

**PSYCHO-LOGICS OF OEDIPUS/ELECTRA COMPLEX:
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP IMPLICATIONS AND THE
NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract

Oedipus/Electra complex has proven to be a cardinal source of tension in marriage relationship, hence creating hindrance to cordiality between siblings, parents and in-laws. This hindrance is premised on the fact that Oedipus/Electra complex implies some form of extremism that breeds contempt in families. While Oedipus complex implies a form of intimacy between mother and favorite son, Electra complex implies intimacy between the father and favorite daughter. As growing children, Oedipus/Electra complex causes jealousy among siblings, denies moral courage to correct children for proper training, excuses the fault of the favorite child, miscarriage of justice/partiality, affects the bond/intimacy between favored child's husband/wife. This paper aims at understanding, exposing, analyzing and providing the necessary prospects to family, marriage, or relationship challenges which extremism of Oedipus/Electra complex imposes. Similarly, this paper offers a thorough research on the implications of Oedipus/Electra complex in marriage especially from a Nigerian experience. Expository and analytic methods are adopted for this study. Thus, the method of exposition is to uncover the concepts of Oedipus/Electra complex and marriage situations in Nigeria while analytic method serves to offer philosophical analysis of Oedipus/Electra complex as well as drawing its implications in marriage experiences. The implication of this study shows that adequate understanding of the effects of Oedipus/Electra complex in marriage/family experience would offer prospects towards caution and mitigation of the extremism of Oedipus/Electra complex.

Keywords: Oedipus/Electra Complex, Marriage, Nigeria, Father, Mother, etc.

Oedipus Mythology

Oedipus is a popular figure in Greek mythology and he was the king of Thebes. His story is comparable to the story of Odewale in *The gods are not to Blame* by Ola Rotimi. Ola Rotimi describes the fate spelt out for Odewale by the gods; that “he would kill his father and marry his mother” and all efforts to avert this fate was abortive.¹ Thus, this abominable fate was fulfilled when Odewale killed king Adetusa his father and married queen Ojuola his mother. Similarly, Oedipus the king of Thebes had the same fate to kill his father and marry his mother. Unfortunately, yet inadvertently, Oedipus killed his father and married his mother.

Though there are several versions of the story about Oedipus, this paper is more interested on the message than the systematic variance in the story of Oedipus. Just like the story of Odewale; Laius, the king of Thebes and who was the father of Oedipus was warned by an oracle that his son would slay him. His mother was Jocasta though Homer referred her as Epicaste.² Laius was already told by the oracle of Delphi that the union with his wife ought not to bear children. Thus, that any child born of the union would certainly kill him. Upon the birth of Oedipus, he was exposed to die in order to prevent the oracle about him coming to fulfilment but he survived. King Laius advised his stewards to pierce the child's ankle that he may crawl and not be able to kill him, hence the name, Oedipus (swollen foot). This they did and he instructed one of his shepherds to abandon the child on the mountain of Cithaeron to die. Thanks to another shepherd who had pity on him and saved him. On request, Oedipus was adopted by another childless king (Polybus) of Corinth and his wife Merope, brought Oedipus up as their son.³

¹. Ola Rotimi, *The gods are not to Blame*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 24

². Ettore Cingano, “The Death of Oedipus in the Epic Tradition”, *Classical Association of Canada*, 46, no. 1 Spring, (1992): 1-11.

³. Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by S. Butcher and A. Lang, (New York: Modern Library Publishers, 1929), 14

Oedipus was told by a drunkard that king Polybus and Merope were not his parents. Following this revelation, Oedipus left for Delphi to consult with the oracle to confirm the real identity of his parents. On getting to Delphi, the oracle only told him that he would kill his father and marry his mother. This was horrific for Oedipus and he vowed not to return to Corinth in order to avoid such atrocity. At this point it was still unknown to Oedipus who was his real father.⁴ Very similar to the story of Odewale in *The gods are not to be Blamed*, Oedipus strayed away from home towards Thebes where he desired to begin a new life in order to leave the palace and territory of Polybus the king of Corinth. He walked down Thebes and fought several wars on the way. One of the wars was his meeting with Laius' charioteer and he killed both Laius and the charioteer following provocations between the charioteer and Oedipus.

After the encounter and victory over Laius with the charioteer where Oedipus inadvertently killed king Laius (his father though unknown to him), he continued his journey not knowing he had actualized the spelt destiny. On his way he encountered the riddle of the Sphinx. Sphinx plagued the land with her riddles and puzzles. Unfortunately, she killed whoever failed to resolve her riddles correctly. However, she promised to kill herself if anyone answered correctly. One of her riddles was 'what walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night?' No one had ever answered this correctly and Sphinx would always slay them for the failure, hence leading to the death of many persons. Oedipus thoughtfully and carefully solved the riddle. According to Oedipus, 'man crawls on all four legs as a baby, then on two legs as an adult and then three legs in the evening (walking stick at old age)'. All passers-by who failed the riddle were all slayed but Oedipus solved the riddle and Sphinx killed herself.

As a reward for such high rated riddle performance, Oedipus had to receive the throne of Thebes and he unwittingly had to take up the queen Jocasta who was his mother. The people mourned the death of their king with his charioteer but unknown to Oedipus was that the same king he

⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by S. Butcher and A. Lang, 48

killed was his father. Oedipus and Jocasta had four children; Eteocles, Polyneices, Antigone and Ismene. Unfortunately, when it was made known that Oedipus had married his mother, Jocasta committed suicide while Oedipus gouged his eyes with two pins and went into exile in the company of two of his sons; Antigone and Ismene. Subsequently, Oedipus died in Colonus which is a city in Athens.⁵

Psycho-Transposition from Oedipus Mythology to Oedipus Complex

Oedipus complex is a psychoanalytic theory introduced by the German psychologist, Sigmund Freud. In his paper, "A Special Type of Choice of Object made by Men",⁶ Freud coined the term, Oedipus complex to describe the emotional desires or what he called "sexual desires" of children at the third stage of psychosexual development which he referred as the phallic stage.

