



Media Framing of Irregular Migration in United Kingdom News Coverage

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Research Focus

- Irregular migration is one of the **most widely discussed** issues among political discourse
- When issues are **framed differently**, their **meaning** and thus **interpretation can change**

Research Question: How does the framing of irregular migration in the mass media contribute to the likelihood of a period of major political contestation occurring?

- Explored by analyzing how **3 ideologically opposed U.K. mass media news sources** (*The Guardian*, *The Times*, & *The Sun*) frame irregular migration
- The **timeline for this study** is based around the **2016 Brexit referendum**, which also coincides with the **2015 European migrant crisis**

Motivation for This Work

- The **increasing number of refugees entering the U.K.** irregularly served as a key part of the **Brexit “leave” campaign’s rhetoric**
- **Brexit** fits excellently as a **period of major political contestation (PMPC)** due to it having a great deal of political discourse as well as having very high stakes
- Many **studies analyze U.K. mass media**, but **few connect this with irregular migration**
- While it is accepted that mass media sources with differing ideological biases use certain frames over others, it is **still unclear if there are consistent shifts relative to where each source began**

Media Framing Analysis & Irregular Migration Framing Literature

- Framing must be viewed as **distinct from agenda-setting**
- **Narrow and focused framing definitions** allow for more nuanced studies
- Elements from **critical and constructionist framing scholars** which **helped inform initial expectations** of the study
- **Connecting framing with irregular migration** helped derive this study’s framing categories

Key Authors & Works

- Robert M. Entman (1991, 1993)
- Paul D’Angelo (2002)
- Maxwell E. McCombs & Donald L. Shaw (1972)
- Dietram A. Scheufele (1999, 2000)
- Toril Aalberg & Audun Beyer (2015)

Literature Review

Relating Agenda-Setting, Priming, & Framing

- **Priming** is largely viewed as an **extension of agenda-setting**
- Scholars differ on **whether framing** is merely an **extension of agenda-setting** or a separate but related concept
- Many argue that if **framing** is subsumed **under agenda-setting** nuance can be lost
- **Agenda-setting** is based on **accessibility** while **framing** is based on **applicability**
- **Others rebut this**, arguing that **separate definitions promote conceptual vagueness**

Broad vs. Narrow Framing Definitions & Theory

- Supporters of **broad views** argue that these **definitions make more sense conceptually**
- Broad encompassing typologies can help tackle framing challenges
- Others argue that **going too broad obliterates nuance**
- **Narrow and specific views** allow for **more relevant studies and analyses**

Cognitivist vs. Critical vs. Constructionist Outlooks on Framing

- **Cognitivist** scholars focus heavily on the **psychological elements** of framing using an **image of “negotiation”**
- **Critical** scholars emphasize how the **mass media creates dominating frames** that **impose a hegemonic view** of events, using an **image of “domination”**
- **Constructionist** scholars argue that **framing is a dynamic process** between **journalists, the political elite, and general audiences**, using an **image of “co-optation”**

Literature Review Continued

Framing & Irregular Migration

- Much **coverage** of irregular migration **uses racialized undertones**
- **Human-interest, humanitarian, threat, and conflict** frames are all heavily utilized
- **Certain frames often dominate irregular migration news coverage**, frequently **painting migrants in a negative manner**

Hypothesis & Arrow Diagram

- Studying the **connections between framing and irregular migration** allows for **intriguing explorations** into how the **mass media frames issues**

- This study examines **how framing changes throughout time across multiple ideologically opposed mass media sources**
- **Critical notions** help explain **why frames dominate news coverage**
- **Constructionist views** help understand **why framing trends change over time**

Hypothesis: If framing in the mass media around irregular migration is more focused on *threat/conflict frames*, then a period of major political contestation is more likely to occur.

