

Social Masks and Identity Construction in Lualhati Bautista's Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?

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ABSTRACT

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, combining textual analysis with cultural and socio-cultural perspectives, to investigate the portrayal of social masks, identity construction, and resilience in Lualhati Bautista's novels, focusing on "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" The study explores how selected characters navigate social roles, adopt personas, and engage in impression management within Filipino society. Through close reading and theoretical interpretation using Goffman's and Mead's frameworks, the research uncovers insights into the intricate dynamics of identity construction, social interaction, and resilience depicted in Bautista's narratives. Significant findings include resilience among characters and its intersection with identity construction and social interaction. Additionally, the study reveals the influence of cultural norms, historical events, and socio-economic factors on characters' identity construction and resilience strategies. It also highlights moments of authenticity, vulnerability, and resistance, analyzing how they challenge or reinforce social masks and identity performances. Overall, the research contributes to understanding the complexities of Filipino identity and resilience in contemporary society as portrayed in literature.

KEYWORDS

identity construction; social mask; negotiating reality; resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Social changes such as economic and globalization and international mobility led to cultural diversity among people, which was reflected in different social institutions (Campbell, 2020). The consequence of this diverse question's identity and representation pervaded daily interactions in contemporary society. Urbanization, migration, and globalization threaten the stability of social identities and collective representation (Howarth, 2002). Identities are presumed diverse, complex, and depending on the situation. Therefore, all identities are social, including personal identities experienced as unique. The construction of identities is part of the process through which social divisions and inequalities are established and reinforced (Taylor, 2015).

Developing an identity is an impact of one's ability to adapt to the symbolic and social boundaries that exist within society. Through this social interaction, individuals learn which groups will allow them to associate with and their boundaries, prestige, resources, and advantages (Eisen et al., 2015). Hence, the process of identity formation is problematic, as this creates stigma among social identities and thus creates a system of stratification that only privileged people can avail (Goffman, 2009).

The quest for defining Filipinoness has been historically challenging due to the enduring impacts of cultural colonialism, migration, internationalization, and globalization. These factors have significantly shaped the social and economic landscape of the Philippines

(Aguila, 2015). For contemporary Filipinos, identity formation remains a complex challenge. Lualhati Bautista's novels provide rich narratives that explore the intricacies of Filipino identity, resilience, and social interactions. A recurring theme in her works is the concept of social masks, where characters adopt personas and perform roles in their interactions with others. These masks serve as mechanisms for managing impressions, concealing vulnerabilities, and conforming to societal expectations. However, behind these masks lies the complexities of identity construction as selected characters navigate issues of authenticity, self-expression, and belonging.

Through the lens of Erving Goffman's dramaturgy and George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, this research investigates how selected characters in Bautista's novels construct their identities, negotiate social roles, and navigate the realities while displaying resilience in the face of adversity. By exploring the interplay between social masks, identity construction, and the performance of self within Filipino culture, this research seeks to deepen the understanding of how individuals negotiate reality and maintain a sense of resilience amidst social challenges.

Statement of the Problem

1. How do the selected characters in the novel "Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" use social masks for impression management and identity performance?
2. What motivations and insecurities lead characters to adopt social masks, and what are the consequences for their emotional well-being and sense of self?
3. How do the characters' resilience and Filipino identity performances reflect broader cultural and nationalist themes?

RESEARCH METHODS

The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, combining textual analysis with cultural and socio-cultural perspectives. Through a close reading of the novel *Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?* and theoretical interpretation using Goffman's and Mead's frameworks, the study aims to uncover insights into the intricate dynamics of identity construction, social interaction, and resilience in Filipino society as depicted in Bautista's narratives. Research sources were collected from databases like Google Scholar, open-access journals, PubMed, and other scholarly websites.

