

Transgressive Narratives at the Margins: Exploring Romanian Transgender Identities in the Online Sphere

Alexandra Cotoc

(Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, RO)

Anamaria Radu

(Humboldt University of Berlin, DE)

Abstract

This study explores how Romanian transgender users construct their identities in the digital space. It analyses the transgressive self-narratives, the reactions from digital audiences, and the intersection of these two dimensions. The study looks at a collection of multimodal online discourses from the perspective of Internet linguistics and identity studies. It identifies patterns in users' attitudes and positions towards transgender identity. The findings reveal that these online discourses frequently exhibit polarisation, with consensus on transgender identities being difficult to achieve. The study contributes to understanding online (self-)presentation and sheds light on stance-taking regarding (trans)gender identities.

Keywords: digital autobiography; transgressive narratives; transgender identity; digital audiences.

Introduction

In recent years, the digital sphere has become a crucial site for identity construction, particularly for marginalised communities whose voices are often underrepresented in mainstream discourse. This study investigates how Romanian transgender individuals articulate and negotiate their identities online, focusing on the interplay between self-narration and audience reception. By examining a corpus of multimodal online discourses, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines Internet linguistics with identity and ethnographic studies.

The analysis centres on the transgressive narratives of a transgender man, Taylor Winters, who challenges normative gender expectations. While exploring how these narratives are shaped, contested, and received within online niche communities, special attention is given to the linguistic strategies employed in his digital autobiography, the affective and ideological stances taken by both the content creator and his audiences, and the broader sociocultural implications of these interactions. Building on previous work (Cotoc and Radu 2024; Cotoc and Radu 2025), this analysis starts with a parallel between Taylor Winters and a trans woman, Daria Jane, to explore three main aspects:

1. Gender trajectory (female-to-male vs. male-to-female) and how it influences narrative framing and audience perception;
2. Cultural context (Romania vs. the UK) and its impact on visibility, acceptance, and discursive strategies;
3. Linguistic environment (Romanian vs. English) and how language choice shapes identity construction and community engagement.

Through this lens and the parallel between these two digital autobiographies, the study identifies recurring patterns in how transgender identities are positioned and perceived, revealing a landscape marked by polarisation and contested legitimacy. While some comments foster solidarity and visibility, others provoke resistance or reinforce binary norms. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of online (self-)presentation and

the dynamics of stance-taking in relation to (trans)gender identities in a post-socialist, digitally mediated context.

This paper begins by outlining a contrastive overview between the two transgender identities and the theoretical framework, followed by a presentation of the methodology and the central hypothesis. It then moves into a detailed analysis of selected examples from the corpus of comments, illustrating how the data supports or challenges the initial assumptions. Through this structure, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive and critical exploration of the discursive dynamics at play.

Contrastive Overview of Daria and Taylor

Despite being a member of the European Union, Romania continues to lag behind in LGBTQ+ rights, ranking among the lowest in the EU according to ILGA-Europe's 2025 report (<https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2025/>). In addition, based on the Rainbow Map, Romania scores 18.63% on a scale from 1 to 100% in terms of legal and policy practices concerning LGBTQ+ people (<https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/>). While legal gender change is permitted in Romania, there is no recognition of same-sex partnerships, and public discourse remains largely conservative. However, recent events such as the record-breaking Bucharest Pride 2025, which drew over 30,000 participants, signal a growing push for visibility and equality (<https://bucharestdailynews.com/bucharest-pride-2025-30k-march/>). Within this contested social landscape, Romanian transgender influencers like Daria Jane (27,6 Tsd Followers) and Taylor Winters (69,4 Tsd Followers) have emerged as powerful digital voices.

Daria Jane, known for her bold, activist-oriented content, often confronts societal norms head-on, using her platform to challenge transphobia and advocate for systemic change, and has become a microcelebrity, as she gained popularity for being the first Romanian transgender woman who documents her life and transitioning process. She has

become “iconic for the community of transwomen”, while stressing out that “transwomen should not be regarded as abnormal” and presenting the lives of transwomen and relevant aspects concerning the transitioning from a male body to a female body (Cotoc and Radu 2024, 353).

Since the “digital media has a global reach, but at the same time also a provincialising effect” (Cotoc and Radu 2024, 356), Taylor Winters adopts an aesthetic and lifestyle-focused approach, weaving trans identity into narratives of beauty, fashion, and personal growth. This highlights the diverse strategies of self-representation and audience engagement among Romanian trans creators, reflecting broader tensions between visibility, acceptance, and resistance in the digital sphere.

Comparing the digital narratives of Daria Jane and Taylor Winters offers a rich lens into how Romanian transgender individuals construct identity online. This comparison reveals how Instagram, gender identity, and cultural context shape the way transgender individuals construct their digital narratives. Daria’s narrative is more visually transgressive and confrontational within a local context, as her content is glamorised and at times eroticised, while Taylor’s is emotionally transgressive, as his content is more self-reflective, expressive of vulnerability, depicting couple life, and challenging norms around masculinity and family in a globalised space. The difference between the two lies in five main dimensions: gender identity and transition narrative, cultural and geographic context, platform use and digital persona, themes and transgressive narratives, identity construction and audience engagement (see Table 1).

