

Name fashion dynamics and social class

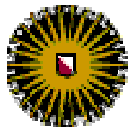
Gerrit Bloothoof¹ & Marijn Schraagen²

¹Utrecht University / Meertens Institute KNAW

²Leiden University

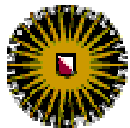
The Netherlands

g.bloothoof@uu.nl / schraage@liacs.nl



the problem

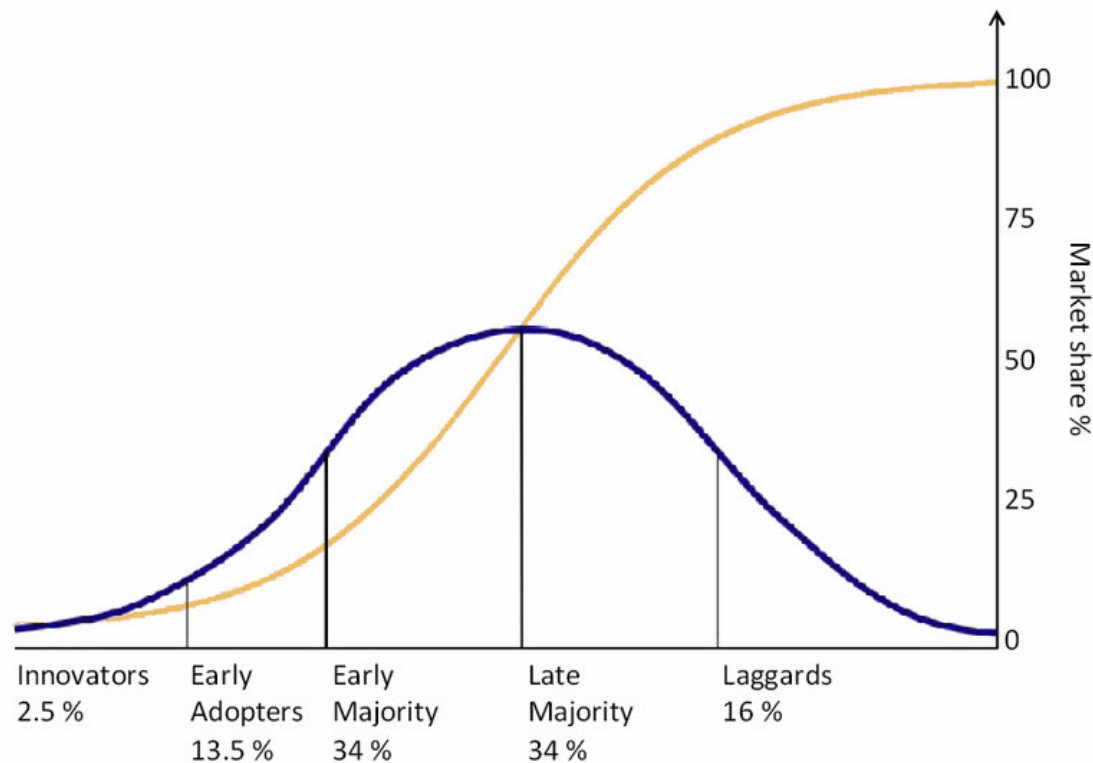
why do (certain) first names become popular



innovation and diffusion

(Rogers, 1964)

