

Intricate Family Dynamics in Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?*

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Abstract: Understanding the intricacies within a household through a novel solidifies the idea how literature reflects life and serve as a means of self-expression, often through impactful stories such as novels. One of the Philippines' celebrated novelists is Lualhati Bautista, known for her works that raise awareness about issues in Philippine society. This study explores the intricate family dynamics in Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?*, focusing specifically on the characters, conflicts, and themes. This qualitative study applies narrative discourse analysis, supported by Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Patrick Davies and Mark Cummings' Emotional Security Theory. As revealed in the findings of this study, it is found that Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* reveals intricate family dynamics. The complex family dynamics in the novel includes stepfamily relationships, co-parenting, separate parent family dynamics, extended family, and sibling relationships. Analyzing the intricacies of family dynamics in the novel not only amplifies the existing studies but is also an outstanding replication of the issues inside the household, contributing to the legal structures related to marital and familial issues. Moreover, although the novel was written years ago, it strengthens the idea of how literature is timeless. Its continued relevance and study today demonstrate its lasting significance from the time it was first published to the present.

Keywords: Lualhati Bautista, intricate family dynamics, novel, family systems, emotional security.

1. Introduction

Within the field of expressive art form, literature serves as a medium towards human expression. A novel is a lengthy, complex literary narrative that deals creatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of people in a particular setting (Burgess, 1999). In this context, the emergence of Philippine literature takes place. When it comes to the rich tapestry of Philippine literature one of the most enduring forms of Philippine literature is Filipino novels. One of the most iconic Filipino novels that paved the way for highlighting societal and political issues is Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata... Paano Ka Ginawa?* The novel is one of Bautista's masterpieces, which won a Palanca award in 1984 (Palanca Awardees, n.d.) and was later turned into a film after a decade's first mass publication in 1988. The inspiration of *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* was based on the life story of Bautista herself, as a wife and as a woman, given

that she also separated from her first marriage and had a live-in partner afterward. The need to study the intricate family dynamics in Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata... Paano Ka Ginawa?* is highly significant, as it is still apparent and pertinent in today's generation. While previous research studies have explored the feminist aspects of the novel, the lack of comprehensive analyses regarding the intricate family dynamics within the novel prompted the researchers to further investigate. The research addresses this gap by examining the effects of the intricate family dynamics on the children's well-being in the novel, while highlighting how the findings can possibly contribute to the legislations related to marital and familial issues.

Family dynamics deals with the interactions, roles, and relationships between family members as well as the different influences that mold these relationships. Families' relationships with one another have a long-term impact on a person's growth and wellbeing through behavioral, physiological, and psychosocial mechanisms (Thomas et al., 2017). Parenting styles are a frequently explored concept in the field of parenting research. Parenting styles are defined as directly observable, specific behaviors that parents use to socialize their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). According to Cummings and Davies (2002), the impact of interparental conflict on children's adaptation is extensively recorded in recent advances and emerging themes in process-oriented research. It's important to highlight a substantial void in the literature concerning this aspect, as the studies pertaining to the subject predominantly concentrate on the societal role of women, with no similar studies directly aligned with the researcher's focus.

Examining a character's numerous aspects and role in a story is the aim of a character analysis. Character analysis ought to be centered on the traits and purposes of a character in a narrative, not on the author's feelings or thoughts about the character. To create a comprehensive study, a character analysis ought to examine several characterization techniques used by the character's author (DeGuzman, 2023). On the other hand, conflict is more specifically defined as a thwarted, at-risk, or opposing desire. It simply occurs when a character desires something, but someone else stands in the way. It also introduces the storyline and calls up the themes (Bushnell,

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2023). Moving on to the theme, this is the central notion that unifies the story's various elements. In various works, the theme emerges gradually, and one doesn't fully grasp the underlying theme until one has read a good portion of the piece (Fleming, 2019). Likewise, a theme or fundamental idea is present in every story, regardless of its length or complexity. A theme is always evident in every literary piece, no matter how the author presents it. By synthesizing existing literature, this study offers understanding how family dynamics are portrayed and analyzed through its characters, conflict, and theme.

Despite the scarcity of related studies and literature about the novel this study focuses on, this only makes this study stand out among other studies as it will augment and continue the exploration of the novel. Additionally, this study focuses on another issue presented in the novel, something overlooked by previous studies: the issue of a complicated familial unit. This makes this study interesting since the world is constantly changing, and people are becoming more open and liberated regarding complex relationships, rendering this study relevant to contemporary family issues. As this study delves into a complex familial unit in the novel, it will also contribute to advancing and improving laws and bills concerning marital issues such as divorce law and the right to child custody. Hence, this study is not only unique but also significant in improving the rights of women as mothers and wives.

