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Erosion of Human Rights Frame and the Rise of Anti-Gender Movement in Croatia: The Case of LGBT

Rights and the Marriage Referendum

By

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1. Introduction

In April 2013, the Croatian citizens' initiative *U ime obitelji* (UIO – In the Name of the Family) announced the campaign for a constitutional referendum defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. UIO was a brand new initiative, but many of its members were already known publicly for their socially conservative activism on issues such as medically assisted reproduction or sex education (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017). Although not officially religiously affiliated, UIO was supported by the Croatian Catholic Church which provided resources and mobilized for the referendum (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017). In the following months, UIO successfully gathered the required 10% signatures of the registered voters, and also accomplished its campaign's goal. In December 2013, five months after the EU accession, Croatia banned same-sex marriage. Out of 37.90% of voters who voted on the referendum, 65.87% said yes to defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman (Državno izborno povjerenstvo RH 2013). In the absence of the voter turnout threshold, these results were valid and binding.

The 2013 marriage referendum was in Croatia a turning point for what is today known as anti-gender mobilization. This refers to campaigns first appearing in mid- and late- 2000s that target LGBT rights and gender equality across various domains, and which employ new discourses and repertoires of actions such as grassroots democracy strategies and social media and online platforms (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b; 2017a; Giebel & Röhrborn 2015; Kováts 2017). Even though anti-gender campaigns were active in Croatia as early as 2006, and particularly in 2012 (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017; Petričušić et al. 2017), it was only with the successful 2013 marriage referendum that anti-gender movement in Croatia gained real momentum. Despite some notable exceptions – such as the 2014 Life Partnership Act that granted same-sex partners most of the marriage rights, with the exception of joint adoption (Čizmek 2014) – the symbolic tide has turned. UIO upped the ante in the struggle against gender rights in the Croatian public space, and the referendum was shortly followed by a flurry of activities, from the constitutional challenges to abortion to campaigning against the ratification of the Istanbul convention. These activities expanded into other areas of public life, from the demand for the electoral reform that would give more formal power to small and fringe actors (Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017; Petričušić et al. 2017) to the media and litigation campaigns targeting UIO's critics in the media and the academia (Vlašić 2018).

Complex interrelations of many factors that contributed to the marriage referendum's success are difficult to grasp comprehensively in a single article. Therefore, we focus on one particular dimension: the framing strategies

of UIO's marriage referendum campaign. The social movements and the political communication literature increasingly show the important role of frames in shaping collective mobilization and policies (e.g. Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Ferree et al. 2002; Verloo et al. 2007; Kriesi 2012). Likewise, many studies focusing on other factors contributing to the success of the Croatian marriage referendum (see, for example, Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017; Petričušić et al. 2017; Sloomaeckers & Sircar 2018) pointed out the relevance of UIO's discursive strategies. Nevertheless, an in-depth analysis of framing strategies that gave UIO an advantage in the referendum campaign is still missing. We provide such an analysis in the present study by identifying the framing mechanism that helped UIO to successfully mobilize general public, achieve its campaign goals, and also rise as an influential actor aspiring to affect wider gender and sexuality policy and societal change in Croatia. In the identification of this framing mechanism, we asked how were UIO's framing choices situated into local socio-political context and we traced how UIO's marriage referendum frames were developed both in response to the frames previously used to advance LGBT rights in Croatia and in relation to the frames that were previously used to support socially conservative goals. But, equally importantly, we also situated UIO's framing strategies in relation to new discursive strategies of wider anti-gender mobilization in Europe.

This study contributes to emerging literature on the European anti-gender mobilizations. At a more general level, this expands the understanding of both the wider patterns of socio-cultural change in Europe and the specific shifts in gender and sexuality policies across a number of European countries such as Croatia that are backtracking on already achieved gender and sexuality rights (by introducing new abortion restrictions, for example) or constitute new policies to limit further expansions of such rights (such as the constitutional definition of marriage as an union between a man and a woman). Croatian case is of particular interest within this framework due to curiously conflicting trends in gender and sexuality policies and public opinion, a consequence of specific historic and political context into which these debates were situated. Croatia decriminalized same-sex relations as early as 1977, while still a member of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Already in the 1980s, Croatia was - together with another Yugoslav republic Slovenia - characterized by growing space of LGBT activism and greater visibility of gays and lesbians (Vuletić 2003). This came to an abrupt halt with the 1990s wars of the Yugoslav secession and the focus on the state- and nation-building by the ruling rightwing *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (HDZ - Croatian Democratic Union). Propagating the essentialist Catholic foundation of the Croatian identity (Bellamy 2003), the period of the HDZ rule propelled wider societal re-traditionalization (Dobrotić et al. 2013), accompanied by the

public erasure of LGBT issues in the 1990s (Vuletić 2004; Đurin 2012). Yet, with the coming to power of the centre-left coalition in 2000, and continued with the return to power of the self-proclaimedly reformed HDZ in 2003, the subsequent decade was characterized by growing political support for the rights of sexual minorities, particularly after Croatia applied for the European Union membership in 2003 (Jurčić 2012). In this context, the first Pride Parade was successfully organized in the capital Zagreb in 2002, and the following years witnessed a growing number of legal provisions for non-discrimination and equality of sexual minorities (Vučković Juroš 2015). Simultaneously, however, the anti-gender movement was slowly growing in Croatia as well, with the marriage referendum initiated by the UIO as the culmination point of its rise.

In our analysis of the discursive dimension of the rise of anti-gender movement in Croatia, we adopted a dynamic approach to framing. Rather than examining UIO's framing strategies in isolation of the marriage referendum campaign, we situated the referendum framing within a broader discursive field of the Croatian LGBT framing in the 2000s. This allowed us to examine how UIO approached the problem of diminishing effectiveness of the morality framing and the rise of the LGBT rights as human rights frame. Our findings show that UIO negotiated wider resonance for their three main campaign frames, the protection of marriage/family, children and values, by increasing the appeal and salience of their demands for the wider public. Our analysis uniquely points out that this was achieved not only through UIO's more obvious framing strategies of appropriating human rights and democracy frames and through the local (multivalent) adaptation of the European reference frame, but also through apparent but superficial disassociation from morality frames used by similar actors in the past, while simultaneously eroding the credibility of human rights, democracy and science frames.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Power of Framing

Frames are typically defined as central ideas that organize interpretation of an issue by selectively focusing attention on only some of its aspects (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Entman 1993; McCombs & Ghanem 2001). Developed most extensively in the research on social movements and collective action, the framing analysis has been used to explain how collective actors articulate their grievances, mobilize support and instigate action by negotiating moments of disruption and contestable meanings (Benford & Snow 2000; Snow et al. 2018). The political communication research fruitfully used the framing approach to analyse the interactions between the public opinion and the public decision-making process (Kriesi 2012). In policy studies as well, framing is increasingly used to

identify how policy problems and solutions are defined and formulated, a development that was also accompanied by a notable methodological innovation of the critical frame analysis allowing for large scale comparative framing projects (Verloo 2005; van der Haar & Verloo 2016). Various studies have suggested that, in conjunction with other factors and within certain limits, effective frames can influence the media and the public discourse (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Ferree et al. 2002; Bail 2012), can help activate or sustain collective mobilization (Cress & Snow 2000), and can facilitate or hinder policy changes (Verloo et al. 2007; Kangas et al. 2014).

While some studies directly measured framing effects by, for example, laboratory (Druckman 2001) or survey experiments (Pizmony-Levy & Ponce 2013), often it is not feasible to directly measure greater effectiveness of a certain frame over others. Instead, the effectiveness of a frame is inferred from the consequences – from the success (or failure) of a collective mobilization, from a shift in public opinion or media discourse, or from a policy change. An extensive conceptual toolbox developed for the task of identifying how and why frames succeed or fail most heavily rests on the concepts of resonance and salience (Snow et al. 2018). Frame resonance typically refers to the factors that make a frame more persuasive. For example, its internal consistency (Benford & Snow 2000), credibility or authoritativeness of its sponsors (Benford & Snow 2000; Schudson 1989), fit with the 'common-sense' perceptions of how the world works (Benford & Snow 2000), or the association with the wider cultural understandings (Benford & Snow 2000; Gamson & Modigliani 1989), also known as metanarratives (Steinmetz 1992; Somers 1994) or master-frames (Snow & Benford 1992). Frame salience, on the other hand, refers to factors that make a frame important for the audience. For example, the emotions it evokes (Bail 2012; McDonnell et al. 2017) or the association with the audiences' personal experiences or central values and beliefs (Benford & Snow 2000). While frame salience is sometimes subsumed under resonance in the literature (see, for example, Benford & Snow 2000), here we follow McDonnell et al. (2017) who make a case for their conceptual separation.