Personality development in Freud goes through a series of childhood stages in which pleasure-seeking energies center around the erogenous areas. By erogenous areas, Freud refers to the areas of the body that are particularly sensitive to stimulation. Thus, he developed the five psychosexual stages as; oral, anal, phallic, latent and the genital stages. The oral stage or hemitaxia is the first psychosexual development stage which lasts for about eighteenth months after birth. Here the child's mouth is the primary erogenous zone and mishandling of this stage leads to oral stage fixation or neurosis at adulthood.⁷ The anal stage lasts from the eighteenth month to the third year. The primary erogenous zone and pleasure at this stage is toilet training.⁸ The third stage is the phallic stage which is the stage when Oedipus complex manifests between the ages of

⁵. Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by S. Butcher and A. Lang, 123

⁶. Humberto Nagera, ed. "Oedipus Complex" in Humberto Nagera, *Basic Psychoanalytic Concepts in the Libido Theory*. (London: Karnac Books, 2012), 64

⁷. Dino Dellugo, "Modules on Freud: On Psychosexual Development" in *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. (Indiana: Purdue University College of Liberal Arts, 2016), 23

⁸. A. Cherry, *Anal State and Psychosexual Development*, (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 42.

three to six. The fourth stage (7-13 years) is the latent stage where the superego takes over helping the child to see that the earlier desires are not very realistic, hence the child begins to struggle with social norms and self-development. The last stage is the genitalia which is another but more conscious form of phallic stage.⁹

The third stage or the phallic stage where the erogenous zone is centered at the child's genitals is the major concern of this paper. This is from the ages of three to six. The child learns the physical difference between the male and female sexes and their associated or appropriated social roles. At this stage, the boy-child desires more emotional attachment with the mother and defends her against the father. The boy-child unites more with the mother while the child's *id* would want to dismiss the father.¹⁰ The child describes the mother as the best and most beautiful woman on earth who deserves much love and every attention.

Freud used the term Oedipus complex to describe the unguarded desires of a boy-child to develop more intimacy with his mother and disdains his father. This is what happens to a child at the phallic stage of personality development. Thus he invests more emotional energy on his mother and seeks emotional satisfactions in return. However, Freud described this condition as unconscious sexual desire for the opposite –sex parent but it is mere attraction to the opposite sex-parent which does not connote sexual gratifications. This drive is so serious that the boy-child shows passionate love for the mother and would practically want to possess her while he unconsciously fights his father as a jealous lover. Freud described this situation in relation to Oedipus complex thus;

his destiny moves us only because it might have been ours
because the oracle laid the same course upon us before our
birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct
our first sexual impulse towards our mother while our first

⁹. C. T. Sullivan, *The Developmental Stages of the Ego*. (London: Aaron Green, 2020), 33-47.

¹⁰. A. Bullock, & S. Trombley, *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. (London: HarperCollins, 1999). 607

hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that this is so.¹¹

There are positive and negative models of Oedipus complex.¹² Positive model of Oedipus complex refers to a boy-child's emotional / desires for the opposite-sex parent (mother) and hatred for the father who is the same-sex parent. Also, negative Oedipus complex refers to the desire for the same-sex parent and hatred for the opposite-sex parent.¹³ The more popular experience and practice is the positive Oedipus complex where the boy child is attracted to the mother than the father thereby developing stronger bounds with the mother than the father. This is a common experience amongst children at the developmental stages and it is a socially acceptable family behavior among children.

Very opposite to Oedipus complex is the Electra complex. This was proposed by Carl Jung in his psychoanalysis.¹⁴ Jung used the term to describe a girl's psychosexual competition with her mother for the possession of her father. This complex occurs at the phallic stage between three and six years of age amongst girl-children. Similarly, at this stage the girl-child learns the physical difference between the male and female sexes and their associated social roles. Also, she desires more emotional attachment with the father and defends him against the mother. In the same vain, the child unites more with the father while her *id* would want to dismiss the mother.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this theory is not wildly acceptable as Oedipus complex is acceptable.¹⁶ Freud himself argued against this theory. He claimed it is a quick comparison to

¹¹. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dream*. (New York: Avon Books 1899). 296

¹². Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dream*, 300

¹³. Elizabeth Auchincloss, *The Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind*. (Texas: American Psychoanalytic Publishing, 215), 110

¹⁴. C. G. Jung, *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1915), 69

¹⁵. A., Bullock & Trombley, S. *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 607

¹⁶. Peter Fonagy, & Mary Target, *Psychoanalytic Theories: Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology*. (Whurr Publishers, 2006), 89

Oedipus complex whereas “Electra complex” does not have equal force in girl-child as Oedipus complex does in boy-child.¹⁷ In spite of the arguments against Electra complex, it is evidentially a drive in the girl-child which cannot be totally denied.

Family Experience in Nigeria and the Oedipus Tension

This paper has tried to understand Oedipus complex and its corollary; Electra complex as psychological dispositions that define parent-child relationship from infancy. Studies have shown that there is a corresponding tension in marital union which is informed by the interplay of parent-child relationship from infancy minding the influence of Oedipus complex or its corollary; Electra Complex.¹⁸

Freud's personality development as discussed already shows a series of childhood stages in which pleasure-seeking energies center around the erogenous areas. According to him, these erogenous zones are developed in the five psychosexual stages as; oral, anal, phallic, latent and the genital stages. However, this study is particularly interested in the third stage with its implication to marriage relationship. At this stage, the boy-child desires more emotional attachment with the mother and defends her against the father. The child unites more with the mother while the child's *id* would want to dismiss the father even in aggressive manners in some cases.¹⁹ On the other side, Electra complex describes a girl's psychosexual competition with her mother for the possession of her father. At this stage, she desires more emotional attachment with the father while her *id* would want to dismiss the mother.²⁰

This model of relationship between the mother and the son or the father and the daughter can be so strong that it dovetails into adulthood. This

¹⁷. Jill Scott, *Electra After Freud: Myth and Culture*. (Texas: Cornell University Press, 2005), 14

¹⁸. Joseph Wolpe, & Standley Rachman, “Psychoanalytic Evidence: A Critique Based on Freud's Case of Little Han” in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 131(2): 135-148.