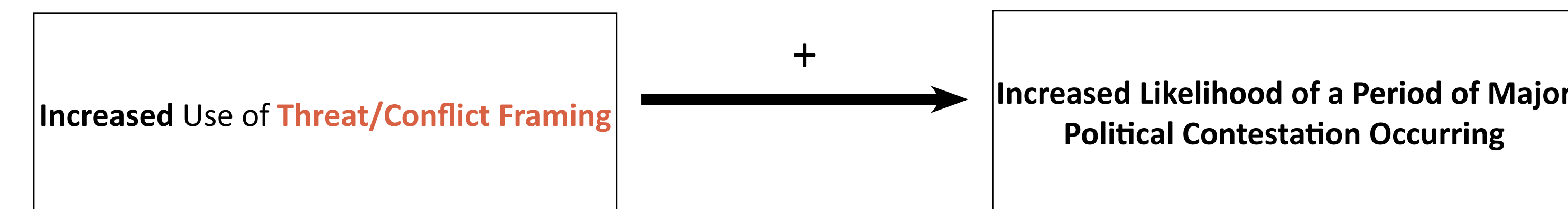


Figure 1: Arrow Diagram of Hypothesis

Methodology

- **Longitudinal qualitative content analysis**
- **Coding scheme** with designated indicators for each framing category
- **3 news sources** (*The Guardian*, *The Times*, & *The Sun*)
- **81 total articles coded**, 27 articles per source
- **3 time periods (T1-T3)**

Framing Categories

Human-Interest/Humanitarian (HI/H)

- Focuses on the **human elements of an issue**
- **HI on the micro-level, H on the macro-level**
- **Personal details of migrants highlighted**
- **Emphasis on the suffering and hardships that can befall migrants**

Threat/Conflict (T/C)

- Emphasizes **conflict between individuals and groups**
- **In the case of irregular migration, often done to depict migrants as a threat to society and its institutions**

Timeline

- **T1: Pre-Brexit Referendum** (January 1st, 2015 - March 31st, 2015)
- **T2: Build up to the Brexit Referendum** (April 1st, 2016 - June 23rd, 2016)
- **T3: Post-Brexit Referendum** (June 24th, 2016 - September 30th, 2016)

Analysis & Findings

- **HI/H** slightly decreases from **T1 to T2**, **T/C** slightly increases
- **HI/H** significantly increased from **T2 to T3**, with **T/C** sharply decreasing
- **N/A** remained relatively stable
- **T/C** used slightly more often at **37 articles vs. HI/H at 31 articles**