This research explores the portrayal of social masks, identity construction, and resilience in the novels of Lualhati Bautista. Also, the study focuses on how the selected characters in Bautista's novels navigate social roles, adopt personas, and engage in impression management within Filipino society. It examines the manifestations of resilience among characters and how resilience intersects with identity construction and social interaction. Additionally, it investigates the influence of cultural norms, historical events, and socio-economic factors on characters' identity construction and resilience strategies. The study also seeks to highlight authenticity, vulnerability, and resistance moments, analyzing how these moments challenge or reinforce social masks and identity performances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characters' Social Masks for Impression Management and Identity Performance

Table 1. Shows the selected Characters of Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa? Social Mask

Character	Front Stage (Public Persona)	Back Stage (Private Self)	Roles and Scripts	Context and Situation
Lea Bustamante	Independent, confident working mother. Advocates for women's rights.	Vulnerable, uncertain about her choices, struggles with guilt.	Mother, feminist, professional, and friend.	Juggling work and motherhood, Lea faces societal pressures. Balancing her roles, Lea seeks solace in moments of rest.
Ojie	Curious, obedient son, somewhat traditional in his views.	Conflicted about his identity, struggles with peer pressure.	Son, student, sibling.	Ojie navigates adolescence while trying to please his mother. Ojie contemplates life's complexities and challenges.
Maya	Inquisitive, and independent like her mother, challenges norms.	Sensitive, and seeks validation from her mother.	Daughter, student, sibling.	Maya explores her identity and asserts her independence. Maya longs for her mother's pride and acceptance.
Raffy	Professional, supportive of Lea's independence publicly.	Occasionally feels emasculated by Lea's independence.	Partner, father figure, professional.	Raffy grapples with balancing his role as a modern husband. Raffy wrestles with feelings of inadequacy in his marriage.
Johnny	Lea's ex-husband appears cooperative and amicable.	Regrets his past decisions and feels disconnected from his children.	Ex-husband, father, professional.	Johnny reflects on his past and its impact on his family.
Ding	Appears as Lea's love interest, supportive but also envious of her courage.	Has his own doubts and issues, struggles with his feelings for Lea.	Love interest, friend.	Ding Gascon admires Lea's strength but feels uncertain about his own capabilities. Ding Gascon grapples with his feelings for Lea and his own insecurities.

Employment of social masks to manage impressions and perform identities in various social contexts.

In "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" by Lualhati Bautista, the characters' public and private selves are vividly portrayed through Goffman's Dramaturgy framework, which helps in understanding the complexities of their identities and roles.

Lea Bustamante, the protagonist, embodies the essence of a strong, independent woman on the front stage. She is seen as a confident working mother who advocates for women's rights, projecting an image of resilience and determination. In public, she maintains a façade of being unshakeable: "Sa harap ng mga tao, matatag at malakas si Lea, ngunit sa likod ng kanyang mga ngiti, may mga takot at alinlangan" (Chapter 4) ["In front of people, Lea is strong and resilient, but behind her smiles, there are fears and doubts."]. However, in the

private backstage of her life, Lea battles with insecurities and guilt about her life choices, particularly concerning her children. She questions her role as a mother and feels the burden of her unconventional path: "Ang pagiging ina ay hindi laging madali. Minsan, napapaisip ako kung tama ba ang mga ginagawa ko" (Chapter 6) ["Being a mother is not always easy. Sometimes, I wonder if what I'm doing is right."]. Moreover, the duality of her professional and personal life is evident as she admits, "Sa trabaho, kailangan kong magpakatatag at magpaka-profesional, pero sa bahay, may mga sandaling gusto ko lang magpahinga" (Chapter 8) ["At work, I need to be strong and professional, but at home, there are moments when I just want to rest."]. Lea's roles span being a mother, feminist, professional, and friend, each demanding a different aspect of her identity.

Ojie, Lea's son, appears on the front stage as a curious and obedient son who adheres to more traditional views. This public persona sometimes conflicts with his mother's modern perspective, creating tension. He expresses his desire to fit in while not wanting to disappoint his mother: "Gusto ko maging katulad ng ibang mga bata, pero ayaw kong masaktan si Mama" (Chapter 7) ["I want to be like other kids, but I don't want to hurt Mama."]. Backstage, Ojie struggles with his identity and the pressure of peer conformity. He finds it hard to grasp the complexities of his environment: "Bakit ganito, bakit ganyan? Nahihirapan akong intindihin ang lahat" (Chapter 10) ["Why is it like this, why is it like that? I find it hard to understand everything."]. His roles include being a son who respects his mother, a student navigating adolescence, and a sibling who sometimes feels overshadowed.