In discussing effectiveness of frames, analysts are often faced with the problem of circular reasoning: the most effective frames are analysed as the most resonant frames, and they are identified as the most resonant because they were the most effective (McDonnell et al. 2017; Snow et al. 2018). A way to tackle this conundrum, McDonnell et al. (2017) suggest, is a more dynamic approach to framing analysis that would be better able to capture shifts in meaning and ownership of particular frames. Therefore, instead of treating resonance as an intrinsic property of a frame, the analyst should examine how resonance is built and achieved by actors negotiating the effect of certain frames that are pushed forward as possible creative solutions for the actors' problem at a particular point in

space and time (McDonnell et al. 2017; for 'culture as problem-solving tool' perspective see also Swidler 2000).

During this process of resonance building, the strategic choices of actors come to the fore. This most particularly includes points of emphasis that need to be selected considering the specific context, the target audience's concerns and the opponents' framing strategies. Such selected points of emphasis go beyond the main proclaimed or campaign-specific issue – what Hänggli & Kriesi (2012) call 'substantive frames' and which are chosen based on the presumed capacity for strong resonance. Most notably, these strategic choices also include 'contest frames' (Hänggli & Kriesi 2012) which – to potential allies - signal actors' more general policy / ideological positioning.

In the next two sections, we present the rise of the human rights frame in expanding the space of the LGBT rights and the consequent discursive mobilization of networks of religious and conservative actors in response to this development, as well as to the diminished effectiveness of the morality framing. Our analysis dynamically situates UIO's framing strategies within this wider societal and temporal framework, and shows how UIO approached the problem of increasing gender and sexuality rights by negotiating a new resonance for their old socially conservative issues.

2.2 Institutionalization and Challenges to the Human Rights Frame

The frame of the LGBT rights as human rights developed with the 1960s and the 1970s gay liberation movement in the USA and the Northern and Western European countries (D'Emilio 2000; Kollman & Waites 2009). In the early 1990s, the human rights frame became central to the LGBT movement at the global level (Kollman & Waites 2009). Several authors linked this frame with the rise of the LGBT-inclusive policies. For example, the frame of human rights is considered instrumental for the government support in the initial recognition of same-sex unions in Northern and many Western European countries in late 1990s and early 2000s (Kollman 2007). More indirectly, this frame was also credited with influencing policy changes by shifting public opinion on same-sex unions in the US (Engel 2013) or for successfully mobilizing LGBT activists in countries such as Poland (O'Dwyer 2012). In Croatia as well, following the societal re-traditionalization (Dobrotić et al. 2013) and the silencing of the LGBT issues in the first post-communist period of the 1990s (Vuletić 2004; Đurin 2012), the post-2000 period of incremental legislative changes protecting or expanding the LGBT rights (Forest 2018) emerged hand-in-hand with the human rights discourse surrounding the first successful organization of the Pride Parade in 2002 and the 2003 Act on (non-

registered) Same-Sex Unions (Kuhar 2011; Butterfield 2016).¹

Various scholars (Kollman 2007; Ayoub & Paternotte 2014) have also noted a special association of the LGBT human rights frame with the European project. As a result of the strong EU institutionalization of this frame in the 1990s, the LGBT rights have been used to assess the democratic maturity of European states, particularly during the EU expansion to the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Moss 2014; Slootmaeckers et al. 2016). Not only were the improvements of the LGBT rights part of the conditionality package for the CEE candidates (O'Dwyer 2012; Slootmaeckers et al. 2016), but the frames of adopting European ideals and standards of human rights and equality were used to pressure national governments into adopting non-binding LGBT-friendly legislature, such as legal recognitions of same-sex unions (Kuhar 2012). In Croatia, for example, which was the first country whose EU accession negotiations included a chapter on the fundamental rights, the local LGBT organizations skilfully used the human rights frame associated with the ideal of Europeanness to push for non-required legislative changes, which is a development that culminated with the 2014 Life Partnership Act (Kahlina 2015; Slootmaeckers et al. 2016).

Nevertheless, in some contexts the human rights frame proved ineffective or counterproductive, not least because of its Europeanization link (Kollman 2007). The frame of the LGBT rights as human rights has been challenged by certain segments of the population or stripped of its emancipatory significance by the conservative political elites. This ranged from the post-accession resistance to the perceived European imperialism endangering national cultures and identities in many CEE countries such as Poland or Lithuania (O'Dwyer 2012; Kuhar 2012; Slootmaeckers et al. 2016; Graff & Korolczuk 2017) to the solely declarative adherence to the protection of the LGBT rights in, for example, the candidate country Serbia (Kahlina 2015; Slootmaeckers 2017). Moreover, the human rights frame has lost some of its salience for the local LGBT communities as well, as they found some of their specific needs unaddressed within this framework (Bilić 2016; Butterfield 2016). Nonetheless, the human rights frame remained the overwhelming focus of the professionalized LGBT activists who in their activities targeted primarily European institutions, international funding agencies and national governments (Kollman 2007; Ayoub & Paternotte 2014), rather than their own constituents and general public.

These developments notwithstanding, the human rights frame remains a strongly institutionalized (Beetham 1998) and a powerful metanarrative of the Western world, loosely defined as Europe and other countries with

¹The 2003 Act on Same-Sex Unions remained symbolic, as it granted solely the mutual assistance and support and the property rights that were virtually unimplementable due to the inability to register the union and the lack of harmonization with other legislation (Vučković Juroš 2015)

population of mostly European descent. Its focus on equality for all, including minorities, makes it easily coupled with the democratic model, another metanarrative of the Western world becoming dominant in the late 20th century as 'the fundamental standard of political legitimacy' (Held 1998, p.11). Therefore, as discussed in more detail below, when the conservative activists of the early 21st century were facing the problem of the declining effectiveness of the morality arguments in their mobilization against new gender and sexuality orders, they identified human rights and democratic frames as the tools that might increase the wider resonance of their demands.

2.3 The Discursive Shift of Anti-Gender Movements

Initial challenges to expanding LGBT rights came in the form of morality frames based on the ideas of unnaturalness, immorality and sin. Such morality arguments were used to resist policy change ranging from homosexual age of consent (Ellis & Kitzinger 2002), regulation of same-sex partnership (Kuhar 2011) to same-sex marriage (Pan et al. 2010; Cole et al. 2012). Similar arguments were also at the centre of sexual nationalisms using sexuality as a means of exclusion from national or socio-political community (Sremac & Ganzevoort 2015). In CEE, in particular, the heteronormative sexual nationalisms or heteronationalisms (Mosse 1988) are often intertwined with religious nationalisms, resulting in the discourse of the God-given moral order protecting people against the homosexuality which is 'a threat to society and a force that emasculates or weakens the national body' (Sremac & Ganzevoort 2015, p.7).

However, with the rise of human rights and democracy metanarratives and with the corresponding development of sexual citizenship categories in the late 20th century, the morality arguments, and their Biblical foundations in particular, have lost some of their legitimizing power in the Western world (Kuhar 2015). Therefore, with the emergence of transnational anti-gender mobilizations in Europe in the mid- and late-2000s (Giebel & Röhrborn 2015; Kováts 2017; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b), the conservative activists embarked on a project of employing new grassroots and digital repertoires of action and constructing a new image: one of democratic and rational actors, rising up against totalitarianisms targeting endangered (overwhelmingly Christian) values and ways of life, and standing up for the 'real' scientific knowledge as opposed to the 'gender ideology' of social sciences and humanities (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b; 2017a). The goals of these actors remained the same: the preservation or protection of heteronormative moral and religious order (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b; 2017a). However, the professionalized activists and allies of anti-gender movements started to eschew the use of such openly moral claims and to seek out more widely acceptable sources of

legitimizations, such as human and democratic rights, both at national (e.g. Hodžić & Bijelić 2014) and at supranational level (Mos 2018). The arguments of sinfulness, unnaturalness, immorality or sickness – that were previously the principal legitimizations of why a protection against homosexuality or same-sex unions was needed – have instead become the device of more radical or far-right actors in most countries in which the human rights’ discourse has gained greater political relevance, as it did in Croatia in the context of the post-communist transition to democracy and the EU integrations (Pavasović Trošt & Sloomaeckers 2015).