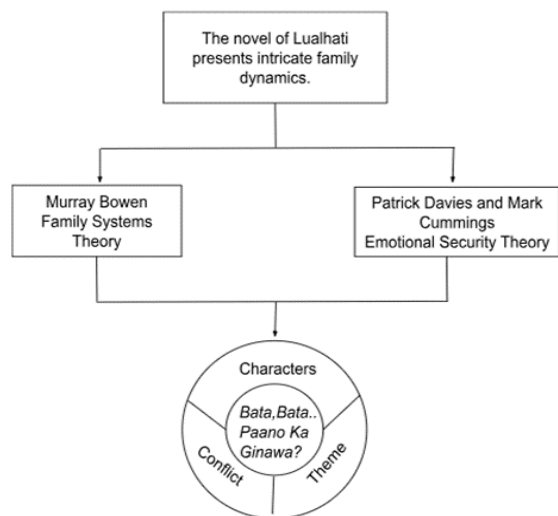


Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

This study assumes that Lualhati Bautista's novel, *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* presents intricate family dynamics. This assumption is supported by Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Patrick Davies and Mark Cummings' Emotional Security Theory.

Murray Bowen's Family System Theory is an approach to understanding the emotional connection of a family, where every family member depends on each other for support and attention; in essence, they affect each other by expressing their emotions either negatively or positively (The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, n.d.-a). Since family system theory is only ideal when analyzing a character as part of a group and not

individually, supporting theories were used to establish a concrete analysis of the characters. On the other hand, family system theory also provides a significant perspective in exploring the family structure and its dynamics, roles, and boundaries depicted in the novel. Hence, through analyzing the strength of emotional connection within the family system through their interaction, communication, and coping strategies as family members, the theme of the novel is explored.

Meanwhile, Patrick Davies and Mark Cummings' Emotional Security Theory centers on children's reactions to interparental conflict. The effects of parental conflict result in emotional distress (Davies & Cummings, 2002). This is the main focus of emotional security theory, dealing with the perception of children exposed to parental conflict and, at the same time, the consequences in its cognitive, behavioral, and physiological consequences (Cummings & Miller-Graff, 2015). Moreover, through Patrick Davies and Mark Cummings' Emotional Security Theory, the study can thoroughly delve deeper into the conflicts of the novel, shedding light on the emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral consequences brought by familial conflicts towards children.

In view of the above, the study investigates the intricate family dynamics in Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* by delving into the characters, conflict, and theme.

2. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employs a discourse analysis methodology, a qualitative and interpretive approach, to deconstruct the characters, conflict, and themes present in the novel *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?*. Moser and Korsjten (2017), assert that a qualitative approach is ideal to use in studies with materials present in narrative nature. By employing this methodology, this study examines the collected data supporting the main problem and subproblems and to provide sustainable and established support for literary assertions and interpretations.

B. Sources of Data

The primary data source is the recent 2018 reprinted copy of Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* —the 2nd edition, with 209 pages and 32 chapters, was published by Anvil Publication Incorporation. The first mass-market edition, consisting of 239 pages, was released in 1988 by Carmelo & Bauermann Publication, marking its debut. Subsequently, a reprint was published in 1991 by Cacho Publishing House, maintaining the same page counts. Both editions were published in paperback format.

C. Data Gathering Procedure

To profoundly execute the objective of the study, the procedure in gathering the data follows four phases: Phase 1. Character, Phase 2. Conflict, Phase 3. Theme., and Phase 4. Creative Write Back.

In Phase 1, the characters are examined through its characterization in the novel. By then, Murray Bowen's Family System Theory is used to examine the characterization of the

characters and how it reflects the intricate family dynamic. A table is used in this phase wherein it contains the Characters, Characterization, Family Systems Concept, and Intricate Family Dynamics.

Phase 2 investigates the conflict in terms of its situation, component processes, meaning, and ability to capture the complex dynamics of parenthood. Patrick Davies and Mark Cummings' Emotional Security Theory is applied in this. The following data are shown in a table which encompasses the Conflict, Situation, Component Processes, Meaning, and Intricate Family Dynamics.

For Phase 3 the novel's themes are corroborated and scrutinized by lines, dialogues and acts from the novel with its characters involved and the pages where this can be read. This phase will utilize Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory. A table is used to present the following data that comprises the Theme, Textual Evidence, Family System Concepts, and Intricate Family Dynamics.

With the final phase, a free-verse poem is written that contains pieces of details from the novel and carries out its results. This is a creative write back in response to the literary masterpiece to express the researchers' interpretation of the piece.

Moreover, the strictly adheres to the ethical considerations, confidentiality, risks, benefits, and notification in case of research inquiry.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter provides an extensive analysis and discussion on the findings of the study. The discourse examines the implications of the findings, thereby making connections to existing literature and offering insightful analysis on theory, practice, and future research in the field.

A. Character Analysis

The characters from the novel *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* possess distinct characteristics that reflect the concepts of the family system, highlighting the presence of intricate family dynamics in the story. The following page contains a table of the character analysis.

