of our problems in society, such as poverty, climate change, violence, patriarchy, inequality between men and women and dictatorship, are unlikely to be resolved without addressing spiritual intelligence in men. Women will continue to carry an unfair burden of passing on the "spiritual gene" or spiritual intelligence or "God gene" to future generations. Danah Zohar goes so far as to claim that collaborative action in any enterprise is a spiritual exercise and goes on to quote St Benedict's famous aphorism, "*Orare est laborare*" [to pray is to work], probably originally phrased as "*Orare et laborare*" [pray and work], not too dissimilar from נאמני תורה ועבודה [*Ne'emanei Torah Va'Avodah*], an Israeli non-profit organisation focusing on education research and policy in the Religious Zionist community.

This writer has addressed the problem of spiritual intelligence in men or lack thereof, albeit tangentially in a Conference Paper, "The End of the World and Science-led Religious Pedagogies: Coronavirus as a Curtain-Raiser for Doomsday" in which the argument that "Science-led Religious Studies pedagogies should assure us that the planet's demise is literally billions of years away, notwithstanding the ravages of global warming and climate change." Further, "Our task is to

work out how religion can help us to limit further damage, not to return to business as usual but to come to a new normal with a quadruple set of relationships with self, others, the cosmos and the supernatural. In short, a new spiritual compass, alert to our better selves as *Homo sapiens*" (forthcoming). This is not possible if men are not contributing their fair share of passing on the "spiritual gene" or spiritual intelligence. The concepts of "Spiritual gene" or "God gene" are mentioned without imputing any scientific valence to them, although Molecular biologist Dean Hamer would claim to do so in his book *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into our Genes* (Hamer 2004). As the title of his book indicates, Dean Hamer argues that Spirituality "is, at least in part, hardwired into our genes" and that it "is one of our basic human inheritances. It is, in fact, an instinct" (Hamer 2004: 6). Lest we misunderstand his use of instinct, used in the same breath as spirituality, he provides the following caveat:

I do not contend that spirituality is a simple instinct like blinking or nursing. But I do argue that it is a complex amalgamation in which certain genetically hardwired, biological patterns of response and states of consciousness are interwoven with social, cultural, and historical threads. It is this interdigitation of biology and experience that makes spirituality such a durable part of the fabric of life — a rich tapestry in which nature is the warp and nurture is the woof (Hamer 2004: 7).

This writer agrees in part with some male respondents in this research reported in Part II of this article who disagree that men are less religious or spiritual than women pointing out that men and women are equally endowed spiritually by nature. This writer is of the view that it is the nurture "algorithm" that literally separates the women from the men. One or two male respondents go the proverbial extra mile and argue that it is the men who are the custodians of spiritual intelligence without whom the women would be bereft. This researcher argues that the reverse is true. Without the females in our lives, men are but trousered apes (cf. Williams 1973), violent and neurotic anti-heroes of our cultures, of whom there are still many, even in high office in both religion and politics.

4. Hypothesis and Self-Location in the Research

The research around which this article is based, hypothesizes, on anecdotal evidence and observation that in any group or community of men and women, especially Christian ones, men are likely to be less religious or spiritual than their female counterparts. If they are religious, it is largely for power as domination not power as service. This research did not set out to prove the lack of spiritual intelligence in men but to corroborate or contradict it in a sample of one hundred men and women who are either academics or students of theology or have some theological literacy in their training or profession. In the end, only fifty-six respondents obliged.