Such developments are well illustrated by the UIO's campaign against same-sex marriage. While the referendum was likely triggered by the 2012 announcement of the Life Partnership Act, the UIO's campaign was both a response to the already achieved accomplishments of the LGBT movement in Croatia and an attempt to prevent any further similar developments, such as the legalizations of the same-sex marriage already occurring elsewhere in Europe (Petričušić et al. 2017). But, above all, the UIO's campaign was part of a wider mobilization against expanding gender and sexuality rights in Europe. As such, it built on previous anti-gender mobilizations in Croatia, from initial opposition to sex education in 2006 to the more expansive mobilization in 2012, both against medically assisted reproduction and again against sex education (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017). However, the UIO's marriage referendum campaign achieved what earlier anti-gender mobilizations in Croatia were unable to do. The referendum win provided the conservative activists with the symbolic ammunition claiming wide popular support for their values and goals, and it established some of its leaders and associates as relevant political actors (Petričušić et al. 2017). The factors contributing to the success of the UIO's referendum campaign are complex and multidimensional, and many have been discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017; Petričušić et al. 2017; Glaudić & Vuković 2016; Sloomaeckers & Sircar 2018). However, an identification of the underlying mechanism of the UIO's framing strategies is still absent from the literature. Our analysis seeks to fill in this gap.

3. Data and Methods

The present study is based on qualitative framing analysis of LGBT² issues reported in the Croatian newspapers between the first Pride Parade in 2002 and the marriage referendum in 2013. Following Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) definition of media frames as central organizing ideas whose purpose is to make sense of relevant events, we

² We are well aware of the complexity of terminology in this matter. For the sake of simplicity, however, we decided to use the established term LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*) throughout most of the text, even though many of the frames used in the Croatian public discourse actually exclude most other groups but gays and lesbians.

define as LGBT newspaper frames those ideas available from newspaper articles that suggest a certain position or interpretation of LGBT issues. Our analysis included identifying all LGBT newspaper frames in the 2002-2013 period for the purpose of mapping out the broader discursive field of LGBT framing in 2000s. We traced how each frame was developed and adapted by various speakers throughout the whole examined period, and then we focused our analysis on the structure of the referendum framing. In particular, we identified UIO's substantive (campaign-specific) and contest (positioning) frames, as well as other frames they used in their support, we mapped out their mutual connections, and then we related these frames to the developments in socio-political context into which they were situated, both at the national and at the transnational level.

For this purpose, in the period between first Pride in 2002 and the marriage referendum in 2013, we examined LGBT coverage in nine newspapers: 24 sata (first published in 2005), Glas Slavonije, Globus, Jutarnji list, Nacional, Novi list, Slobodna Dalmacija, Večernji list, and Vjesnik (ceased publication in 2012). These newspapers reflect diverse positions, both at the regional and at the national level. We did not compare coverage across newspapers. Instead, we used newspapers as indicators of public discourse. We focused on newspapers, rather than on parliamentary or policy debates, in order to account for the mediated nature of public opinion formation (Steensland 2008; Kriesi 2012), and also to obtain access to more varied perspectives than those reflected in parliamentary proceedings and policy documents.

We sampled newspaper articles using critical discourse moments strategy (Chilton 1987; Gamson 1992). We focused on periods most likely to cause debate on LGBT issues: Pride Parades (Zagreb 2002-2013, Split 2011-2013), International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT; 2005-2013), pertinent parliamentary sessions (Same-sex Unions, Gender Equality and Family Law in 2003, Medically-Assisted Reproduction in 2005, Registered Partnership in 2006, Anti-Discrimination and Gender Equality in 2008, Medically-Assisted Reproduction in 2009, 2011 and 2012, Anti-Discrimination in 2012), and the key events of the 2012/2013 sex education campaign and the 2013 marriage referendum campaign. For regular or announced events (e.g. Pride, demonstrations) we typically examined coverage of the week before and after the event. For parliamentary debates, press conferences and similar events, we focused on reactions during the event and in the week afterwards. Some time-limited events (e.g. IDAHOT) were covered only for that day. During the examined period, we identified all articles referencing homosexuality, LGBT, Pride Parades and same-sex unions, as well as all articles about sex education, medically assisted reproduction and marriage referendum that explicitly discussed LGBT-related issues.

We developed our coding scheme both deductively, using frames identified in the literature, and inductively, following the open coding procedure (Emerson et al. 1995) on a subset of newspapers. After a process of deliberation and modification, we devised – and implemented in Atlas.ti software – a hierarchical coding scheme following the principles of framing analysis developed by Ferree et al. (2002) in their analysis of media discourse on abortion. Using utterances as units of analysis, in each article we identified thematic codes (e.g. gays are aggressive) and their speakers (e.g. clergy or conservative NGO representative). Codes were abstracted into sub-frames with a positive or negative³ evaluation (e.g. sexual minorities are undemocratic, negative). These were further abstracted into frames (e.g. democratic principle) and subsumed into a particular category (e.g. human rights and democracy frames). Although we partially departed from Ferree et al.'s approach (2002) in our analysis of newspaper frames, which was qualitative rather than quantitative, we found this hierarchical coding approach with positive and negative evaluations particularly well suited for the fragmented and often exaggerated nature of the newspaper reports and 'soundbites'. For this reason, for example, we did not utilize critical frame analysis approach initially developed by Verloo (Verloo 2005; van der Haar & Verloo 2016) which, although better suited for qualitative analysis, we found more appropriate for policy documents which are typically more self-contained and more elaborate in suggesting a diagnosis and solution to a policy problem (even when this is done implicitly). Newspaper articles, on the other hand, as noted by Ferree et al. (2002), belong to the arena of 'talk' rather than policy. Although these two issues are related, and even more so in the case of the media debate on the marriage referendum, the newspaper talk is able to 'pick up' on a greater variety of sometimes disjointed voices and less internally coherent cultural narratives. These, in turn, more often function in terms of binary evaluations, rather than the proposed diagnosis-and-solution narratives to a certain type of a 'problem' that are more easily found in policy documents.

Our decision to pursue a qualitative analysis of the identified frames was based on our emerging understanding that the frames were primarily meaningful in terms of their mutual relations within the same temporal context, especially as newspaper interest in particular LGB issues wavered between different periods, and since many news agency articles were repeated in parts or fully across different newspapers. For this reason, our analysis did not focus on frequencies, but on thematic identification of frames, and their inter-relations and prevalence in each year. We identified frame as prevalent in a particular year if it belonged into the highest category for the type

³ Our coding checklist also included the possibility of neutral or unidentifiable evaluations, but their presence was limited to several very technical legal interpretation. Therefore, we excluded those from the presentation of results.

of evaluation it presented. For example, in 2008 we linked 21 utterances with the frame protection of values (negative evaluation). The second most frequent frame with negative evaluation was the protection of future with 16 utterances. In this case, we identified protection of values as the most prevalent negative frame of 2008. The process was identical for frames with positive evaluation. In the next two sections, we present and discuss the results of this analysis.

4. Mapping the Broader Discursive Field: LGBT Framing in the 2000s

We identified five main frame categories in the Croatian newspapers during critical discourse moments in 2002-2013: morality, protection, human rights and democracy, European reference, and science (Table 1 lists all identified frames for each frame category and provides descriptions of sub-frames). We also identified two main periods of the LGBT discourse. In the first period, starting with the 2002 Zagreb Pride, discussion of LGBT issues is limited. In the second period, starting with the 2011 Split Pride, this discussion grew stronger, particularly in relation to the final stages of the EU negotiations. In the text below, we first present initial LGBT frames, and then we move on to the main changes in the LGBT framing in the second period. These changes in 2011 and 2012 were setting the stage for the referendum framing, which is the focus of our next section.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

4.1 Early Developments (2002-2010): Human Rights vs. Morality, and Multivalent Use of the European Reference

In the period starting with the first Pride in June 2002, the coverage of LGBT issues was relatively infrequent, including no more than 20-30 articles annually across all examined newspapers. These articles were prompted mostly by annual Pride Parades and pertinent Parliamentary sessions. Slightly higher coverage was noted in 2007 and 2008, in association with violent incidents of the 2007 Zagreb Pride and the 2008 Parliamentary debates on Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination acts. During these parliamentary debates, the issue of EU compliance came to the fore, especially as the proposed recognition of gender identity in the Anti-discrimination act provoked strong resistance from the Catholic Church and related organizations (Dobrotić et al. 2013).