1. Gender Identity and Transition Narrative

Aspect	Daria Jane	Taylor Winters
Identity	Trans woman	Trans man



Transition	Born in 1998 in Romania, transitioned at 18 in Thailand, publicly visible from early stages	Born in 1984 in Romania, transitioned at 34 in Germany/USA, after moving abroad
Narrative Focus	Emphasises femininity, beauty, and visibility in Romanian society	Emphasises authenticity, body autonomy, and family-building

2. Cultural and Geographic Context

Aspect	Daria Jane	Taylor Winters
Location	Lives in Bucharest	Lives in London
Cultural Framing	Navigates Romanian conservatism and media scrutiny	Offers a transnational perspective, contrasting Romanian and Western experiences
Audience	Primarily Romanian- speaking	International, English-speaking audience (with Romanian roots)

3. Platform Use and Digital Persona

Aspect	Daria Jane	Taylor Winters
Main Platforms	YouTube, Instagram	TikTok, Instagram
Content Style	Glamorous, influencer-style, beauty-focused	Educational, personal, couple- focused, family-oriented
Tone	Bold, confrontational at times	Warm, reflective, often humorous

4. Themes and Transgressive Narratives

Aspect	Daria Jane	Taylor Winters
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Transgression	Challenges gender norms in a conservative society; highly visible and politicised	Challenges assumptions about masculinity, fatherhood, and trans family-making
Stigma Navigation	Faces direct backlash and media sensationalism	Navigates stigma through storytelling and emotional connection
Activism	Implicit through visibility and media presence	Explicit through educational content and advocacy for trans parenthood

5. Identity Construction and Audience Engagement

Aspect	Daria Jane	Taylor Winters
Self-Presentation	Emphasises transformation and beauty as empowerment	Emphasises authenticity, vulnerability, and relational identity
Audience Interaction	Often polarising; receives both support and hate	Builds a supportive community; less polarising due to international framing
Narrative Strategy	Uses visual transformation and glamor as tools of empowerment	Uses storytelling, humour, and emotional openness to build empathy

Table 1. *Contrastive Overview of Daria and Taylor*

Transgressive Narratives and Performance

The marginalised identity of Taylor Winters is articulated, negotiated, and received in a digital context, with particular attention to the dynamic interplay between personal storytelling/self-narration, social norms, and the performative dimensions of identity. The critical examination of the intricate processes involved in the construction and expression of his transgressive narrative within niche communities in the online sphere requires the nexus between self-narration, performance, performativity, and performativity, as well as transgression and audience reception.

In examining the role of self-narration, we draw on the assertion that “for marginalized groups such as queer individuals whose voices are often excluded from mainstream discourse, social media offers a relatively accessible and dynamic space for self-expression” (Talv and Käänte 2025, 37-38). Within this digital landscape, transgender users engage in the construction of multimodal discourses that articulate self-narratives characterised by transience and progression towards their desired selves. These narratives are not static representations but rather dynamic processes, where identity is continuously shaped and reshaped. As Klepper argues, narrative becomes “contingent to the definition of identity” (Klepper 2013, 4). This process of identity construction is further complicated by the duality inherent in personal identity. Klepper (Idem, 5) notes that:

personal identity is the mediation between two extremes: a person may have the strongest sense of self, of being a presence, of momentarily experiencing her/his actions as a fully conscious agent, but simultaneously disown her/his past selves and future accountability; or, a person may have an overwhelming sense of continuity and similarity, but hardly feel like an agent: an acting character who ‘owns’ her/his connectedness to the moment.

We contend that the narratives constructed by transgender users on social media function not only as expressions of identity but also as active sites of identity negotiation, revealing exactly the mediation of the two extremes of personal identity. These narratives mediate between presence and continuity, and agency and fragmentation, allowing users to articulate a self that is both in flux and deeply rooted in personal experience. In this way,



social media becomes a performative space where identity is not merely represented but continuously shaped and redefined in relation with audiences. As Cotoc and Radu (2024, 355) observe, “digital spaces, through their very glocal nature, are powerful tools in displaying transformations and behaviours which are subsequently endorsed by the audience in a reciprocal way”. This reciprocal dynamic is an “interaction between multiple co-authors and co-creators of a life narrative – through such acts as tagging, reposting, and liking” and it “participates equally in the production of the text as its author of the text” (Schultermandl, 2020, 148-149). Moreover, this interaction underscores the performative and iterative nature of identity in digital contexts, where self-expression is both personal and socially mediated. This performance is a digital autobiography that is made public for an imagined audience, “a cultural practice that seeks a public, an audience of imagined and unknown strangers who will interact with how a specific life has coemerged with specific media forms” (Poletti 2020, 12).

In the process of self-narration, digital spaces function as heterotopias, as conceptualised by Hetherington, drawing on Foucault’s original notion, as spaces of alternate ordering: “Heterotopias open up a space for the experience of otherness in relation to neighboring social spaces in a society. [...] heterotopias are real spaces of otherness, where ambivalence and insecurities can be retained for the search of authenticity beyond the binary” (Hetherington apud. Kraus 2013, 77). Within these heterotopic digital environments, authenticity and reliability emerge as central features in the autobiographical practices of transgender users, conveying a truth that is both manifested and credible. We also witness a “mundane proliferation of surveillance and self-life-inscription” (Poletti 2020, 74), which is continuously negotiated by audiences, transforming digital autobiographies into performance acts, as well as performative and periperformative acts.

These acts are autobiographical acts which critically engage with the ways in which the content produced by transgender users is interpreted, while also recognising their inherent subjectivity of self-representation. This represents the periperformative nature of

their discourses that “both narrate an individual life and critically interrogate the textual conditions under which lives are narrated. [...] a key element of periperformative life narrative is a critique of the importance of using a unique voice that speaks from and about the lived experience of the subject” (Poletti 2016, 366). Their discourse on social media shows a life narrative which is “a performative utterance that brings into being both a life and a self, and a performative reiteration of dominant discourses and ideologies that constitute both personhood and the intelligibility of what meaning may be found in “life” itself” (Poletti 2016, 367).