¹⁹. A. Bullock, & S. Trombley, *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. 607

²⁰. A. Bullock, & S. Trombley, *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. 610

can be so strong that the boy-child begins to unreservedly care for the mother and protect her from every form of assault both from the father or anyone else. Similarly, the girl-child protects and cares for the father very passionately. Unfortunately, this form of intimacy in some cases are responsible for sexual abuses/incest, poor parenting (over pampering), etc. However, it should be noted that sexual abuses from this relationship is not a regular occurrence as imagined. Sometimes, some mothers accuse their husbands of such sexual abuses following from the intimacy of Electra complex. Experiences show that this accusation is products of imagination, effects of emotional disconnect with the husband, fear of lost in the bond with the husband especially when the husband is beginning to invest much energy to the relationship, sense of jealousy and unconscious fight/battle to reclaim her bond with the husband. This is a product of imagination because the mother begins to insinuate some form of exclusion and conspiracy against her in the relationship, hence accuses the husband of overstepping bands and begins to fight the girl-child to reclaim bond with the husband.

On the other hand, the boy-child becomes so over protective of the mother that he desires to stay with her to show her every form of care within his reach, protect her from internal and external aggression, protect her rights in the family, etc. He enjoys spending quality time with the mother; eating with her, sleeping on the same bed with her, taking a walk with her, holding her always, embracing her, kissing her, etc. Even when quarrels ensue between the mother and father, he takes side because he thinks that the mother is too previous to be hurt and fragile, hence needed to be defended. He quickly dismisses and excuses the mother's faults especially if between the mother and the father. Though he may not fight back physically but he begins to show signs of displeasure to the father for being a bully. Out of the father's sight, he returns to console the mother while making some bogus and consoling promises to the mother such as; 'I will buy you some shoes, clothes, aeroplane, cars, houses, take you abroad/vacation, take you round the world, etc'. Unfortunately, this situation makes the father sometimes begin to unconsciously develop hatred for the son because the son is

supplying emotional energies to the mother while excluding him. This would always play out whenever he wants to spend some time with the wife while boy-child is enjoying good time with the mother. Thus, he vents his anger and would sometimes react in a violent and demeaning languages to scare the boy.

In most cases, this experience is very observant with the first son or any other son to whom for some other reasons; the mother develops such intimacy. Besides the first son, other reasons for the choice of a favorite son may include;

1. the son who is the maternal father's namesake or by the superstitious beliefs on reincarnation (in which case the mother calls the son "papa m or daddy m"),
2. namesake of a loved family member,
3. associated experiences before, during or after birth (associated experiences such as; difficulty or easy pregnancy, significant favor received before or at birth, death of husband or close family member during pregnancy or immediately after birth),
4. poverty and other life challenges or blessings,
5. historic events which are in most cases personal or family related, etc.

In situations where the father dies early, the son takes the place of the father and struggles to prove himself as a man capable of replacing the father's role/responsibility to the mother. Even at his grave inconvenience, he struggles to build a house for the mother and calls it 'a family house'. The primary intention is not for other members of the family but particularly for the mother's comfort while other members are secondary beneficiaries. However, very unlike Freud's claims, this care does not imply a sexual union rather; there is a form of attraction, intimacy and bond that units both. This bond is what Freud referred as Oedipus complex.

Similarly, the girl-child develops this form of relationship with the father. Directly opposite what happens between the mother and the boy-child is

observable between the father and the daughter and in most cases with the first daughter. However, this form of intimacy can exist with another daughter besides the first especially when the father has other reasons to develop particular love or intimacy for another daughter besides the first. Such reasons may include;

1. cultural factors like namesake / reincarnation {especially when the girl-child takes the name of the father's mother (in which case the father calls the daughter “mama m or mummy m”) or other father's loved family member},
2. experiences before, during or after birth,
3. sickness/weakness of a particular girl and need for protection against other siblings may make the father bond with the sick or weak daughter,
4. need for moral/social protection in particular environments (especially when the family migrates to a hostile environment, morally loose environment, when elder sisters have lived regrettable life style then the father over protects a younger girl from similar experience by bonding with her),
5. other family factors / pressures that make the father develop such bond with other daughter(s) than just the first daughter, etc.

The favorite girl-child finds reasons to dismiss and excuse her father's faults especially when there is a quarrel with the mother, she takes sides with the father against the mother. She returns to report the mother to the father for every matter in the house even when not asked. She feels most protected with the father's presence and feels much unprotected in his absence. This is manifest in the joy she expresses seeing her father come back home. She protects the father's food at home even before everyone else eats, she would always ask questions about dad's food and even inspect it to be sure it is sumptuous enough. Of course, she would pick quarrels with everyone if the food is not to her satisfaction. She derives joy serving the father at his return each time. It is always her pride to spend quality time with dad, enjoy dad's company and feels safe to share her feelings / worries / challenges / successes with dad. This attitude is more encouraged when the father is friendly and the opposite becomes

the case when the father is quarrelsome or not friendly/romantic. She prefers to sleep with dad on the same bed but this attitude begins to reduce from adolescent age.

In the family, one of the challenges of Oedipus/Electra complex experience is the 'Joseph Complex'. This is the form of complex derived from the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers.²¹ Joseph was so loved by his parents and given special attentions and privileges that breed jealousy, hatred and contempt among his other siblings so much so that they planned killing him. Thus, when the father or mother is not able to control the complex of either Electra or Oedipus respectively, the logical effect at the childhood stage is what we refer in this research as 'Joseph Complex'. Here the concept of mummy's boy or daddy's girl breeds a form of jealousy among the other brothers and sisters especially when they make this relationship so obvious and to the disadvantage of other siblings. Unfortunately, the other siblings begin to plot how to pull down the loved child and fight him or her as a reaction to the love / favor which they are denied but given to one person. In some cases, the other siblings use the loved child to get favor from parents by making their requests to their parents through the favorite child.