- *Model assumes a maximum number of interested consumers*

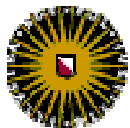
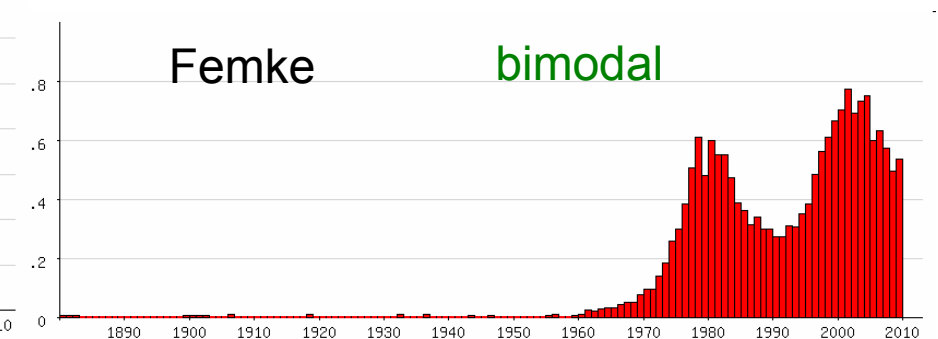
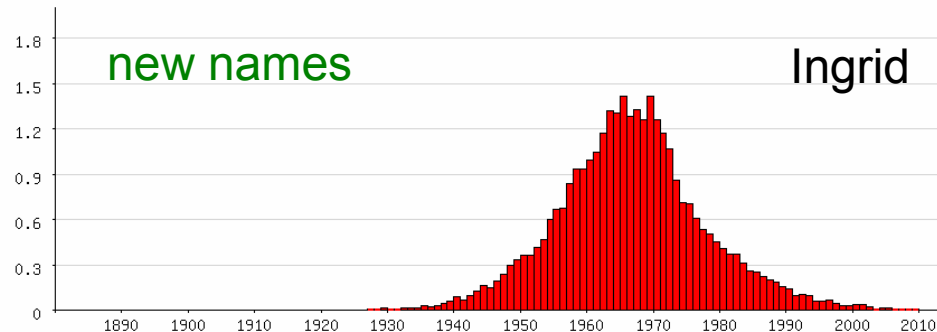
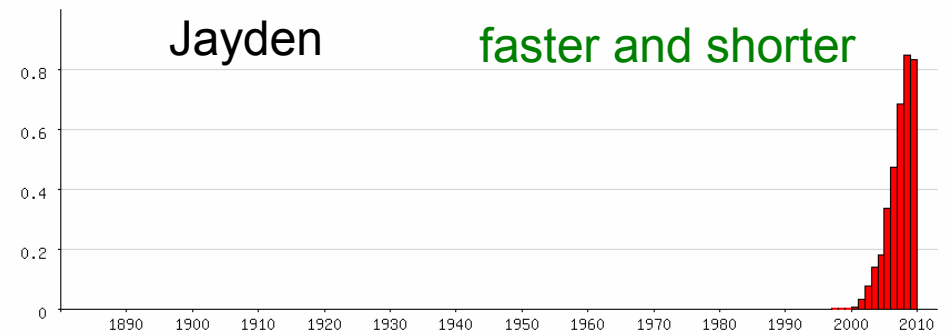
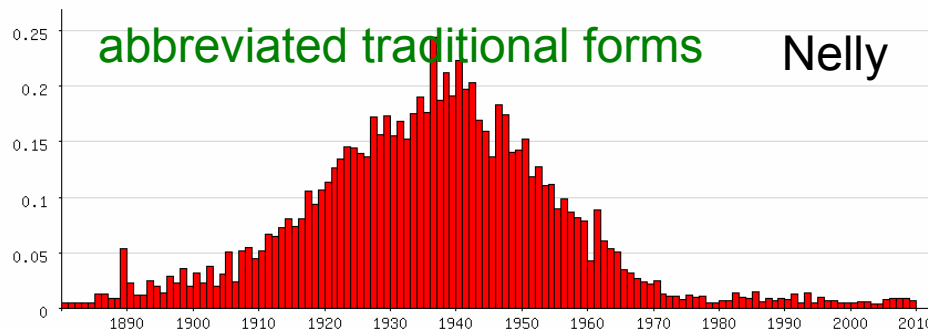
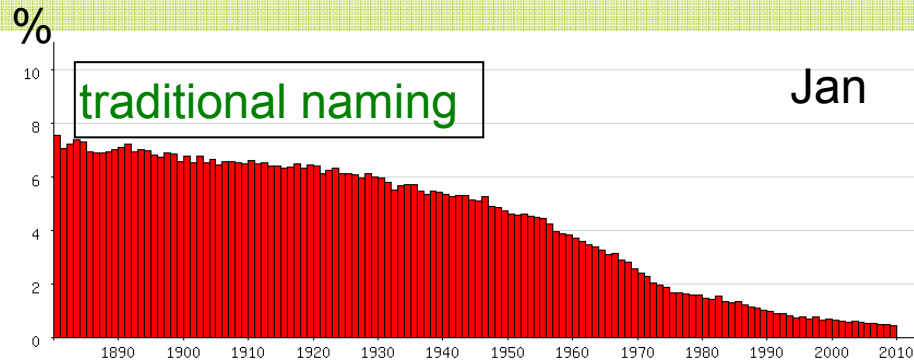


influences and questions

- sensitivity to fashion
 - parents abandon tradition and make own name choices
- snobs – bandwagon phenomenon
 - innovation by elite or other social class?
 - process within each social class?
- which names become popular?
 - random (multi factor) process?
 - some names are lucky, others aren't



from tradition to fashion



first name material

- full Dutch population (16 million + 5 million)
 - from Civil Registration
- “first name genealogy”
- first names, birth dates, birth places & countries, **parent-child relations**
- almost complete in period 1930-2010
- good sample between 1880 – 1930 (>25%)



