

A3.3 Friendship and Identity in School



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Key Facts

The project aims to study the mechanisms underlying the co-evolution of adolescents' friendship networks and their ethnic identifications. In the **first funding phase**, we have build up a panel of school-based networks in 9 schools that surveyed above 2,000 students.

Three waves of data were collected during the first funding phase. In the ongoing **second funding phase**, we have so far collected a fourth wave; the fifth one is currently collected, and a final sixth wave will be collected early next year.

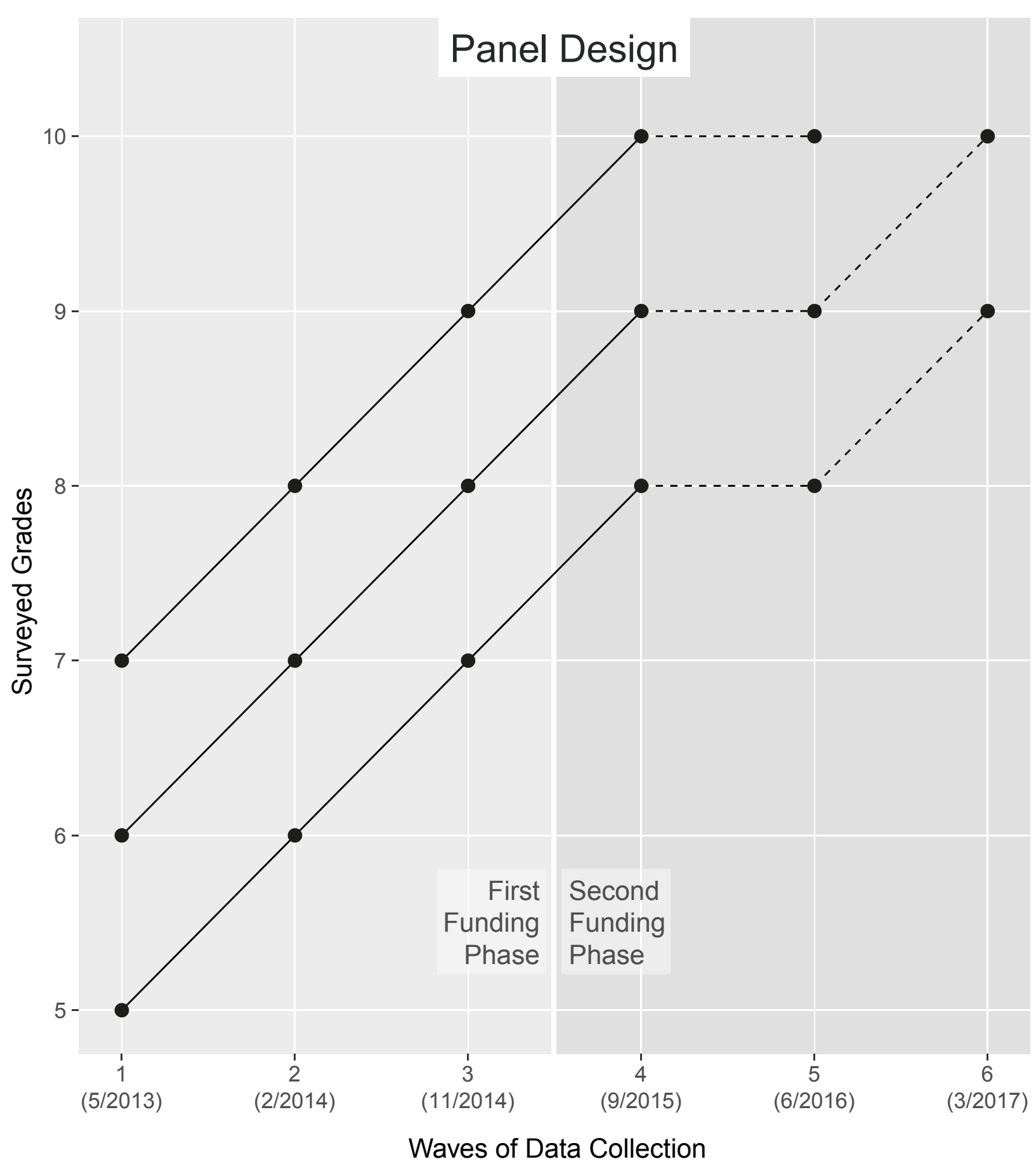
The data

- enable to study **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**.