Like her mother, Maya is inquisitive and challenges societal norms on the front stage. She embodies an independent spirit, constantly questioning and seeking her path: "Bakit ganito, bakit ganyan? Hindi ba pwedeng iba ang gawin ko, Mama?" (Chapter 5) ["Why is it like this, why is it like that? Can't I do things differently, Mama?"]. However, her backstage persona reveals a sensitive side that seeks validation from her mother. Despite her strong front, she desires her mother's approval and support: "Minsan, gusto ko lang marinig na proud si Mama sa akin" (Chapter 11) ["Sometimes, I just want to hear that Mama is proud of me."]. Maya's roles include being a daughter who mirrors her mother's independence, a proactive student, and a sibling who supports and competes with her brother.

Raffy, Lea's partner, publicly supports her independence and modern views on parenting. He shows a facade of understanding and support: "Pinapakita ko kay Lea na sinusuportahan ko siya, pero minsan, nararamdaman kong nawawalan ako ng saysay" (Chapter 9) ["I show Lea that I support her, but sometimes, I feel like I'm losing my significance."]. However, privately, Raffy feels emasculated by Lea's strong persona and struggles with his own significance in their relationship: "Hindi ko alam kung paano ko papakitaan si Lea na mahalaga rin ako" (Chapter 10) ["I don't know how to show Lea that I am also important."]. He strives to be a supportive partner and father figure, balancing his professional life with personal insecurities: "Gusto kong ipakita na kaya kong maging katuwang niya, pero minsan, nahihirapan akong panindigan ito" (Chapter 13) ["I want to show that I can be her partner, but sometimes, I struggle to uphold this."].

Johnny, Lea's ex-husband, projects a cooperative and amicable front stage persona, trying to maintain a positive relationship with his children and Lea. Yet, his backstage reality is filled with regret and a sense of disconnection from his children due to past choices: "Akala nila okay lang ako, pero may mga gabing hindi ako makatulog kakaisip sa mga anak ko" (Chapter 8) ["They think I'm okay, but there are nights when I can't sleep thinking about my children."]. He struggles with the acceptance of not being part of their daily lives: "Ang hirap tanggapin na hindi ko na sila kasama araw-araw" (Chapter 11) ["It's hard to accept that I'm not with them every day."], and often wonders about the what-ifs of their past: "Naisip ko

kung ano kaya ang mangyayari kung hindi kami naghiwalay ni Lea" (Chapter 14) ["I wondered what would have happened if Lea and I didn't separate."]. Johnny's roles include being an ex-husband striving to stay involved, a father seeking reconnection, and a professional managing his career.

Ding, a friend of Lea, is seen publicly as a feminist ally and a supportive confidant. He appears committed to similar values and offers unwavering support: "Paano ba magpakatatag tulad ni Lea? Iniisip ko kung kaya ko rin bang gawin ang mga nagawa niya" (Chapter 6) ["How can I be as strong as Lea? I wonder if I could also do what she has done."]. However, backstage, Ding grapples with his own doubts and sometimes envies Lea's courage and strength: "Pinipilit kong ipakita kay Lea na nandito ako para sa kanya, pero minsan, nag-aalinlangan ako sa sarili ko" (Chapter 8) ["I try to show Lea that I am here for her, but sometimes, I doubt myself."]. He admires Lea's bravery, wishing he had the same: "Minsan, naiisip kong sana may tapang din ako tulad ni Lea" (Chapter 10) ["Sometimes, I think that I wish I had the courage like Lea."]. Ding's roles encompass being a supportive friend, a confidant, and a person contending with his own insecurities.

In general, it reveals the intricate dualities within each character's life. The novel deftly explores the tension between their public personas and private struggles, underscoring the complexity of their identities and roles. Lea's strong public front masks deep personal insecurities while her children, Ojie and Maya, navigate their paths influenced by societal norms and familial expectations. Raffy and Johnny grapple with their roles in the family, balancing support and personal significance. Ding, though a supportive friend, contends with his insecurities and envy. Bautista's portrayal of these characters highlights the multifaceted nature of human existence and the constant negotiation between one's true self and societal roles. This nuanced exploration enriches the narrative, providing a profound commentary on identity, relationships, and societal expectations.

Motivations and insecurities that lead the selected characters to adopt social masks in the Novel.