In the context of Taylor Winters’ life narrative on Instagram, transgression and body narrative emerge as central themes that challenge normative understandings of gender and embodiment. As Zimman (2014, 18) notes, “trans bodies have often been held up as exemplifying the way sex can be constructed and reconstructed”, and Taylor’s curated digital presence exemplifies this process. Through visual storytelling, captions, and personal reflections, Taylor’s narrative becomes a site of both resistance and redefinition where the body is not a fixed biological given but a canvas for self-determined identity. Taylor’s autobiographical posts, much like Daria Jane’s, participate in what Zimman (2014, 32) describes as a “destabilization of the boundaries between male and female embodiment, by decoupling gender from the physical body while making both a matter of self-determination”. These narratives subvert binary frameworks and invite audiences into a more fluid, inclusive understanding of identity. The body, in this context, is not merely represented but actively narrated, transformed into a space of agency, visibility, and transgressive potential. Yet this process of identity narration does not occur in isolation; it unfolds within the interactive dynamics of networked publics, where the audience does not merely consume content passively but actively participates in shaping its meaning through stance-taking and emotional engagement. As Poletti (2020, 74) suggests, the audience itself emerges from the narrative flow gradually positioning themselves within the unfolding assemblage of clues, interpretations, and affective responses. This dynamic is intensified in

the realm of “networked publics”, which, as boyd (2010, 39) defines, consist of both “the space constructed through networked technologies” and “the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice.” Within the networked publics, individuals operate through “networked individualism” (Wellman 2003; Darvin 2016, 526) forming fluid, personalised connections rather than fixed group identities. The result is sometimes a polarised discursive space where users take visible stances on trans identities, often guided more by personal convictions and emotions than by factual reasoning. This polarisation is especially evident in the comment sections, where expressions of solidarity, resistance, or ambivalence reflect the broader cultural tensions surrounding gender, embodiment, and legitimacy in digital life narratives.

Methodology and Hypothesis

To examine how Taylor co-constructs his trans identity through digital discourse within networked publics and practices of networked individualism, this study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic methodology. The approach is informed by the contrastive framework employed by Cotoc and Radu (2025) in their analysis of perceived identity formation across different digital inputs, and it is adapted here to a single-platform, audience-focused corpus. Despite the study concentrating on a single Instagram post, it allows for comparative insights without claiming statistical generalisability.

The dataset consists of 2,160 user-generated comments posted in response to a single Instagram Reel published by Taylor between 22 November 2024 and 12 June 2025. Comments were collected manually and anonymised in accordance with ethical guidelines for digital discourse research. Non-verbal elements (emojis, hashtags, orthographic emphasis) were retained, as they contribute to stance-taking and affective positioning. Comments were filtered and thematically coded for relevance to gender identity, transition, embodiment, or social positioning. The relevant comments were subjected to qualitative stance analysis, focusing on positive stancetaking and negative stancetaking, and were

interpreted in order to examine how individual users' positioning contribute to the collective construction of trans identity in comment threads.

This study hypothesises that audience perceptions and evaluations of trans identities in digital spaces are shaped by three interrelated variables: the direction of gender transition, the cultural context, and the language of narration. More specifically, it anticipates that female-to-male and male-to-female transition narratives elicit different discursive framings and affective responses; that Romanian and UK-based sociocultural contexts influence normative expectations and tolerance thresholds; and that Romanian-versus English-language environments condition the visibility and intensity of both supportive and transphobic discourse. These factors are expected to affect not only the presence of evaluative commentary, but also the forms of stance-taking and identity positioning enacted by users within networked publics.

Corpus Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section investigates how trans identity is discursively constructed through periperformative life narratives in digital environments, with a focus on Taylor Winter's Instagram reel "Nothing's gonna stop us  " (see figure 1 below)¹. Building on Cotoc and Radu's observation that "more than in a face-to-face context, identities emerge from the narrativization of the self" (2024, 356), the analysis explores how Taylor's autobiographical content becomes a site of identity negotiation shaped not only by self-representation but also by audience engagement.

The concept of the periperformative life narrative shaped through the interplay between self-performance and public reception is particularly relevant in this context. Taylor's Instagram reel, captioned "Nothing's gonna stop us  " and set to *Starship – Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now*, serves as a focal point for this analysis. The post forms a rich corpus for examining how networked publics respond to trans embodiment and visibility.

The comments under scrutiny reflect a wide range of stances, from affirmation and solidarity to skepticism and resistance. The following analysis explores these dynamics, highlighting how trans identity is co-constructed through digital discourse and networked publics. Within this discursive space, the fact that Taylor chooses English to present his life-narrative plays a crucial role. English often functions as a connector to the global queer community and serves as a visual shorthand for content aligned with broader, often Western, cultural narratives. This association with globalness is further reinforced by patterns observed in Romanian queer social media, where commercial or outward-facing accounts tend to use significantly more English, often in full, presumably due to its prestige as an international and business language (Hasanova 2010). Thus, the presence and tone of audience responses are not only shaped by identity narratives themselves but also by the linguistic and cultural framing through which these narratives are mediated.

¹ The corpus falls outside copyright restrictions, and it can be accessed at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCsL62yCX2x/>.