At the end of the second project phase, we will have established a unique panel that encompasses the whole period of lower secondary education.

Study Design

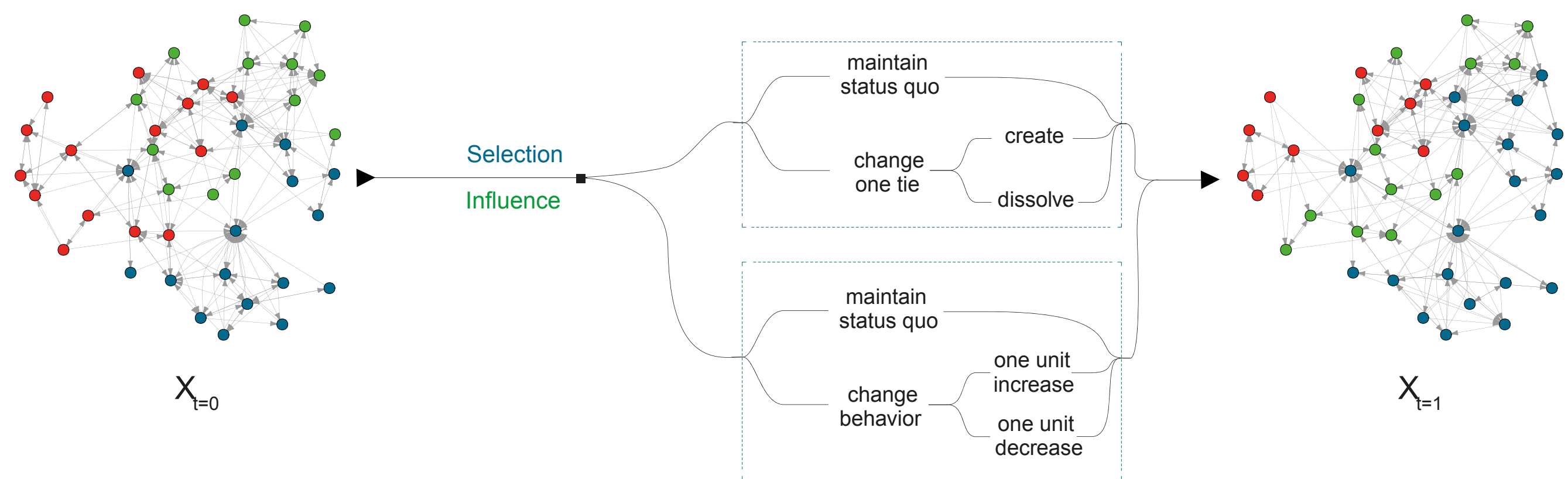
- Target population: children with and without an immigrant background in grades 5, 6, and 7 (age 10 to 15) in the first wave
- Stratified school-based sample approach aimed at schools with a high share of immigrants (especially of Turkish origin) in North Rhine-Westphalia
- Collection of six waves within two funding phases:



Immigrants' National Identity and Native Friends: Selection or Influence?