Focusing on the protagonist's characterization, Lea, a dynamic character who transforms within a narrative (Chesson, 2022) is portrayed as an empowered woman who is self-sufficient and capable of making her own decisions. She embodies the image of a modern woman during a time when women were still facing prejudice, despite the introduction of

radical and progressive ideas in society. Her independence reflects several aspects of differentiation of self, as she maintains her identity. As defined, differentiation of self is the capacity to function independently of a group, such as family members in an emotional unit, and to maintain one's sense of identity (Top Counseling Schools, n.d.). Lea takes full responsibility for her beliefs, emotions, and actions. Defying social conventions and expectations, she takes proactive steps to create the life she desires, instead of blaming others for her circumstances. Her strong sense of belief and conception about how she should live reflects her role as a supportive mother, where she often encourages and willingly allows her children to explore the world and expand their horizons, while also adhering to disciplined and appropriate decisions that mold them into better individuals. She believes everyone is their own person, and everyone can make their own decision, hence giving her children the freedom to choose to whom they would want to live after her separation from her husbands.

Another characterization of Lea is her being sexually liberated, which is a manifestation of her distinctive character and independence. She refuses to let conventions of society or views of others define or control how she interacts with men and navigates their relationships on her terms. It reflects her ability to maintain a sense of self and autonomy, as she refuses to rely on other people for approval or fulfillment, taking ownership of her own emotions and desires. However, being independent and sexually liberated led to the intricacies of her family dynamics; specifically, it resulted in stepfamilies where two people get married or move in together and start a new family with kids from separate biological parents (Mind Help, 2024). The process of Lea integrating into the stepfamily poses obstacles due to her independence and sexual liberation. Her strong sense of independence and self-reliance could be at odds with the dynamics or expectations of the family, causing tensions or conflicts while everyone adjusts to their new roles and relationships. As a result of Lea's sexual liberation, the stepfamily's co-parenting dynamics are more complicated. In the narrative, her children within the stepfamily struggle with their understanding of the unconventional relationship within their family unit, which leads to confusion, emotional insecurity, and impacting their sense of belonging.

Another significant character in the novel is Lea's legal and ex-husband, Raffy, who is characterized as a dominant husband and negligent father, a static character that never changes in the narrative (Chesson, 2022). Triangles and emotional cut-off are evident in Raffy's avoidance or repression of uncomfortable

Table 1
Character analysis

Characters	Characterization	Family Systems Theory Concept	Intricate Family Dynamics
Lea	Independent Woman Supportive Mother Sexually Liberated	Differentiation of Self	Stepfamily Co-Parenting Relationship
Raffy	Dominant Negligent Ambitious	Triangles Emotional Cut-off Differentiation of Self	Separate Parent Family Dynamics
Ding	Short-tempered Unfaithful	Family Projection Process Emotional Cut-Off	Step Family
Ojie	Dependent Rebellious	Differentiation of Self Sibling Position	Extended Family Sibling Relationship
Maya	Seeking Identity	Sibling Position	Step Family

feelings, such as guilt and insecurity for not fulfilling Lea's desire and expectations of him. Given Raffy's dominant personality, which manifested throughout his marriage with Lea, their union deteriorated, as both of them share a similar perspective on their careers but do not have a compatible view on a relationship that is founded on cooperation and compromise. His pride as a man was aggrieved and further prevailed when he learned Lea betrayed him with Ding, which resulted in their separation. Raffy's dominant personality reflects the concept of traits in Bowen's Family System Theory of Triangles. Triangles are emotional triangles that develop inside families as a result of interpersonal tensions or conflicts. These triangles can give rise to power struggles or alliances that have the potential to perturb the system's overall stability and balance (The Bowen Center, n.d.-b). On the other hand, the concept of emotional cut-off is when a person has an unhealthy relationship with other people and they choose to cut-off emotional communication with them (Top Counseling Schools, 2023).

Raffy's emotional cut-off with Lea further resulted in his negligence in fulfilling his paternal obligation to Ojie, negatively affecting the dynamics of separated parent families as a whole and straining his co-parenting relationships with Lea. His inability to perform his parental responsibilities negatively impacts Ojie's well-being since it leads to the child feeling insecure and neglected, which causes emotional distress and instability in the family dynamic. Another characterization of Raffy is him being ambitious, which reflects the concept of differentiation of self. Ambition can be interpreted as an expression of autonomy and uniqueness, characteristics attributed to a well-differentiated self. The intricacies of family dynamics are impacted by Raffy's ambition in several ways. As a separated parent, his ability to effectively cohabit with his ex-wife Lea and handle the challenges of shared parenting is impacted by his focus on his desires and ambitions. His ambitious objectives demand a lot of time and effort, thereby diverting away from his involvement in his child's life, which made Ojie feel as though he was being neglected and abandoned.