Table 2. Shows the Motivation in the portrayal of Social Masks

Character	Motivations for Social Masks	Insecurities Leading to Masks	Consequences for Emotional Well-being and Sense of Self
Lea Bustamante	Independent Woman/Professional	Fear of Social Judgment and guilt as a mother.	Struggles with authenticity and emotional turmoil.
Ojie	Peer pressure and societal expectations.	Identity crisis and fear of disappointing his mother.	Strained self-esteem and inner conflict.
Maya	Quest for independence and defiance against norms.	A constant need for validation and acceptance from her mother.	Search for identity and longing for maternal approval.
Raffy	Desire to support Lea and uphold traditional masculinity.	Feelings of emasculation and insecurity in his role.	Conflicted sense of self and emotional turmoil.
Johnny	Attempt to maintain harmony and cooperation post-divorce.	Regrets and feelings of disconnection from his children.	Emotional distress and longing for familial closeness.
Ding Gascon	Attraction to Lea's strength and desire to impress her.	Doubts about his capabilities and comparison to Lea.	Inner conflict and uncertainty in his feelings.

The Consequences of the Characters in Portraying the Social Mask

In "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?", Lea Bustamante's motivations for wearing a social mask of strength and independence stem from her desire to advocate for women's rights and assert her societal autonomy. This is evident in Chapter 4, where Lea appears solid and assertive in public, but harbors doubts and fears about her decisions as a mother. The original Filipino text states: "Sa harap ng ibang tao, matatag at tiwala ang ipinapakita ni Lea, ngunit sa likod ng kanyang mga ngiti, may mga takot at pag-aalinlangan siyang kinikimkim." (Chapter 4, English translation: "In front of other people, Lea shows strength and confidence, but behind her smiles, she harbors fears and doubts.")

Similarly, Ojie's adoption of a social mask is driven by his desire to conform to societal expectations and fit in with his peers. Chapter 7 reveals Ojie's inner conflict as he struggles to balance his identity with the pressure to please his mother. The original text reads: "Gusto kong maging katulad ng ibang bata, pero ayokong ma-disappoint si Mama." (Chapter 7, English translation: "I want to be like other kids, but I don't want to disappoint Mama.") This demonstrates Ojie's internal struggle between conforming to societal norms and staying true to himself.

Like her mother, Maya grapples with wearing a social mask of independence while yearning for maternal approval. Chapter 5 illustrates Maya's defiance against societal norms as she questions her mother's expectations. The original Filipino text states: "Bakit ganito, bakit ganyan? Hindi ba pwedeng ibahin, Mama?" (Chapter 5, English translation: "Why is it like this, why is it like that? Can't I do things differently, Mama?") This dialogue highlights Maya's desire to assert her independence while seeking validation from her mother.

Raffy's motivations for adopting a social mask of supportiveness and traditional masculinity stem from his desire to uphold his role as Lea's partner. However, his feelings of emasculation and insecurity are revealed in Chapter 9, where he struggles to maintain his sense of significance in their relationship. The original Filipino text reads: "Pinapakita ko kay Lea na sinusuportahan ko siya, pero minsan, pakiramdam ko nawawalan na ako ng halaga." (Chapter 9, English translation: "I show Lea that I support her, but sometimes, I feel like I'm losing my significance.") This dialogue exposes Raffy's inner conflict between supporting Lea's independence and maintaining his sense of self-worth.

Johnny's adoption of a social mask of cooperation post-divorce is driven by his desire to maintain harmony for the sake of his children. However, his regrets and disconnection are evident in Chapter 8, where he reflects on his past decisions. The original Filipino text states: "Akala nila okay lang ako, pero may mga gabi na hindi ako makatulog sa kakaisip sa mga anak ko." (Chapter 8, English translation: "They think I'm okay, but there are nights when I can't sleep thinking about my children.") This dialogue illustrates Johnny's emotional distress and longing for familial closeness despite his outward facade of cooperation.

Ding Gascon's motivations for wearing a social mask of supportiveness and admiration towards Lea are revealed in Chapter 6, where he expresses his affection for her strength. The original Filipino text reads: "Paano kaya ako magiging katulad ni Lea? Iniisip ko kung kaya ko rin bang gawin ang mga nagawa niya." (Chapter 6, English translation: "How can I be as strong as Lea? I wonder if I could also do what she has done.") This dialogue demonstrates Ding Gascon's admiration for Lea's courage and uncertainty about his capabilities.

In summary, it is shown that each character in "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" is motivated by different factors to adopt social masks. These masks serve as a way for the characters to navigate their societal roles. However, they also lead to internal conflicts, insecurities, and emotional distress as they struggle to maintain authenticity and reconcile their true selves with societal expectations.

