

Young Child's and Older Adult's Voices: Dialogue in a Song

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Abstract: This paper is a review of an intergenerational song produced in the Philippines in 1980, which features a dialogue of an older adult and a young child.

Keywords: young children's voices; older adults' voices; intergenerational dialogues; protection; participation

In 1980, an intergenerational song was released in the Philippines entitled “Batang-bata Ka Pa (You Are Still Young),” performed by the APO Hiking Society as part of their 10th Year Anniversary Album. Written by Jim Paredes (1980), who is one of their band members, the song features voices of two generational perspectives—an older adult and a young child.

The song begins from the perspective of an older adult talking to a young child. The older adult, wisened by the years, gives advice to the younger one. He tells the young child that being told what to do by older ones is a part of life. The older adult reminds the younger one that he is still young and needs to listen to learn more and not act too sure of himself. To rephrase his message, he is essentially saying that life is not a paradise where one can just play around in. He is saying that life is about knowing what is right, and what is wrong, and that he is there to inform the young one of these things.

The young child responds that he is aware of his youth, but that he also has a right to figure things out on his own. Through his words, the young child says that he should be allowed to experience things first-hand, to ask questions about the truth presented to him, and to be free explore the world because this is his way of learning about life. This dialogical exchange was captured beautifully through the song lyrics which was translated to English and is presented below for better appreciation.

This song encapsulates a beautiful intergenerational dialogue of seemingly opposing perspectives of the young and the old. While one can say that the older adult's voice is tinged with patronization and/or condescension, it is a voice that should not always be considered belittling, but one of encouragement and guidance. It is a voice that is a result of years of battles, seeking to provide counsel to the younger one. It is a voice coming from the perspective of protection. On the contrary, although the young child never said that he does not want to listen, he responds that he would like to be given the opportunity to learn from experience. It is a voice appealing to be heard, as it is oftentimes silenced just because of his youth. It is a voice that takes the perspective of participation. The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989) accounts for both protection and participation. Discourses within the field of intergenerational experiences could include discussions on how to balance both for the well-being of both generations.

However, more than seeing the opposing views of generations, the song is a wonderful reminder that each generation has a voice to be sought and heard, because none is more important than the other. Including both older and younger voices in reviews of different media, may it be in the form of books, songs, films, and even in research, is highly imperative.

References:

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Table 1. Batang-Bata Ka Pa Song Lyrics and translation.

Batang-Bata Ka Pa (You Are Still Young) Performed by the APO Hiking Society Words of Jim Paredes	
In the Filipino language	Translated to English by the reviewer
<p><i>Boses ng mas nakatatanda:</i> Batang-bata ka pa at marami ka pang Kailangang malaman at intindihin sa mundo 'Yan ang totoo Nagkakamali ka kung akala mo na Ang buhay ay isang mumunting paraiso lamang Batang-bata ka lang at akala mo na Na alam mo na ang lahat na kailangan mong malaman Buhay ay 'di ganyan Tanggapin mo na lang ang katotohanan Na ikaw ay isang musmos lang na wala pang alam Makinig ka na lang Makinig ka na lang</p> <p><i>Koro ng mas nakatatanda:</i> Ganyan talaga ang buhay Lagi kang nasasabihan 'Pagkat ikaw ay bata at wala pang nalalaman Makinig ka sa 'king payo 'Pagkat musmos ka lamang At malaman ng maaga Ang wasto sa kamalian</p> <p><i>Boses ng Bata:</i> Batang-bata ako nalalaman ko 'to Inamin ko rin na kulang ang aking nalalaman At nauunawaan Ngunit kahit ganyan ang kinalalagyan Alam ko na may karapatan ang bawat nilalang Kahit bata pa man Kahit bata pa man</p> <p><i>Koro ng Bata:</i> Nais ko sanang malaman Ang mali sa katotohanan Sariling pagraranas ang aking pamamagitan Imulat ang isipan sa mga kulay ng buhay Maging tunay na malaya Sa katangi-tanging bata</p> <p><i>Sagutan:</i> Batang-bata ka pa at marami ka pang Kailangang malaman at intindihin sa mundo (Nais ko sanang malaman Ang mali sa katotohanan) Batang-bata ka lang at akala mo na Na alam mo na ang lahat na kailangan mong</p>	<p><i>Voice of Older Adult:</i> You are still young and there is still a lot that you need to learn and understand about the world That's the truth You are mistaken if you think that Life is just a small paradise You are just a young child and you already think that You already know everything you need to know Life is not like that Just accept the truth That you are only a kid who does not know anything Just listen Just listen</p> <p><i>Older Adult Chorus:</i> That's life You're always being told [what to do/what to think] Because you are a young child and don't know anything Listen to my advice Because you are just a young child So you would know early on What is right from wrong</p> <p><i>Young Child's Voice:</i> I know that I am a young child And I admit that what I know and understand is not enough But even if I am an in this state and stage I know that everybody has a right Even a young child Even a young child</p> <p><i>Young Child's Chorus:</i> I would like to know What is wrong with the truth Personal experience is my way [to learn] To open my mind and see the colors of life To be truly free To [be] a unique child</p> <p><i>Dialogue:</i> You are still young and there is still a lot that you need to learn and understand about the world (I would like to know What is wrong with the truth)</p>

<p>malaman (Sariling pagraranas Ang aking pamamagitan) Nagkakamali ka kung akala mo na Ang buhay ay isang mumunting paraiso lamang</p> <p>La la la la la La la la la la la La la la la la La la la la la la La la la la la...</p>	<p>You are just a young child and you already think that You already know everything you need to know (Personal experience is my way [to learn]) You are mistaken if you think that Life is just a small paradise</p> <p>La la la la la La la la la la la La la la la la La la la la la la La la la la la...</p>
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