In this period, the LGBT framing adhered to division of human rights opposing (traditional) morality, with European reference being used on both sides of the debate. The LGBT activists and representatives consistently used the human rights frame – mostly articulated as *right to equality and non-discrimination* – to further the case of LGBT rights. The direct challenges to this frame were much less frequent, and included denying sexuality access

into the public sphere (since displays of LGBT identity or homosexual identification were judged to be *improper behaviour*), and questioning existence of discrimination or pushing it aside as an issue of low priority, with the final conclusion that *protection or expansion of LGBT rights was unjustified* since they are not endangered or societally relevant. Parallel development with the rise of human rights frame was its European reference, with the protection of LGBT rights emerging as a civilizational marker that aligned Croatia with the Western and the *European model*, as opposed to the backwardness of the Balkans or the East.

On the other side of the debate, morality frames were also steadily and consistently available from newspapers during this whole period – primarily presenting homosexuality or same-sex unions as *violations of natural or religious order*. Initially, the opponents of LGBT rights did not engage with the European references when, for example, challenging or denying LGBT rights or explaining their opposition to Prides or legislative changes. Exceptions are rare but strong homophobic anti-EU sentiments deploring, for example, 'Euro-faggotization' of Croatia ('Raskol pod zastavom duge', *Glas Slavonije*, 11 July 2005), but such frames remained marginal. However, with the EU negotiations starting in the mid-2000s, the European reference became more relevant for the opponents of the LGBT rights, as they started expressing concerns changes brought by *EU coercion* in area of LGBT rights will endanger *Croatian values* and risk its *future*. Nevertheless, such Eurosceptic fears remained relatively mild and balanced by simultaneous manifest commitment to the EU membership. This is well illustrated by the religious officials joining the 2008 parliamentary debate on the Anti-Discrimination act, where the inclusion of gender identity was framed as unnecessary from the legal point of view as it was going *beyond the EU requirements*.

High Representatives of Religious Communities in Croatia further warn that 'the harmonization of our legislation with European must not be an excuse for endangering the fundamental values of the Croatian society.' But, they asses, 'it seems that this is not about the harmonization of our legislation with the European one, but it is taking matters beyond the European standards...' ('Zakon o suzbijanju diskriminacije treba značajno doraditi', *Jutarnji list*, 09 July 2008)

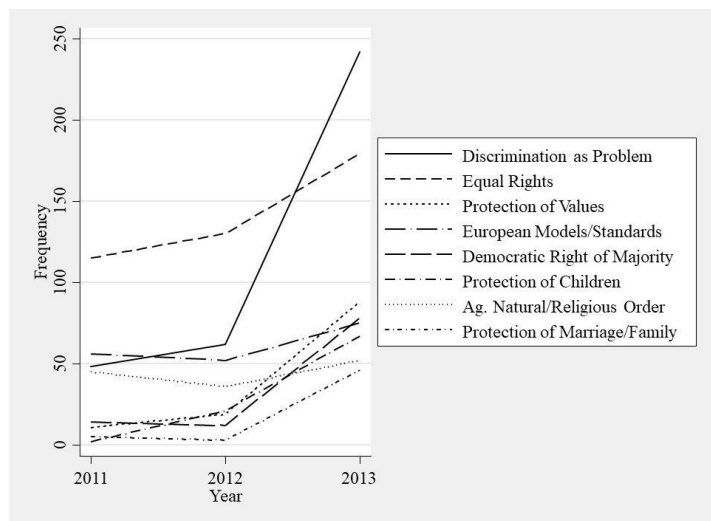
Adopting such a narrow legalistic view thus allowed for the opposition to expanding LGBT rights without opposing EU aspirations as such and resulted, in turn, in the multivalent use of the European reference by the conservative actors.

4.2 Turning Tide (2011-2012/13): New Democracy and Science Frames, and Disassociation from Morality

The heightened public awareness of LGBT issues after 2010, reflected in the jump to nearly 200 newspaper articles respectively in 2011 and 2012, changed the nature of the LGBT debate. While human rights and morality frames continued to be used in opposition, with the European reference utilized both by the LGBT rights' supporters and opponents, the second period is uniquely marked by new uses of democracy and science frames, and by the professionalized conservative activists' growing disassociation from the morality framing. The intensification of the LGBT debate, throughout which these developments occurred, was initiated by the violent incidents of the first Split Pride in June 2011. Together with peaceful and unprecedentedly large showing of supporters at the Zagreb Pride a week later, this is generally considered to mark a critical juncture point for the rise of public support for LGBT rights in Croatia (Jurčić 2012). This public interest was further sustained by the marked EU attention to the state of LGBT rights in the final stage of the EU negotiations, the 2012 announcement of new legislature introducing registered same-sex unions (but not marriage) by then-ruling centre-left government (Bilešić et al. 2012), and the 2012 campaign against sex education by the conservative activists allied with the Croatian Catholic Church.

In 2011 and 2012, the human rights frame became even more prominent, as politicians associated with centre-left ruling coalition joined the LGBT activists in professing public support for *equality of rights*. As seen from Graph 1, which illustrates main trends in 2011-2013, the *equality of rights* was one of the strongest newspaper frames in 2011-2012, followed only by the renewed insistence that LGBT *discrimination is indeed a problem* the Croatian society faces and the continued dedication to the frame of the *European models or standards*. Further, in this period, the LGBT activists formulated a new frame demanding the *protection of existing children* of the LGBT people, which, though not marked by high frequency, is marked by a strong symbolic importance suggesting new level of claims for LGBT equality. These frames with positive evaluation of LGBT issues continued to be opposed by morality frames in 2011-2012, particularly those presenting homosexuality or homosexual unions as *violations of natural or religious order*. As seen from Graph 1, such morality frames were steadily present in this period, even though they were soon going to be overtaken in frequency by other anti-LGBT frames. However, although the presence of morality frames was solid, not all actors opposing LGBT rights used morality frames equally. As we show below, in 2011-2012 the professionalized conservative activists started to disassociate from morality frames and to increasingly replace them by new democracy and science frames.

GRAPH 1



We first identified new democracy frames in justifications of negative responses to the 2011 Split parade. While previously negative reactions to Pride were validated by accusing gays and lesbians of imposing their values (which implied that *sexual minorities are undemocratic*), in the events surrounding the Split Pride the democracy framing was articulated differently – as the *democratic right of the majority* to express opposition to matters contrary to their values and beliefs. The conservative activists and the Catholic Church campaigning against sex education in 2012 later consolidated this frame in the public discourse. Using the concepts of ‘gender ideology’ – and ‘homosexual propaganda’ – supposedly hidden in the proposed health and sex education curriculum, the campaigners against sex education articulated their opposition to a more inclusive presentation of sexual identities and minorities through the claim of parents’ rights in terms of *protection of values* and *protection of children*.

Asked to interpret the criticism that the Church is interfering with the civil issues, Batarello [president of the conservative NGO 'Vigilare'] says this is an 'incredible intolerance'. 'We are surprised by the secular liberals who do not recognize another opinion. We live in a democracy and everyone has the right to their opinion, and so does the Church, and the Church includes all the believers and all the baptized people, and not only just the hierarchy. The Cardinal and the priests have opened up a space to discuss this publicly, but this is, in fact, the parents' story.' ('Pobuna s Kaptola: Sexualni odgoj podijelio Hrvatsku', *Večernji list*, 13 December 2012).