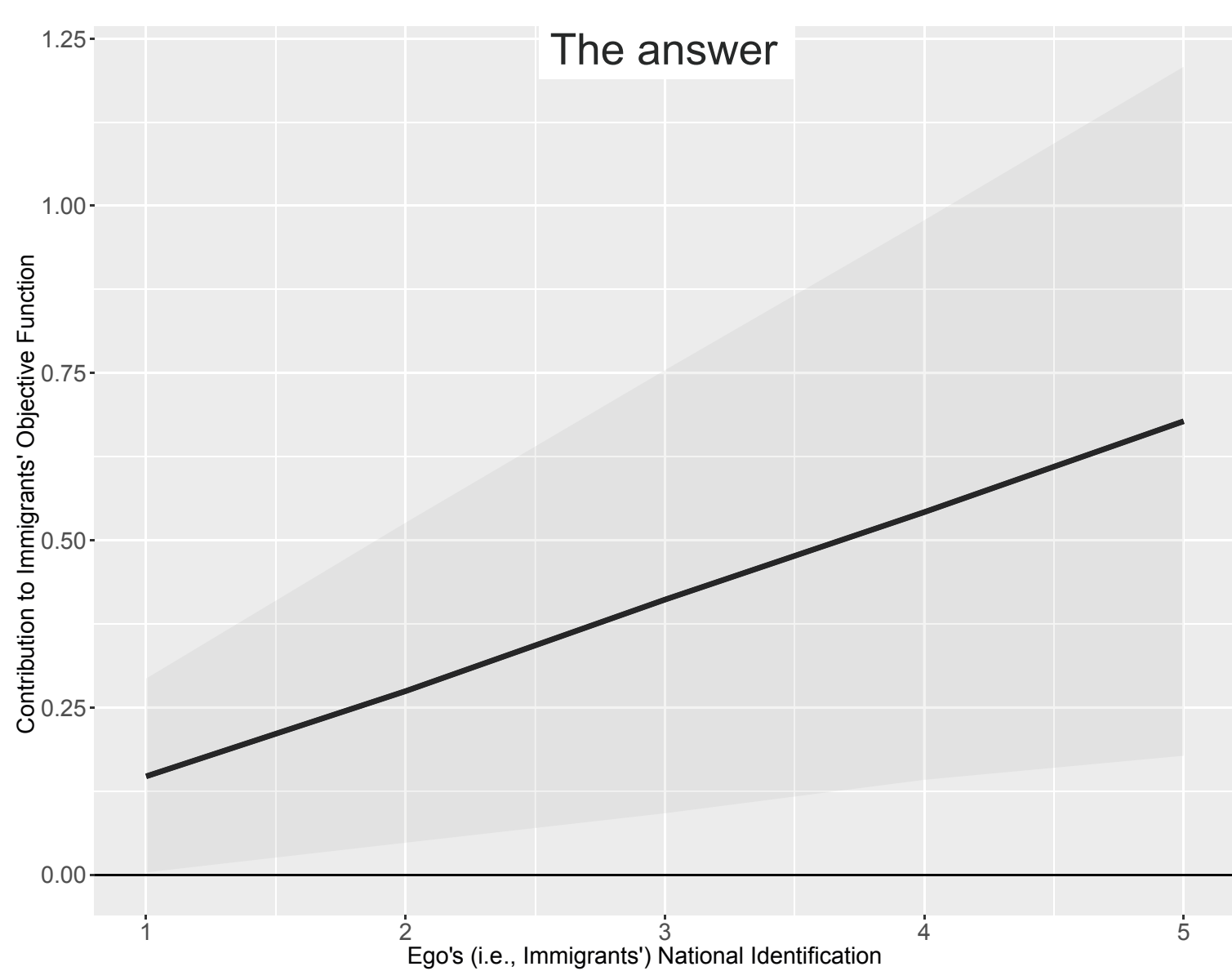
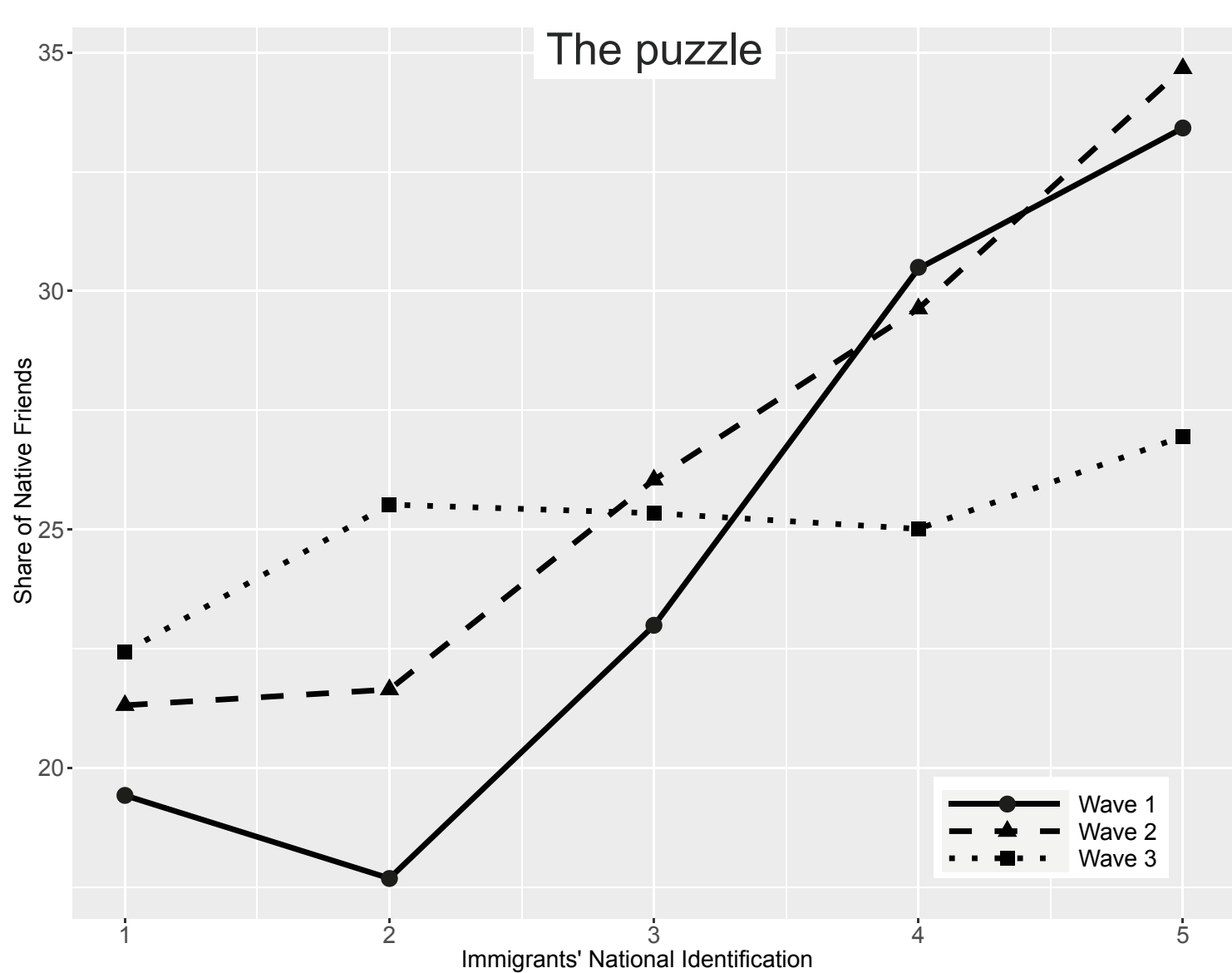
The graph on the right-hand side shows that immigrant students with strong national identification have more native friends than those with lower national identification, and vice versa. Yet, while this general pattern is well-known, we know little about how and why it emerges.