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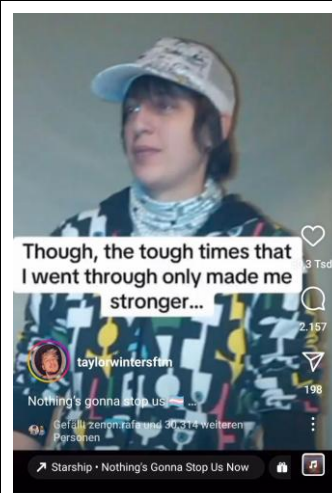
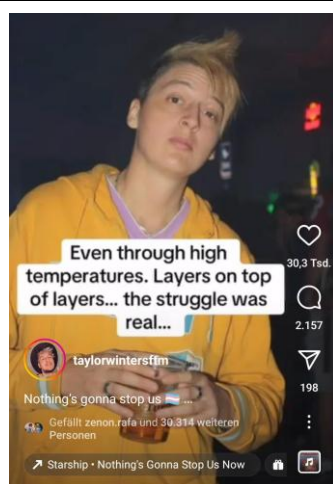
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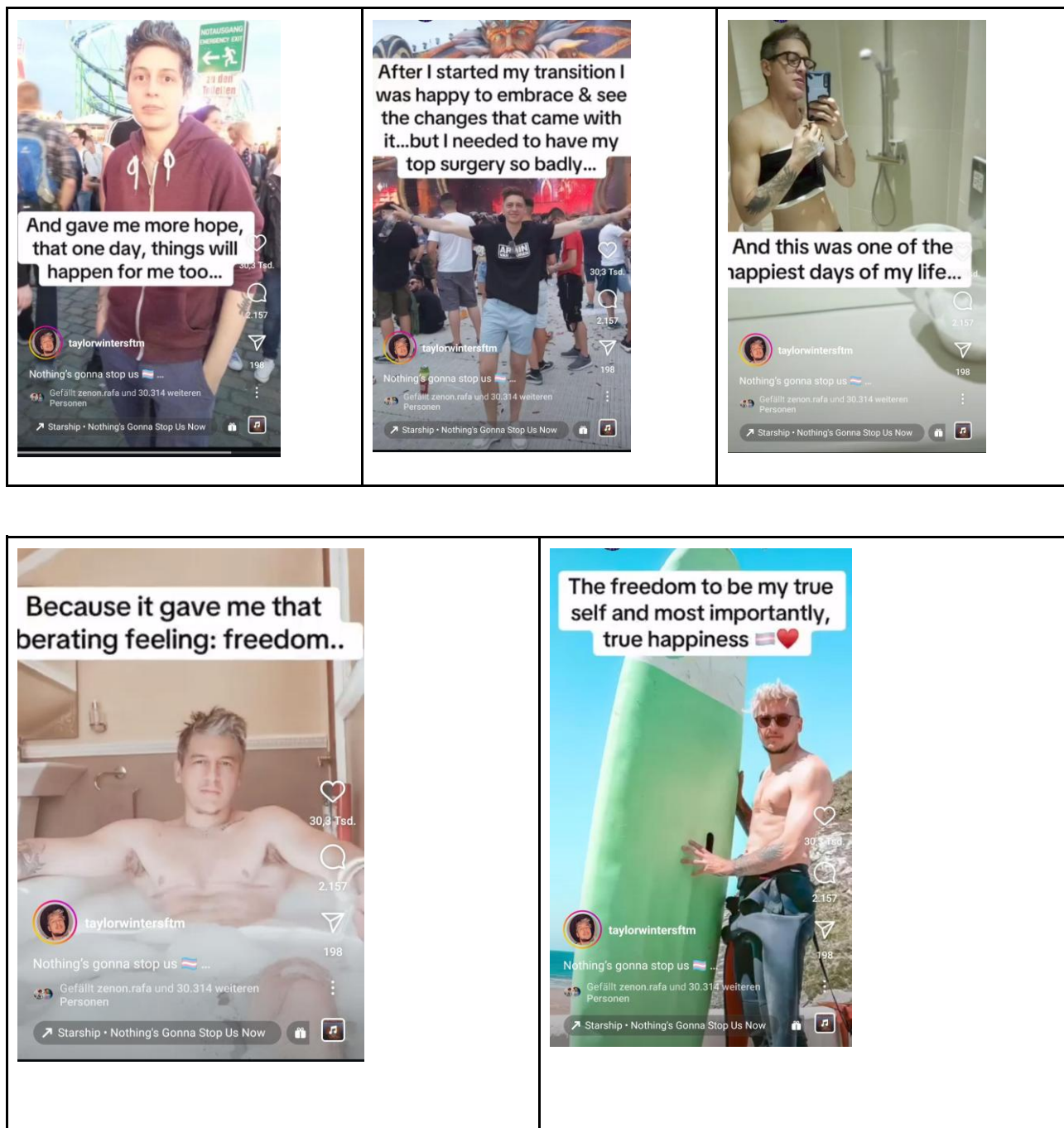


Figure 1. Instagram Reel "Nothing's gonna stop us 🏳️"

Taylor Winters' life narrative on Instagram exemplifies how transgression and body narratives intersect in the digital age. His posts challenge binary gender norms and present the body as a site of agency and transformation. Alongside other trans creators like Daria

Jane, Taylor's story destabilises traditional ideas of gendered embodiment. However, these narratives unfold within networked publics that hold conflicting views on trans identities. Audience reactions range from admiration to hate speech, reflecting broader cultural tensions. As Cotoc and Radu (2022, 56) note, "users appeal to their emotions and convictions rather than to facts". This emotional engagement shapes how trans identities are negotiated online, turning digital platforms into contested spaces of both empowerment and resistance.

As illustrated in Table 2 below, the comments on Taylor's story reflect a deeply polarised discourse shaped by tensions surrounding gender identity, national belonging, and cultural values. We have presented these comments verbatim and included translations of those originally written in Romanian in the Annex. The mirrored structure of the selected comments reveals patterns that closely align with the categories previously identified in our analysis of Daria Jane's case, as discussed in our earlier article (Cotoc and Radu 2025, 97-103; Cotoc and Radu, 2025, *Romanian networked publics and transgender identity Coggle Map*).

