

# A3.3 Friendship and Identity in School



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## Contribution

The project aims to study the mechanisms underlying the formation of and change in adolescents' social networks and their ethnic identifications. For this purpose we developed measures of national and ethnic identification that are applicable to children and adolescents in the school context.

The project collects data that

- enable to study school-based **friendship networks**
- from a **longitudinal** perspective
- using **our newly developed measurements of national and ethnic identity**
- not only at the **classroom** but also at the **grade level**.

In addition to the project team's own substantive research contributions, all data will be made **available to the international scientific community** as scientific use files.

## Developing Measures of National and Ethnic Identity

One key objective of the project is to further develop and test measures of national and ethnic identity among children and adolescents from different countries of origin in Germany. National identity refers to the identification with the host society, whereas for immigrants ethnic identity refers to the identification with their own ethnic group. For both national and ethnic identity we distinguish different components of identity, such as self-categorization, importance, private regard, public regard, and emotional attachment. Our measure also accounts for dual identities as well as for behavioural aspects of identity.

To empirically evaluate our measures we first conducted two cognitive pretests with children and adolescents in Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. Based on the results we revised our measures and then tested them quantitatively in a survey of 175 students in two schools in North Rhine-Westphalia. Overall, the results indicate that our measure adequately captures various components of national and ethnic identity among children and adolescents from different countries of origin in Germany.

## Disentangling the Causal Interplay between Social and Identificational Integration

Previous studies have repeatedly reported that immigrants with a low level of national identification have relatively few native friends, and vice versa. However, these studies face several limitations that in combination do not allow to assess whether children choose their friends based on shared national or ethnic identities (i.e., selection) or whether friends over time adjust their own identity towards those of their friends (i.e., influence). We aim to separate selection processes from influence processes by using stochastic actor-based models of the co-evolution of networks and behavior. Using these models we further intend to broaden our understanding of ethnic homogeneity in friendship networks and related intergroup processes.

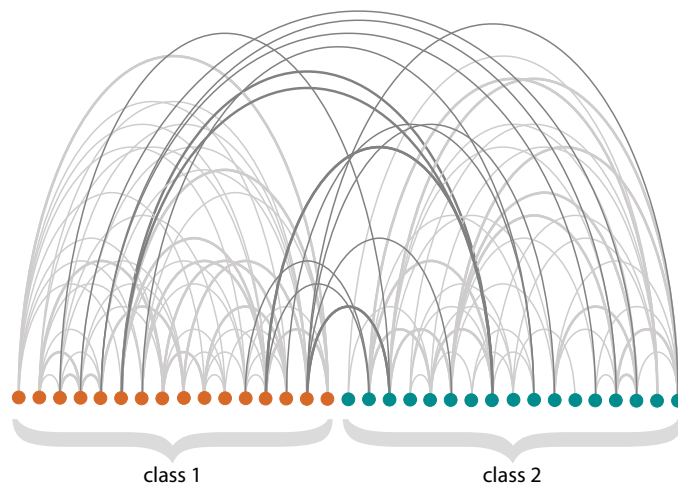
## Research Design

- Target population: children with and without an immigrant background in grades 5, 6, and 7 (age 10 to 15)
- Stratified school-based sample approach aimed at schools with a high share of immigrants (especially Turkish immigrants) in North Rhine-Westphalia
- Collection of three biannual waves; wave 1 started very recently in mid-April 2013

Anticipated Sample Size (N = 1590)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7
Lower Secondary School	74	98	150
Intermediate Secondary School	168	176	171
Comprehensive Schools	257	250	246
	499	524	567

## Illustration: Friendships at Class and Grade Level



The graph above shows observed friendship nominations in two 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Every node denotes one student; friendships between students are denoted by the arcs ranging from one node to another. The coloration differentiates between friendships within (light grey) and between classes (dark grey).

Substantively, the graph illustrates that friendships exist not only within but also between classes, and that these cross-class friendships indeed occur quite frequently. This finding suggests that extending friendship nominations to the grade level helps to present a more comprehensive picture of friendship relations in school.