In the same vein, the mother (this is dominant among mothers) or father do not do much to encourage the favorite child's personality development rather he or she is over protected even against morality and social order. Also, this is manifest when either parents take sides at the slightest rifts amongst the children while protecting their favorite child against others; giving the favorite son or daughter pet names that totally distinguish him/her from others and places him/her above others; showing partiality in sharing formulars of works, food, drinks, meat etc. This level of obsession is obvious among mothers especially when the husband is dead, has a self-absorbed or narcissistic partner or when a mother is antisocial / asocial such that the mother redirects her emotional energies towards her favorite son.

²¹. Genesis 37. 11

Nevertheless, this attitude can be tolerated in order to exponent the ego of the child in the first five years of age. Similarly, this can be moderately tolerated for the last child as a protective measure against the stronger brothers and sisters in order to raise his/her ego and prevent bullying from the older children. When the reason is premised on the fact that the younger child is weak, the elder brothers and sisters in this case, should be made to understand this reason in order to avoid dangerous jealousy amongst the favorite child leading to 'Joseph Complex'.

Generally, the level of body contact in this relationship both of the mother with the son and the father with the daughter begins to reduce at adolescent stage. The reduction of body contact include; desiring to sleep with the mother or the father, holding hands, hugging, kissing / pecking, etc. This does not really imply a reduction of the intimacy but the consciousness of sexual hormonal development makes the boy or girl become more independent from such previous contacts that existed. Sometimes, the girl or boy desires to spend more time with friends/peers outside the parents to enable them engage in some explorations/conversations such as; free conversations on peer experiences (films, boxing, football, music, sex, gossips, etc), life dreams, tasting alcohol or cigarette as proof of boldness, dangerous or risky activities, etc. Some parents misinterpret this withdrawal as a negative sign of the child getting to know evil or do other funny things as a reason for the withdrawal. It is very important that parents get to understand the different psychological developmental stages of children and the parental response to these stages. This is a necessary tool for the child towards developing adequate social surface for healthy interaction and social encounter with the peers and the wider world.²²

More so growing into adulthood, the child begins to develop intimacy with the opposite sex outside the mother or father. The form of intimacy at this level could be so strong and cordial that their hearts bond in love

^{22.} Anacletus Ogbunkwu, 'Reforming a Deformed Seminarian: Philosophical Issues in Psychology and Prospects for Better Formation', being *2022 Inaugural Lecture presented at Pope John Paul II Seminary, Awka*, pg 3.

and longing for each other. Naturally, this situation begins to create some emotional breaks and lessens the emotional attention to mother or father. In cases, the boy or girl may not be very conscious of this emotional break away from mother or father respectively. The new form of intimacy sometimes develops into marriage relationship. It is interesting to note that this new relationship is responsible for tension in some families. Though the mother intellectually knows that her son will get married someday and focus on his own family but unaware of the emotional implications to her. Thus, she begins to react to this emotional break. She often times would elicit shame and guilt in her son²³ thereby reminding him that he is beginning to abandon her mum who has sacrificed a lot to see him through in life.

Unfortunately, this emotional break in relationship between father or mother and girl-child or boy-child respectively begins to create some sense of jealous and subtle resistance. Thus, the mother or father projects the cause of this problems to his or her daughter in-law or son in-law respectively.²⁴ However, minding masculine tendencies the father manages this break better than the mother. More so at the stage of marriage, the relationship between father and the favorite daughter is usually beginning to weaken. Conversely, the relationship between the favorite boy and the mother does not get as weak as that of father and daughter. In some cases, the mother becomes so obsessed so much so that she becomes very needy, clingy, romantic and shows obvious tendencies of resisting the break. This situation builds pang of jealous in the mother which intensifies so much that she begins to accuse the daughter in-law to be the cause of the break in relationship. She cooks-up every form of allegations which in most cases are imagined than real. Such allegations include:

^{23.} J.B. Snow, "Jocasta Complex- The "Mama's Boy" and His Narcissistic Mother: A shared Psychosis" published online <https://www.audible.com/pd/Jocasta-Complex-The-Mamas-Boy-and-His-Narcissistic-Mother-A-Shared-Psychosis-Transcend-Mediocrity-Book-117-Audiobook/B01BYN0BG4>. Accessed on 04 April, 2023.

^{24.} Trevor Pederson, *The Economics of Libido: Psychic Bisexuality, the Superego, and the Centrality of the Oedipus Complex*. (London: Karnac Publishers, 2015), 44

1. “since my son got married to you, you have turned his eyes away from his home especially his parents and siblings”²⁵
2. “since my son got married to you, you have tied him with *juju* to abandon training his siblings and the ongoing house project in the family”
3. “since my son married to you, he abandoned paying school fees for his younger ones or helping anybody from our family anymore”
4. “you are a witch who have entered to scatter our family”
5. “God will punish you for all the misfortune you have brought into our family”
6. “my son was trained in school by selling family land and other properties with hope that he will train his siblings but now you (wife) have turned his attention to your own family and against his family”.
7. “In African traditional marriage system, marriage units both families whereas you have come to divide the already existing unity among us by turning our son away from us”

Unfortunately, the mother in-law tries to poison the minds of other siblings and family members against the son and daughter in-law making the whole matter more toxic. This is why she would prefer to use plural pronouns such as 'our family' not 'myself'. This is an unconscious attempt to make the situation a family affair whereas the mother in-law is making a personal struggle to regain / mourn her lost intimacy with the son. At this stage, the sword is drawn and the battle begins with the son and daughter in-law against the entire groom's family members. This becomes more difficult as the sisters of the groom would find no reason to understand their brother; they rather accuse the wife as responsible for their family crisis. Unfortunately, the matter gets worse when the daughter in-law goes to fight this situation; she ends up opening up many more war fronts against herself. Thus, the brothers in-law and sisters in-law would see her reaction but not their mothers' action. Even the children of the daughter in-law would not be comfortable with their

²⁵. Jane Malcolm, *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession*: (London: Aaron Green, 1988), 158-159.

mother's reaction because they cannot see the grandmother's actions. The mother in-law's actions are not very visible in most cases because it relates to emotions and feelings except in extreme cases.

