

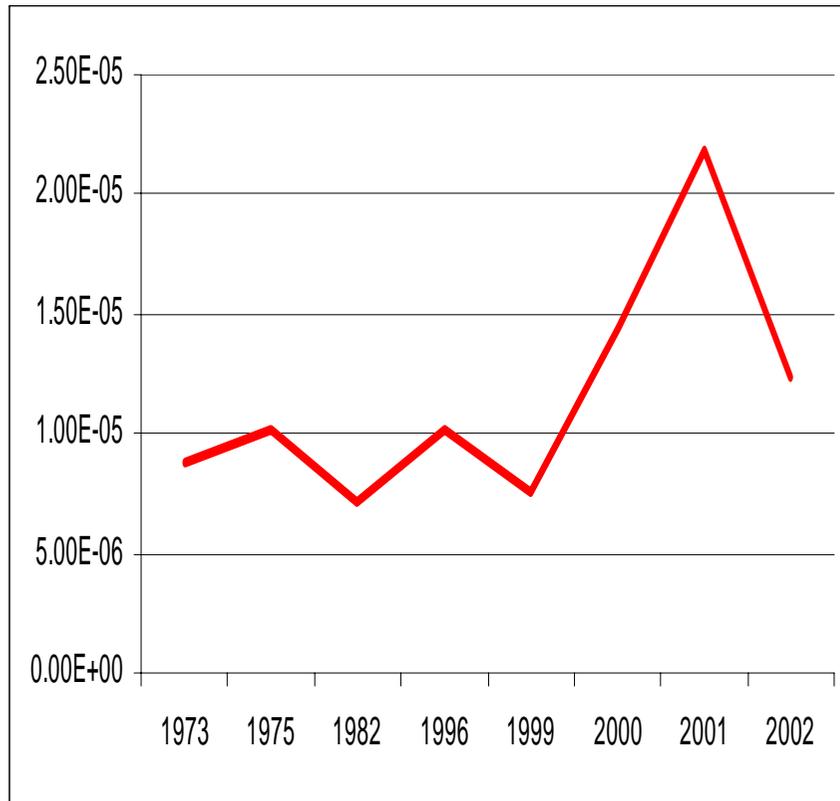
Discussion of

Exposure to foreign media and
changes in cultural traits:
Evidence from naming patterns in
France

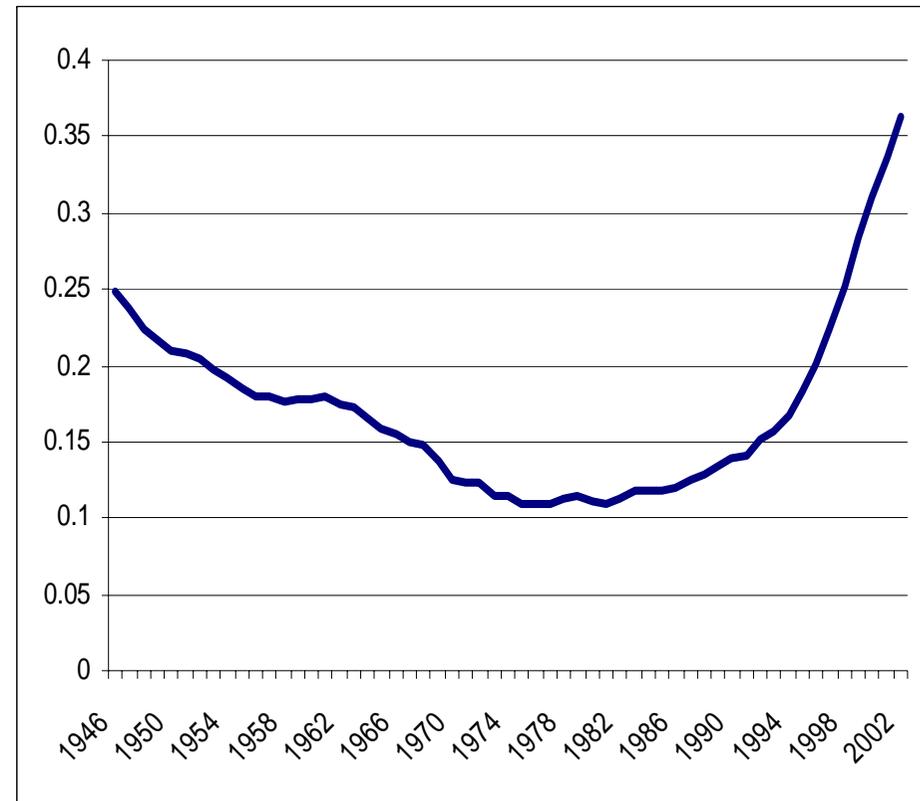
*by Anna-Celia Disdier, Keith Head and
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Why am I the discussant?

Tito's frequencies



The fall and rise of 4 digit names



The paper

- Literature on endogenous preferences (from Chicago to Penn)
- Empirical assessment of whether media affect preferences based on cohort-specific data
- In particular, focus on preferences which are deemed to be an expression of the national “cultural identity”
- Underlying policy issue: is there scope for “cultural protectionism”?

