



Communication Papers
Media Literacy & Gender Studies

BOOK REVIEW



**Butler, J. (2024). *Who's Afraid of Gender?*
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.**

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Judith Butler's book *Who's Afraid of Gender?* is a significant theoretical work that analyzes the "anti-gender" discourses currently on the rise globally. Butler discusses how political and ideological attacks on the concept of gender have emerged, the discursive strategies through which they have circulated, and the role played by the media and the cultural sphere in this process. The book examines the anti-gender movements that have gained momentum in recent years in Europe, Latin America, and the United States within their historical, political, and cultural contexts

Butler's central argument is that the "gender ideology" discourse was produced not as a genuine theoretical debate but rather as a political phantasm. The author argues that the concept of gender is often distorted by conservative political actors and that this discourse is linked to authoritarian forms of politics. In this context, Butler contends that anti-gender movements are not merely a critique of an academic concept but are also part of a broader political attack on feminist and queer rights.

The book also highlights the role of media and public discourse in the circulation of anti-gender rhetoric. According to Butler, media outlets often simplify or sensationalize gender discussions, thereby laying the groundwork for misunderstandings in the public sphere. In particular, social media and political propaganda channels can exacerbate social polarization by disseminating discourses that portray gender studies as a threat. In this regard, the book also makes a significant contribution to the literature on media studies and cultural studies.

Theoretically, Butler's approach is situated between queer theory, feminist theory, and critical political theory. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theories of power and discourse, as well as the queer theory literature, the author explains how anti-gender policies are produced. This analysis treats gender debates not merely as an academic issue but also as part of cultural wars and ideological struggles.

One of the book's significant contributions is demonstrating that anti-gender movements are interconnected on a global scale. Butler notes that anti-gender discourses emerging in different countries employ similar rhetorical strategies and are often supported by religious, nationalist, or conservative political actors. This perspective reveals that anti-gender policies circulate within a transnational network.

However, the book also has some limitations. Because Butler's theoretical approach is quite dense and conceptual, certain sections of the work may be challenging for readers unfamiliar with academic literature. Additionally, while the book focuses primarily on ideological and discursive analyses, it addresses empirical examples of how anti-gender movements spread through digital media practices or algorithmic platforms only to a limited extent.

Who's Afraid of Gender? offers an important theoretical contribution to understanding contemporary gender debates. Butler's analysis demonstrates that

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anti-gender discourses are not merely a cultural debate but also a critical political issue regarding democratic values and human rights. For this reason, the work serves as an important reference source for researchers in the fields of gender studies, media studies, and political science.,

References

Butler, J. (2024). Who's afraid of gender? Farrar, Straus and Giroux.