Bolstering the *protection of children* frame, campaigners against sex education also introduced a new frame of *scientific evidence* suggesting harmful outcomes for children raised by same-sex families. Although claims about *protection of children* from gays and lesbians were raised already in parliamentary debates about same-sex unions in the mid-2000s, justifications of these earlier debates were more strongly linked to Biblical or unnaturalness arguments, as also noted by Kuhar (2015). Pointedly, the mainstream conservative activists campaigning against sex

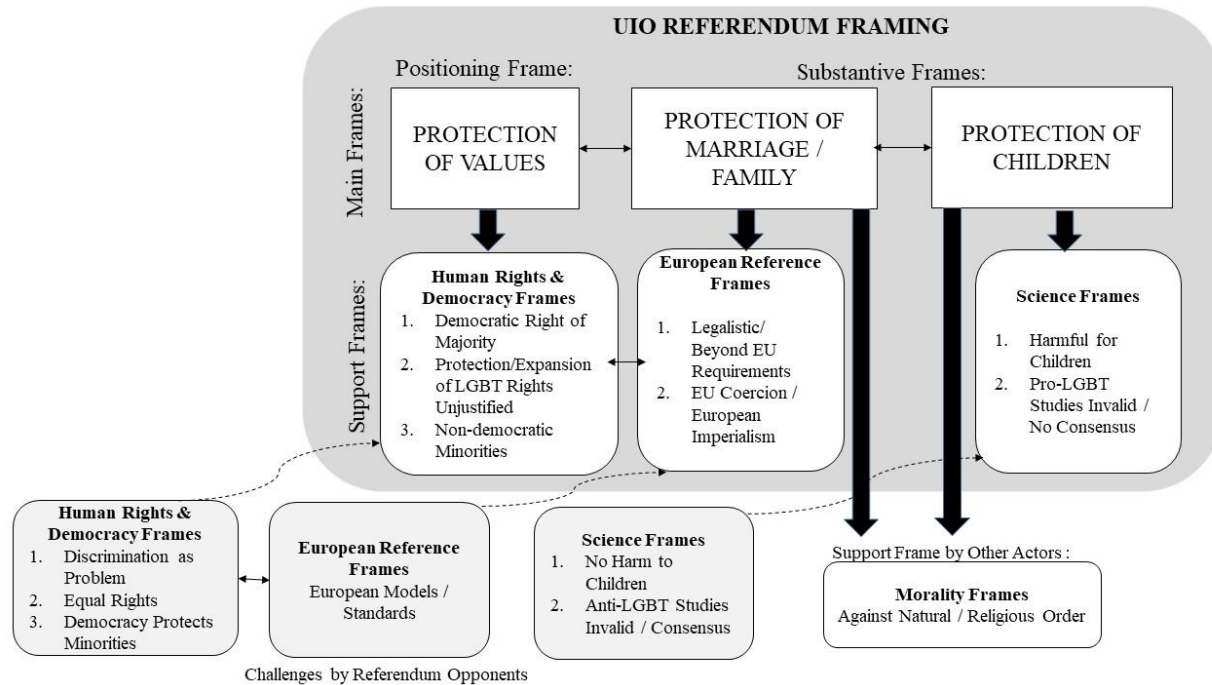
education justified neither *protection of children* nor *protection of values* primarily with morality framing. Instead, they increasingly relied on new democracy and science frames, even though some other actors opposing LGBT rights continued to reach for morality arguments (for example, generally looking, morality frames were considerably more frequent than science frames). As we show below, these framing strategies, established in 2011 and 2012, were developed further and most successfully by the UIO's marriage referendum campaign.

5. The 2013 Marriage Referendum and UIO's Framing Strategies

5.1 Mapping the Marriage Referendum Discursive Field

Following on the heels of the sex education campaign, the marriage referendum campaign, started by *U ime obitelji* (UIO) in April 2013, put the LGBT issues at the centre of public discourse. In nearly 300 articles on referendum alone, we identified three main frames central to the marriage referendum campaign: protection of marriage/family, children and values (see Graph 2). Further, in support of these main referendum's messages, UIO appropriated human rights and democracy frames and continued with the science framing, the strategies that followed directly from the sex education campaign. UIO also continued with the multivalent use of the European reference, where European models or EU legislature were invoked in service of raising Eurosceptic resistance without actually opposing EU integrations, a strategy that conservative and religious actors adopted in the mid-2000s. As seen from Graph 2, each of the three support frames (human rights and democracy, science and European reference) was closely associated with one of the UIO's main frames. On the other side of the debate, the LGBT rights' supporters continued to focus on human rights and democracy frames linked with the reference to the European models/standards, and they also responded to the UIO's science frames. However, while in this way the referendum opponents provided counter-frames for each of UIO's frames used in support of the referendum's main messages, they did not challenge directly morality framing which, although notably absent from the UIO's campaign, was still readily available from other referendum actors who used it in support of protection of marriage/family and children frames (see Graph 2).

GRAPH 2



5.2 Ideological and Political Positioning of the Marriage Referendum Campaign: Protecting Marriage/ Family, Children and Values

With their constitutive demand for the constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and their very name *In the name of the family*, UIO arrived at the public scene as defender of traditional heterosexual marriage, presented as the only legitimate unit associated with family. This role was, through the campaign's imagery and discursive focus, further extended to children, who were to be protected from the 'possibility to be adopted by a same-sex couple' ('Peticijom traže da se u Ustav ugradi "Obitelj su mama i tata" ', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 12 May 2013). The focus on children provided a direct link to the momentum built in previous months by the campaign against sex education, but all three segments - *protection of traditional marriage, family and children* – were bundled together to form the referendum campaign-specific issues or 'substantive frames' (Hänggli et al. 2012), and thus firmly establish UIO's ideological position.

Notably, these substantive frames were not the most prevalent frames of the UIO's campaign – this role belonged to the *protection of values* frame, which UIO used as its general position/policy statement or 'contest frame' (Hänggli et al. 2012). By linking marriage and family to protection of traditional Croatian values, UIO

positioned its specific socially conservative issues within a more general framework of national identity and culture. This, in turn, provided the actors on the right-wing political spectrum with a focal point of their support for the referendum. This is illustrated by two quotes below highlighting national values and Catholic tradition; one from the right-centre opposition leader, and the other from the Croatian Cardinal of the Catholic Church.

The HDZ President Tomislav Karamarko said that he would tell the sympathizers and the members of the party to vote 'for' the constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a woman and a man on the referendum on the 1st December. 'This is related to the traditional values, to history, to what we take to be a definition of marriage', Karamarko said... ('Zagrebački HDZ: Nadamo se da će svi normalni glasati "za" ', *24 sata*, 28 November 2013)

On the day of the referendum, which falls on first Advent Sunday, you [the clergy] should invite the believers to attend, and to cast their voice 'FOR' so that they can contribute to the preservation of the precious gift of marriage and the values that are essential for the well-being of our Church and the Croatian Homeland. ('Božanić: Neka svatko s ponosom i radošću zaokruži odgovor "ZA" ', *Večernji list*, 20 November 2013)

Therefore, with the protection of values frame, UIO's achieved clear political positioning on the rightwing side of the Croatian political cleavages, thus also reinforcing the link between socially and nationally conservative ideological dispositions that was previously established in the Croatian political arena.

5.3 How UIO's Main Frames Served to Build Collective Identification and Attract Political Allies

The strategic choices in focusing on protection of traditional marriage/family and children and on protection of values as the UIO's main substantive (campaign-specific) and positioning (contest) frames result from UIO's political and ideological positioning in relation to local socio-political context. First, placing the protection of marriage/family and children at the centre of the campaign clearly signals that the main targets of the UIO's mobilization efforts were the groups with socially conservative ideological dispositions, since the centrality of these issues to these groups' central values and beliefs assured they would find these frames most salient (Benford & Snow 2000). However, as the arguments based on morality claims were at the time already less effective than in the past among other societal groups (Kuhar 2015), UIO needed political allies beyond this core group to achieve their goals, which went beyond the referendum win towards another re-traditionalization of the Croatian society.

Such larger societal ambitions of UIO are evident already from the greater prevalence of the protection of values frame than any other UIO frame, including their campaign-specific frames. Stronger emphasis on contest (positioning) than on the campaign's substantive frames is not only a typical strategy of extreme political actors, but this strategy also suggests that a campaign's underlying goal was to build a stronger collective identity that will sustain group's activities after the campaign ends (Hänggli et al. 2012). Indeed, UIO used the marriage referendum

as a springboard for their political establishment, and they were later able to yield political influence disproportionate to their size (Petričušić et al. 2017). In this respect, UIO used their substantive frames as well, and the emphasis on protection of children in particular, in support of their wider political positioning. Specifically, UIO's primary purpose was to achieve what Bail (2012) calls the 'fringe effect': the amplification of an emotional effect of fear and anger in order to increase the media visibility (and overrepresentation) and to establish the bias of public opinion in their favour. UIO is not alone in this strategy which, in fact, is a marked feature of new repertoires of action of anti-gender activists elsewhere in Europe as well. Protection of children was thus used in a similar manner previously by the French *La Manif pour Tous* and then by numerous similar groups across various European countries, from Italy and Germany to Slovenia and Slovakia (Paternotte & Kuhar 2017a).