When it comes to Lea's live-in partner, Ding, who is characterized as a short-tempered person and a static character, reflects the intricacies of family dynamics. Ding's volatile personality and short temper are a result of unresolved emotional problems in both his family of origin and himself. Family projection is the process by which people project their emotional difficulties or unresolved disputes onto family members. This projection frequently takes the shape of dysfunctional behaviors or communication styles (Galloway, 2022). It is evident how the stepfamily dynamic is strained and tense due to Ding's volatile behavior and short temper. A hostile or unstable home environment resulted from his inability to control his emotions and communicate effectively, which led to arguments with his partner, Lea, and projecting his frustrations or emotions towards the children. His personality affected his ability to effectively cohabit with Lea and navigate relationships with his child and stepchild. Moreover, Ding is also portrayed as unfaithful, which reflects the patterns of

behavior in emotional cut-off. By cutting off, people run the risk of making new relationships and developing into more dependent on others to meet their needs when they try to defuse tensions in family interactions (The Bowen Center, n.d.-c). Ding's infidelity to Lea reflects his attempts to escape managing more serious emotional problems or relationship vulnerabilities, trying to find fulfillment outside of his relationship with Lea. He takes this behavior as a coping mechanism for emotions of discontent that he can't express in the context of their relationship.

Another characteristic of Ding is being dependent on his mother, or one could claim him as being a "Mama's boy," which reflects a lower level of differentiation of self. Individuals who lack a strong sense of self-differentiation rely so much on other people's acceptance and approval that they either rapidly change their thoughts, words, and behaviors in order to please others (The Bowen Center, n.d.-d). In this case, Ding depends on his mother so much to the extent that his needs, wants, and expectations from his mother are entwined with his sense of identity and autonomy. He finds it difficult to set up sound boundaries and to stand up for his needs and wants without consulting his mother. Extended family dynamics, which consist of relatives within the family clan and do not necessarily live together but typically live close with one another (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024), are greatly impacted by Ding's reliance on his mother, especially when it comes to intergenerational relationships and behavioral patterns inside the family unit.

Delving into the rebellious character trait of the oldest child, Ojie, who is Lea and Raffy's son and Maya's stepbrother. Living with his stepfamily, Ojie's rebellious behavior is influenced by his position in the family's sibling position. In Bowen's theory, the core idea is that significant traits are consistently shared by individuals who grow up in the same sibling position. However, in this case, Ojie and Maya are step-siblings (The Bowen Center, n.d.-e). His rebellious actions are an expression of his attempts to establish his individuality and sense of belongingness in the family, especially in regards to his younger sister Maya. The need for approval and attention from his family may also be the root cause of Ojie's rebellion.

As the youngest child, Maya's position within the sibling hierarchy influences her approach to identity formation and familial relationships. Maya's adjustment and acceptance into the stepfamily dynamic are influenced by her struggle for identity in the context of the stepfamily. Stepchildren are likely to be apprehensive about the impending changes and how they will affect their relationships with their biological parents and step siblings (Robinson, 2024). Being the youngest child, Maya faces particular challenges when interacting with her stepbrother, Ojie, especially when she feels subordinate to him or finds it difficult to assert her own identity in the blended family. Navigating through the intricacies of their family dynamics, Ojie and Maya's characterization reflects the impact of being in a complex familial relationship. Having different fathers and dealing with the complications within their family unit led the children to face challenges beyond their control, which resulted in a negative impact on their sense of

individuality.

As a result, the characters within the direct and step family relationships in *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* exhibit distinct characterizations that reflect various concepts of family systems theory, resulting in the presence of intricate family dynamics. Through the lens of family systems theory, the novel provides insights into the impact of individual behaviors and relationships on the overall functioning of the family unit, shedding light on the intricacies of familial bonds and dynamics.

The intricate family dynamics in the characters are stepfamily, co-parenting relationship, divorced parent family dynamics, extended family, and sibling relationship.

B. Conflict Analysis

Table 2 exhibits the scrutinization of the conflict and indicates that children's emotional wellness when confronted with the strains and tensions of marital discord within both primary and blended family relationships reveals various component processes which strengthen the meaning of conflict and the existence of intricate family dynamics.

The first situation of man vs. man conflict is the mix-blood familial connection between Lea's children. Ojie and Maya face an emotional security and internal representations that play an important role in their adjustment to conflict. This component process addresses the cognitive and attachment factors that influence children's internal representations based on their primary assessment of the threat and self-relevance of conflict (Cummings & Miller-Graff, 2015). Thus, the siblings' relationship proves that the intricacies of their family dynamics is evident.

The second situation of the same type of conflict is the intense marital dispute between Lea and Ding that greatly affects the emotional stability of the children. Tension arises when Ding discovers that Lea and Raffy, Ojie's biological father, hugged. Ojie and Maya become unwilling observers to their parents' conflict, witnessing firsthand the consequences of their destructive relationship resulting in another component process which is the emotional security and children's regulation of their own emotional arousal. Repeated exposure to detrimental marital conflict may cause heightened emotional reactivity, encouraging adjustment issues (Cummings & Miller-Graff, 2015). The extended family system is an addition that there is an intricate dynamic within the family.