This writer locates himself in the research as a sixty-four-year-old male academic who is aware that his gender and African ethnicity may well be factors in terms of bias, but he is also aware that as an objective researcher proud of his matrilineal heritage, he has endeavoured to take cognizance of male-gendered blind spots. Recently, this writer had a close encounter with his hypothesis. His wife's niece unexpectedly landed on their doorstep with the news that she was pregnant outside wedlock. The female members of the household rallied around her, with their default empathic spiritual value immediately kicking in. They wanted to know how she was feeling and how they could help. Two of them knew what it was like to be pregnant and to give birth after all one of them was the biological mother. As the only male member of the household, with no experience of parturition, this researcher immediately began thinking about the economic bottom line of another mouth and a half to feed, the anticipated hospital bills and hidden costs to cover cravings and many *ante partum*, *in partu* and *post-partum* mammalian needs. His state as a male having less spiritual intelligence than women as his default position was mitigated only by the response of the pregnant girl's biological father who demanded an apology from his daughter for running away from his patriarchal home. The girl in question was no early nubile virgin and all this was taking place in the context of the young lady's fiancé who had already paid a substantial down payment on the *lobola* (dowry or bride price).

The typically patriarchal father mentioned above immediately pontificated that this had now changed the matrimonial and nuptial algorithms. The fiancé needed to be summoned forthwith to be slapped with a new charge of breaking her fiancée's virginal hymen in spite of the fact that both boy and girl were well beyond the age of consent, effectively making the unborn child a crime. Knowing the patriarchal Neanderthal-father in question, this researcher was also sure that whatever pecuniary compensation was being demanded was not directed towards the welfare of the pregnant subject. As far as he was concerned, being the Sower of the all-important seed in his ex-wife's uterus warranted compensation. This was the only way he knew how to exercise power arising out of his failed resolution of the Oedipus complex. The biological father is now demanding that her pregnant daughter be kicked out of her current accommodation where she is seeking refuge to the family of the fiancé because that is what his pre-modern culture demands.

As to what accounts for the difference in spiritual intelligence in men and women, "*quot homines tot sententiae*" [There are as many opinions as there are people]. Opinions range from the categorical nature [intrinsic] to the nurture [extrinsic] categories. As Francis Chanda responded, "Women, evidently are more religious than men, reasons being another interesting discussion" (Email, 19 August 2021). Asked by Caryle Murphy to respond to the 2016 Pew Research Center Report, what in his personal view were the most plausible explanations for the differences in religious commitment

between men and women, David Voas, Professor and Head of the Department of Social Science at University College, London responded with typical academic nuance. In part II using the text of Gen 2.18, this writer is more categorical than his University College fellow academic does here:

Personally, I'm tempted to give the classic academic response that more research is needed. At the risk of seeming wishy-washy, I suspect that nature and nurture both play a part. Boys and girls are socialized differently and men and women are still channelled into different roles. When we look at the psychology of individual differences, though, particularly in personality, it's not easy to attribute gender gaps in their entirety to social forces.⁴

5. *Significance of the Research*

The so-what or significance of this research, initially questioned by one of the respondents, Michael McGuirk, mentioned in Part II of this article, is corroborated by the Pew Research Center Report (2016), citing statistics from the United States of America, worth quoting at length.

Standard lists of history's most influential religious leaders — among them Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) — tend to be predominantly, if not exclusively, male. Many religious groups, including Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews, allow only men to be clergy, while others, including some denominations in the evangelical Protestant tradition, have lifted that restriction only in recent decades. Yet it often appears that the ranks of the faithful are dominated by women. In the United States, for example, women are more likely than men to say religion is "very important" in their lives (60% vs. 47%), according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey. American women also are more likely than American men to say they pray daily (64% vs. 47%) and attend religious services at least once a week (40% vs. 32%). According to media accounts, women so outnumber men in the pews of many U.S. Churches that some clergy have changed decor, music and worship styles to try to bring more men into their congregations (Pew Research Center 2016: 5).