Positive Stancetaking	Negative Stancetaking
Validation/Admiration 1. ❤️❤️❤️ thank you for sharing your truth! Inspiring and beautiful! Be happy and healthy, always! ❤️ 2. Trebuie să fii ceea ce sufletul îți sugerează, bravo pentru curaj. 3. There was something masculine in your gaze even when you were little. I wish you all the best 🌸 4. Medically, he's perfectly normal. Wow...you are very handsome! I'm glad to see you be able to be yourself. It's not an easy thing in this world and so many people don't get it. But damn, you are one heroic heck of a man ❤️	Hate/Dislike 1. Absolutely repulsive. Why are you even allowed in public? 2. Tutorial cum sa-ti distrugi viata ireversibil 🔥💧 3. Disgraceful u will never be a man ever you will always be a woman. 4. Cam 36/40 de ani irositi ca și femeie...hopa vreau sa fiu(xx)însă în ADN tau tot femeie ești ...știi satana a găsit cu Cale sa suceasca minte multora ...in ciuda faptului ca ti-ai bătut joc de creație lui Dumnezeu...Dumnezeu te iubește asa cum



5. God made him want to be a man. So he became what he was meant to be. If God didn't want that, He wouldn't make him desire this. 6. So glad you didn't give up and living your authentic life ❤️	ești dar nu tolerează idioțenia și păcatul...trist ptr tine. 5. God never makes mistakes!!! He made you a female for a reason!! 6.You can feel like a truck but you will never be. Its ok to pretend you are a woman Still and always will be female
Romanian proud/Balkan proud 7. As a Romanian, I am so freaking proud of you! May you always feel comfortable in your skin! 8. oh we 100% claim HIM 🏳️‍🌈 RO 9. We do claim him ❤️ 🇷🇴 We do not claim our corrupt government that does nothing for us, that keeps people stupid and ignorant like in these comments, our criminals and thieves. And you sir, hot as 🔥🔥🔥🍷 10. Ca si româncă îmi cer scuze public pt toate mesajele negative de aici. Ma doare sufletul sa vad popurul nostru "creștin" câta rautate si ura poate sa arate. 11. Nu asculta comentariile acestea! Țara noastră te iubește și tot te acceptă! Dacă cetățenii din ei nu o fac, e strict problema lor! Sunt mândră de tine! [...] Different doesn't mean wrong! 💕 12. balcan trans people are the strongest ❤️	Romanian exclusion 7. esti o dezamagire pentru populatia romaniei o dezamagire tuturor 8. Please never return to Romania again. Unless you're planning to seek healing at a monastery 9. we don't claim you - marș 10. Ce mutantu naibii ești tu. Bine ca te ai mutat în UK. Nici sa mai pomenesti de România, sa nu mai vreodată ca ești româncă. Nu te recunoaștem, nu ne trebuie oameni ca voi. Sunteți o scârbă, mergeți oriunde vreți. Dar de România și de noi nu pomeniți, tu ești engelzoiacă acum. [...] 11. as a Romanian, I don't claim you, neither as a woman. You should be ashamed of yourself 12. Ne bucuram ca ai plecat in UK, STAY THERE 😂😂😂😂😂



13. I was born and raised in Romania and lived through the revolution too. I am so happy to see that you had support from your parents and found your way to being yourself ❤️ 14. Surviving Balkan as a Queer kid in any shape or form... We deserve gold medals 🏆🏆🏆🏆🏆🏆🏆 15. If you survived romania under these circumstances you can survive anything! 💙	
Psychological explanation 16. [...] știința și psihologia au dovedit că persoanele transgender sunt normale, corpul se dezvoltă înainte de creier în pântec așa că există oameni pentru care cele două nu se aliniază. 17. da search pe google academic si cauta articole stiintifice despre persoanele trans, un psiholog bun il indruma spre tranziție, asta e singura solutie pentru disforia de gen [...].	Psychological problem 13. e boala grea asta, un psiholog bun trebuia si te reseta bine 14. Please, tell us more about your mental illness 15. So you're mentally ill for a while, stay in the west that's where those like you belong 16. Mental patient craving attention again.
Censorship in a state/Trans rights Ceașescu Dictatorship 18. Sunt cu 4 ani mai mare ca el, crede-ma ca nu era nimic in Ro pe vremea aia care sa te "influențeze" sa fii gay, si mai ales trans. [...] nici macar in media internationala care a ajuns la noi dupa anii '90, gen televiziunea prin cablu, nu erau programe sau filme cu gay si trans.	Censorship in a state/Trans rights Trump administration 17. again- u claim genitals don't affirm gender but removing them does 😂. Nah. Doctors are following the agenda now. It will be debunked eventually like any crazy bs in history. Trump is on the right trajectory. 🍆 I'll minority will@never be a norm



19. Imi amintesc ca am vazut cuvantul "homosexual" intr-un film Cand eram adolescenta folosit ca jignire si nimeni din jurul meu nu stia ce inseamna si nici din DEX nu prea am inteles. 20. Mi se rupe sufletul cand ma gandesc la toti adolescentii care pe vremea aia stiau ca- s altfel dar nu gaseau nicio informatie care sa valideze ce simt, cat de singuri trebuie sa se fi simtit. Nu e nimic mai groaznic pe lumea decat sa nu stii cine esti, si Cand aflii, sa nu poti sa fii tu.	18. Uita te la Americani cu tot cu știința lor ce de cct au ajuns. Bine că a venit Trump la putere. [...] 19. Hope you will end up in america 20. sa vina trump pentru o saptamana doua
Reference to the necessity of the right wing party 21. tu ești comunistul care luptă împotriva inumanității... [...] de aia nu mai ninge, nu mai vine crăciunul că există transgenderi și alte bălării. fă-ți griji de sistemul medical, de sărăcia din România și de rata analfabetismului de la noi din țară pentru că astea sunt problemele cele mai mari pe care le avem acum în momentul de față. [...]	Reference to the necessity of the right wing party 21. Dezgustătoare, păcat că sunteți lăsați liberi pe străzi încă, deaia îl vor toți pe Georgescu președinte 22. Iese Georgescu președinte si va calmează. Această boală trebuie tratată.
Mutilation 22. Nobody is mutilating themselves. These are normal surgeries that everyone gets. You don't view it as mutilation when a cis woman or cis man gets breast reduction	Mutilation 23. Everyone is struggling with something. You are not special, nobody is. Don't get me wrong, it's very good that you found your inner peace, but mutilation is not the key for