In some cases, this situation affects the bond existing between the young couple such that the pressure becomes difficult for the boy to bear and sometimes he becomes aggressive and reactionary to the wife. This experience is worse when the new family have some challenges like delay in child bearing. The daughter in-law is accused by the mother in-law as one used by some agents to destroy her son while she struggles to convince her family members to develop hatred towards their daughter in-law.

In the same vein, this experience is similar though in a lower degree with the bride's family especially when the girl is daddy's pet. Minding African masculine pride, the father of the bride would not like to be seen as interfering with the marriage of his favorite daughter, hence he gives up the fight very easily than would the mother of the groom. In most cases, the father gives up easily when the couple are living in peace, hence the Electra factor is easily dismissed by the new bond. Nevertheless, girls that still desire such relationship with their dad after marriage show signs of unhappy bond with the husband who is supposed to be a replacement of the prior bond with the father. In this case, the husband needs to do more to bond with the wife patiently.

Conclusion

The effort so far has been to understand the implications of Freud's Oedipus complex in marriage / family relationship between husband / wife, siblings and parents. To explain Oedipus complex, Freud used the story of Oedipus the king of Thebes who killed his father to marry the mother. Freud applied this story to describe the unguarded desires of a young boy to develop more intimacy with his mother and disdains his father, hence the term Oedipus complex. Freud described this condition as unconscious sexual desire for the opposite-sex parent. However, this is an extreme claim. It is to be noted that Oedipus complex is a mere

attraction to the opposite sex-parent which does not connote sexual contact. This paper draws a corollary of Oedipus complex as the Electra complex which describes the same emotional tie between a daughter and the father. One of the implications of both Oedipus and Electra complexes is the Joseph Complex which describes the pang of jealous which begins to develop amongst other siblings for the reason that one is loved by either parent more than others.²⁶

Both Oedipus and Electra complexes develop at the third or phallic stage of the child's personality developmental stages. The management of this stage determines the model of relationship the child keeps afterwards and the child's social surface of interaction. This situation affects the relationship between the favorite girl-child or boy-child with other siblings giving rise to Joseph Complex. Gradually from adolescent stage, Oedipus or Electra model begin to lose much of body contact because of the child's self-awareness of the sexual differentiations and the desire to associate with peers. When the girl-child or boy-child gets married, the prior relationship (with dad or mum) begins to face challenges minding the new bond of marriage. This state creates a form of emotional break with dad or mum leading to jealousy, hatred²⁷ and struggle to reclaim the lost bond with son or daughter. This paper claims that Electra complex is easier to handle because girls cling faster to their new love and fathers are ready to let go. Oedipus complex is more difficult because mothers are clingier, hence resort to emotional blackmail to both the son and the daughter in-law such that the boy-child would yield to her.

This paper shows that the greatest challenge Oedipus complex imposes on families is at the marriage stage of mummy's boy. It becomes obvious

²⁶. C. Jim, "How Your Relationship with Your In-Laws Impacts your Marriage" in *Focus on the Family*, published online <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/how-your-relationship-with-your-in-laws-impacts-your-marriage/> accessed Nov. 24, 2014.

²⁷. Megan Carnegie, "The Tensions that fan Tricky In-Law Relationship" a publication of *Family Tree*, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20221111-the-tensions-that-fan-tricky-in-law-relationships>, accessed on Nov. 22, 2022.

that the mother finds it difficult to let go the son. She develops jealousy and creates tension around the family for everyone to blame the daughter in-law whom she unconsciously presumes is responsible for her problem. On the part of the mother, this matter becomes worsened in situations where the husband is dead, a woman with self-absorbed or narcissistic partner / husband or a mother with antisocial / asocial tendencies.²⁸ On the part of the daughter in-law, the situation is worsened when the new family has challenges such as delay in child birth, health challenges, she reacts to the jealous pang from the mother in-law, quarrelsome with the husband, etc. At this instance the mother vents her anger on the daughter in-law and begins to draw the sword with unreal allegations. Some daughter in-laws misunderstand this situation and begins to through taunts on their mother in-law in order to strongly resist her interference. This is not a good response rather to draw closer to the mother in-law, reassure her and calm her fears. In the same vain, this paper makes a clarion call on boy-children to become conscious of this syndrome, hence not to allow either side of the mother or wife to be highly distressed emotionally. While he bonds with the wife, he needs to help both the mother and wife develop mutual respect in the family.

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²⁸ J.B. Snow, "Jocasta Complex- The 'Mama's Boy' and His Narcissistic Mother: A shared Psychosis". published online <https://www.audible.com/pd/Jocasta-Complex-The-Mamas-Boy-and-His-Narcissistic-Mother-A-Shared-Psychosis-Transcend-Mediocrity-Book-117-Audiobook/B01BYN0BG4>. Accessed on 04 April, 2023.

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THE VOLATILE NATURE OF SECURITISATION THEORIES: LESSONS FROM OGONI CRISIS OF 1995 AND RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE IN 2022

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Abstract

Following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the theories of securitisation are once again in need of reconsideration of the most appropriate theory for assessing the issues and crises related to security. In order to situate the discourse within the proper context for thematic discourse, Steven Smith's position that traditional views of securitisation are no longer relevant will be taken as paradigm. Smith argues that following the 9/11 attack over the World Trade Centre, traditional securitisation theories are not relevant since other factors beyond the state motivate conflicts. Through the method philosophical analysis, this study argues that Smith's position that traditional approach to securitisation has been found to be misleading following the Russia-Ukraine crises where states and military might are the referent frame. Upon further exploration however, this study takes the position that all theories of securitisation are useful for the comprehension of the factors and conditions that initiate and make conflicts to thrive. What motivates the correct theory will depend on the particular context, as there is no one theory that fits for all circumstances. As way of reinforcing the validity of this thesis, this study uses the Ogoni Crises of 1995 aside the Russo-Ukraine conflict as paradigms.

Keywords: 9/11 Attack, Ogoni Crisis, Russia-Ukraine Tensions, Securitisation Theories, Steven Smith.