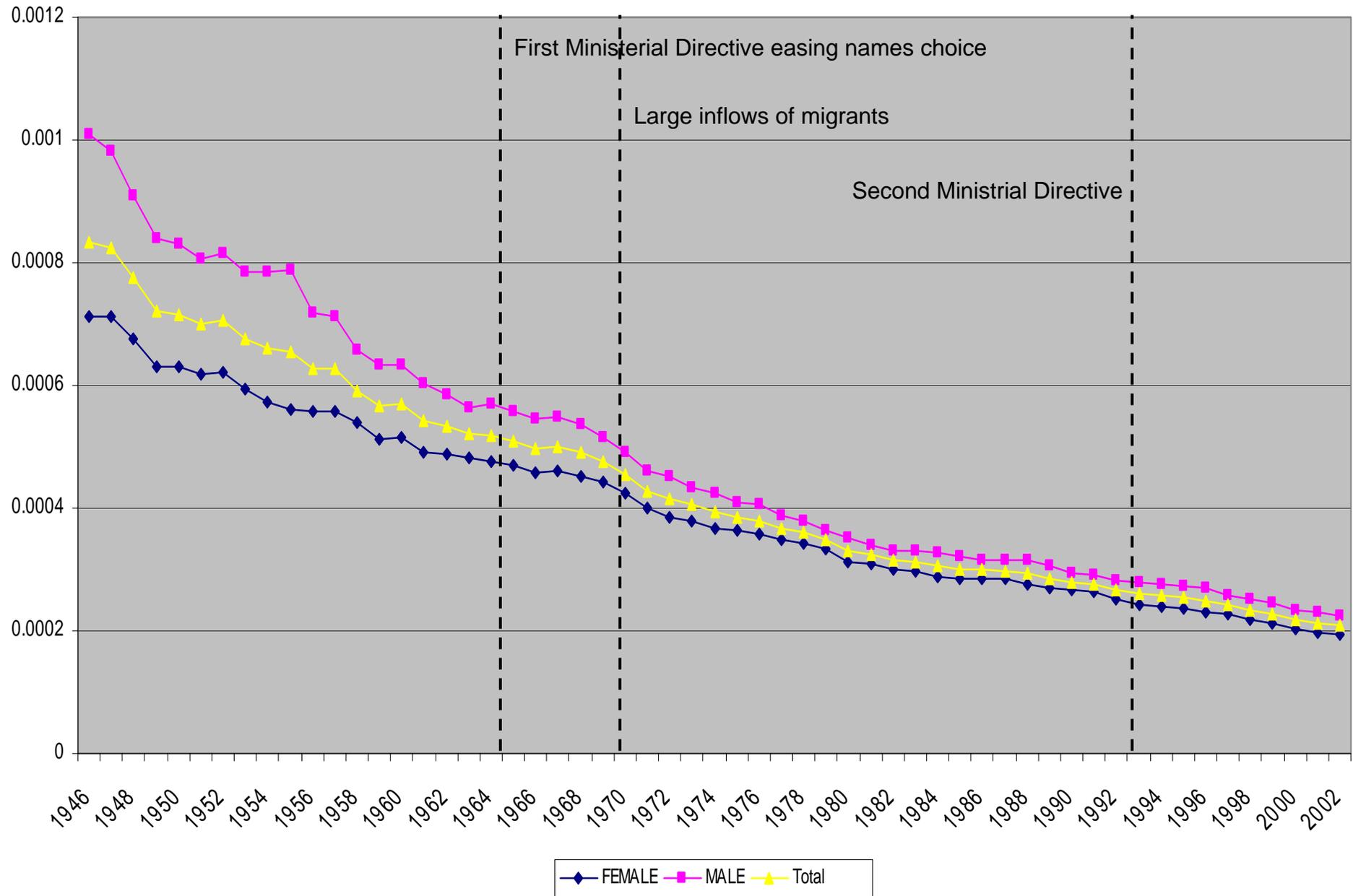
3 issues

1. Are names an expression of the “cultural identity” of a country?
2. Identification of the role of media in affecting name choices
3. Policy implications: can we draw any?

Names and cultural traits

- Definition of culture (Becker '96 -> Guiso, Sapienza, Zingales, 2006): “those customary beliefs and values that ethnic, religious, and social groups transmit *fairly unchanged* from generation to generation.”
- Are names an expression of “*fairly unchanged*” beliefs and values? Or are they a vehicle of social integration?
- France: *ius soli*. Born French. Married women lose their last name. Systematic differences across gender and migrant/native status?

Average cohort-specific frequency of names



Are we identifying media effects?