surgery to affirm their gender and make themselves feel more comfortable in their body. This is no different. Also, you can't identify as an amputee. What you're poorly describing here is called BID. It is actually a neurological disorder in the DSM5. It's not comparable to being trans because "amputee" is not an aspect of one's identity. It's a disability. Also being trans still isn't considered a mental illness by any actual doctors. You just wanna cling to false beliefs. Which IS actually a mental illness . It's called a delusion. 23. You can give birth with whatever the chromosomes you have cause guess what. There are women with uterus that have XY. Also, what does giving birth have to do here? Do you really think the only thing that makes you a woman is giving birth? Infertile women are men now? Women that have lost their internal genitals due to cancer are men? 24. e corpul tau? Te 'mutileaza' pe tine? Te deranjeaza cu ceva? Era ma.ta sau ce. Acum pe bune.	mental struggles. The mind is always changing, depending on the hormonal balance of your body. Good luck 24. You are still a woman. You just mutilated your healthy body. 25. so I have limited brain activity cuz I don't support body mutilation, thank God he made me slow then. Make it make sense. 26. if you really have to ask that question, it's sad. basically you don't see anything wrong in a person mutilating themselves and also drugging because of an ideology? i feel bad for parents who lost their child to the "taking skin off the forearm to form the genital" disease
Religion 25. "Legile lui Dumnezeu"=)))))) There's no bigger hate than a christian's love, ma jur. 26. it is not a sin to be trans it is a just part of god's journey for specific people so they can align their body to their soul 27. si care va fi plata pentru că trăiește o viață fericită și nu rănește pe nimeni? va arde el în iad etern pentru ce mai exact?	Religion 27. Satan is the one who causes confusion! 28. God is love but He is also just and He loves the sinner but He hates sin. Remember what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. 29. transgenderism = satanism 🔥 - copii ăștia au nevoie de Dumnezeu și psihiatrici. 99.9% did transgenders sunt nenorociți pe



	viață și recunosc asta însă este prea târziu. .1% sunt cei care refuză să accepte ca au făcut o greșeală. Mi-e milă de oameni ăștia...[...] 30. Daca te intorci la Isus iti va ierta pana si pacatul asta. Pocaieste te cat mai e timp pe pamant.
Logical and scientific arguments 28. "Sex - the characteristics and traits of biological sex. Sex refers especially to physical and biological traits, whereas gender refers especially to social or cultural traits, although the distinction between the two terms is not regularly observed." - American Psychological Association ... "Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time." 29. So you're a woman just because you have a vagina? If tomorrow you woke up with nothing down there you'd no longer be a woman? It's so gross to boil down people to their parts, I am not a woman just because of what I have down there, I am a woman because of my experiences, because of my brain, the way I was socialized and the way I feel about myself, if suddenly I had nothing down there that would not change.	Mocking overtone: Identifying as ... 31. she has chromosome XX, she can make child's so she s a women! Doesn' t matter if she thinks she's a man, cow, pig, airplane, dinozaur...etc she was born a woman, she has chromosome XX so she will be a woman 4ever! 32. Surprisingly, yes... I was born a man, I will never be able to give birth to a child, no matter how much I would like to... I would never be able to be a cat or a cow no matter how much I would like to be... wake up from delusion moron! 33. bottom line is no one cares what u identify as- man, fox, napoleon. We see the truth and we will call u for what u are. A woman in this case.



Influencing kids 30. I had loving parents I didn't even know about being trans until middle school. So no, this is just science. "Most children between ages 18 and 24 months can recognize and label gender groups. They may identify others as girls, women or feminine. Or they may label others as boys, men or masculine. Most also label their own gender by the time they reach age 3. However, society tends to have a narrow view of gender. As a result, some children learn to behave in ways that may not reflect their gender identity. At age 5 or 6, most children are rigid about gender and preferences. These feelings tend to become more flexible with age.	Influencing kids 34. E alegerea ei ce dorește să facă cu viața ei. Problema e când spun copiilor la grădinițe că e normal. 35. I have a kid on the way, but thanks anyways. i'll teach him/her to hate twink's like you and it's gonna be easy because hating abnormal creatures like you is in our blood ;D 36. nu îmi stârnesc interesul articole "științifice" scrise de persoane transvertite sau transsexuale că există știință bună și știința rea. Și nici nu mă interesează psihologii sau care îi încurajează spre tranziție, fiindcă cel mai probabil au fost și ei spălați pe creier de asemenea "studii". [...] Dacă un om adult dorește să se îmbrace ca o femeie și să se considere una, asta e problema sa, dar să stea departe de copii că altfel cred că și părinții lor se vor identifica cu un urs grizzly. 😊
Medical explanations 31. No, that's a lie. Science actually says that chromosomes don't determine gender. Hell sometimes they don't even determine sex. Some females have XY and some males can have XX if the SRY gene is or isn't activated and anyways it doesn't matter because gender develops in early childhood. You aren't born with it. THAT'S the science. Again, it's not considered a mental illness to be trans. You just can't accept real science.	Medical explanations 37. That's crazy! When the doctors performed a lumpectomy to extract a cancer tumor I felt like a part of me was missing and when I had to get a mastectomy to remove the cancer that came back a month after I finished treatment I felt that a part of me died and I have never been the same. But if that makes her happy, kudos to her.



