Barkadahan: A study of peer group norms and values among Filipino adolescents

Jennifer Ann Lajom
De La Salle University

Nico Canoy
Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University

Rajiv Amarnani
De La Salle University

Apryl Mae Parcon
University of the Philippines-Diliman

Paula Melizza Valera
De La Salle University

Peer groups are among the most influential aspects of adolescent development. The present study is a qualitative investigation of the behaviors, norms, values, and dynamics in general of the adolescent peer group in the Filipino setting-the barkada. Four focus group discussions composed of adolescent peer group are held, two in the urban setting and two in the rural setting. Findings through thematic content analysis show that adolescents in the barkada show the following norms: revelation of true self to peers, consistency of behavior, help and protection among the peer group, and pakikisama (or smooth interpersonal relations). The values found include valuing oneself, valuing others, a sense of resolve, and trust directed both to the other and to the self. Implications in terms of adolescent identity development, personal and relational self-concept, and dynamics within the barkada are discussed.

Keywords: adolescence, identity development, peer, group norms, values, self

Participation in peer groups plays a critical role in adolescent development and experience. The significance of peer groups in human development is likely salient throughout one's lifespan, but there is reason to expect peer group interactions to most significantly influence adolescents and their growth trajectories. Adolescence, as a period, has always been a

point of significant biological, cognitive, and social development, beginning with the onset of puberty. It is this transition from childhood to adulthood when adolescents face identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). It is also during this stage when they slowly try to relinquish their dependence on parents and, instead, shift their attention to peers as their primary source of appraisal and recognition (Steinberg, 1988). Spending most of their time with their peer group allows them to experience a new sense of belonging, connection, and concern in such company (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Newman & Newman, 1976). Since this is also a time when adolescents experiment with a variety of choices, roles, identities, and behaviors, peer groups represent a normative, comparative reference by which adolescents construct and re-organize identity (Rabaglietti & Ciairano, 2008).

Dynamics of the Peer Group: Formation, Membership, and Selection

The seemingly ubiquitous quality of peer group membership in adolescence lends evidence to a sort of impetus to form and join peer groups. Baumeister and Leary (1995) expresses this dynamic in terms of the Belongingness Hypothesis, whereby "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497). The hypothesis posits that adolescents form and join peer groups because of a drive to belong-as fundamental as the drive to eat and sleep. This drive can be slaked only through recurring interactions of positive affective valence and with expected continuity. In the context of the peer group, adolescents repeatedly engage in these happy interactions, expecting these interactions to continue in the future.

There are, however, alternative hypotheses that attempt to clarify the impetus to engage in peer group interactions. Newman and Newman (1976) hypothesizes that, during adolescence, peer interactions become essential to the development of affirmative self-concept and identity. This is just as Social Identity Theory posits-a strong sense of group identification helps one to develop greater self-concept and self-esteem (Stets & Burke, 2000). In the same vein, peer group selection appears to be contingent on how esteemed one is by peers (Brown & Lohr, 1987), such that general peer approval guides specific peer group membership. This sentiment has been echoed in germinal social psychology theory. Charles Cooley's Looking Glass Self is an early sociological hypothesis stating that one's identity is borne out of perceptions of how s/he is seen by other people, a hypothesis that still finds empirical support in recent years (Cook & Douglas, 1998). Indeed,

there is evidence that the impetus to peer group membership is borne out of a need to belong and to develop self-concept and identity.

Members of peer group tend to be similar among one other in many aspects such as age, gender, physical appearance, hobbies, interest, personality, attitudes, values, and academic performance, among other things (Crandall, Schiffahauer, & Harvey, 1997; Degirmencioglu, Urgberg, Tolson, & Richard, 1998; Ellis, Rogoff & Cramer, 1981; Feingold, 1988; Ryan, 2001). The similarity-attraction hypothesis explains that when one finds similarity with a person, there is a certain attraction that comes in and when there is a certain attraction, it is most probable that one will find similarity with the other (Crandall, et al., 1997). This is the premise behind Social Categorization Theory-that peer group normative behavior strengthens similarity to other members of the peer group (Verkooijen, de Vries, & Nielsen, 2007). Increased normative behavior and similarity to the group archetype serves "to validate one's own status as a group member and to enhance group cohesion" (p.56).