- Methodology: regression of frequencies of names at different cohorts on various measures of (domestic and foreign) media exposure
- Serious reverse causality issue: use *only* foreign media and actors.
- Simultaneity bias: controls for common and unobserved determinants. Fixed effects for names and cohorts

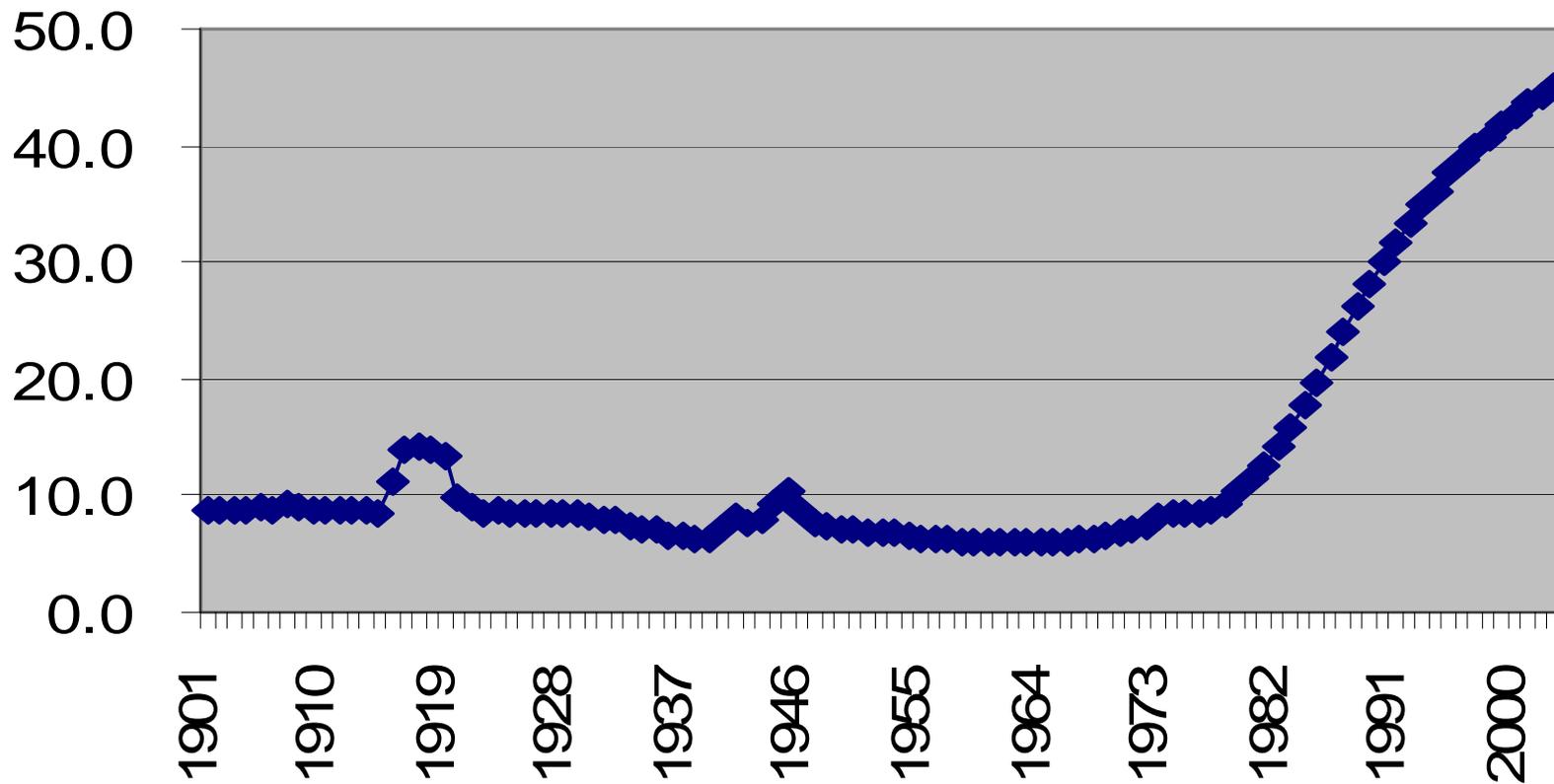
FE only foreign by gender

| | Female | Male |
|--------------------|------------|------------|
| Movie: actor OTH | 0.241 | 0.185 |
| | (0.170) | (0.098)* |
| Movie: actor USA | -0.105 | 0.283 |
| | (0.086) | (0.052)*** |
| Tv show: actor OTH | 0.145 | 0.226 |
| | (0.066)** | (0.029)*** |
| Tv show: actor USA | 0.348 | -0.013 |
| | (0.027)*** | (0.015) |
| # of obs. | 158057 | 135977 |

Are we identifying the 3 channels of impact of media on name choice?

- Coordination, introduction, association. Likely to be changing over time.
- *Introduction* effect is more concentrated with larger TV penetration.
- *Association* can also be negative: can we exploit this (e.g., "bad roles"?)
- Different *co-ordination* is required with smaller families and more born "hors marriage"

Hors mariage pour 100 nés vivants (%)



Policy issue

- Welfare analysis: why should US media influence on French “cultural traits” reduce welfare?
- The model suggests that the three channels-functions of media (co-ordination, “product innovation”, association-meaning of names) generate positive externalities. Am I missing something?

Summary

- Frontier paper
- Very intriguing

- Possible developments:
- Investigate the behaviour of migrants
- Isolate French from foreign names
- Influence on names length: the “Troisi effect”