If these findings and those that are discussed in Part II portend any significance regarding men's likely lack of spiritual intelligence, it lies in how these findings impact on the rest of life in terms of the "quadruple set of relationships with self, others, the cosmos and the supernatural" mentioned above and in Part II and discussed tangentially in a recent Conference paper already mentioned above.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, the research employed purposive sampling to garner opinion on two research questions. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective

sampling, a form of non-probability sampling was used in order not to rely on researcher judgment to choose members of the population to participate in the survey for what they could bring to the survey. This was mixed with random sampling from the researcher's Facebook and social media friends. This research was not testing whether men were less spiritual or religious than women. To put it simply, it was trying to find out whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the hypothesis, especially in the reasons adduced. For this reason, the researcher avoided the usual framing of research hypothesis in terms of Null Hypothesis [H_0] or nullifiable hypothesis⁵ and T-Test common in Social Science research. The research was interested in finding out whether respondents would agree or disagree with the hypothesis by their own understanding of spiritual intelligence and in particular the reasons they gave.

The choice of purposive sampling aimed at accessing a particular demographic subset, mainly colleagues in tertiary institutions with a modicum of theological literacy and students in training for the Catholic priesthood. All participants of the survey were selected because they fitted this demographic profile but due to the slow uptake in this demographic, the research turned to random sampling on social media. The initial target was 100 respondents but 56 was the final sample. They answered the following two questions:

- i. Do you agree with the hypothesis that men are less religious or spiritual or that they have less spiritual intelligence than women?
- ii. What in your own opinion constitutes spiritual intelligence?

Respondents were asked to address the above two questions and had the option to have their views ascribed or to submit their responses anonymously.

1. What's Oedipus Complex got to do with Spiritual Intelligence?

Once the title had been framed and by semantic association, the immediate question was, "What's Oedipus Complex got to do with Spiritual Intelligence?" Tina Turner's lyrics raced to mind, "What's love got to do, got to do with it? What's love but a second-hand emotion? What's love got to do, got to do with it? Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?" Readers may well ask what Oedipus complex has got to do with spiritual intelligence.

The Oedipus complex is a controversial and complex theory in psychoanalytic theory. It's relationship to Oedipus complex may not be immediately evident. This work argues that there is a nexus and which the research illustrates in the example of the Afikpo village-group below. Sigmund Freud first introduced the concept of Oedipus complex in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and coined the expression in his *A Special Type of Choice of Object made by Men* (1910). Oedipus complex refers to a child's [originally a boy's]

unconscious sexual desire for the opposite-sex parent and hatred for the same-sex parent. Sigmund Freud considered that the child's positive identification with the same-sex parent led to the successful outcome of the complex and that unsuccessful outcome of the complex led to neurosis. Part of the argument of this article is that both identification and non-identification with the father lead to spiritual non-intelligence in men by eliding the mother.

Sigmund Freud rejected the term "Electra complex" which was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung in his work, *Theory of Psychoanalysis* (Jung 1913) in regard to the Oedipus complex manifested in young girls. Sigmund Freud further proposed that the Oedipus complex, which originally refers to the sexual desire of a son for his mother, is a desire for the parent in both males and females, and that boys and girls experience the complex differently: boys in the form of castration anxiety, girls in the form of penis envy.

The focus of this research uses the Oedipus complex as defined by Sigmund Freud as a point of departure, but it goes beyond Sigmund Freud by interpreting the Oedipus complex in men as a search for power in which the male child dethrones his father. Although Simon Ottenberg does not state it in so many words, his research renders itself amenable to the view that the Oedipus complex in boys is a search for power and domination, especially over females as illustrated in this article in the case of the Afikpo village-group of South-Eastern Nigeria.⁶

2. Oedipus Complex, Men and Power: The Case of the Afikpo Village-Group

We have already met the Afikpo village-group of South-Eastern Nigeria above. We cite them here for the light they throw on the lack of spiritual intelligence among men which we have hypothesized and corroborated from other studies. Ehugbo, often referred to as Afikpo, is the second largest urban area in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It is the headquarters of the Afikpo North Local Government Area. According to the Nigerian 2006 Census, the population of Afikpo was estimated at nearly 160,000. Several archaeological findings support the claim that Afikpo civilisation existed as far back as the Neolithic age. There is a rite of passage, which is pertinent to our current discussion on Oedipus complex, for every male child from Afikpo which entails initiation into the Ogo cult and is shrouded in secrecy and mystery. Women are not privy to the workings of the cult, thus conferring power over females to the male child.