general trends: name groups

- a name group consists of names that are frequently found together in a family

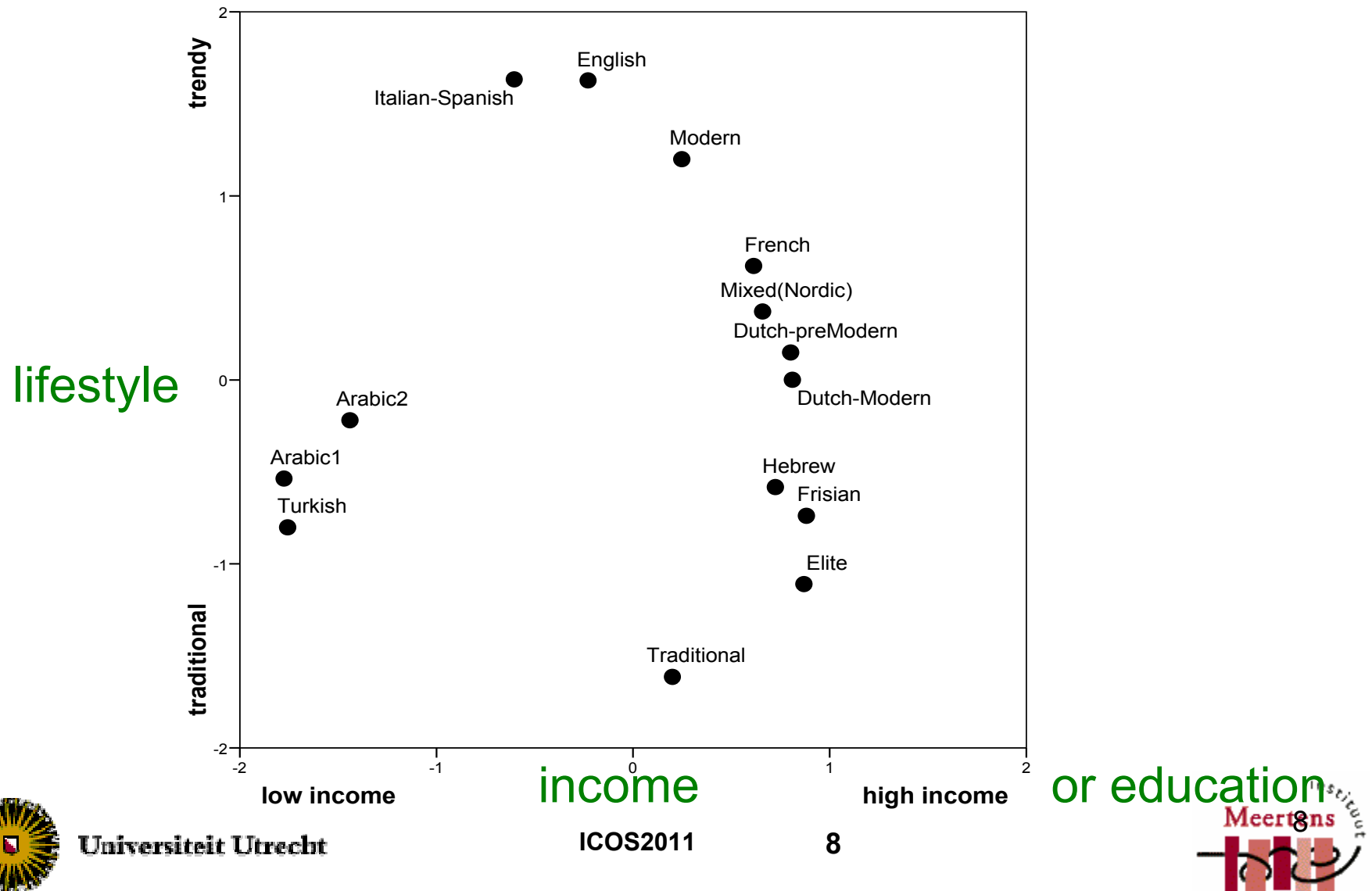
name groups

- differ in language, background, structure and 'modernity' (time)
- likely have relations to social grouping



14 Dutch name groups (1985-2005)

(1400 most popular names)

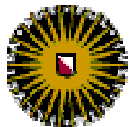


- “social classes” tend to have own name preferences in The Netherlands
(no indication of vertical diffusion, elite does not lead)
- but there is a huge overlap in name preferences