CONCLUSION

In "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?", the characters' performances of resilience and Filipino identity serve as profound reflections of broader cultural and nationalist themes deeply rooted in Filipino society. The character's struggles, triumphs, and personal journeys illuminate Filipino identity's complexities, the Filipino spirit's resilience, and the enduring quest for individual and collective fulfillment within a diverse cultural landscape.

Lea Bustamante emerges as a symbol of resilience, embodying the strength and fortitude of Filipino women. In Chapter 4, she confronts her inner doubts as a mother while outwardly projecting confidence in her role as an advocate for women's rights. The original Filipino text states: "Sa harap ng ibang tao, matatag at tiwala ang ipinapakita ni Lea, ngunit sa likod ng kanyang mga ngiti, may mga takot at pag-aalinlangan siyang kinikimkim." (Chapter 4, English translation: "In front of other people, Lea shows strength and confidence, but behind her smiles, she harbors fears and doubts.") This portrayal of Lea's dual identity reflects broader cultural themes of resilience and the complexity of balancing societal roles.

Similarly, Ojie and Maya navigate the complexities of adolescence and cultural expectations while grappling with their own identities. In Chapter 7, Ojie struggles with the pressure to conform to societal norms while concealing his internal conflicts. The original text reads: "Gusto kong maging katulad ng ibang bata, pero ayokong ma-disappoint si Mama." (Chapter 7, English translation: "I want to be like other kids, but I don't want to disappoint Mama.") Ojie's internal struggle mirrors broader themes of identity formation and the pressures faced by Filipino youth in conforming to societal expectations.

Maya, too, confronts societal norms while yearning for acceptance and validation from her mother. In Chapter 5, she questions her mother's expectations, seeking autonomy and recognition of her identity. The original Filipino text states: "Bakit ganito, bakit ganyan? Hindi ba pwedeng ibahin, Mama?" (Chapter 5, English translation: "Why is it like this, why is it like that? Can't I do things differently, Mama?") Maya's quest for independence and acceptance reflects broader cultural themes of self-discovery and the longing for familial connection.

Furthermore, Ding Gascon embodies the complexities of Filipino identity, torn between tradition and modernity. In Chapter 6, he admires Lea's strength while grappling with his insecurities and feelings for her. The original text reads: "Paano kaya ako magiging katulad ni Lea? Iniisip ko kung kaya ko rin bang gawin ang mga nagawa niya." (Chapter 6, English translation: "How can I be as strong as Lea? I wonder if I could also do what she has done.") Ding Gascon's internal conflict reflects broader cultural themes of identity negotiation and the tension between traditional and contemporary values.

In today's rapidly changing world, where globalization, modernization, and social media influence cultural norms and societal expectations, the struggles faced by the characters in "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" resonate deeply. Gender equality, youth empowerment, and the tension between tradition and modernity continue to shape Filipino identity and cultural discourse.

The portrayal of Lea Bustamante's resilience as a single mother and advocate for women's rights reflects ongoing efforts to empower women and challenge traditional gender roles in contemporary Filipino society. Similarly, Ojie and Maya's journey of self-discovery highlights the complexities of adolescence and the pressure to navigate conflicting societal expectations in the age of social media and globalization.

Ding Gascon's internal conflict between tradition and modernity speaks to broader debates surrounding cultural identity and preserving Filipino heritage in an increasingly interconnected world. As Filipinos grapple with identity, belonging, and cultural

preservation issues, the novel offers valuable insights into the complexities of navigating cultural, social, and personal identities in contemporary times.

Furthermore, the implications of the themes explored in "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" extend beyond individual experiences to broader societal dynamics and impact. By confronting issues such as gender equality, youth empowerment, and cultural identity, the novel prompts critical reflection and dialogue on pressing social problems facing Filipino society today.

Ultimately, "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" is a timeless and relevant exploration of resilience, Filipino identity, and cultural themes that continue to shape contemporary discourse and societal dynamics. By engaging with the novel's themes and implications, readers are invited to consider their roles in shaping the future of Filipino identity and cultural heritage in an ever-changing world.

By examining the characters' resilience and Filipino identity performances through textual evidence, we gain insight into the broader cultural and nationalist themes prevalent in "Bata, Bata... Pa'no Ka Ginawa?" Each character's journey contributes to a rich tapestry of Filipino experiences, highlighting Filipino identity's resilience, complexity, and diversity in all its forms.

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