Dunphy's (1963) germinal work on the structure of the urban adolescent peer group reveal that peer groups are crowds composed of two-to-four cliques such that adolescent peer groups have internal hierarchies and subgroups. Clique leaders and crowd leaders engage in reciprocal interactions and relationships. Dunphy found that the two central roles in urban adolescent crowd are held by the crowd leader who leads the social development and interactions within the group and the sociocenter who relieves tension and pressure in the group dynamics. The crowd leader and the sociocenter achieve an equilibrium that sustains the dynamics of the adolescent peer group.

Peer Groups and Psychological Outcomes

Participation in peer group dynamics has been associated with a vast range of such psychosocial benefits as greater self-esteem (Brown & Lohr, 1987), scholastic achievement (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008), adjustment (Swenson, Nordstrom, & Hiester, 2008), and positive developmental outcomes in general (Rabaglietti & Ciairanno, 2008). It can also satisfy one's need for safety and security (Newman & Newman, 2001). In particular, feelings of belongingness in a peer group are associated with reduced internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Newman, Lohman, & Newman, 2007). As previously mentioned, the inverse also applies-such that deprivation of peer interactions has been associated with depressive affect (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Indeed, while peer group interactions typically start out with activity-centered pursuits, these later reach a rather personal level where companionship and emotional support are reciprocated (Hays, 1985). Levinger and Snoek (1972, as cited in Hays, 1985) explain that as the friendship progresses, one begins to be more comfortable opening up, giving way to increased mutual concern and interdependence. Peers provide a context for expression and regulation of positive and negative emotions (Crandall, et al., 1997; Hays, 1985; La Freniere, 2000). At the same time, it provides a source of validation beyond what the family offers (La Freniere, 2000).

The adolescent peer group also serves as context in which crucial socialization can take place. These socialization and interactions within the adolescent peer group can influence academic outcomes. In a social network analysis of adolescent peer groups among American middle school students, Ryan (2001), student peer group accounts for longitudinal changes in academic performance even after controlling for mixed selection of similarly achieving friends. The students' intrinsic motivation for academic engagement is closely tied to their peer group. Furthermore, peer group affiliations can result in positive health outcomes as well. Peer group interventions have been shown to increase peer involvement in adolescents' type I diabetes care and decreased family conflict as a result of diabetes (Greco, Pendley, McDonell, & Reeves, 2001).

However, peer group interactions may also lead to greater incidence of risk behaviors like substance use and violence (Sussman, Unger, & Dent, 2004). This tendency is not consistent across peer groups. The crowd in which the peer group is contextualized better predicts the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviors. For example, affiliation with pop, skate, techno, and hippie crowds is positively associated with substance use, whereas affiliation with sporty, quiet, computer nerd, and religious crowds is negatively associated with substance use (Verkooijen, et al., 2007). In a similar vein, research has shown that both self-reported and teacher-reported ratings of antisocial behavior are positively associated with perceived peer group antisocial behavior (Laird, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 1999).

Norms, Values, and Identity

Group norms are "emergent properties of group" that are likely to arise due to regular interaction among a group of people (Wellen, Hogg, & Terry, 1998, p. 48). Interactions within a peer group crystallize a set of norms that are then internalized by peer group members, particularly so for newer

members (Macdonald, Leary, & Tangney, 2002). Peer group membership tends to be assorted according to similar individual attributes (Crandall, et al., 1997) and to be stable across wide spans of time (Degirmencioglu, et al., 1998), which may make agreement upon a set of group norms more likely to occur within a given group.

The role of peer group relations in identity development is extensive. During adolescent years, one seeks to construct an identity that is independent from the family, but defined by the peer group (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). These relationships can contribute to individual, personal identity construals and to behavior. By aligning one's identity development with group values, one achieves a greater feeling of belongingness in the peer group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Illustrating this further, longitudinal research has shown that prosocial behavior in peers contributes to one's own pursuit of prosocial goals (Barry & Wentzel, 2006).