Introduction

In this essay, three tasks are to be undertaken in order to be able to arrive at the aim of analysing the proposal of Steven Smith¹ over the limitations of the traditional realist view of security, especially following the motivations and the consequences of the September 11 (9/11, hereafter) attacks. The first task is to agree with Smith that indeed the concept of security is essentially loaded and shy of fixed understanding. The second task is to disagree with him that there are instances wherein the state is the reference frame and other component units are subordinate. This is demonstrated in the Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022. The implication here is that the traditional view to understanding security is very much relevant. The third task is to also agree with Smith that there are some instances where the non-traditional approaches to the concept of security overrides the traditional approach. This is demonstrated in the Ogoni Crises of Nigeria, during the dictatorial regime of the late General Sanni Abacha.

Having established its task or objective, it is pertinent to state from the outset, the core thesis of this essay by insisting that one needs to be pay attention to the context of the discourse. What this means is that one needs to look closely at events in order to be able to establish whether a realist view of securitisation can function as an appropriate framework or whether a post-positive driven approach like feminist theory suffices. The lesson from this is that one cannot completely wish away the state as a referent object, as other components or units can also serve. In the same way, one cannot also place all emphasis on these other components and pay less attention to the centrality and focus of the state. These are the two deductions from the critical analysis of Smith and the limitations of the realist account of securitisation for assessing the 9/11 attacks. The position of this essay is inspired from the work of Smith² himself who in one of the passages of the work agrees with Ken Booth³ that the idea of

¹. Steven Smith, "The Contested Concept of Security", in *Security Studies and World Politics*, ed. K. Booth (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 2005), 27-61

². Smith, "The Contested Concept of Security", 28-29

³. Booth, "Security and Emancipation", *Review of International Studies* 17 no. 1, (1991): 313-326

security is a derivative from issues connected to politics and economics. These are issues that are emergent from the regions of conflict and then command the scrutiny of security policies. This passage is the one that presents the implication that one needs to situate every conflict and violent agitations within a context in order to see which security theory or framework is more viable or plausible. To understand how this essay arrived at this, it is helpful to undertake a short review of Smith. This is important to assist with making the argument of Smith as lucid as possible.

Steven Smith on the Various Concepts of Security and the 9/11 Attacks

The essay written by Steven Smith “The Contested Concept of Security” sets out to achieve a fundamental aim – to show that the idea of security is never fixed but always subject to revision. He bemoans the attempts of the traditional realist school of thought which is deeply influenced by positivism, to provide a sweeping understanding of the concept of security – one which is fixed and true irrespective of context. As the separate study of Carnesale and Nacht indicate, all realist definitions of security, irrespective of their individual divergents, still come to agree with one another that the preservation and the protection of the state is paramount.⁴ Since the threat to the existence of a state are in the form of the military, then it is also the case that to attain their sovereignty and integrity, a state must also have its military.⁵

Realist conceptions of the idea of security, it needs not further elaboration is a clear indication of the priority given to positivism whose approach to studying reality is both empirical and scientific.⁶ Its aim is to settle on the assessment of reality by paying less attention to individual

⁴. A. Carnesale and M. Nacht, “Forward”, *International Security* 1 no. 1, (1976): 2

⁵. J. De Bahl, “Security: An Essentially Contested Concept?” *E-International Relations* (2014) Available at <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/08/24/security-an-essentially-contested-concept/> (Accessed March 2, 2022).

⁶. S. McGlinchey. *Foundations of International Relations*. (London: Bloomsbury 2021):70-71

biases and prejudices. The distinction between theory and fact as well as the neutrality of the assessment of fact is held in high esteem.⁷ This is the foundation of the realist understanding that the concept of security is fixed and centres on the state and military might irrespective of circumstances or other components such as the individual and the politico-economic realities of humans.⁸

Smith disagrees with this fixed and neutral free understanding of the concept of security. He returns to Walter Gallie's⁹ argument by saying that it is not possible to have a fixed concept of security, since the concept is a contested area. Smith proceeds to state that a fixed understanding of security is not only inconsistent, but it is also not in line with how various groups within a state perceive threats and danger. The trado-realist conception of security with the state as the central actor cannot be sustained without limitations.¹⁰ Smith demonstrates this by citing the limitations of the trado-realist approach to security in the 9/11 attacks. The 9/11 attacks have been able to show that there are instances wherein a state may not be the central actor. On the one hand, the United States is an actor, on the other hand it is not Iraq that is the other principal actor but an element, a terrorist group in Al-Qaeda. This is why Smith holds that "it may be difficult to prove, for example, that Osama bin Laden ordered the attacks to take place in the places and at the times that they did. This makes it difficult for states to negotiate with such organisations especially when they do not share a similar set of goals."¹¹ Following his confidence that the trado-realist account of security is limited across

7. Steven Smith and P. Owen. Alternative Approaches to International Theory. In: J. Baylis and S. Smith, (eds). *The Globalization of World Politics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005):271-293

8. B. McSweeney. *Security, Identity and Interests*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999):145

9. Walter Gallie. Essentially Contest Concepts. *Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society* 56 (1956): 167-198

10. See E.A. Kolodziej. Renaissance in Security Studies? Caveat Lector. *International Studies Quarterly* 36 no. 4, (1992): 421-438; and M. McDonald. *Security, The Environment and Emancipation: Contestation Over Environmental Change*. (London: Routledge 2012): 18-19

11. Smith. The Contested Concept of Security, 32

many ways, Smith considers some six non-traditional account of security as a way of justifying his conviction that given the outlook that the idea of security is not fixed, some elements will be ranked higher than other elements.¹² The first school he considers is the Copenhagen school.

The Copenhagen school comprises of notable scholars such as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. The main thrust of the Copenhagen school is the need to retain the emphasis on the state as the referent object. Other aspects of the state such as ecological, economic, political and socio-cultural cannot be underestimated for understanding how conflicts and threats emanate and can be dealt with. It is however important to illustrate that even when the state has other important components, it continues to rank as the referent object. Following this reality, Smith argues that this makes the Copenhagen School not properly situated in assessing the 9/11 attacks.

