Masterseminarpaper Summary: Immigration & Media Framing in Swiss Referendums

1. Summary of the Original Project

The original seminar paper explored how immigration was framed in Swiss media during periods of high political salience, particularly around national referendums. It used a dataset of 1,731 articles from major German-language and ideologically diverse newspapers and used the GPT API to classify content by:

- Framing strategy (economic, cultural, political/legal, etc.)

- Sentiment and emotional tone

- Oppositional constructs ("us vs. them" framing)

The analysis was conducted to find framing pattern by ideological orientation, but the clarity of the results was limited.

2. Limitations of the Original Project

- Scope too broad: Multiple referendums and multiple analysis dimensions.

- Classification failure: Over 40% of articles were unclassified (due to model or prompt limitations).

- Low article counts: Some outlets (e.g., *Weltwoche*, *WOZ*) had too few articles to support generalization, this was problematic in the analysis.

- Overlapping categories: Vague frame definitions blurred distinctions (e.g., "political/legal"), there were too few frames for many categories, so many categories hat to be collapsed in order to compare.

- Ideological mismatches: Unexpected results (e.g., opposition framing from leftist papers) which might have stemmed conceptual ambiguity or the prompt not being clear enough.

3. Proposed Refinements/Additions

Scope

- Focus exclusively on the 2014 Mass Immigration Initiative (highly salient, polarized and well-documented).

Framing-Only Analysis

- Analyze only frames, not sentiment or opposition categories.

- Refine frame definitions and introduce subcategories (e.g., for economic frame: economic-benefit vs. economic-burden).

- Allow articles to carry multiple frames with strength indicators. (The articles are very long and might use more than one frame, assess whether there are multiple frames present and which one is the most prominent.)

Improve Sampling Strategy

- Exclude low-frequency outlets (e.g., *Weltwoche*, *WOZ*).

Additional: Link to Voting Outcomes

Since ideologically distinct outlets such as Die Weltwoche (far right) and WOZ (far left) will be excluded from the sample due to low article counts, I realized that analyzing media ideology directly might be difficult. Instead, I would like to expand the project by linking the identified media frames to actual voting outcomes:

- Use the official BFS voting results by district («Bezirk») from the 2014 Mass Immigration Initiative.

- Assign each district to a "media region" («Medienraum»). This is based on a Publicom dataset from 2017. The dataset ranks newspapers by market share and perceived opinion influence within each region. The idea is to approximate which types of frames the population in a given district was most likely exposed to.

- Then, run regression or correlation analyses to analyze whether exposure to specific frame types predicts referendum vote shares.

4. Specific Questions

- Online vs. Print: Would it be better to use online versions instead of print versions of articles for classification this time? (I thought this could improve classifications as online articles might be shorter generally, and online versions were wide-spread in 2014.)

- GPT classification: Are additional validation methods (manual test samples, simpler prompts) needed to make sure that the classifications are consistent/accurate?

- Use of media regions (2017): Is it acceptable to use 2017 data on media regions and newspaper influence for a 2014 vote? This is the earliest available dataset I could find, but I thought it was very useful that they assess both market share and perceived opinion influence.