The third situation under man vs. man of the same component

process is the family disharmony which immensely causes distress to the children in terms of their emotions and decision-making. Interadult conflict causes poor emotional and physiological reactivity in children (Davies, Martin, & Sturge-Apple, 2016). Children's reaction to interadult anger leaves them feeling adrift, worried, angry, and sad about their future. The separation of the spouses is an intricacy of their family called separate parent family dynamic.

The fourth man vs. man situation is the interruption of Maya during interparental conflict in an attempt to regulate her parents' emotions by misbehaving. Children, for example, may interrupt interparental arguments by misbehaving (e.g., becoming angry or crying), thereby diverting the parents' attention away from their disagreement and onto a less significant punishment issue (Cummings & Miller-Graff, 2015). This type of family dynamics can be associated with co-parenting relationships where parents go through their children's needs and demands.

The fifth man vs. man situation occurs when Ding's altercation with Maya arises from Maya's reckless disclosure of information. In connection to the situation, emotional security and children's regulation of their own emotional arousal is linked to examine the high levels of alertness and arousal deplete psychological energy, competing for the resources needed for a child to properly moderate emotions and actions (Cummings & Miller-Graff, 2015). This happens because of the separate parent family dynamics that they have, increasing the attendance of intricacies.

The last situation deals with Ojie's internal conflict leading him to rebel against his mother. Emotional security and internal representations are attachments that are believed to impact children's internal representations or working models of themselves and their social context. As a result, children's emotions may reflect not just the immediate environment of interparental conflict, but also affective and cognitive representations influenced by previous experiences (Davies, Martin, & Sturge-Apple, 2016). With this, the situation indicates the intricacies of going through a separate parent family dynamic placing a child in the tough situation of having to cope with two separate family systems.

Sibling relationships, extended family system, divorced parent family dynamic, and co-parenting relationships are the complexities of the family dynamics in the novel.

Table 2
Conflict analysis

Conflict	Situation	Component Processes	Meaning	Intricate Family Dynamics
Man vs. Man	Mix-blood familial connection	Emotional security & internal representations	Threat and self-relevance of conflict	Sibling Relationships
	Intense marital dispute	Emotional security & children's regulation of their own emotional arousal	Heightened emotional reactivity	Extended Family System
	Family disharmony	Emotional security & children's regulation of their own emotional arousal	Children's reaction to inter adult anger	Separate Parent Family Dynamic
	Interrupted interparental conflict	Children's attempts to regulate marital emotions	Misbehaving	Co-Parenting Relationships
	Ding's altercation with Maya's attitude	Emotional security & children's regulation of their own emotional arousal	Dysregulation of child's behaviors	Separate Parent Family Dynamic
Man vs. Himself	Ojie's rebellion	Emotional security & internal representations	Poor adjustments	Separate Parent Family Dynamic

C. Theme Analysis

The third phase accentuated the themes, where they are corroborated and scrutinized by lines, dialogue, and actions by the characters using Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory. A table is used to present the following data.

Table 3
Theme analysis

Theme	Textual Evidence	Family System Concepts	Intricate Family Dynamics
Primary Parent Struggles	Chapter 4, Paragraphs 3-4, Lines 4-6, & Page 37-39		Cohabiting Relationship and Uninvolved
	Chapter 29, Paragraph 50, Lines 4-6, & Page 187	Differentiation of Self	
	Chapter 26, Paragraph 16, Lines 3-4, & Page 169		
	Chapter 9, Paragraph 19, Lines 1-5, & Page 72		Parent-Child Relationship
	Chapter 18, Paragraph 40, Lines 1-5, & Page 124	Emotional Cut-Off and Family Projection Process	
	Chapter 13, Paragraph 10, Line 1, & Page 96		Cohabiting Relationship
	Chapter 13, Paragraph 13, Lines 1-5, & Page 97	Nuclear Family Process	
	Chapter 13, Paragraph 15, Line 1, & Page 97		
	Chapter 24, Paragraph 48, Lines 1-3, & Page 140	Nuclear Family Process, Family Projection Process, and Emotional Cut-Off	Co-parenting and Cohabiting Relationships
	Chapter 18, Paragraph 56, Lines 1-5, & Page 120		Parent-Child Relationship and Authoritative
Defying Gender Norms And Expectations	Chapter 10, Paragraph 30, Lines 1-3, & Page 78	Differentiation of Self	
	Chapter 5, Paragraph 70, Lines 4-6, & Page 40		
	Chapter 18, Paragraph 27, Lines 1-5, & Page 123	Family Projection Process	
	Chapter 22, Paragraph 15, Lines 1-3, & Page 152		
	Chapter 5, Paragraph 14, Line 2, & Pages 44-45	Differentiation of Self	Dysfunctional
	Chapter 25, Paragraph 86, Lines 1-2, & Page 167		
	Chapter 7, Paragraph 49 & Paragraph 51, Lines 1-3 & Line 4, & Pages 60-62		Competitive and Communal Relationships
	Chapter 13, Paragraph 5, Lines 6, & Page 96		Communal Relationship
	Chapter 31, Paragraph 5, Line 5, and Page 195		Competitive Relationship
	Generational Disagreements	Chapter 1, Paragraph 26, Lines 2-5, & Page 14	Family Projection Process
Chapter 3, Paragraph 20, Lines 3-6, & Page 34		Differentiation of Self	Communal
Chapter 31, Paragraph 34, Lines 2-4, & Pages 197-198			
Chapter 12, Paragraph 29, Lines 1-5, & Page 92			Authoritative
Chapter 15, Paragraph 53, Lines 1-5, & Page 109			Authoritarian
Chapter 4, Paragraph 47, Lines 3-4, & Page 40			
Chapter 29, Paragraph 74, Lines 4-5, & Page 189			Parent-Child Relationship and Authoritative
Chapter 14, Paragraph 41-42, Lines 3-4 & 1-4, & Page 102-103			
Chapter 14, Paragraph 26, Lines 1-5, & Page 101			
Chapter 29, Paragraph 92, Line 4, & Page 190			