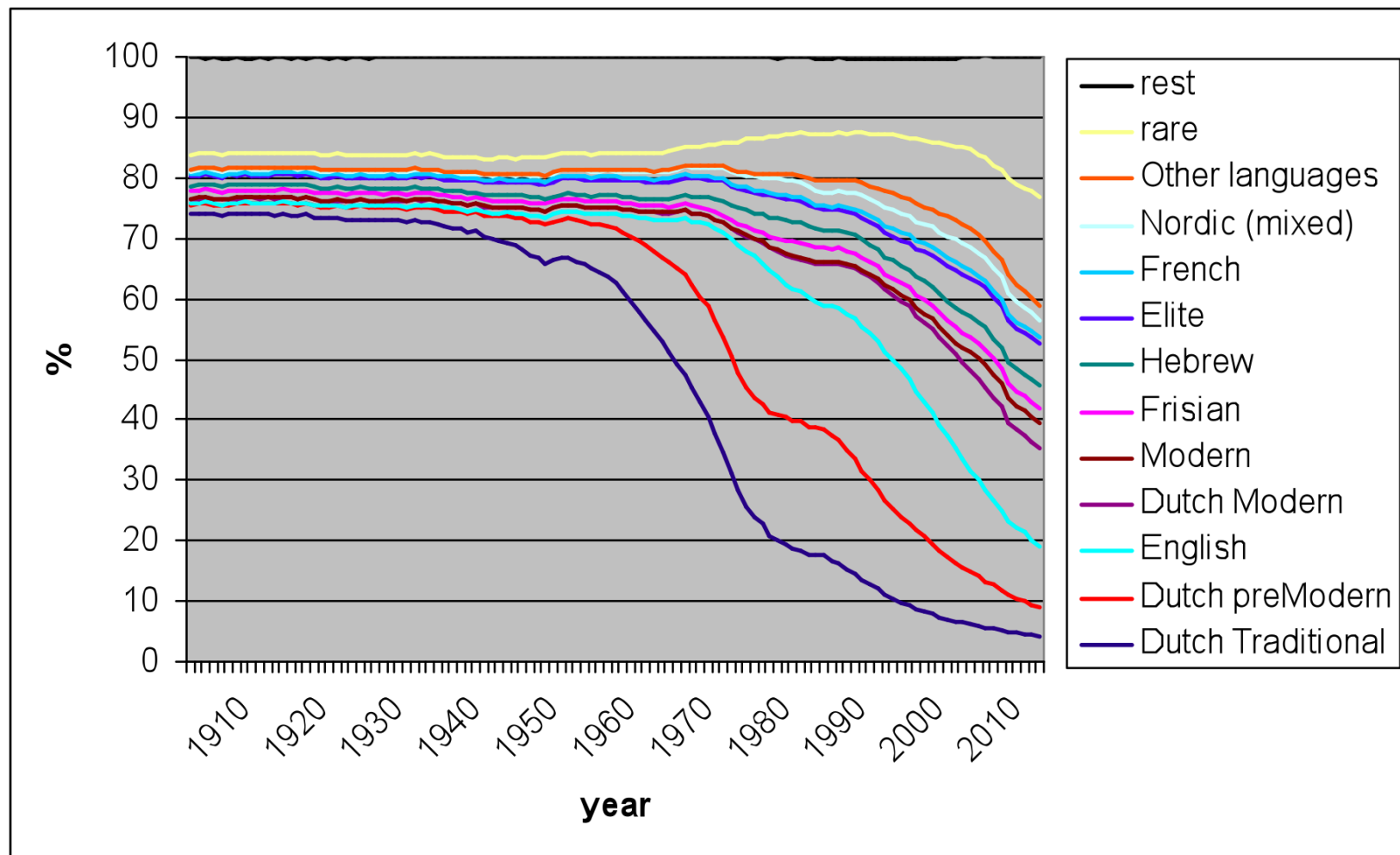
dynamics of name groups

- development of name groups over time between 1900-2010
- long term change from tradition to fashion
- followed by slow and overlapping changes between name groups



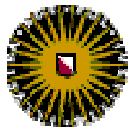
dynamics of name groups

(1900-2010, cumulative per year)



developments in popularity

- each social class chooses own names and has its own developments (with internal elite and bandwagon)
- or still some kind of diffusion between classes?

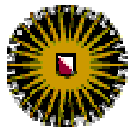


complex popularity for a name

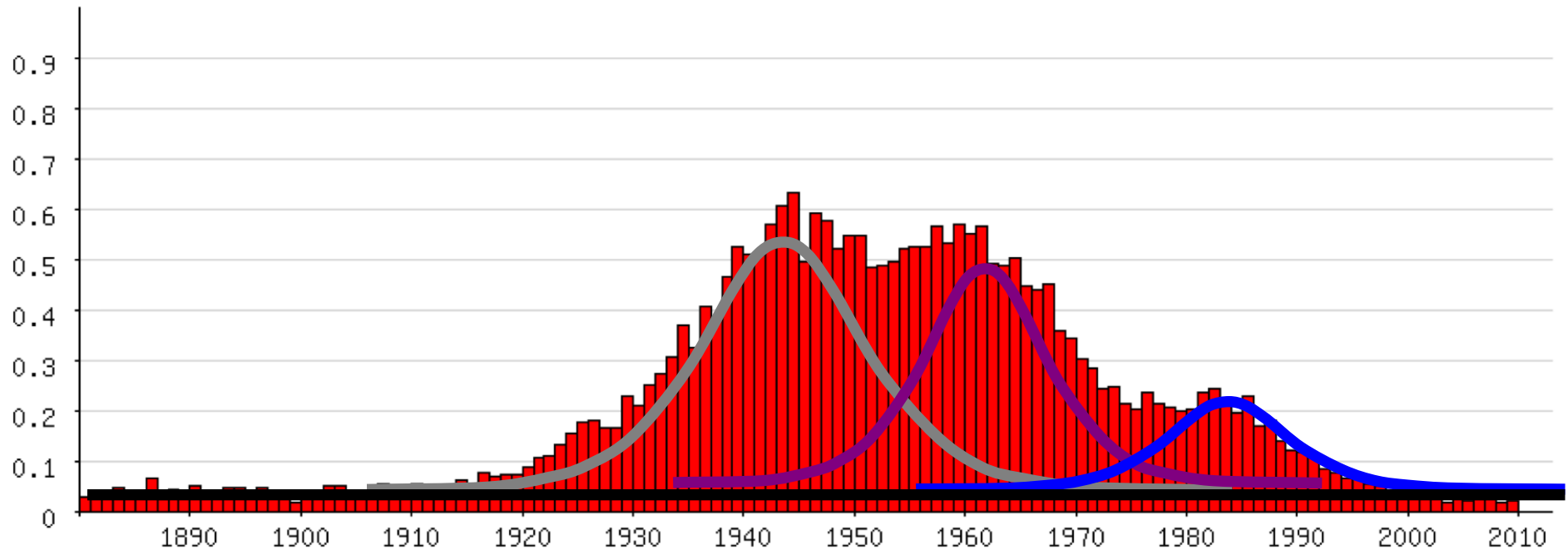
- a single popularity peak
 - is relatively rare
- bimodel or trimodel development