The first thing Simon Ottenberg points out about the Afikpo village-group is that "There are strong sex role divisions" and that "Economic and political power reside primarily in the hands of men" (Ottenberg 1988: 328). Polygyny is common as is to be expected and as Simon Ottenberg points out, this helps to limit "intimate bonds between the husband and each wife. This separation is accentuated by the presence of a men's secret society noted above in each village, to which all adult males belong, which excludes females from some events

and allows them only to be onlookers at others. Afikpo men view this separation as a primary goal of the secret society. Males believe that the secret society (there is none for females) is capable of controlling female behaviour and assisting in female fertility” (Ottenberg 1988: 328–329).

Simon Ottenberg links the experience of initiation by the Afikpo male to the Oedipus complex by noting that “The close mother-boy tie during the nursing period followed by the entry of the father into the relationships at weaning creates a wish in the child to retain his intimate mother-tie, and hostility toward the father, who is partially replacing him” (Ottenberg 1988: 335). Simon Ottenberg believes that “these Afikpo infancy conditions establish a strong Oedipus complex, one which Afikpo adults strive to resolve in order to produce warrior men” (Ottenberg 1988: 336). Simon Ottenberg also links the Oedipus complex among the Afikpo to gender differentiation as is to be expected and concludes that “the gender question lingers on and is not so readily resolved” (Ottenberg 1988: 342). The Oedipus complex among the Afikpo is closely related to future patriarchal roles for both the father and the initiand and therefore successful hosting of the son’s initiation ceremony, particularly the first-born son, earns the father the requisite power kudos so necessary in such hierarchical and patriarchal societies. In like manner, successful or unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipus complex in men contribute massively to their search for power as domination at the expense of power as service and is the point of my citing the case of the Afikpo village-group.

3. Sigmund Freud on Religion and the Oedipus Complex

So how did Sigmund Freud view religion? In some of his best-known writings, he suggests that religion is an “illusion,” a form of neurosis, and even an attempt to gain control over the external world. In *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), Sigmund Freud suggests that “religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from its readiness to fit in with our instinctual wishful impulses” (Freud 1933: 56). In *The Future of an Illusion* (1928), he opines that “religion is comparable to a childhood neurosis” (cited in Coles 1981: 383). In similar vein, in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* he suggested that “Religion is an attempt to master the sensory world in which we are situated by means of the wishful world which we have developed within us as a result of biological and psychological necessities” (Freud 1933: 168).

Sigmund Freud’s well-known attitude to Religion is that it was an expression of underlying psychological neuroses and distress.⁷ At various points in his writings, he suggested that religion was an attempt to control the *Oedipus complex* (as opposed to the *Electra complex*), a means of giving structure to social groups such as that of the Afikpo village-group used as an example. In *Totem and Taboo*, Sigmund Freud pointed out the conflictual nature of the Oedipus Complex.

Let us assume it to be a fact, then, that in the course of the later development of religions the two driving

factors, the son’s sense of guilt and the son’s rebelliousness, never became extinct. Whatever attempt was made at solving the religious problem, whatever kind of reconciliation was effected between these two opposing mental forces, sooner or later broke down, under the combined influence, no doubt, of historical events, cultural changes and internal psychological modifications (Freud 2009 [1918]: 152).

For Sigmund Freud, religion was a wish fulfilment and an infantile delusion, as well as an attempt to control the outside world. On this latter point, I am in total agreement with Sigmund Freud as Simon Ottenberg showed in his study of the Afikpo village-group (Ottenberg 1988). This Freudian theory is best understood in the light of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, as indeed Sigmund Freud himself did. In most religions, God is a male figure and men are his anointed viceroys, except perhaps in Pentecostal varieties where female spouses sometimes inherit leadership from their husbands as if spiritual leadership were transmissible via the euphemistically named “onward Christian soldiers” marching as to war.