Peer group interactions also contribute to a group identity (Newman & Newman, 2001) which factor into an "extended self-concept" (Brewer & Gardner, 2006, p. 84). Identity is thus understood to be an overarching construct that is both personal and collective, some going so far as to say "the self is fundamentally relational" (Andersen, Chen, & Miranda, 2002, p. 159), a statement of reasonable merit. This collective identity "reflects internalizations of the norms and characteristics of important reference groups and consists of cognitions about the self that are consistent with that group identification" (Brewer & Gardner, 2006, p. 84). This group self, or relational self, is especially relevant in Eastern-influenced cultures, as research on Asian-Americans has shown that their characterization of the self is contingent on the relational context of the situation (English & Chen, 2007).

Notably, the perceived importance of peer group affiliation among adolescents appears to decrease with age (Brown, Eicher, & Petrie, 1986). Younger adolescents value crowd affiliations to a greater extent than older adolescents. Older adolescents report dissatisfaction with the greater need for conformity within the peer group. The normative nature of the adolescent peer group can become oppressive during the later stages of adolescent development. The older adolescent has a broader and more established set of social networks that can be tapped and accessed without the need for constrictively normative peer group relationships. Indeed, Brown and collaborators (1986) find that willingness to conform is a predictor of an adolescent's valuation of belonging to a peer group. An adolescent who is unwilling to conform and who has other established ties may devalue the role of the peer group as necessary.

Recent research on Filipino high school students has revealed much about Filipino youth values. Natividad's (2004) survey research on high school students at a public school in Metro Manila show that these high school students have the greatest preference for the values of benevolence, self-direction, and universalism, and least preference for power and hedonism. Compared to Korean-Americans and Korean immigrants in New York, the local sample shows higher levels of self-esteem. These same local sample also evince a balanced independent-interdependent self-construal, straddling both traditionally Western and Eastern construals of self. There is also a pervasive optimism among these youths, who believe "that their goals in the realms of education, work, marriage, and future residence are reachable" (Natividad, 2004, p.135).

The specific direction taken in identity development appears to be driven by the salient group norms and values. Adolescents join a particular peer group and learn how to be a functioning member of that group. The norms and values that the group deems important become more apparent as interactions and shared experiences within the peer group accumulate over time (Newman & Newman, 2001; Verkooijen, et al., 2007), strengthening group similarity. Young adolescents become more sensitive in terms of how they behave because they take into consideration how they will be evaluated by other group members, as implied by social identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000). The peer group thus becomes intensely facilitative in the development of identity on the personal and on the relational level.

In sum, the norms and values inherent to a peer group are critical in their contribution to an individual's identity across social context. In this day and age, the sheer range of opportunities available to the individual can complicate and delay consummate identity development (Abregana, Udarbe, & Valbuena, 2003), which further underscores the need to characterize identity development in youth. The present research seeks to determine which specific norms and values typically exert influence on the Filipino adolescent in the peer group, or barkada, and the implications of these norms and values on peer group dynamics and adolescent developmental trajectories.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive design that employed focus group discussions (FGD) as method for data gathering. Respondents were adolescents who studied in local high schools that came from both urban

and rural backgrounds. A total of four FGD sessions were conducted: two of which had participants from urban institutions while the other two had participants from rural institutions.

Participants

A total of 36 adolescents that comprised 18 males and 18 females participated in the study. The ages of all respondents ranged from 13 to 17 years, with a mean of 15.17. For the urban institutions, the FGD sessions were made up of 19 respondents (i.e., 10 in the first session and nine on the second), with a total of 10 males and nine females in both sessions. For the rural institutions, there were 17 respondents (i.e., nine of which belonged in the first session and eight on the second), with a total of eight males and nine females in both sessions.

Instruments

The main objective of the focus group discussion was to confer about issues that adolescents face regarding the nature of their barkada, as well as the recognized norms and values that come with the membership. The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate the discussion.