Stronger focus on the UIO's contest (positioning) frame of protection of values also functioned to increase the salience of the UIO's issues more widely on the right-wing political spectrum and thus attract new political allies. In particular, this served the purpose of forming alliances with the main actor of the 1990s nation- and state-building, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), and with groups such as the war veterans, who in the Croatian context jointly 'owned' (Walgrave et al. 2015) the issue of national identity and culture (Kasapović 1996; Bagić & Kardov 2018). Such a positioning – already familiar from the coupling of the heteronationalisms and the CEE religious orders (Sremac & Ganzevoort 2015; Sremac et al. 2015; Pavasović Trošt & Sloodmaeckers 2015) – was further reinforced by the UIO's ally, the Croatian Catholic Church, which in the nation-building period of the 1990s became established in the public imagery as the historical carrier of the Croatian national identity (Bellamy 2003). Therefore, linking UIO's specific referendum issue with the more general issue of national values allowed UIO to exploit the existing political cleavages to their advantage, and to attract allies beyond the traditional 'morality' interest groups. Indeed, several authors (Glaurdić & Vuković 2016; Sloodmaeckers & Sircar 2018) have argued that the marriage referendum vote can be analysed along the lines of Croatian political and electoral cleavages.

It should be noted, however, that although the appeal to the Croatian national identity and culture is a local adaptation, this strategy of seeking political allies in such a manner is used by other anti-gender activists as well. Even in those countries not characterized by similarly strong religious-national structures – such as France, Austria or Germany (Kováts & Pöim 2015; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b) – diverse groups including religious and conservative activists, but also nationalist and far right groups, have used gender as a 'symbolic glue' of their shared discontent against progressive policies of the neoliberal project, without necessarily sharing the same ideological

assumptions or perceptions of the underlying morality order (Kováts 2017).

Still, in order to build a wider resonance for their goals, UIO still needed to attract support beyond these socially and nationally conservative groups. Therefore, in mobilizing for the 2013 referendum, UIO further negotiated wider resonance for their goals by expanding their framing strategies around three supportive elements, emergent both from the broader discursive field of the Croatian LGBT framing in the 2000s, and from transnational strategies of anti-gender mobilizations elsewhere in Europe. These were: (1) appropriation of human rights and democracy frames; (2) use of European reference frames to both support Eurosceptic fears and affirm European belonging; and (3) superficial disassociation from morality frames with the simultaneous erosion of credibility of human rights and democracy and science frames.

5.4 Building Wider Resonance for the Marriage Referendum Debate: Local Adaptations, Appropriations and Deliberate Silences

In recognizing that focusing their marriage referendum campaign only on the frames that are central to the socially and nationally conservative audiences would likely be a tactics of limited reach, UIO follows cues and lessons of the earlier strategies of anti-gender activists, both in Croatia and elsewhere, and displays, above all, responsiveness to specificities of both national and transnational context. Responsiveness to the national context in shaping support frames is most notable in peculiarly Croatian adaptation of the European reference frame by the conservative activists and politicians whose publicly expressed Euroscepticism is, unlike as in many other countries in the region (Pavasović Trošt & Sloodmaeckers 2015), milder and trumped by the desire to, culturally and politically, belong to Europe. Responsiveness to the transnational context, on the other hand, is most clearly seen from very close links between UIO's appropriations of human rights, democracy and science frames and their deliberate avoidance of the morality frames, which are discursive strategies also shared by various actors opposing gender and sexuality in other European countries.

5.4.1 Multivalent Use of the European Reference Frames and Appropriating Human Rights and Democracy Frames. With the very first public appearance in April 2013, UIO framed its campaign as a response to unwelcome European/Western trends: it acted to prevent 'the "French case", that is, the legalization of same-sex marriages' ('Referendumom do zabrane istospolnih brakova', *Novi list* 25 April 2013). However, despite such initial positioning, UIO resisted being placed on the wrong side of the civilizational divide – which was the counter-frame offered by the referendum opponents. Instead, UIO emphasized how EU does not recognize same-sex marriage and

right to children as fundamental human rights. With this, UIO embedded their framing strategies within continued multivalent use of the European reference frame. On the one hand, it used the threat of *EU coercion or European imperialism* as a call to action. On the other hand, it accepted the legitimacy of the EU legal framework of human rights, as it located same-sex marriage in the legally unnecessary space *beyond the EU requirements*. This also connected the European reference frame to human rights frame, as any discrimination was vehemently denied – referendum cannot endanger LGBT rights 'because homosexuals haven't had that right(s) so far' ('O referendumu u Splitu', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 November 2013). Consequently, *protection of the LGBT rights was not justified*, and the referendum did not concern LGBT individuals: 'We have nothing against homosexuals, we just want to protect ourselves' ('O referendumu u Splitu', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 November 2013).

Further, building on previously introduced interpretation of democratic principle solely as the *majority rule*, UIO systematically portrayed the referendum as an action protecting democracy, a 'festival of democracy' even ('Markić: Referendum je prilika da zaustavimo teror', *Glas Slavonije*, 18 November 2013). At the same time, UIO labelled the referendum opponents as *non-democratic group behaving improperly* – using, for example, methods reminiscent of the communist totalitarian regime. The fact that ruling centre-left coalition committed publicly to opposing referendum further helped UIO claim popular legitimacy against the ideological impositions of the state apparatus. Such framing was enthusiastically welcomed by conservative oppositional parties, and by the ruling coalition's main contender, *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (HDZ - Croatian Democratic Union).

'He [the prime minister] is also used to the silent majority, but this majority has risen up now and it is not silent anymore, but it is actively participating every day in the matters such as health education and the constitutional definition of marriage. The SDP's [Socijaldemokratska partija - Socialist Democratic Party] agenda is to downplay the system of values of the Croatian people, to disparage marriage as a life-unit between a woman and a man, to disparage family ... We will oppose this, and we will oppose this Government's attempt to ideologize Croatian society on the foundations that remind us somewhat of the historical period which we believed to be behind us', sharply responds Iličić [a UIO representative], who also strongly criticizes the government for challenging the petition for the referendum on the constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a woman and a man. ('Na barikadama kulturnog rata', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 24 May 2013)

UIO's focus on the majoritarian principle of democracy triggered the counter-frame emphasizing the *problem of discrimination* embedded in the very possibility of such a referendum and the *democracy's duty to protect minorities*. While the protection of minorities might have been implicit in the human rights discourse previously, it was very rarely used explicitly in the LGBT debates before 2013. However, at that point, articulation of the counter-frame to the majoritarian principle came late and had little effect. By appropriating human rights and democracy frames, UIO already initiated the erosion of credibility of the referendum's opponents. Once the

contrasting interpretations became the focus of the debate, the frame of the 'other side' could be presented as an expression of particular interests and dismissed. As we show below, this strategy of using opposing interpretations to erode credibility becomes particularly apparent with the use of the science frame.

5.4.2 Science into the Breach (or Not). Science frames emerged in support of the *protection of children* frame in the 2012 sex education campaign. They continued to serve the same function in the referendum campaign. Based primarily on the claims that being raised by homosexual parents is *harmful for children*, UIO often cited 'many' or 'relevant studies' without going into specifics or sources. When sources were specified, UIO dominantly relied on one particular study, the so-called Texan study by Mark Regnerus, which was discredited in academic circles (ASA 2015). However, any challenge to the Texan study or to the UIO's claim of scientific evidence suggesting harmful outcomes for children – such as the public statement made by the Croatian Sociological Association ('Sociolozi: Markić selektivno pokušava koristiti istraživanja', *24 sata*, 04 December 2013) – was met with *questioning the validity of all other studies*. UIO bolstered authoritativeness of its scientific claims by having them presented by experts, even when these individuals' area of expertise was not the most pertinent, such as a tenured professor of anatomy presenting research on homosexuals ('O referendumu u Splitu', *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 25 November 2013).

While (in)frequency of science frames in the referendum campaign suggests their peripheral role, the manner in which UIO used them sharply outlines the strategy of using contrasting interpretations to erode the credibility of a principle. While UIO apparently used science frames to support its claims, the consequence of their use was an erosion of trust into scientific evidence. Since the debate about methodological problems or evaluation of data is typically lost on general public – as seen from the debate about vaccination or climate change (Mikulak 2011) – the narrative that was presented to the public became the story of 'our experts vs. their experts', where the evidence by 'their experts' could be dismissed as ideological / part of the liberal or the LGBT agenda.