While fascinated by religion and spirituality, Sigmund Freud was largely critical. He critiqued religion for being unwelcoming, harsh, and unloving toward those who are not members of a specific religious group. From *The Future of an Illusion*, he wrote that “Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilisation. On the contrary! Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect” (Freud 1928: 72–73).

Some of his most critical comments on religion can be found in his text *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) where he describes religion in the following vein. “The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life.”⁸

4. Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*

Set in the Greek classical period in the fifth century BCE, *Oedipus Rex* is an examination of power. In it, the gods unleash a plague on Thebes. As the priest says to Oedipus, “The god of plague and pyre raids like detestable lightning through the city” (Prologue, lines 30–31). After badgering the old prophet Teiresias, Oedipus is told, “I say that you are the murderer whom you seek” (Scene 1, line 143). Oedipus, the incumbent king, was the murderer of King Laius, his father who had abandoned him at birth for being defective. The Greek word Oedipus means “clubbed foot.” Now married to the widowed queen Jocasta after having solved the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus searches for the murderer only to find

that it was he, not only the murderer of his own father but also the incestuous husband of his mother. As the chorus sings in *Oedipus Rex*, “The Delphic stone of prophecies remembers regicide” (Ode 1, line 1–2). In fact, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), in which Sigmund Freud first published his formulation of what would later be known as the Oedipus complex, he referred to the Greek myth of Oedipus as confirmation of the profound and universal power of the incest-patricide fantasy. Though it was not until his *Contribution to the Psychology of Love* in 1910 that Sigmund Freud first used the term, “Oedipus complex,” and not until a 1920 footnote added to the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905 that he gave his first synopsis of the complex. From 1897 onward the discovered fantasy was already destined to be linked to the tragedy bearing the name of “Oedipus complex.”

Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* opens with the Prologue in which the Priest of Apollo asks King Oedipus of Thebes to help end the plague that is ravaging the city, “Noblest of men, restore life to your city” (Prologue, lines 48–49). In response, the strongman-type Oedipus informs the Thebans that he had already sent his brother-in-law, Kreon, to consult with the oracle of Apollo at Delphi on the matter, “I have sent Kreon, son of Menoikeus, brother of the queen, to Delphi, Apollo’s place of revelation, to learn there, if he can, what act or pledge of mine may save the city” (Prologue, lines 71–75). As they were deliberating, Kreon returns with the message that in order for the plague to end, the murderer of Laius, the previous king of Thebes, must be brought to justice, “By exile or death, blood for blood. It was murder that brought the plague-wind on the city” (Prologue, lines 104–105).

According to the oracle, the murderer was still residing in the city. Oedipus, who arrived in Thebes after Laius’ death, asks Kreon for the details of the murder. Kreon explains that Laius was killed by thieves while on his way to consult an oracle. Oedipus vows to avenge the regicide and end the plague, “You shall see how I stand by you, as I should, avenging this country and the gods as well, and not as though it were for some distant friend, but for my sake, to be rid of evil” (Prologue, lines 137–140).

In order to find the murderer, Oedipus summons the blind prophet Teiresias. When Oedipus asks about the identity of the murderer, Teiresias is at first cryptic and reticent. “How dreadful knowledge of the truth can be when there’s no help in truth” (Scene 1, lines 101–102), he tells Oedipus. He laments that there is little point in knowing the truth when the truth will bring nothing but misery. However, when Oedipus insults Teiresias and accuses him of the murder, Teiresias angrily reveals that Oedipus himself killed Laius, “I say that you are the murderer whom you seek” (Scene 1, line 143). Oedipus assumes that Teiresias is in cahoots with Kreon in a conspiracy to dethrone him, and he angrily lambasts the blind prophet. He accuses Teiresias of being bereft of talent and boasts that he was the one who had saved the Thebans from the Sphinx. When Oedipus arrived, Thebes was held captive