The guide consisted of five open-ended questions that specifically reflected the following subject matter:

√   the overall nature of the peer group, which included how it is defined, as well as what activities do members participate in
√   the norms that allow continued membership within the peer group, and
√   the values learned from being a member of the peer group

Procedure

Prior to data gathering, the researchers sought approval from the school administrators. Afterwhich, appointments were made regarding the schedule of the focus group discussions. Selected students from different classes were chosen by the school administrators to participate in the study.

In each FGD session, the facilitators introduced themselves and explained the nature and objectives of the study. Informed consent forms were provided to obtain the respondents' agreement to participating in the study. The

respondents were reassured of their anonymity and that the utility of their inputs will be used for research purposes only. Once the various topics to be discussed were made clear, the respondents were encouraged to participate and share their thoughts. A digital voice recorder was used in every session, which lasted for approximately one hour.

To ensure that the insights of the respondents were captured completely, the facilitators relayed the data provided back to the respondents immediately after each session. They were encouraged to give additional inputs or make clarifications to further validate the data. As the sessions ended, respondents were provided with refreshments and were thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis

The data were subjected to thematic content analysis. Once transcriptions have been made, data segments that pertained to the respondents' experiences with their peer group, the norms followed and values learned were extracted and compared with other strands. Themes were generated based on the abstraction of similarities and differences of the responses and conceptual labels were formulated for each theme.

RESULTS

The present study investigated the dynamics of the Filipino adolescent peer group as reflected in their perception of the specific norms and values obtained from being members of the *barkada*. Focus group discussions were conducted that addressed what it took for peer groups members to remain within the *barkada*, as well as what they learned by being members of their respective peer groups. Data revealed salient expected behaviors and insights about the relevance of belonging in a *barkada* as experienced by adolescent peer group members.

The Filipino Adolescent *Barkada*

To further understand how the Filipino adolescent perceive membership in a peer group, insights regarding the nature of a *barkada* were elicited that included how the *barkada* is defined and what group activities do members engage in. A *barkada* was defined as a *space of mediation between the self and the other, consisted of members who are bonded under a common rubric of experience, whose quality of relationships among*

individual members is encroached to the emerging group life. As a space of mediation between the self and others, it provided a venue wherein members are invited to form new relationships and to experience tension and disagreements in the process. For instance, peer group members accounted the budding of their *barkada* from this process over time, as mentioned by a respondent, *"Nabuo kami sa pagdaan po ng panahon na kami po ay nagkakasama."* Another participant further explained that a *barkada* can foster initiation of deeper relationships, *"...halimbawa po meron kang barkada, bali ako po yung nagiging tulay para maging 'mag-On' yun dalawa."*

In light on the common rubric experience, a *barkada* also reflected a group of people with shared characteristics, activities and desires that engaged members to spend time together. Sample responses included, *"Nadiscover po namin na pare-pareho kami ng mga hilig"and "kung ano yung gusto ko iyon din ang gusto niya".* Joint activities that members of a barkada engaged in included those that concern their academics (e.g., *"second year po kaklase ko pa rin sila..."*) and outside school hours (e.g., *"Nagsasama sa sine, samba.").*

Finally, quality of relationships among the members of the *barkada* was defined as determined, lasting, and fated. Members perceived that destiny played a role in their coming together, as stated by one respondent, *"...pero pinagtagpo sila ng destiny."* In this vein, fulfilling a lasting relationship characterized the *barkada* as well, *"ang totoo po nyan barkada, sabihin mo friendship naniniwala po ako na this is for a lifetime."*

In terms of activity engagement among members, the respondents viewed the *barkada* as a context that can provide opportunities for the exploration of the self, i.e., *a source of self-knowledge and improvement.* Membership in the *barkada* also provided aid, i.e., giving help and support among its members. In terms self-knowledge and improvement, membership in a barkada provided avenues for learning, in such way that the members themselves arrange opportunities through discourses and advising. As expressed by statements such as, *"Tinuturuan po ako ng tamang landas para ma-attain ko po ang main goal ko" and "Natuklasan po namin yung mga bagay po na karaniwan po sa amin. Ang gagawin nila kung masama man i-iimprove nila at kung mabuti ito pwedeng gayahin nila."* Belonging in a *barkada* allowed a member to discover and enhance one's capabilities and broaden one's perspectives to facilitate optimum development.