- logistic curve fitting

rate of change is proportional to the number of children with the name
rate of change is proportional to the number of interested parents



Hans: logistic curve fitting

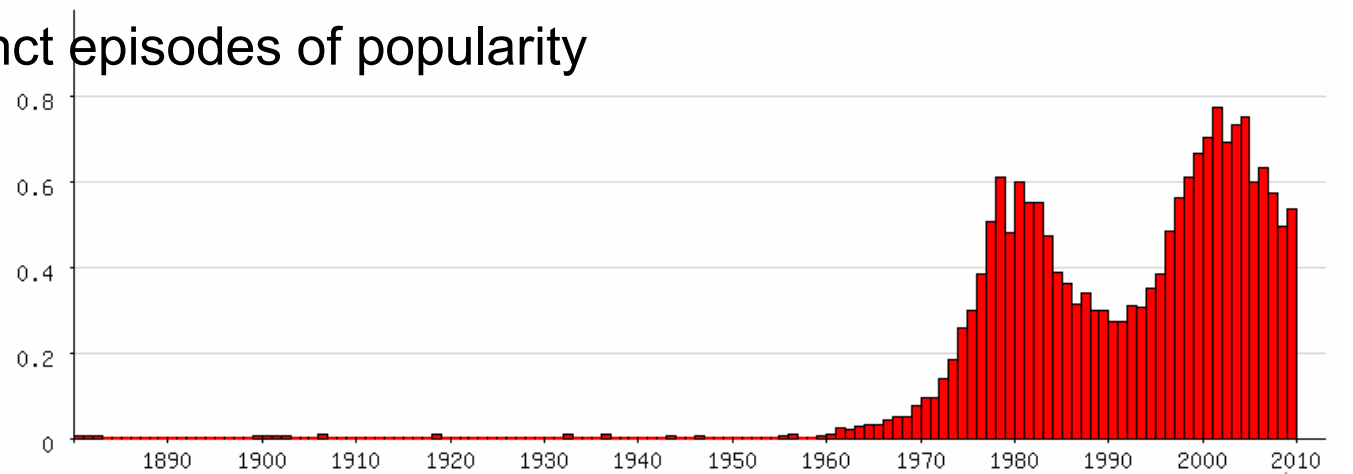


- base line
- model peaks in 1944, 1962, 1985
- associated to different social classes?



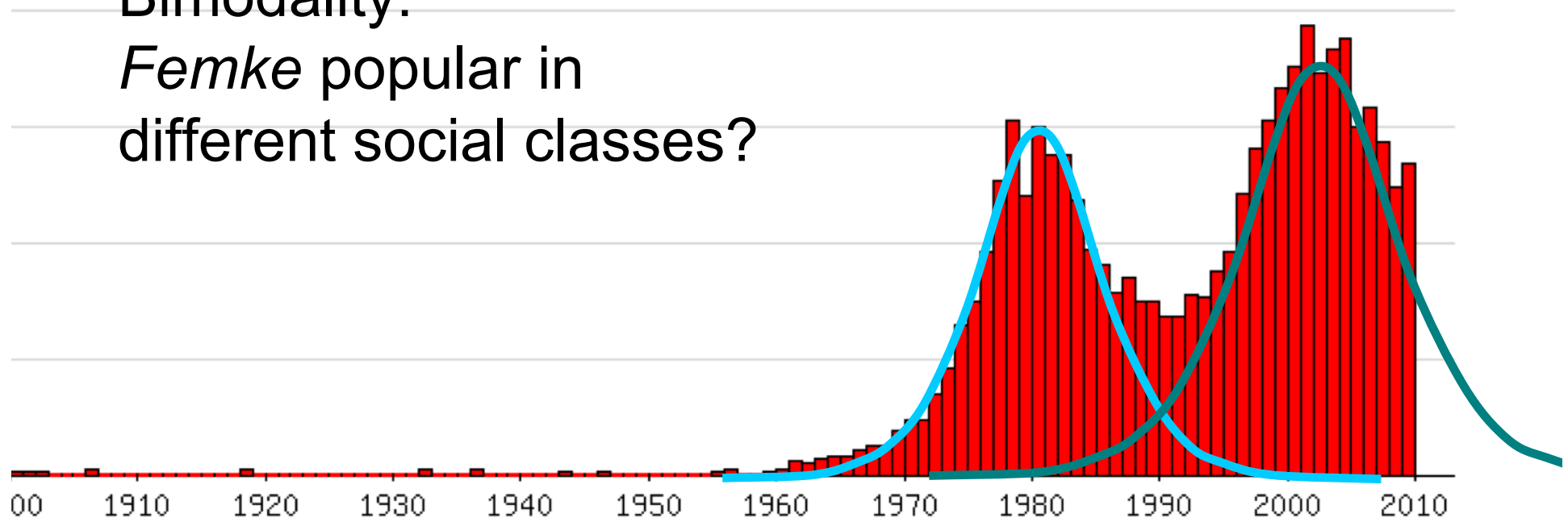
the case of *Femke*

- Frisian female name
 - derived from Frisian male name *Femme*
 - *many parents will not know this*
 - diminutive –ke
 - very low frequency before 1960
 - currently a total of 15.205 children
 - TWO distinct episodes of popularity



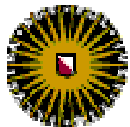
logistic curve fitting

Bimodality:
Femke popular in
different social classes?