Constructivism is another important theoretical framework on security which was considered by Smith in a bid to establishing the elusive nature of security, following the 9/11 attacks. The fundamental position of the constructivist school or theory is that identities and interests are crucial in any analysis of conflicts. The constructivists see culture to be causal and not constitutive of a status quo, which the 9/11 attack has been able to disclose. The identities of those who were indicted as the primary elements of the 9/11 attacks cannot be reconciled with that of the states that support them. For instance, most Muslims are sympathetic to the cause of those who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks such that they are not willing to accept any evidence that suggest thus.

The critical security studies approach to security explored by Smith is the Welsh school, whose foremost proponents are: Booth¹³ and McDonald.¹⁴ For them, security is just the same as emancipation. And emancipation is

^{12.} Smith The Contested Concept of Security, 32

^{13.} Ken Booth. Security and Emancipation. *Review of International Studies* 17 no. 1, (1991): 313-326

^{14.} M. McDonald. *Security, The Environment and Emancipation: Contestation Over Environmental Change*. (London: Routledge 2012):21

conceived as rescuing people from physical limitations that makes life difficult for them.¹⁵ McDonald adds that these limitations or constraints are contextual.¹⁶ For this school, it is the people that are the referent object.¹⁷ Following the application of this theory to the 9/11 attacks, Smith says it is difficult to establish a stand between the volatile notion of security and emancipation as well as which of them is more appropriate within the context of those who carried out the September 11 attacks.¹⁸ Who do they wish to emancipate? Westerners or Middle Easterners, since there are groups within each rank, that feel justified that the attacks are some forms of expression of the outburst of the excesses of the West over the world.

Another securitisation framework explored by Smith is the feminist security studies. The primary contention of this framework is the need for the concept of security to understand and admit into its analyses the role that women play in the issues related or connected to conflicts and violence. As Smith maintains, the feminist perspective is convinced that it is only when it shown, the place of women in international relations can the notion of power be well understood. Smith however agrees that feminist security studies much as it is considerable it has destabilising implications for security studies. Smith is also convinced that in the last analysis the issues of gender and how women were perceived by the hijackers and in the ranks of Al-Qaeda reflect the considerable view that the place of women cannot be treated as a side issue.

The poststructuralist view of security is of the outlook that the traditional idea of security and a referent object is no longer viable. Emphasis on the narratives provided by the participants to the conflict plays a principal role. Smith argues that the view of the poststructuralist is well entrenched in the occurrences of the 9/11 attack. This is the case since the Bush

^{15.} Booth. *Security and Emancipation*, 319

^{16.} M. McDonald. *Security, The Environment and Emancipation: Contestation Over Environmental Change* 2012):21

^{17.} J. De Bahl. *Security: An Essentially Contested Concept?*

^{18.} Smith, *The Contested Concept of Security*, 32

administration's narrative on the one hand and the story told by Al-Qaeda, on the other hand are not at par. This means that there is a need to focus on coming to understanding the other. It is through understanding the other does the other during conflicts and violence that one begins to work towards a reliable securitisation network.

Human security sees insecurity as a general issues that cuts through all human societies. It is a global phenomenon that is replete in all societies. Hence, the essential feature of this form of securitisation is that material sufficiency is at the core of human security. Smith argues that the human security outlook focuses over the fact that for most of those who sympathise with the cause of the 9/11 attackers, the level of material sufficiency of the West and the exploitation of the other countries justifies the attack. In other words, they support the attacks based on the background of poverty and lack which is not endemic in the United States but may be seen as a causative from the United States.

Following the exposition of these six non-traditional theories, Smith makes his point by stating that their individual positions over the 9/11 attacks and the consequences are suggestive of his thesis that the idea of security as a concept lacks consensus. On this note, he goes on to state that other concepts such as state, community, emancipation and how the intertwine with the individual or groups are also under contestation.

As way of critically analysing the position or argument of Smith, there will be two sections ahead that will focus on the remaining two tasks of instances where Smith's position is both valid and invalid in application, using an instance for each. What has been done thus far, however, is the successful discourse over the first task wherein the agreement with Smith that indeed the concept of security is loose and fixed as opposed to the trado-realist approach that wants it fixed, to see the state as the main component and military might as the expression of this.

Stephen Smith and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: A Realist Analysis

In February 2022, authentic efforts have been put in place to see the military occupation of Ukraine by Russia. It is record that Ukraine used to be a part of the vast former USSR which broke up in 1991.¹⁹ With closer ties to the West, Ukraine is on the verge of joining NATO but intends to remove all political obstacles first. On the other hand, Russia is wary of any military threat that this union may have on her territory. Child et al. report that there is a huge military presence moving close to Ukraine's capital, Kyiv.²⁰ Heavy missiles and similar artilleries have been witnessed to be deployed against residential areas in some parts of Kyiv.²¹

The contention of this essay is not to go into details of the Russia-Ukraine crises. However, an important point which this essay seeks to pass is that there is no way that one can simply dismiss the traditional realist perspective to understanding the idea of securitisation. Under this kind of condition, it is clear that the realist ways of perceiving what it means for securitisation is well-endorsed. This is because a critical look at the idea of security from the angle of the traditional realist view, the state is a referent entity. A critical assessment of the tensions emanating in Ukraine, following the occupation of Russia, one can easily see that this is a situation of conflict between two states.