Legitimising the necessity to tell the story 32. I was happy to learn about your journey. Thank you for sharing it and being the light ❤️ 33. ai creat un adevărat război aici... Probabil te așteptai să fie mulți care nu înțeleg situația ta. De aia ai și plecat...Nu numai sistemul a fost cauza plecării tale din Romania, ci și oamenii din jurul tău, probabil... Oamenii nu sunt informați, ei știu doar un cuvânt generic pentru toți cei diferiți de ei și îl arunca de câte ori au ocazia. Succes Taylor! Acolo unde ești, poți fi tu însuți! 🙌	Legitimising the necessity to tell the story 38. Why do you feel the need to share something intimate with everyone in a public space? No matter who they are. Like .. why?!

Table 2. *Positive versus Negative Stances*

The comment corpus reveals a multi-layered epistemological struggle in which trans identity is negotiated through psychological, political, religious, and moral frameworks, each mobilised to either legitimise or delegitimise Taylor's existence. Supportive discourse draws on contemporary psychological and medical explanations, referencing academic research, the non-pathologisation of transgender identities, and developmental accounts that emphasise a misalignment between sex and gender. These positions often make reference to censorship in communist Romania and the absence of information about

LGBTQ+ identities before and after 1989, reframing transition not as a modern influence but as an identity previously silenced by structural repression. In contrast, hostile stancetaking pathologises trans identity, deploying labels of mental illness, reductive biological determinism, and analogies to animals or objects. Medical transition is reframed as mutilation or ideological self-harm, while psychology and psychiatry are dismissed. This delegitimation is embedded within a broader conservative political imaginary, where figures associated with right-wing authority are invoked as necessary correctives to perceived moral decay, linking trans embodiment to wider anxieties about social order, liberalism, and national decline. Religion operates ambivalently across the corpus: positive comments reinterpret faith as compatible with transition and personal authenticity, while negative discourse mobilises punitive theological narratives that frame transgender identities as sinful, satanic, or socially contaminating, particularly in relation to children. The theme of influencing children thus emerges as a central node of moral panic.

An approximate distribution of stancetaking across the 2,160 comments indicates that hostile or delegitimising discourse constitutes the majority of reactions, accounting for roughly over half of the corpus, while supportive comments represent approximately one quarter to one third. A smaller proportion consists of neutral, ambiguous, or interactional comments. Although these figures are indicative rather than statistical, the imbalance between negative and positive stancetaking is consistent across the dataset. Taken together, these discursive patterns demonstrate that the conflict exceeds disagreement over individual identity, instead exposing an ongoing struggle over who has the authority to define normality, scientific truth, moral order, and social belonging within networked publics.

Final Remarks

Romanian transgender individuals use digital platforms to craft *periperformative narratives*, stories that not only constitute transgressive narratives but actively shape and affirm online identity through ongoing interaction with audiences. Taylor Winters' Instagram presence

exemplifies this dynamic, where the body becomes a site of transformation and resistance, and transgender identity is continuously negotiated in response to public visibility. These narratives challenge binary norms and invite both solidarity and backlash within networked publics.

Networked public reactions reveal a highly polarised discursive space. While some users express empathy and support, others respond with hostility, exclusion, or mockery, often invoking conflicting interpretations of science, morality, and national identity. These patterns closely mirror those observed in the previous study on Daria Jane, where Romanian networked publics similarly displayed emotional and ideological stancetaking rather than consensus-driven dialogue. As reflected in the Romanian networked publics and transgenderism Coggle Map, both cases illustrate how transgender visibility in digital spaces provokes intense reactions that are shaped by cultural anxieties, religious beliefs, and contested notions of national belonging. These narratives underscore the recurring dynamics of trans identity negotiation in Romanian online spheres, where personal storytelling is reshaped in real time and becomes a site of both empowerment and public contestation.

This study contributes to shaping a perspective on networked publics in relation to transgenderism as it builds on our second article examining the topic. Across the two articles, we explored a transition from male to female and from female to male, each situated within distinct cultural contexts and accompanied by particular linguistic dimensions. While the intention was not to produce a quantitative analysis, several aspects nevertheless emerged from our findings. Taylor's female-to-male transition appears to elicit patterns of stancetaking that differ in tone and framing from those documented in male-to-female narratives, with masculinity often naturalised by supporters and denied by opponents through biological reductionism. The Romanian cultural context further amplifies these dynamics, as trans embodiment is entangled with post-communist anxieties about moral order, Western influence, and national continuity. Language choice plays a crucial role in



this process: English comments tend to mobilise globalised psychological and medical discourses that frame gender as complex and experientially grounded, whereas Romanian comments more often draw on religious absolutism, nationalist gatekeeping, and moral panic, particularly around children and social decay. At the same time, code-switching and Romglish function as metapragmatic tools for irony, mockery, or distancing. These patterns show that trans identity in digital spaces is not only negotiated through visibility and interaction, but is refracted through culturally specific discourses and linguistic resources, which shape how transition is understood, legitimised, or rejected within Romanian networked publics.

