Folktales are one of the major tools adopted in the socialization of boy and girl children. The contemporary times notwithstanding, folktales are still an integrated part of daily living and are narrated in homes and schools by older persons to younger ones. Folktales are still visible through the print and electronic media, especially on the pages of novels, newspapers, school textbooks, magazines.

Folktales play edifying roles in a community's and individual's wellbeing. For example, in times of difficulties or hardship, children rely on the morals of folktales to carry them through. A disadvantage is that the narrator can easily transmit his or her biased or erroneous views to his audience, who because they are young, believe and act out these beliefs.

The paper explores the different themes in some selected folktales in which parents/guardians/teachers instruct and transmit moral values and communal beliefs to children, and how these affect the way children relate with the state, institutions of authority, the opposite sex, and the world.

Adopting a content analysis as methodology, selected folktales from the three major ethnic areas of Nigeria (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa) dealing with fertility, marriage, masculinity, moral values are analysed. Using Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s theory of subjectivity, the paper shows how the these ideas, values and stereotypes are easily transmitted because the narrators are adults or persons the children know and relate with, and so hold everything they say as true.

One of the findings from this research is that though it is generally believed that women are the custodians of culture because of their close affinity to children, this is only partly so. Women are only in custody of some particular tales that are didactic in nature. However, when a boy child attains a particular age (and this varies from one culture or communal context to the other), he ceases to be part of the storytelling circle of women. His father, grandfather or uncle takes over; the boy begins to accompany any of these on long journeys to farm, hunt, visit relations and friends, or admission into secondary school. Freud describes this experience as the development of a “superego” in the child. This is a process whereby the boy child submits or transfers his allegiance from his mother to the authority of his father and the state.