by a female sphinx. In order to make her leave, Oedipus solved her riddle.⁹ After successfully liberating the city from the Sphinx, Oedipus was made king and married the queen who unbeknownst to them was the mother who had abandoned him in infancy. It is now Teiresias’ turn to rebuke Oedipus for not trusting in his skills as a prophet. He cryptically reveals that Oedipus’s parents trusted his talents. As Teiresias departs the scene, he delivers one parting shot: Oedipus is both the father and brother of his children, implying that he had married his mother, “To the children with whom he lives now he will be brother and father — the very same; to he who bore him, son and husband — the very same who came to his father’s bed, wet with his father’s blood” (Scene 1, lines 240–243).

After Teiresias leaves, Oedipus turns his anger on Kreon, whom he believes is conspiring to dethrone him. He orders Kreon to either leave Thebes or die. Their argument is interrupted by the arrival of Jocasta, Oedipus’s wife and Kreon’s sister. She scolds them for arguing when they have proverbial bigger fish fry. Kreon departs the scene, leaving Jocasta and Oedipus to discuss the matter as husband and wife. Jocasta chides Oedipus for baselessly accusing Kreon of treason and advises him not to put such trust in prophecies. As evidence, she cites Teiresias’s prophecy that her former husband, King Laius, would be killed by his own son. In response, Jocasta and Laius sent their child away to die on mount *Kithairon*. Laius was later killed by thieves on his way to consult the oracle at the Delphi.

When queen Jocasta narrates the murder of Laius, her husband the king, it startles Oedipus. He recalls his journey to Thebes, in which he participated in some skirmish akin to the murder that his wife now describes. Oedipus begins to fear that he may well be the villain who murdered Laius. He tells Jocasta to summon the only survivor from Laius’s entourage. When Jocasta questions Oedipus further, he explains the circumstances that brought him to Thebes to the effect that Oedipus was raised in Corinth by King Polybus and Queen Merope. One day, he eavesdropped on a royal conversation to the effect that he was not their biological son. To find out the truth of the matter for himself, Oedipus visited the oracle of Delphi, who did not confirm his parentage but instead foretold that Oedipus would murder his father and marry his mother. In order to circumvent the prophecy, Oedipus fled Corinth. On his way to Thebes, in the same location where Laius was murdered, he encountered a travelling party who threatened to run him off the road. In retaliation, Oedipus killed them all, save for one survivor, who got away. Oedipus is now troubled by the possible nexus between Laius’ murder and his own hitherto unexplained actions. Jocasta urges him to avoid reaching any hasty conclusions until he has had the chance to talk to the survivor.

Soon after Jocasta’s advice to wait for the only survivor, a messenger arrives from Corinth to inform Oedipus that King Polybus is dead. Oedipus and Jocasta take this news as further proof that prophecies are inaccurate, because Oedipus was

prophesied to be his father's murderer. However, the messenger then reveals that Polybus was not Oedipus' real father. Instead, the messenger, who was previously a shepherd, received the baby Oedipus from one of Laius' herdsmen. Oedipus asks Jocasta if she could identify the herdsman, but she begs Oedipus not to pursue this line of inquiry. Assuming that Jocasta is simply embarrassed to be married to someone of non-royal ancestry, Oedipus continues his inquiry and calls for the herdsman to be brought before him. Jocasta then departs, promising to be "silent evermore."

The herdsman then arrives and confirms that he gave the infant Oedipus to the messenger. However, upon being questioned about the infant's origins, he remains stubbornly silent. When Oedipus threatens to have him killed, the herdsman reluctantly admits that the infant was Laius' and Jocasta's son. Laius and Jocasta told the herdsman to kill the child, who was prophesied to murder his father and marry his mother. However, the herdsman took pity on the infant Oedipus and instead gave him to the messenger, believing that the child could do no harm if he was raised in another city.