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Corpus

"Nothing's gonna stop us . Available at <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCsL62yCX2x/>

Annex

Table 2. Positive versus Negative Stances

Positive Stancetaking	Negative Stancetaking
Validation/Admiration 2. [Be who your soul tells you to be – well done for your courage.]	Hate/Dislike 2. [Tutorial how to destroy you life irrversibly 🔥👊] 4. [About 36/40 years wasted as a woman...whoops I want to be (xx) but in your DNA you are still a woman ...you know satan found the way to twist the minds of many ...despite the fact that you mocked God's creation...God loves you as you are but he does not tolerate idiocy and sin...sad for you.]
Romanian proud/Balkan proud 10. [As a Romanian woman, I publicly apologise for all the negative messages here. It breaks my heart to see how much malice and hatred our “Christian” people can show. 11. [Don’t listen to these comments! Our country loves you and still accepts you! If some of its citizens don’t, that’s entirely their problem! I’m proud of you!] Different doesn’t mean wrong! ❤️	Romanian exclusion 7. [you are a disappointment for the population of Romania a disappointment for everyone] 9. we don’t claim you - [get lost] 10. [You're such a goddamn monster. Good thing you moved to the UK. Don't even mention Romania, don't ever say you're Romanian. We don't recognize you, we don't need people like you. You're disgusting, go wherever you want. But don't mention Romania or us, you're English now.] 12. [We're glad you went to the UK], STAY THERE 😂😂😂😂😂



Psychological explanation 16. [[...] science and psychology have proven that transgender people are normal. The body develops before the brain in the womb, so there are people for whom the two don't align.] 17. [Do a search on Google Scholar and look for scientific articles about trans people. A good psychologist guides them toward transition – that's the only solution for gender dysphoria [...].]	Psychological problem 13. [it's a hard illness, you need a good psychologist who could reset you well]
Censorship in a state/Trans rights Ceașescu Dictatorship 18. [I'm four years older than him – believe me, there was nothing in Romania back then that could 'influence' you to be gay, let alone trans. [...] Not even in international media, which only reached us after the '90s through cable TV, were there shows or films with gay or trans people.] 19. [I remember seeing the word 'homosexual' in a movie when I was a teenager. It was used as an insult, and no one around me knew what it meant – not even the dictionary helped me understand it clearly.] 20. [My heart breaks when I think about all the teenagers back then who knew they were different but couldn't find any information to validate what they were feeling – how alone they must have felt.]	Censorship in a state/Trans rights Trump administration 18. Look at the Americans with all their knowledge, what a sh*t they have become. Good thing Trump came to power.[...] 20. [Trump should come for a week or two.]



There's nothing more terrible in this world than not knowing who you are, and when you finally find out, not being able to be yourself.]	
Reference to the necessity of the right wing party 21. [You're the communist fighting against inhumanity... [...] That's why it doesn't snow anymore, why Christmas doesn't come – because transgender people and other nonsense exist. Worry about the healthcare system, the poverty in Romania, and the illiteracy rate in our country, because those are the biggest problems we're facing right now.]	Reference to the necessity of the right wing party 21. [Disgusting, it's a pity that you're still let loose on the streets, that's why they all want Georgescu as president] 22. [Georgescu gets elected as president and calms you down. This illness must be treated.]
Mutilation 24. [Is it your body? Are they 'mutilating' you? Does it bother you in any way? Was it your mother or what? Seriously now.]	Mutilation
Religion 25. [God's laws'] =)))))) There's no greater hate than a Christian's love, [I swear]. 27. [And what will be the punishment for living a happy life and not hurting anyone? Will he burn in hell for eternity – for what exactly?]	Religion 29. [transgenderism = satanism 🔥 - these kids need god and psychiatrists. 99.9% of transgenders are broken for life and recognize it but it's too late. 1% are the ones who refuse to accept they made a mistake. I pity these people....] 30. [If you turn to Jesus he will forgive even this sin. Repent while there is still time on earth.]
Influencing kids	Influencing kids



	34. [It's her choice what she wants to do with her life. The problem is when they tell kindergartners it's normal.] 36. I'm not interested in "scientific" articles written by transverts or transsexuals because there is good science and bad science. Nor am I interested in psychologists or those who encourage them to transition, because they have most likely been brainwashed by such "studies" too. [...] If a grown man wants to dress like a woman and consider himself one, that's his business, but stay away from children or else I think their parents will identify with a grizzly bear too. 🤪
Legitimising the necessity to tell the story 33. [You've started a real war here... You probably expected that many wouldn't understand your situation. That's why you left... It wasn't just the system that made you leave Romania, but probably also the people around you. People aren't informed – they only know one generic word for everyone who's different from them, and they throw it around whenever they get the chance. Good luck, Taylor! Where you are now, you can be yourself!] 🙌	Legitimising the necessity to tell the story



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Bio-bibliographical notes

Alexandra Cotoc is a lecturer PhD in the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania. Her scientific fields of interest are Internet Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Digital Humanities. She served as co-chair of the Steering Committee of the European Summer School in Digital Humanities, Culture & Technology (2024–2025) in Besançon, France, and is currently a member of the Steering Committee for the 2025–2026 term. Alexandra Cotoc teaches courses and seminars on Digital Culture and Communication, Sociolinguistics, and Internet linguistics. Her collaborative published work include volumes and articles on the fields mentioned: *Online and Offline Discourses. New Words, New Sociolinguistic Perspective* (2019), *An Introduction to Internet Linguistics: The Cultural Sociolinguistic Take with Case Studies* (2021), *How Youth Culture Articulates. A Languaculture Incursion into Subcultural Assemblages* (2024). She has coordinated the thematic issue *Textual Negotiation of Online Identities* of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai PHILOLOGIA* journal (2022). She has been a member of several national and international research projects.

Email address: alexandra.cotoc@ubbcluj.ro

Anamaria Radu is a lecturer PhD in the Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilization at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Currently, she is an ILR lecturer at the Department of Romance Languages and Literature at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. In addition to teaching and evaluating Romanian as a foreign language, her research interests include Language Acquisition, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Digital Humanities. Her published work include: “The Digital Life Narrative of a Romanian Transgender Microcelebrity through the Lens of Networked Publics”, in *European journal of life writing* (2025), “The Identity Repertoires of Romanian Microcelebrities. A Digital Ethnography Approach to Telling a Life Story on Social Media”, in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philologia* (2024), “Branding with Language: Romanian as a Foreign Language on Instagram”, *Helsinki Romanian Studies Journal* (2024). She has been a member of several national and international research projects.

Email address: anamaria.radu@ubbcluj.ro