

**Scrinzi, Francesca (2024). *The Racialization of Sexism: Men, Women and Gender in the Populist Radical Right*. Routledge.**

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Francesca Scrinzi's *The Racialization of Sexism: Men, Women, and Gender in the Populist Radical Right* offers a timely and urgent analysis of one of the most contentious political dynamics of our present time: the interplay between gender and the populist radical right (PRR). In a political landscape that has evolved significantly since her research was conducted, her insights feel even more relevant today. Italy is now led by its first female prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, a leader of the PRR party Fratelli d'Italia [Brothers of Italy], while in France, Marine Le Pen came closer than ever to winning the presidency in 2024. Right now, the newly elected president, Donald Trump, is signing executive orders every day, frequently in the name of women's rights, while relentlessly attacking LGBT people, migrants, and other minorities. These developments underscore the importance of understanding how conservative parties not only mobilize women as voters but also secure their active participation in day-to-day party activities and leadership roles, which in turn increases their appeal and legitimacy. As far-right parties increasingly adopt gendered rhetoric to advance exclusionary agendas, Scrinzi's work addresses crucial questions about how women and men engage with these movements, often negotiating deeply contradictory ideologies.

Grounded in meticulous empirical research and informed by a rich theoretical framework, this book provides an important contribution to our understanding of the complex ways in which gender and far-right politics intersect. By exploring the lived experiences of activists in Italy's Lega Nord and France's Rassemblement National, Scrinzi unpacks the often paradoxical reality of how individuals, particularly women, navigate their roles within these masculinist and nationalist organizations.

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The book challenges conventional views of populist radical right (PRR) parties as "men's parties," instead presenting a nuanced exploration of how these parties engage with and mobilize gender ideologies, and how women take part in their activities often by reinforcing and negotiating gender norms. It identifies a shift in PRR gender politics, where these parties co-opt feminist and gender equality rhetoric to reinforce exclusionary nationalism, targeting migrants, especially Muslims. This focus shed light on a recent and significant turn in PRR narratives, that often build up their own agenda and legitimacy in the name of women's rights. Scrinzi introduces the concept of the "racialization of sexism," which describes how PRR parties frame gender equality as a hallmark of Western identity, contrasting it with a racialized portrayal of migrants as perpetrators of patriarchal oppression. As she argues, "Women's emancipation from patriarchal constraints is identified with the nation while 'pre-modern' models of gender are ascribed to the migrants, and more specifically those coming from Muslim countries" (p. 2). This strategy denies existing gender inequalities within western societies while amplifying anti-immigration sentiment. Through an intersectional analysis of the Lega Nord (Italy) and the Rassemblement National (France), the book reveals how PRR parties shape their gender ideologies to fit national contexts, shaped by differing gender, ethnicity, and religious regimes.

The book draws on life histories of over 100 activists and ethnography to examine how PRR parties' gendered propaganda influences members' experiences. It highlights the gendered division of labor within these parties and the ways women activists navigate the tension between their political engagement and the parties' masculinist cultures. Scrinzi underscores the evolution of PRR gender ideologies, underlining their shift from traditionalism to a "modernized" rhetoric that incorporates neoliberal discourses of individualism and choice, while still maintaining patriarchal and heteronormative features. The book connects PRR gender strategies to broader trends in neoliberal globalization, emphasizing how these parties are not isolated phenomena but extensions of mainstream societal discourses on gender, ethnicity, and religion.

Scrinzi's work fills significant gaps in the scholarship on the populist radical right (PRR) by moving beyond simplistic portrayals of these parties as inherently sexist or uniformly patriarchal. Instead, she provides a nuanced understanding of how gender and sexuality are strategically mobilized within PRR organizations, showing how women negotiate their activism in ways that both conform to and challenge traditional gender norms. Equally importantly, she incorporates men into this analysis, demonstrating that their roles and performances should be taken into account to understand the gender dynamics of PRR politics.

The book's application of intersectionality in practice is another standout feature. Scrinzi effectively employs this lens to unpack how age, class, gender, and life-course trajectories influence activists' engagement with these parties. This approach underscores that activism within PRR parties cannot be understood in isolation from the broader social structures that

shape individuals' lives. By revealing the complex, intersecting factors that contribute to PRR mobilization, Scrinzi advances both the theoretical and empirical study of gendered political engagement.

Additionally, the book shifts focus from high-profile leaders to the rank-and-file activists who sustain these movements. Scrinzi argues that understanding PRR parties' ideologies, practices, and infrastructures requires examining these activists' day-to-day work, including their emotional motivations and investments. This attention to the role of emotions in mobilization is particularly insightful, as it reveals how PRR parties create affective bonds with their supporters and sustain their engagement over time.

While the book's extensive ethnographic fieldwork is a notable strength, this component feels underutilized in the analysis. Scrinzi's reliance on interviews, while rich and revealing, sometimes limits the depth of insights into the dynamics of day-to-day activities within PRR parties - dynamics that ethnographic observation is particularly well-suited to capture. Given the size of her unique sample, comprising more than 100 life histories, readers are left wanting more stories that could have further enriched the analysis. This underutilization of ethnographic data presents an opportunity for future publications to more fully leverage these materials.

Another area for improvement lies in the discussion of feminist movements in Italy and France. While Scrinzi touches on the prevalence of a "feminism of difference" in these contexts, her analysis does not fully account for the broader feminist landscape during the time of her research, which included the rise of intersectional and transfeminist movements and the increasing visibility of discourses on gender identity and trans rights. Thus, she explains a crucial dynamic of our time, e.g. the convergence between gender critical feminists (often belonging to the feminism of difference) and sectors of PRR parties, while dismissing the broader contentious field of feminist arena, where several actors and players are revolving around gender and sexuality issues. Exploring these movements in greater depth would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how PRR parties appropriate and reframe feminist claims. In particular, examining convergences between gender-critical feminists and PRR parties, as well as divergences with intersectional and transfeminist movements, would offer valuable insights into how PRR actors co-opt feminist discourses.

Furthermore, the book's treatment of the intersection between anti-gender movements and PRR parties is somewhat cursory. While Scrinzi acknowledges these connections, the analysis does not delve into the early dynamics of these interactions, even though anti-gender actors were already emerging as key players in politicizing gender and sexuality issues during the research period. A deeper exploration of these links, especially given their increasing prominence in contemporary politics, would significantly enhance the book's contribution.