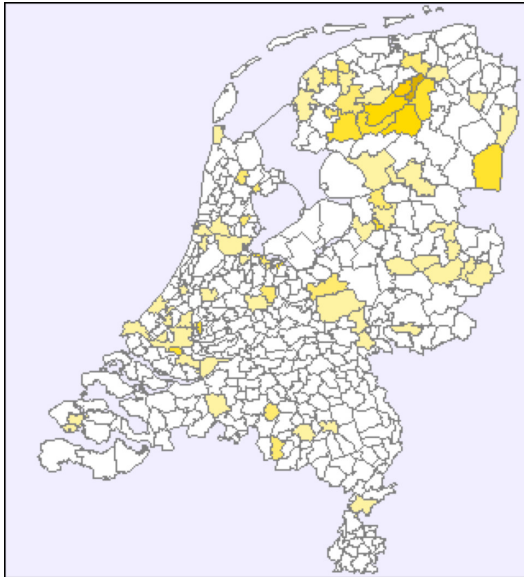
diffusion

- *Femke* originates from the province of Friesland
- how did the name penetrate the rest of the country?
- is the geographic spread different for the first and second peak?

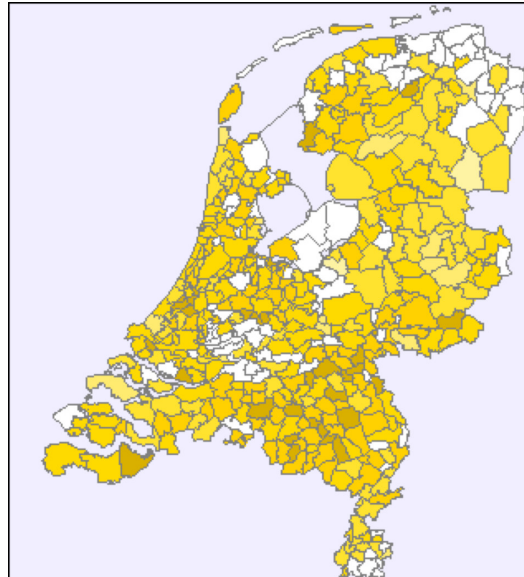


geographic diffusion

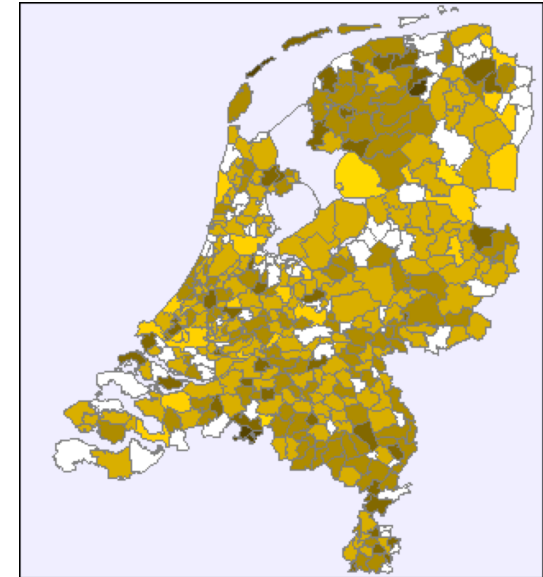
(% in places of birth)



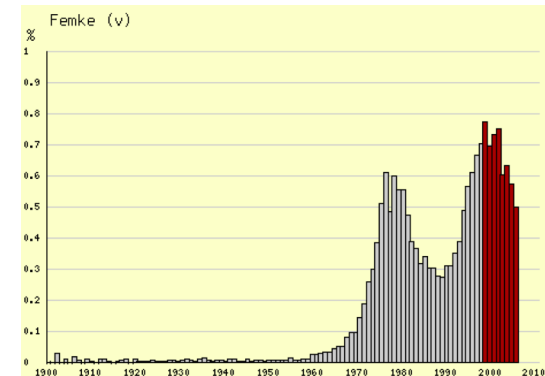
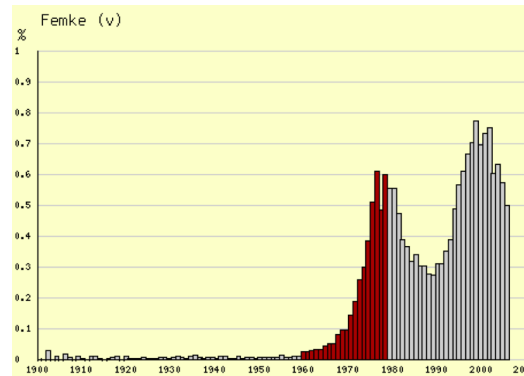
<1960