With regard to aid, adolescent peer group members found their *barkada* to be individuals that they could seek assistance from, may it be for instrumental needs or emotional support. Peer group members were also

considered as those who do not discriminate based on the time, number, and gravity of aid sought. Peer group members provided the help and support their co-members need. This provision ultimately reflected the dependability experienced by group members from each other, as expressed by this participant, *"..nagiging dingding, nagiging haligi ko, nagiging sandalan kung saka-sakaling may problemang nararamdaman..."*

Finally, the Filipino adolescent *barkada* was described as a group composed of individuals who share similarities in attitudes, beliefs, and personal preferences. These similarities were often found out and/or reinforced further when members "hang out" with each other, whether during or after school. A *"tambayan"*, described as a place where the group members often stay and hang out such as malls, were usually associated among the Filipino *barkada*.

The Norms of a *Barkada*

When posed with the query about what it took to remain or not be removed from the *barkada*, the salient norms that were recognized as relevant included *revealing of true self, consistency of behavior, help and protection,* and *"pakikisama"*.

Revealing of true self pertained to how a peer member was expected to "be his/her true self", as expressed in terms such as *"magpakatotoo ka (sa sarili)"* and display transparency in word and deed that reflect one's genuine characteristics among the members of the *barkada*. Relative to this, the peer member was also expected not to display behaviors that are contradictory to what the member has previously demonstrated with his peers. This was expressed by the responses, *"(makakapagpatanggal sa akin ay kung) sakaling maging plastic ako..."*, of which being "plastic" denoted dishonesty and not being transparent about one's true self, which could lead to exclusion from the peer group.

Consistency of behavior described how a member of a *barkada* is expected to maintain his or her ways of interacting with the other members. Such consistency was expected to be observed since the time he or she became a part of the group. The phrase "stay as you are" had been emphasized in the discussion. This depicted that members of a *barkada* can be ensured of inclusion in the group when they abide by this norm. Conversely, respondents who expressed that *"pagbabago"* or a negative change in behavior of a member with whom the peer group have gotten used to could lead to exclusion from the barkada, as depicted in statements like *"yung makakapagpaalis sa akin siguro yung magbabago ka ng ugali na hindi nila matanggap."*

Help and protection among the peer group was another norm that members of the *barkada* were expected to abide. Peer members should be able to provide aid (e.g., *"kaya kapag may problema ang isa tulungan po para one for all, all for one"*). At the same time, they should also be able to look out for each other (e.g., *"hindi po kami magpapabaya sa isang kasama at di iaadya sa masama".*) The practice of *"damayan"* was also highlighted in this norm, as expressed by one member, *"Sa isang tao kailangan niya rin ng kaibigan, kailangan niya rin ng kadamay... "*, wherein peer members should be able to act as companion and someone to share the other's affliction.

Another salient norm among adolescent peer groups was the notion of *"pakikisama"*, by which members of the *barkada* are expected to express the desire to participate in the experiences and share in the collective decisions of the entire *barkada*. This could be applied in situations such as attendance of a group function (e.g.,. *"Makiki-join sa mga happenings"*), and decision-making based on the consensus of the group (e.g., *"pinapapili kung majority wins"*). When a peer group member refused to engage in *"pakikisama"*, this could lead to potential conflict and exclusion (i.e., *"paglayo")* as well as a peer being upset with another (i.e., *"pagtatampo"*).

Values Learned from the *Barkada*

Among the many lessons that the adolescent found meaningful in their membership in the peer group, *valuing one's self and one's relationships* with others were found to be the most salient. Furthermore, being able to display trust, as well as having resolve, were also included as additional values that adolescents recognized to be of benefit from being with their *barkada*.