From the situation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, it is also stated clearly that military might is a way through which the state can counter security threats from the outside. What this means, following the proposal of Smith is that even when the traditional approach to security may not be

^{19.} Michael Parenti. *The Sword and The Dollar*. (New York: St. Martins Press 1989):56

^{20.} C. Child, Z. Rasheed and A. Harb. Russia-Ukraine Live News: Huge Russian Convoy Enters Ukraine. (2022) Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/28/us-announces-plan-to-expel-russian-diplomats-from-un-liveblog> (Accessed March 2, 2022)

^{21.} C. Child, Z. Rasheed and A. Harb. Russia-Ukraine Live News: Huge Russian Convoy Enters Ukraine.

plausible for assessment of the 9/11 attacks, it does not suffice for the Russia-Ukraine crises. This is the case because it is a case of one state invading another state with her military might. Conversely the other state is also standing her ground as a state with her military powers. Under this condition, the traditional realist way of assessing conflicts and violence is well justified. This is why this essay maintains that contexts really matter regarding which of the theories of security can be used for examining conflicts. Within the context of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the trado-realist approach to understanding security is justified. However, within the context of the 9/11 attacks, upon which Smith's analysis is based, the trado-realist framework is not pliable. Another example which confirms the context character of the factors that determine how security can be defined and assessed will be via the Ogoni Crisis of Nigeria. This other example is crucial in assisting with similar scenarios as the 9/11 that was provided by Smith for making sense of how one ought to consider securitisation and assess same.

Smith, the Concept of Security and the Ogoni Crisis of 1995

Ogoni land, in Niger Delta area happened to be where the 50 percent of Nigeria's oil is drilled. Prior to the discovery of the oil, Qgoni land's major occupation was fishing but immediately after 1956 when oil was discovered since, then up till date the Ogoni land has been suffering of oil spillages.²² The cases or instance of oil spillage destroys all forms of aquatic-related sources of livelihood as well crop cultivating activities.²³ It is on record that over the years about 30 billion dollars have been raked in as oil revenue from Ogoni land. Yet they have virtually nothing to show for it. They live in abject poverty. It is quite ironical and unimaginable that the Ogoni people suffer just because crude oil is found in their soil.²⁴ They neither benefit directly from the huge revenue nor are they part of its revenue allocation scheme. Their environment remains

^{22.} Elizabeth Isichei. *A History of Nigeria*. (Lagos: Longmans 1983):29

^{23.} A.A. Kadafa. Oil Exploration and Spillage in The Niger Delta of Nigeria. *Civil and Environmental Research*. 2 no. 3 (2012):2

^{24.} O. Orubu and E. Ehwareme. The Nigerian Oil Industry: Environmental Diseconomies, Management Strategies and The Need For Community Involvement. *Journal of Human Ecology* 16 no. 3 (2004): 200-220

devastated with ecological problems spiralling.²⁵

The Ogoni people continued to suffer this agony of deprivations and brutality with pockets of cries and shouts of pro tests until 1990 when they organized themselves and founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).²⁶ Almost immediately, this new agitated group within became a rally point through which the voice of the Ogoni people can be heard. It emerged to assist the plight and cause of the Ogoni to correct the perceived injustice and neglect that has evolved as a security threat to their survival as a people in Nigeria. The consequence of this struggle was the surfacing of the Ogoni Bill of Rights of December in 1999, a few years after some martyrs.

Clear as this might be, the state does not support the agitations of the group MOSOP. The regime of the then General Sanni Abacha used the powers of the state to suppress the protest of the group. Eventually, the hanging of the President of MOSOP, Ken Saro Wiwa caused international outburst over the excesses of the state and how it treats its citizens. Regardless of the details surrounding the Ogoni Crisis of 1995, what is of primary interest here is the kind of narratives which exists between the state and the core representatives of MOSOP and the implications it has for the evaluation of a security framework.

On the one hand, the situation is a vindication of the position of Smith that it is not possible to use the traditional realist position on security for the 9/11 attacks. The same can be said of the Ogoni crisis. Here, the state is dealing with elements within itself. The state sees this MOSOP group as an internal threat to the stability of the country as a whole. Unless the element is dealt with, the state may be found as incompetent or lackadaisical. As a result, the state uses its military might to crush the top executive of the MOSOP agitation group who were fighting to the need

^{25.} A.A. Kadafa. *Oil Exploration and Spillage in The Niger Delta of Nigeria*, 3

^{26.} O. Orubu and E. Ehwareme. *The Nigerian Oil Industry: Environmental Diseconomies, Management Strategies and The Need For Community Involvement*, 213

to consider the plight of the region where the crude oil of Nigeria is being extracted for national benefit. Clearly, a non-traditional perception of security is needed for comprehending the Ogoni crisis.

By using the critical studies proposal and the views of the Welsh school where security is seen to be close to emancipation, a better analysis can be realised. The MOSOP is an element that recognises the neglect of the Nigerian government toward the environmental insecurity of the Ogoni people. However, the Nigerian government was operating using the traditional realist view of security which saw internal threat in the ways that external threats are perceived and diminished via military force. As the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has been used to demonstrate the contextual nature of the securitisation theory on the foreign same, the same has been used for re-assessing the case of the MOSOP during the dictatorship of the late General Sanni Abacha. These two instances are used to endorse the position of Steven Smith concerning the application of securitisation theories in the assessment of conflicts.

When the poststructuralist approach is used, another way of seeing the issue suffices. Particularly, the stories told of the effects of oil spillages in the Ogoni environment runs contrary to the story of the Nigerian federal government which perceived MOSOP as a threat to national stability. Clearly, from this Smith is correct to have taken the stance that the idea or notion of security is volatile.

Conclusion

In this essay, the task has been to argue along with Smith (2005) that indeed the traditional realist view of security is not reliable for understanding the 9/11 attacks. However, the position of this essay is that this does not make the traditional realist position useless in understanding the concept of securitisation. As a way of making this claim forceful, the Russia-Ukraine crisis of 2022 is used as paradigm. Analogously, there is no doubt that there are other instances wherein non-traditional theories or frameworks of security have been particularly useful, as Smith maintains. The Ogoni crisis has been briefly examined

from the Welsh school and the Poststructuralist frameworks. The point being shown here is that just as Smith maintains, it is important to consider the context wherein violence or conflicts arise. This will determine the appropriateness of a particular theoretical framework on security. It is precisely for the reason of emphasising contexts and the fact that the notion of security cannot be fixed that this essay finds Smith's submission to be tenable. Hence, the work of Smith is justified in the sense that it calls attention to the case of contexts. However, any attempt to examine the work that it condemns totally the use of traditional realist perception of securitisation must be assessed critically.

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