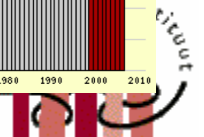
1960-1980



2000-2006



Universiteit Utrecht



homogeneous diffusion

- **no** gradual diffusion from Friesland to the rest of the country (1960-1980)
- **no** different location in 1960-80 and 2000-2006



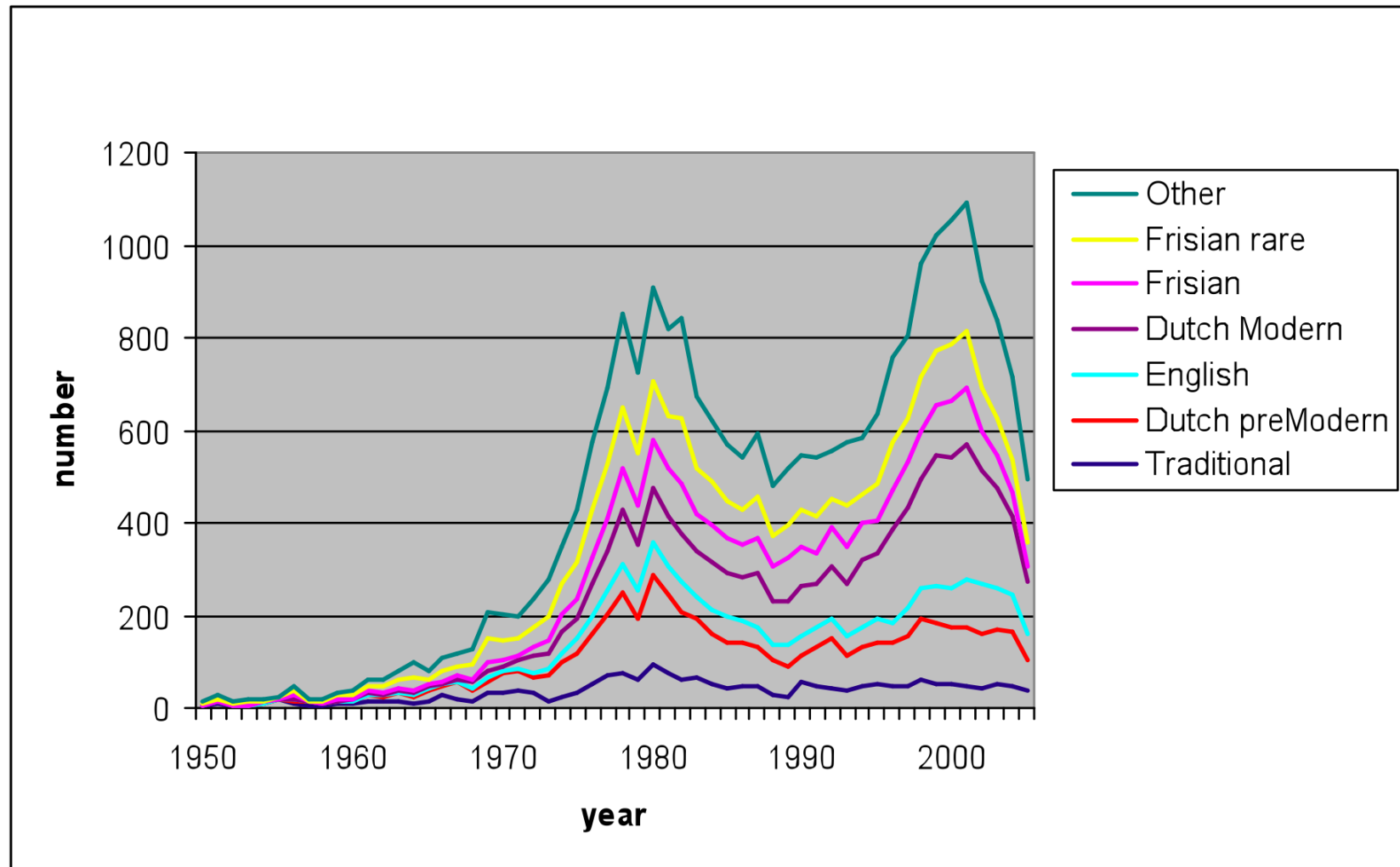
siblings of *Femke*

- analysis of **names of parents** of *Femke* does not work
 - most of the parents' names are still traditional
- **names of brothers and sisters** of *Femke* may indicate changes in parental preferences over time (thus changes in social classes involved)