For the respondents, valuing relationships with peers described an appreciation for the relational bonds formed through interactions, as sampled in the phrase, *"natutuhan kong pahalagahan ang tunay na pagkakaibigan at pagsasamahan".* For these adolescents, belonging in a peer group allowed them to realize the importance of being together. They also recognized the capability of peers to dispel loneliness. Furthermore, displaying selflessness by putting the needs of peers ahead of the adolescent's (e.g., *"pagbibigay o pagpaparaya sa mga barkada")* was another way by which a peer member value the *barkada*.

Aside from valuing others, the adolescent peer member also learned to value one's self. By becoming a member of a barkada, the adolescent learned to take time to "take care", "prioritize", and "give importance" to one's self. Moreover, engaging with the peer group allowed the adolescent to acknowledge one's own self-worth (e.g., *"nararamdaman mo na may halaga*

ka pala") as well as an avenue for developing skills that would enhance his/ her potentials (e.g., *"natutunan ko pong lalong mapaunlad yung self confidence ko"*), and facilitate further self-improvement (i.e., *"kailangan mo ng instrumento para malaman mo na nagkamali ka...at kaibigan iyon"*).

Expressing trust in oneself and for others was another value that adolescents learn from their peer group. As a result of the adolescent's membership and interaction with the *barkada*, learning to believe and rely on other people became an apparent learning (i.e., *"Siguro sa barkadahan ko po natutuhan ko pong magtiwala sa ibang tao"*), as well as learning to believe in oneself (i.e., *"Natutunan ko po na maging malakas ang tiwala sa sarili."*)

Finally, with the help of the *barkada*, the adolescent peer group member learned to achieve resoluteness when it comes to everyday challenges. The respondents achieved what they referred to as *"katatagan"* when it comes to dealing with problems. They learned to remain strong during adversities (e.g., *"Dapat hindi ako nasukol sa mga problema ko"*) and viewed these adversities in a less negative light (e.g., *"kayang harapin ang mga problema o pagsubok sa buhay namin at wag indahin yung anumang problema."*).

DISCUSSION

The present study aims to describe the specific norms by which members of the adolescent peer group abide by to maintain membership within the barkada, as well as the values imbibed by the adolescent brought about by membership in the peer group. The findings of this research do not claim that the norms and values presented here can be generalized across all adolescent peer groups, nor to differentiate between environmental contexts (i.e, urban versus rural) or other demographic characteristics. However, the data uncovered in this study are able to illustrate certain parallelisms between internalized norms and the acquired values, and how this may be related to the adolescent's pursuit of positive development.

Findings from four focus group discussions show that it is imperative for the adolescent peer member to display transparency and consistency of character, be a pillar of support, as well as to ensure smooth relations with his/her peers. The context of the peer group allows the adolescent to internalize valuable learning such as giving importance to established relationships with others, and recognizing the value of one's self. The value of trust and resolve also prove to be valuable traits that the adolescent peer member gained from peer membership.

The findings of the research concur with the existing literature regarding peer relationships among adolescents. The similarity among members of

the Filipino *barkada* agrees with the similarity-hypothesis (Hartup, 1996) wherein the presence of similarity among group of individuals brings about attraction that may facilitate the onset of friendships. As a possible foundation of friendships, the similarity characteristic among peer groups becomes relevant, as it may facilitate peer group influence. Peer group influence pertains to the inclination of peer group members to strengthen and further reinforce attributes and behaviors they shared through time as implied by social categorization theory (Verkooijen, et al., 2007). In the current study, therefore, norms that involved a showing of genuine character from the adolescent peer as well as displaying such character consistently are recognized as salient and relevant. Perhaps, these norms are deemed important by the peer group because it is why the *barkada* was formed in the first place, by which the members got together because they have something in common that is included in their genuine characteristics. Hence, not being true to oneself or changing to someone else is not tolerated because it shakes the very foundation of the formation of the peer group, as well as the subsequent friendships that developed.