5.4.3 Backstage Role of Morality Frames. Finally, as evidenced already in the actions of the professionalized conservative activists campaigning against sex education, UIO's official campaign avoided referencing morality frames claiming that homosexuality or same-sex unions were *violations of natural or religious order* or *pathological*. For example, we identified only two instances when UIO representatives used morality frames, both occurring immediately before the referendum. In one of those instances, unnaturalness of homosexual unions was implied by the procreation argument ('Sučelili smo "U ime obitelji" i "Građani glasaju protiv": Tko ima

bolje argumente?', *Večernji list*, 28 November 2013), and in the other instance the UIO spokesperson defined the opposite-sex couples as 'normal couples...as God willed it' ('Željka Markić "Želimo da gay parovi nikada ne dobiju ista prava kao normalni ljudi" ', *Jutarnji list*, 29 November 2013). Nevertheless, although morality frames were no longer so prevalent compared to other frames as in the 2000s, other actors continued to use them during the referendum campaign. For example, an anonymous participant of the march bringing the referendum petition signatures into the Parliament stated that it was 'natural that a union between a man and a woman is marriage. All these other things are sick, unnatural' ('Ispred Sabora okupilo se oko tisuću ljudi', *24 sata*, 14 June 2013). Similarly, UIO's main ally, Catholic Church, used the procreation argument to defend the naturalness of heterosexual marriage. Notwithstanding the UIO's 'official' disassociation from morality frames, they were still used by UIO's allies and supporters, and testified to the UIO's stance on these matters.

At the same time, while their main frames were being challenged and appropriated (see Graph 2), the LGBT rights' supporters did not develop any comparable frames contesting or countering implicit morality frames of the referendum campaign. Instead, the LGBT rights' supporters adopted defensive position with the eroded credibility of their most important frame of human rights. UIO, on the other hand, successfully re-framed the issue of LGBT rights by refocusing the attention on the democratic will of the majority and on the adherence to the EU letter of the law, all in the service of protection of marriage, family and children, and under implicit assumptions of morality arguments against LGBT rights.

5.5 How UIO Used Human Rights and Democracy, Multivalent European References and Science Frames to Negotiate Wider Resonance for 'Old' Socially Conservative Issues

In our analysis, UIO has relied on three main mechanisms to negotiate wider resonance for their issues beyond their core socially and nationally conservative audiences. First, UIO successfully re-interpreted and appropriated human rights and democracy frames that were previously dominantly used in the Croatian public discourse to protect and justify the expansion of LGBT rights. While it is typically expected that actors will ignore the frames advantageous to the other side (Hänggli et al. 2012), UIO built on the emerging recognition of actors of earlier anti-gender mobilizations in Croatia that the deep institutionalization of human rights and democracy frames, particularly in the context of their European connection, cannot be dismissed. Indeed, as earlier direct confrontations of morality vs. human rights frames have demonstrated, the equality argument has trumped morality in shifting public support or in contributing to LGBT-friendly legal changes in the past (Engel 2013; Kollman & Waites 2009; Kahlina 2015).

Therefore, UIO adopted 'riding the wave' strategy (Hänggli et al. 2012), where they showed responsiveness to wider audiences by head-on addressing the successful frames of their opponents. The UIO's response, however, was not defensive. Rather than offering rebuttals or engaging directly with the LGBT supporters' frames of human and equal rights, UIO pushed their own re-interpretation of human rights and democracy frames, which focused on the democratic right of the majority. Thus, UIO worked to shift the minority issue out of focus, as the referendum was framed to be solely about the protection of the group the UIO claimed to represent. The defensive position was, in turn, taken by the referendum opponents who had to engage directly with the UIO's majoritarian frame and to explicitly articulate the minority protection principle in the defence of the LGBT rights threatened by the referendum. But, in merely reacting to the frames the UIO had articulated, the referendum opponents were faced with UIO taking the control of the debate within the framework of human rights and democracy. Similar appropriations of human rights and democracy frames by actors of anti-gender mobilizations were evident in other European countries as well. For example, the conservative activists were demanding the protection of the will of the majority or accusing opponents of totalitarianism in countries ranging from Poland and Slovenia to Italy, Austria and Germany (Graff & Korolczuk 2017; Kuhar 2017; Garbagnoli 2017; Mayer & Sauer 2017; Villa 2017).

Second, in their referendum framing, UIO was responsive to the Croatian broader discursive field regarding mixed Europeanization feelings, and it used European references to both support Eurosceptic fears and affirm European belonging. On the one hand, UIO evoked threat associated with the perceived EU coercion or imperialism to further stoke up feelings of fear and anger (see again the 'fringe effect' in Bail 2012). This strategy seems to have been at least partially effective as Slootmaeckers & Sircar (2018) suggest that the UIO's campaign was more successful in the Croatian regions which were already characterized by higher levels of Euroscepticism. At the same time, UIO recognized as human rights only those that were explicitly (and bindingly for each nation-state) defined as such in the EU regulative. Such a formalistic definition of human rights reinforced the legitimacy of the EU framework, and confirmed their EU commitment. As a result, UIO avoided alienating the mainstream political and societal actors who committed to the EU integration on both sides of the political divide (Dolenec 2013). This conclusion is supported both by the scarcity of the strong homophobic anti-EU frame from our data, and by the comparison with other countries in the West Balkans and elsewhere in CEE, such as Serbia or Poland, in which the frame of the European imperialism was much stronger (Pavasović Trošt & Slootmaeckers 2015; Graff & Korolczuk 2017).

Finally, in their official discourse, UIO successfully disassociated from previously dominant morality framing. Instead, UIO based their claims on the re-interpreted human rights and democracy frames, and on the newly emerging science frame that was – similarly as in the 2012 sex education debate in Croatia, but also even earlier in the neighbouring Slovenia (Kuhar 2015) – used both to claim scientific support for the conservative actors' claims and to deny the validity of any dissenting research. This disassociation from morality frames and the subsequent embracing of human rights, democracy and science frames seemingly increased the legitimacy and the public acceptability of the UIO's claims. However, on a deeper level, the main result of this strategy was an erosion of credibility of human rights, democracy and sciences frames, as the debate shifted into an issue of contrasting interpretations. While science frames remained relatively peripheral to the referendum campaign, this development was particularly damaging for the human rights frame, as it was partially stripped of its former effectiveness in supporting the LGBT rights and, instead, associated with particular interests (be that interests of the so-called LGBT lobby, liberals or the EU elites). At the same time, the morality frame, that was pushed from the public spotlight but which still remained a strong implicit principle of the UIO campaign, was the only one to remain standing without an apparent equivalent competitor among the marriage referendum opponents.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we analysed how the *In the name of the Family* (UIO) citizens' initiative framed the LGBT issues in their 2013 campaign for the constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Specifically, we asked how the framing of LGBT issues in the marriage referendum campaign contributed to UIO's referendum victory and their subsequent rise as an influential actor of anti-gender mobilization in Croatia. In our dynamic approach, we situated the UIO's referendum framing within a broader discursive field of the Croatian LGBT framing in the 2000s. This allowed us to identify how UIO approached the problem of the previously successful use of the LGBT rights as human rights frame and of the diminished effectiveness of morality frames, and how they solved this problem by negotiating new resonance for 'old' socially conservative issues.

Our findings suggest that UIO negotiated wider resonance for three main frames of the referendum campaign, the protection of marriage and family, children and values by (1) appropriation of the human rights and democracy frames, by (2) multivalent use of the European reference, including both a mild form of European imperialism and a confirmation of their commitment to the EU framework of human rights, and by (3) disassociation of their main referendum frames from the morality frames and supporting them instead with the re-

interpreted human rights and democracy and the emerging science frame. However, while others have also noted the discursive shift of various European anti-gender mobilizations highlighting democratic struggles against the totalitarianism and the suspected science of 'gender ideology' (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017b; 2017a), our dynamic approach uniquely allowed us to identify how the UIO's disassociation from morality frames remained superficial. Instead, the newly negotiated resonance of their issues rested in large part on the implicit support of the morality frame, which remained unchallenged by the referendum opponents. This development was further bolstered by the UIO's erosion of credibility of the science frame, and most of all, of the human rights frame, that was previously the main framing tool in the LGBT rights' expansion.

Although this study gained insight into the role of discursive dimension in the UIO's referendum victory and their subsequent rise as an influential actor of anti-gender mobilization in Croatia, framing analysis alone is insufficient to grasp the multidimensionality of this and similar developments. Therefore, the findings of our analysis should be situated also within the analyses of Croatia's historical trajectory and socio-institutional context (see, for example, Forest 2018), the analysis of actors' characteristics, networks and strategies (Hodžić & Bijelić 2014; Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017) and the political opportunity structure within which they acted (Petričušić et al. 2017). In addition, our own framing approach has certain limitations. For example, as most other framing studies, we were unable to directly measure framing effects and have, instead, relied on inferring frames' effectiveness from the end result – the UIO's successful referendum mobilization. Our method of qualitative framing analysis has further limited the direct comparability of the identified frames and inhibited statistical analysis.