Primary parent struggles, defying gender norms and expectations, and generational disagreements are the themes that are evident in the novel. These recurring themes reflect the concept of family systems, which amplify the presence of intricate family dynamics. The complexity of family dynamics in the novel *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* is evident in the fact that, despite Lea cohabiting with Ding and co-parenting with Raffy simultaneously, her role as the primary parent is emphasized throughout the narrative, highlighting her experience of raising their children alone.

In chapter 4, paragraph 3, line 4, and page 37 and paragraph 14, lines 3-4, and page 39, depicts the common struggle of a mother, balancing her obligation as a parent and her life as a careerwoman. In Lea's case of being a primary parent, these excerpts portray Lea as occupied, being challenged to balance her priorities, relying on her children's capability to be independent given that Ding is absent to take part in overseeing the children. Lea's ability to multi-task as a parent and careerwoman shows her well-differentiated self, where she recognized her realistic dependence on others but remained composed in the face of conflict to carefully assess her decisions (The Bowen Center, n.d.-d). This indicates the family dynamics of Lea and Ding's cohabiting relationship as uninvolved with Ding's lack of initiative to cater his role as a father to Ojie and Maya and as a husband to Lea. Uninvolved

family dynamics include distant family members who are often unavailable, where they display a lack of interest and support driven by their indifference (Anderson, 2023). Despite their cohabiting relationship, Lea was aware that Ding was not proud and felt ashamed of their marriage being a common law, as revealed by Lea in their confrontation in chapter 29, paragraph 50, lines 4-6, and page 187.

Given that Ding is stagnant to cater the role of father to both Ojie and Maya, and Raffy is not available to serve his role as a father figure to Ojie, Lea's role as a father was highlighted during the time Ojie needed a father's support to offer emotional assistance. There were two instances when Lea's role as a primary parent to Ojie was underlined: when Ojie had his circumcision and when Ojie revealed that he cannot join the investiture of the boy scout because Raffy cannot attend. In both events, the differentiation of self of the mother and the emotional cut-off and family projection process of the child towards her mother were underlined. In this case, the parent-child relationship between Lea and Ojie was constrained, emphasizing that parenthood has become a stressor for Lea as it highly demands her time, causes her to feel stressed, and diminishes her well-being as Ojie was still a child and demands more time and care (Thomas *et al.*, 2017).

However, despite her effort to fill the role of father to Ojie, her son still sees it as insufficient. In chapter 18, paragraph 40, lines 1-5, and page 124, Ojie lamented his insecurity of not having his biological father, Raffy, on his side. The emotional cut-off Ojie projected to Lea prior to his frustration for not having his father around was observed after Ojie had his vacation with Raffy, condemning his mother for not having his father assist him because they have separated, hence causing him to rebel. In the context of Bowen's theory emotional cut-off concept, people who are projecting emotional cut-off were vulnerable to pressuring the people around them to meet their expectations to not risk the relationship they share with other people (The Bowen Center, n.d.-c). Additionally, Ojie's projection of his frustration onto Lea exemplifies the concept of the family projection process. This dynamic can occur among various family members, often involving a blamer and one who accepts the blame, particularly those who are more vulnerable (Galloway, 2022).