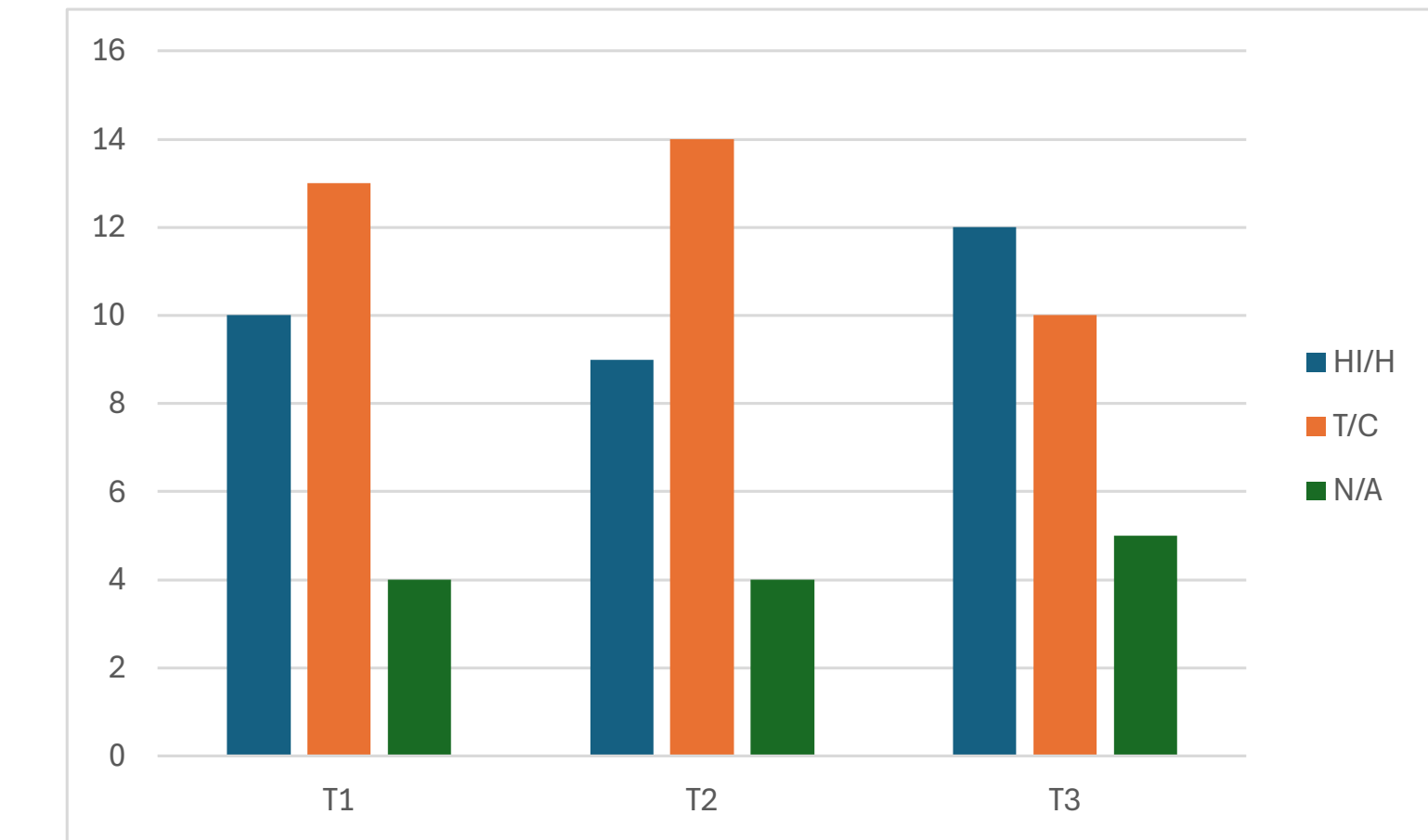


Figure 2: Number of Articles Coded as HI/H, T/C or N/A by TP

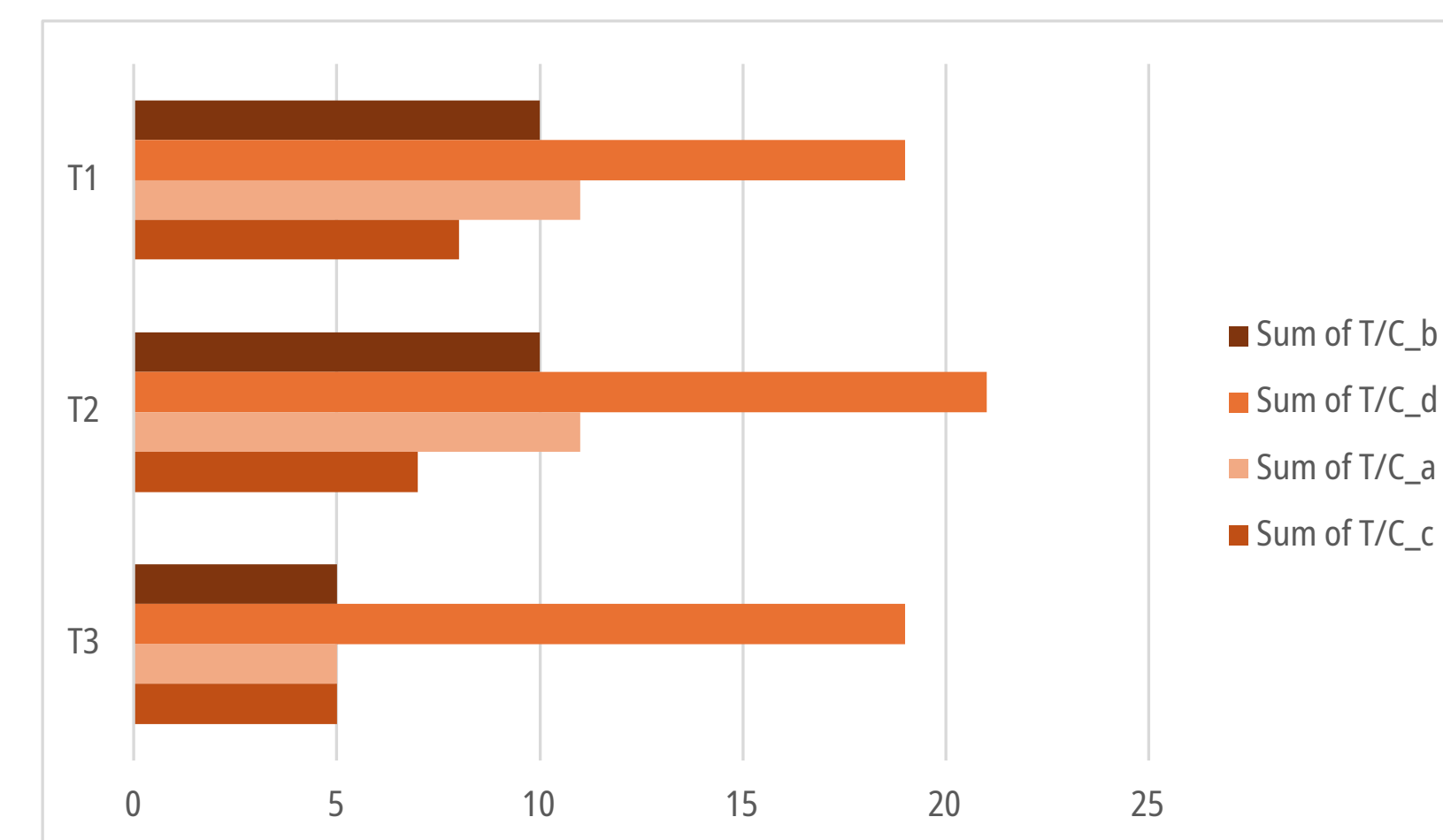


Figure 3: T/C framing indicators by TP

- Analysis revealed an **inverse relationship between HI/H_a_micro and HI/H_a_macro** indicators
- When the former decreased the latter increased
- This **relationship was not present in T1**
- Overall **inverse relationship suggests preference towards macro depictions of irregular migration**