Nevertheless, the qualitative framing analysis has also provided us with a more in-depth understanding of the substance and the bonds between different frames. It was, therefore, a crucial element of our dynamic approach that allowed us to situate UIO's frames within their broader discursive field and to make the connections necessary for the identification of the continued backstage role of morality frames and the erosion of the human rights frame. This, in turn, also allowed us to overcome the limitations of circular reasoning inherent in our framing approach, and to show how the resonance of UIO's frames emerged from UIO's strategic negotiation of the previous LGBT framing in the Croatian discursive field, as well from their responsiveness to more widely targeted audiences and to the socio-political moment in which they mounted their challenge against the LGBT rights in Croatia.

Therefore, our study makes a distinct contribution to emerging literature on anti-gender mobilization in Europe. It highlights in particular one of the mechanisms shaping public opinion and social policy as the UIO's

framing strategy contributed to shifting public opinion and policy changes in the issues of gender and sexuality. Not only did their campaign achieve a constitutional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman in Croatia, but, over the following years, this ban and the role the UIO played in its success emerged as a strong symbolic tool which the conservative activists used to similarly affect social policy in other gender and sexuality areas as well – from mounting resistance against abortion (Hina 2019) to limiting same-sex couples' access to foster care (Hina 2018). Since UIO is well entrenched in transnational networks of anti-gender actors (Hodžić & Štulhofer 2017; Paternotte & Kuhar 2017a), we expect that the most successful elements of the UIO's mobilization against same-sex marriage will be – or have already been – adapted to particular contexts of conservative activists fighting against gender and sexuality rights in other European countries as well. It falls, therefore, to future studies to examine how well the framing mechanism we identified in this case works elsewhere.

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Table 1: All Frames Identified in the Croatian Newspaper Articles during Critical Discourse Moments, 2002-2013 (9 Newspapers)

Category of Frames	Frames	Sub-frames	
		Positive Evaluation	Negative Evaluation
Morality	Morality Argument	<p>(+) Homosexuality is Normal</p> <p><i>a. Homosexuality is genetic or inborn trait, it is normal, it is not illness, homosexuals are people just like us.</i></p>	<p>Homosexuality is / Same-sex unions are:</p> <p>(-) Against Natural / Religious Order</p> <p><i>a. Described as immoral, perverse, sinful, against God's will, unnatural, non-reproductive.</i></p> <p>(-) Illness / Pathological</p> <p><i>a. Described as mental illness, as being caused by problems in upbringing.</i></p> <p><i>b. Associated with paedophilia.</i></p> <p>(-) Threatening Patriarchy</p> <p><i>a. Gays not real men, lesbians are sexually frustrated...</i></p>
Protection	Protection Demands	<p>(+) Protection of Existing Children of LGBT People</p> <p><i>a. LGBT individuals already have children who should be legally protected or recognized as part of same-sex families.</i></p>	<p>Protection of:</p> <p>(-) Values</p> <p><i>a. Traditional, Croatian, Catholic or Christian values are endangered by expanding LGBT rights and should be protected.</i></p> <p>(-) Family / Marriage</p> <p><i>a. Traditional family or heterosexual marriage are threatened and should be protected from expanding LGBT demands.</i></p> <p>(-) Children</p> <p><i>a. Children should be protected from unspecified LGBT threat, from danger of same-sex parents, from homosexual models, from wrong values / propagation of homosexuality.</i></p> <p>(-) Future</p> <p><i>a. Giving in to LGBT demands will lead to other dangerous future developments (slippery slopes' scenarios including bestiality, incest, etc) or unacceptable demands (same-sex marriage, adoption).</i></p> <p>(-) Health</p> <p><i>a. People should be protected from homosexual lifestyle which endangers health (AIDS, psychological problems...)</i></p>
Human Rights & Democracy	Human Rights	<p>(+) Equal Rights</p> <p><i>a. LGBT individuals have right to legal equality, non-discrimination, non-violence, dignity, public assembly, public expression...</i></p> <p>(+) Full Equality</p> <p><i>a. LGBT individuals have right to marriage, family, children/adoption/ART.</i></p> <p>(+) Discrimination as Problem</p> <p><i>a. Anti-LGBT discrimination is a problem in Croatian society.</i></p> <p><i>b. Examples and cases of discrimination, argument that something is a discrimination.</i></p> <p><i>c. Personal experiences of discrimination.</i></p> <p>(+) Improvements in Rights</p> <p><i>a. Examples or statements of improvements in LGBT rights, in legislature or in public discourse compared to previous periods.</i></p>	<p>(-) LGBT Improper Behaviour</p> <p><i>a. Displays of LGBT identity or homosexual orientation do not belong into the public sphere.</i></p> <p><i>b. Sexual minorities are aggressive or engage in provocative behaviour.</i></p> <p>(-) Expansion / Protection of LGBT Rights Unjustified</p> <p><i>a. Other societal issues more important than LGBT rights.</i></p> <p><i>b. LGBT individuals not actually being discriminated against (no European reference).</i></p> <p><i>c. LGBT rights are not actually rights (no European reference).</i></p>

	Democratic Principle	<p>(+) Democratic Protection of Minorities</p> <p><i>a. Democracy should protect the rights of minorities.</i></p> <p><i>b. Protection of minority rights is a test of democracy.</i></p>	<p>(-) Undemocratic Sexual Minorities</p> <p><i>a. Sexual minorities are imposing their values and ideology or asking for privileges.</i></p> <p><i>b. Sexual minorities are persecuting or threatening the majority.</i></p> <p>(-) Democratic Protection of Majority</p> <p><i>a. Democracy should protect the will of majority.</i></p> <p><i>b. Majority has the right to express opposition contrary to their values or beliefs.</i></p>
European Reference	Europeanness and EU Legal Order	<p>(+) European Models or Standards</p> <p><i>a. Tolerance or expansion of LGBT rights is aligned with civilizational values or European trends.</i></p> <p><i>b. Tolerance or expansion of LGBT rights is aligned with the EU standards or good practices or the EU legislature.</i></p> <p><i>c. Intolerance or limitations to LGBT rights are backward or un-European/ belong to the Balkans or to the East.</i></p>	<p>(-) Strong (Homophobic) Anti-EU Expression</p> <p><i>a. Strongly pejorative expressions (e.g. Euro-faggotization...)</i></p> <p>(-) EU Coercion/ European Imperialism</p> <p><i>a. Expansions of LGBT rights are the consequence of external pressures or the EU coercion.</i></p> <p><i>b. LGBT legal trends that are endangering national culture or identity might follow in wake of trends in Western European countries.</i></p> <p>(-) Legalistic/Beyond EU Requirements</p> <p><i>a. Changes or expansions to LGBT rights are not required by the European standards or the EU legislature.</i></p> <p><i>b. Certain LGBT rights are not actually human rights according to the EU legislature.</i></p>
Science	Supportive Scientific Evidence	<p>(+) Homosexuality Normal</p> <p><i>a. Based on scientific evidence, homosexuality is normal, inborn, not illness.</i></p> <p>(+) No Harm to Children</p> <p><i>a. Based on scientific evidence, children of LGBT parents suffer no harmful outcomes due to sexual orientation of their parents.</i></p> <p>(+) Discrimination Harmful</p> <p><i>a. Based on scientific evidence, it is the LGBT discrimination that it is harmful for children of LGBT parents.</i></p>	<p>(-) Homosexuality Harmful</p> <p><i>a. Based on scientific evidence, homosexuality is sickness or mental illness.</i></p> <p><i>b. Based on scientific evidence, homosexuality is harmful for physical, mental or emotional health.</i></p> <p>(-) Harm to Children</p> <p><i>a. Based on scientific evidence, children of LGTB parents suffer harmful outcomes.</i></p>
	Evaluation of Scientific Evidence	<p>(+) Anti-LGBT Studies as Invalid / Scientific Consensus</p> <p><i>a. Anti-LGBT studies are methodologically invalid and the credibility of its researchers is in question.</i></p> <p><i>b. There exists a scientific outcomes on nature and outcomes of homosexuality / LGBT parenthood.</i></p>	<p>(-) Pro-LGBT Studies as Invalid / No Scientific Consensus</p> <p><i>a. Pro-LGBT studies are methodologically invalid or its researchers are biased.</i></p> <p><i>b. No scientific consensus on nature and outcomes of homosexuality / LGBT parenthood.</i></p>