Oedipus, realising that he had indeed murdered his father and married his mother, runs offstage in grief. A second messenger then enters the stage and reports on what has happened inside the palace. Jocasta, no longer able to stomach the incestuous truth, hanged herself. Oedipus, upon finding her dead, used the pins of her dress to blind himself. An inconsolable Oedipus then re-enters the stage and bemoans the tragedy of his life. When Kreon arrives, Oedipus asks to be exiled for his sins. He also asks Kreon to look after his young daughters, Antigone and Ismene. As Oedipus is led away, the Chorus laments his fate. Oedipus's story continues in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Perhaps a word about Oedipus' real father, King Laius, might help to explain the fate that befalls his son. King Laius of Thebes, was himself a man acquainted with violence. In a homosexual act, he is reported to have raped Chrysippus, son of his friend and master of the house, Pelops and abducted Chrysippus, crimes for which he, his family and Thebes were later punished by the ever-vengeful gods described in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. The abduction of Chrysippus is thought to be the subject of one of the lost tragedies of Euripides, called *Chrysippus*, whose plot covered the eponymous protagonist's death. It is this crime that best explains Apollo's oracle at Delphi that Laius' own son, Oedipus would kill him. With the connivance of his wife Jocasta, Laius is reported to have pierced the legs of his new-born baby Oedipus at the ankles with a golden hook, passed a chain through the holes and tied them together or to the ground, and then left Oedipus to die on Mount *Kithairon* until rescued by a shepherd.

So, how does the Oedipus complex factor into spiritual intelligence or lack thereof? Rather than Sigmund Freud's sexualised theory of Oedipus complex, this writer sees Oedipus complex as a search for raw power by men by dethroning their father. Due to the evolutionary development of patriarchy in most societies, men have appropriated the

Oedipus complex as a search and attainment of power which has its objective the subjugation of the other. Women, on the other hand, have appropriated the Oedipus complex or Electra complex as an exercise of power designed to serve their better selves, others, the cosmos and the deity or deities. For this reason, they are more likely to be more religiously or spiritually intelligent than their menfolk. Although Simon Ottenberg did not study this aspect of the Afikpo village-group, their appropriation of the Oedipus complex leads one to surmise that their lack of positive resolution of the Oedipus complex was likely to lead to lack of proper spiritual intelligence among the menfolk. In Part II of this article, we discuss the findings of this research and tease out their wider implications and of my hypothesis that men are likely to be less spiritually intelligent than women.

IV. CONCLUSION

This half-way conclusion serves to sum up the first part of a proposed two-part article. Part I offers a theoretical framework for the findings discussed in part II. Part I has defined the aim of the study as ascertaining whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the hypothesis that men were spiritually less intelligent than their womenfolk. This article also identified the research problem to the effect that if men were likely to be less spiritually intelligent than women, this would constitute a problem with intractable consequences with men continuing to lose out on spiritual capital. Methodologically, we asked respondents to weigh in on the hypothesis through purposive sampling and random sampling. The theoretical framework holds that Oedipus complex explains the putative lack of spiritual intelligence in men. As in Sigmund Freud, Oedipus complex is due to "father hunger" but not in the Freudian sexualised sense but of a power drive in men to dethrone their father. In trying to resolve their Oedipus complex, men subconsciously hate the father-figure and want to dethrone him by killing him so that they can copulate with their mother by committing incest, metaphorically speaking, as a way of exercising power.

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Endnotes

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⁹ The Sphynx is a mythological creature with a lion's body and a human head that had tormented Thebes by demanding an answer to her riddle, "What has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" When the respondent answered incorrectly, he or she was eaten. Oedipus, who had arrived as an outsider, gave the right answer, the Sphynx killed herself and Oedipus became king and married the queen. His answer was, "A man crawls on all-fours in infancy, walks on two feet when he is grown and leans on a staff in old age."