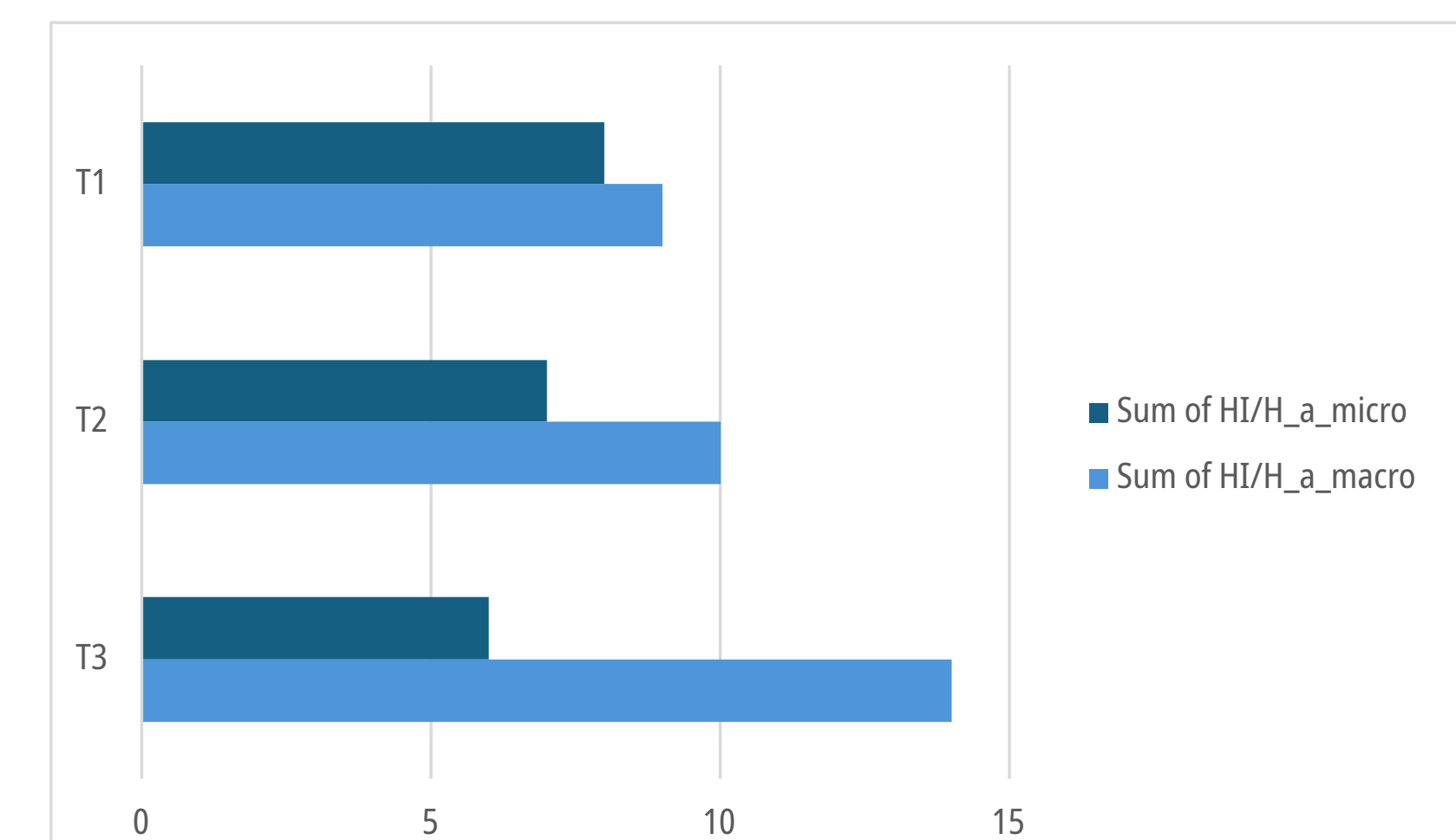


Figure 4: HI/H Framing Indicators by TP

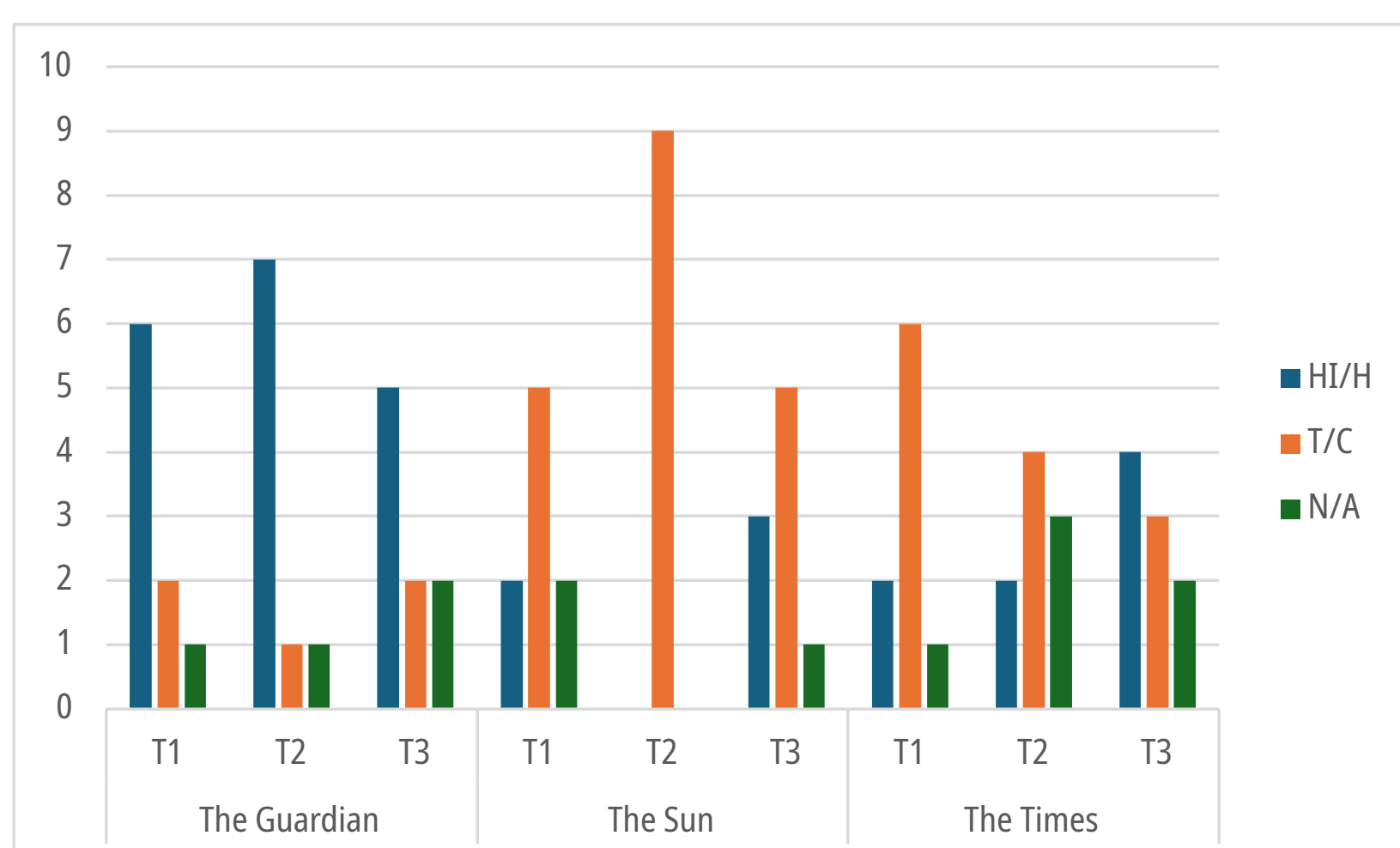


Figure 5: Number of Articles Coded as HI/H, T/C, or N/A by TP & Source

- **The Guardian** had the **most HI/H** articles, with few **T/C** articles overall
- **The Sun** displayed the **inverse trend**, with the **most T/C** articles
- **The Times** had a **decrease of T/C** articles in **T2** with an increase of **N/A** articles, suggesting the use of **alternative framing categories**
- **T/C framing drastically decreased to an extent in all sources in T3**, with an **unexpected rise in HI/H framing**
- This suggests a **phenomena extending beyond any particular source**

Implications

- While not significant in this study, **secondary framing should still be taken into consideration** to determine its relevancy
- **Tracking individual framing indicators** proved to be quite useful and yielded **plentiful findings**
- **Analyzing an ideologically diverse range of mass media sources** provides **important nuance**
- **Future research should include more framing categories**, such as one capturing the **economic costs** of an issue
- **Further studies** should make an effort to **use as many, well-trained coders as possible**
- Analyzing the **2015 European migrant crisis** from the **perspective of other EU countries** (such as **Greece or Hungary**) could provide for interesting findings