Evidence has also shown that similarity breeds trust within group dynamics (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, social identity theory has shown that ingroup folk is considered more trustworthy than the outgroup folk (Stets & Burke, 2000). Thus, there is an expectation of trustworthiness that is placed on all peer group members, consistently, in word and deed, such that the adolescent in the peer group is able to trust the other members of the peer group and eventually reap the benefits of this shared trust. In terms of this trust-expectancy framework, *pakikisama*, consistency of behavior, and help and protection as norms require that the peer group members be trustworthy. Only a trustworthy peer group member can be expected to reliably provide help, to be consistent in word and deed, and to cooperate with other peer group members in the form of *pakikisama*. Revelation of the true self, or self-disclosure, is likely due to being able to trust the other members of the peer group. Thus, the trust-expectancy dynamic in the adolescent peer group may underscore how delicate the adolescent is. Rather than a peer group dynamic that is independent, the adolescent peer group is primarily interdependent-buttressed by a primary understructure of mutual reliance and expected trust.

As members of the peer group eventually develop bonds that further evolve to friendship, they experience the benefits that friendship brings about. Apart from belongingness, it is found that one is guaranteed to satisfy the need for safety and security as a result of peer group membership (Newman & Newman, 2001). Similarly, Hartshorne (1994) include social support,

which can further be classified as emotional, instrumental and informational support as a benefit of friendship. However, findings show that providing of help and protection become more salient as a norm. Perhaps it is because of this expected helping behavior that adolescent peers are able to experience such benefit. Aid and social support become a part of the *barkada's* nature and at the same time a benefit precisely because a norm maintains with the individuals who make up the peer group.

Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that the underlying objectives of the norms assert what the individual must do for himself/herself (i.e., one should reveal one's true self, or be consistent with one's behavior) and what the individual must do for the others (i.e, help and protect them, or display *"pakikisama"* with them). The same can be said with the beneficiaries of the values acquired from peer group membership. It mirrors that of the norms such that the adolescent peer member learns valuable things from the barkada that reflect influence on how they must deal with others as well as they must deal with themselves.

Perhaps this mirroring is brought about by the type of norms that the barkada finds important to uphold, which the adolescent learns from as a result adherence to such norms. For instance, the display of *"pakikisama"* may reinforce the value of giving importance to established friendships within the *barkada*. Another will be being expected to reveal and be consistent in showing one's character gives one an opportunity to air out potential issues and concerns and make initial progress towards resolution of their problems (Rotenberg, 1995).

Given this parallelism, the idea of group identity that incorporates the *I* and the *We* concept can contribute to identity development (Giordano, Cernkovich, Groat, Pugh, & Swinford, 1998). The norms and values reflect the *I* can be considered as the agent to who seeks membership and does so what is expected of him/her to maintain membership, while the *We* reflects how the individual experiences shared history with the group, including the internalization of group norms and values that eventually strengthen group ties and acquire group identity. This further concurs with the idea behind the duality of identity formation, such as that of Phoenix (2001) regarding individuation and social relatedness, and that of Brewer and Gardner (1996) who claim that having internalized such norms that imply expectations for the self and others may contribute in identity development in a way that the extended self-concept is tapped and that both overarch the personal and socially collective contexts of the adolescent. In this sense, putting others ahead of one's self does not necessarily disrupt identity development but rather, it is through cooperation that self-affirmation is appropriately achieved (Hernandez & Iyengar, 2001).

In sum, the outcome of this study depicts how the *barkada,* at its core, can be seen as a support system for the developing adolescent. Internalization of specific norms and values reflect the aspect of identity development that encompasses autonomy and relatedness, such that its role clearly shows how the adolescent is able to achieve a balanced sense of self-concept. The notion of relatedness is further reinforced by cultural influences such as the Filipino's collective self (Natividad, 2004) and the preference for maintaining smooth interpersonal relations (Marilao, 1997), thus making reciprocity in displaying trust or support a mutual experience for the members of the *barkada.* By articulating what keeps members of the *barkada* intact, as well as acknowledging the merits of membership, the adolescent is able to experience significant developmental undertakings and consequently achieve a positive portrait of personal growth and development.

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AUTHOR NOTES