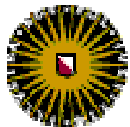
name groups of *Femke*

(cumulative per year)



siblings of *Femke*

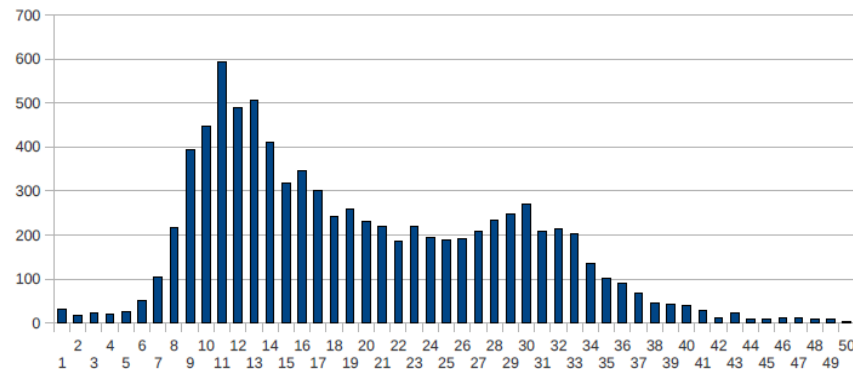
- siblings names belong to expected name groups
- **no** differences in time, other than general trend



social environment of *Femke*

(in social media, 753.000 friends in Hyves)

- names of friends of *Femke* may reveal her social class



age ->

- presupposition: *Femke* has same social class as parents



Femke in social media

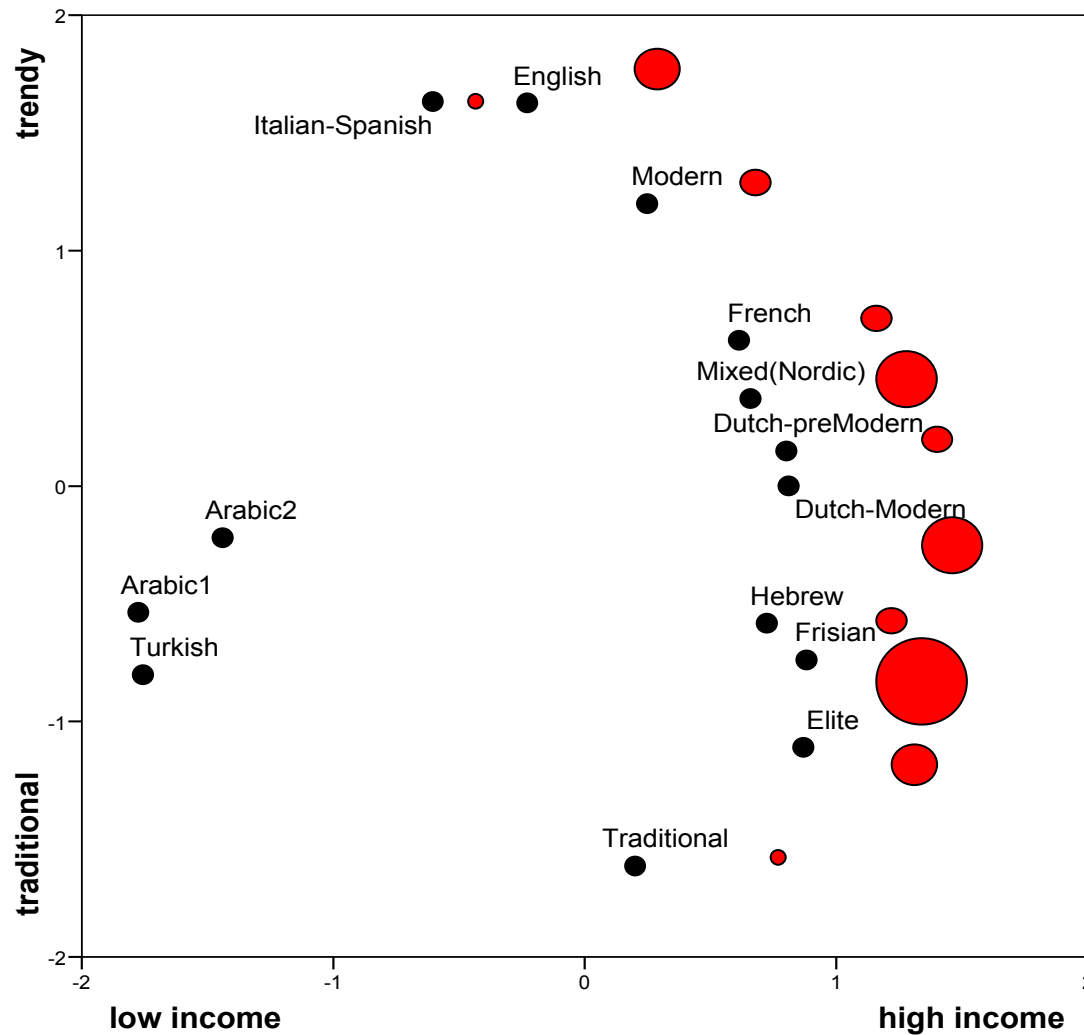
Relative high presence of the name groups:

1. Frisian (<i>Femke</i> excluded)	2.6 (2.1)
2. Nordic (mixed)	1.6
3. Dutch-modern	1.3
4. Elite	1.2
5. English	1.2

No big differences between young and older *Femke*



753.000 friends of *Femke*



in conclusion

for the two peaks of *Femke* we found

- no geographic component
- no indications for involvement of subsequent social groups
- (no influence of well-known namesakes)



we failed to explain complex popularity
in terms of social class effects