To find out, we estimated stochastic actor-oriented models (SAOM). SAOM are agent-based models that simulate the joint development of friendship networks and individual characteristics such as national identification. In particular, SAOM allow to tell whether friends affect identification (influence) or whether it is the other way around and identification affects friendship choices (selection).



Our models provide no support for social influence (i.e., having native friends does not affect immigrants' national identification). Regarding selection, the graph on the right-hand side shows that immigrants who identified strongly with the host country were more likely to befriend natives than were those with lower national identification.

The key message thus is that the causal arrow runs from identification to friends, but not vice versa.



Religion, Religiosity, and Friendship Choices

In Europe, marginally religious Christian or nonreligious populations face a comparatively religious and growing Muslim minority group. How do religious boundaries shape friendships in such a context?

The graphs below illustrate intra- and inter-group friendship choices of moderately and highly religious Christian and Muslim students. Regarding intra-group friendships, Muslim students preferred to have Muslim friends, but Christian students showed no such tendency of religious homophily. High religiosity was further associated with increased in-group preferences. As for inter-group friendships, Christian students were hesitant to befriend Muslim peers, but the reverse did not hold true.

In sum, religion itself, rather than individual religiosity, seems to be the main divide. An important follow-up question is whether Muslim students' pronounced religious homophily is a reaction to or a source of social exclusion in the sense of Christian students' tendencies not to befriend them.