Additionally, Lea was not only a primary parent to Ojie but also to Maya, fulfilling her role as the child's mother even during work hours. In the entirety of Chapter 13, the cohabitation between Lea and Ding is starting to deteriorate, affecting how Maya is cared for. This is apparent with Ding's rant to Lea in chapter 13, paragraph 10, line 1, and page 96, that Lea is managing her time well in being a wife and a mother. The deteriorating union between Lea and Ding throughout the chapter exemplifies the concept of the nuclear family emotional process, where four patterns influence conflicts within a family. The behavior and perceptions of individuals regarding relationships significantly impact these patterns, with the emotional system serving as the primary force driving them apart (The Bowen Center, n.d.-f). In the confrontation between Lea and Ding, all four patterns manifest. The first pattern, marital conflict, is initiated by Ding, which Lea attempts to

ignore. This further encourages Ding to pressure Lea, leading to the second pattern: dysfunction of the spouse. When Ding notices Lea's continued unresponsiveness to his complaints, he expresses anxiety about Maya's well-being, escalating to the third pattern, impairment of one or more children. Finally, the last pattern, emotional distance, occurs as Lea gives up on engaging with Ding's complaints.

Throughout chapter 13, Maya's exposure to her parents' argument serves as a warning to her that they might separate, impacting her emotional well-being, jeopardizing her views on familial values, and becoming her projection for her tactless behavior. In the given passages in chapter 13, Lea and Ding forgot to consider that Maya might be observing them, further adapting their volatile communication as exemplified in her tactless expression in chapter 2, paragraph 27, line 1, and page 24. The given occasion indicates that Maya acquired her tactless behavior from her parents, encapsulating the concept of multigenerational transmission processes.

Moreover, the indifference between Lea and Raffy's co-parenting and the conflicted cohabitation between Lea and Ding became more apparent when Ojie and Maya had an accident, emphasizing the situational irony of Lea taking all the blame for Raffy and Ding's shortcomings in fulfilling their roles as fathers. In chapter 24, paragraph 48, lines 1-3, and on page 161, Raffy and Ding collaborated against Lea to protest her parenting style. This ironic occurrence, where both her ex-husband and live-in partner blame her for their shortcomings, exemplifies various concepts in Bowen's family systems theory. Ding's blaming of Lea for the children's accident was regarded as manifestations of two patterns within the nuclear family emotional process—marital conflict and spouse dysfunction. Meanwhile, Raffy's blaming of Lea can be viewed through the lens of the family projection process, where his concerns for the children are projected onto Lea—just as Ding does. Raffy and Ding's reasons for blaming Lea stem from their emotional cutoff from her. Raffy cuts Lea off as he is starting a new family with Elinor, while Ding distances himself from Lea due to his jealousy from Raffy and his own infidelity towards Lea.

Further, with Raffy's poor performance of co-parenting and Ding's stagnant cohabiting, Lea asserted her dual figure of being a father and mother, a primary parent, in chapter 18, paragraph 56, lines 1-5, and page 125, exemplifying her strong self-differentiation. Lea's role as a primary parent incorporates her views and parenting style, particularly in raising her children. The protective and nurturing nature of Lea as a mother contrasts with her supportive nature in letting her children experience opportunities of growth. In chapter 5, paragraph 70, lines 4-6, and page 49, Lea discussed that she refused to raise her children cowardly. Additionally, aside from her contrasting nature of being protective and supportive, her nature as a disciplinarian was also unmistakable. In chapter 18, paragraph 34-35, lines 1-4 and 1, and page 123, Lea unintentionally slapped Ojie due to Ojie's sarcastic retort. However, aside from this single event of her harsh discipline to Ojie, Lea is more verbal disciplinarian. In chapter 18, paragraph 27, lines 1-5, and page 123, Lea reprimanded Ojie about gambling, instilling in him the danger of gambling addiction. Moreover, Lea's role as

primary parent has instilled effective and valuable insights for Maya and Ojie, as they chose to be under her care instead of choosing to be under their father's custody.

On the other hand, Lea does not only seek acknowledgement for sexual needs and being in a romantic relationship but also emphasizes her needs to develop and cultivate her identity, not just as a mother and wife but also as an individual with a profession. In chapter 7, paragraph 49, lines 1-3, page 61, Lea asserted that she also has a vocation to follow, dismissing the traditional idea and maternal role of providing a child to her husband and tending their home in the same chapter, paragraph 55, lines 1, page 62. Lea's strong self-differentiation as a career-oriented individual implies that her family dynamics with Raffy are both communal and competitive, as she believes she has purposes beyond motherhood. However, due to Raffy's dominance, their family dynamics became competitive, as they held differing views on how to make their marriage work, ultimately leading to their separation. With Lea's strong career orientation as illustrated by her resiliency after her legal separation from Raffy, it is no longer surprising that she doesn't depend on him in regards to financial assistance in raising Ojie. Additionally, during the time Lea and Ding have been cohabiting, there is at least a similarity that built a connection between them—their obligation as parents. However, it was only a short-lived connection with their toxic and unhealthy union, and the obligation of being a father on Ding's part started to be less practiced. Chapter 13, paragraph 3, lines 6, and pages 96 shows that their cohabitation was communal, where a sense of equality manifested and they considered each other's perspectives when it came to rules and challenges (Anderson, 2023).

In chapter 14, paragraphs 45-60, and pages 103-104, Lea both gave Ojie the advantages and disadvantages of choosing her and Raffy. In chapter 29, paragraphs 91, lines 1-2, and page 190, Lea explained to Maya that despite choosing their fathers over her, she will forever be their mother. In both events, the family dynamics of the parent-child relationship helped Ojie and Maya decide to remain under the care of their mother, as Lea displayed the authoritative dynamics of their family through the positive reinforcement of parenting, where she let the children have the freedom to choose whose custody they preferred. Although, despite her unspeakable desire to have custody over her children, she still expresses her ideas that support women having a strong influence over their child custody throughout the narrative. In chapter 6, paragraph 71, lines 3-4, and pages 55, Lea expressed her dismay over the prejudices of the legality of having a child out of wedlock. Her strong radical ideas that endorse the mothers' rights to claim custody over their children highlight her mother's instinct of being a nurturing mother, suggesting her strong belief that mothers' have more capability in taking care of their children and further exemplifying the dynamics of parent-child relationships.

With Lea's characterization as sexually liberated, career-oriented, financially independent, an equal parental responsibility advocate, and being resilient, the recurring theme of defying the gender norms in society has become more

apparent through her well-developed self-differentiation character. Lea's well-developed self-difference further introduced another theme: aside from defying the gender norms in society, she also illustrates generational disagreements, shifting the conventional ideologies established by the society into a radical one.

Consequently, the literary proof is found in the ties between the initial and subsequent stepfamilies in *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* show unique motifs that correspond to different family systems theory principles, leading to complex family dynamics. These themes highlight the importance of familial ties as well as the challenges of navigating the complexity of mixed households. The novel sheds light on the complexities of familial alliances and dynamics by examining how individual behaviors and relationships affect the family's overall functioning through the lens of family systems theory. The complex familial relationships in the theme are parent-child relationship, authoritative and authoritarian, co-parenting and cohabiting relationship, communal and competitive, dysfunctional, and uninvolved.

D. Creative Write Back

Below is a free-verse poem that is written as a creative write back in response to the novel that carries out the result of the investigation.

Bakit?
Isang malikhaing pagtugon

Hindi isa, kun'di dalawa
ang tatay ni Ojie kay Lea.
Si Raffy na totoong tatay niya,
si Raffy na legal na asawa ni Lea;
at si Ding— si Ding na tatay rin ni Maya,
si Ding na asawa ni Lea sa kama.
"Bakit? Bakit? Bakit dalawa?"
Mga tanong ni Ojie at Maya kay Lea.
Ani naman ni Lea,
"Paglaki n'yo, saka n'yo mauunawaan
ang mga kati sa puso na kailangang kamutin,
at hindi kayang gawin ng iisang puso;
kailangangan ng kasama, kaya maigi nang dalawa."

Ngayo'y mag-isa, wala na ang dalawa;
si Raffy, si Ding, sa buhay ni Lea.
Si Raffy, sa piling ni Eleonor;
si Ding, nagpakasal sa iba!
"Bakit? Bakit? Bakit mag-isa?"
Tanong ni Ojie at Maya kay Lea.
Ani naman ni Lea,
"Paglaki n'yo, saka n'yo mauunawaan
na may kati sa puso— 'pag sobrang kinamot,
nasasaktan, nasugatan, nagdurugo.
Anong gagawin? Eh, 'di gagamutin.
At para gumaling, wag nang kakamutin."

Walang asawa, mag-isang ina

kay Ojie, kay Maya, si Lea.
Silang tatlo—sa isang "buong" pamilya.
Dahil kahit may kating naging sugat,
at mga kating wala nang kakamot;
para ki'na Ojie at Maya—
may mga kamot sa puso nilang sapat na ang hagod
ng mapagmahal ng isang inang si Lea.

The researchers believe that it is crucial to discuss topics that do not conform to our cultural norms and practices so that we can develop empathy and understanding for these kinds of situations.

4. Conclusion

As revealed in the findings of this study, it is found that Lualhati Bautista's *Bata, Bata...Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* reveals complex family dynamics. Upon the analyzation of the characters in the novel, it is found out that the intricate family dynamics in the characters are stepfamily, co-parenting relationship, separate parent family dynamics, extended family, and sibling relationship. Meanwhile, the conflict analysis reveals that sibling relationships, extended family system, separate parent family dynamic, and co-parenting relationships are the complexities of the family dynamics in the novel. Further, the complex familial relationships in the theme are parent-child relationship, authoritative and authoritarian, co-parenting and cohabiting relationship, communal and competitive, dysfunctional, and uninvolved. Understanding the intricacies of the family dynamics in the novel not only amplifies the existing studies but is also an outstanding replication of the issues inside the household. It's timely and relevant experiences of the characters, the conflict within, and the themes presented plays crucial role in shaping the significance of the study. This also sheds light for further study as well as contributing to the legal structures related to marital and familial issues, supporting the growing body of local literature. A family may be the smallest unit of the society but it holds bigger and intimate matters that are worth investigating.

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