

The Chrysalis Shroud for Transgender

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Transgender (or trans, also known as gender minorities) is an umbrella term that refers to individuals who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth (Puckett et al., 2019). The term includes a broad array of trans men, trans women, people who do not identify with a gender (e.g., agender), or people who identify outside of binary concepts of gender (e.g., genderqueer, or nonbinary individuals; American Psychological Association, 2015). We use the terms trans and gender diverse (TGD) to capture the myriad of identities found within the broader transgender community. TGD people, especially youth, have been found to experience severe mental health disparities including depression and anxiety (e.g., Puckett et al., 2019). Suicidality is also disproportionately higher in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth than the general population and even more pronounced in TGD youth (e.g., 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report, 2021). LGBTQ people of color (POC) may be at even greater risk for decreased mental health (Sutter & Perri, 2016). These high rates of mental health disparities and suicide are found globally (e.g., Lee et al., 2020; Virupaksha, 2016; Zwickl, 2021) and are likely due to experiences of stigmatization and marginalization, minority stress (e.g., such as housing and employment discrimination), as well as gender-based violence (Budge et al., 2020). Rarely do TGD youth feel supported at school, let alone in their own homes. Burdensomeness (negative beliefs and perceptions of being a burden upon others and being incompetent in life) and belongingness (sense of loneliness and disconnection from others) are critical factors in suicidality and especially important to address in TGD people (Joiner, 2005). Studies have found that by supporting and promoting resilience in TGD youth, their well-being is enhanced (e.g., Clements et al., 2021; Snooks & McLauren, 2021; Puckett et al., 2019).

To educate people about the psychological and social sequela experienced by TGD youth and bring to light both the dangers of suicide and need for resiliencies, we have created a special life-promoting garment in the form of a chrysalis shroud. While burial clothing has been understudied, several avant-garde designers have emphasized green and sustainable designs that incorporate natural materials and allow for more personalized burial practices (Michel & Lee, 2017). Our garment emphasizes the dialectic between suicidality and resilience. Based on one of the designer's cultural heritage and to acknowledge the even greater discrimination for TGD POC, we envisioned a garment for a TGD youth. Our goal was to interweave metaphors of hope and support in every aspect of the garment. As LGBTQ and TGD allies, we wanted to participate in a journey of acceptance, while at the same time emphasize the seriousness and possible lethality of living life as a TGD person. A chrysalis is often used as a metaphor for change, as the caterpillar transitions into a new form and structure, that of a butterfly. Visually, a chrysalis can also be compared to that of a shroud, which is a fabric covering that surrounds a corpse and is often used for protection, reverence, mummification, or cremation (Kinkaraco, 2021). In Korea, shrouds have been widely used as part of traditional funeral rites. After the body is washed, Korean family members often carefully wrap the clothed person in a shroud before

placing them in a coffin (Miller-Wilson, n.d.). Korean traditional funeral customs are based on the idea of honoring loved ones who have died in order for them to make a smooth and peaceful transition to their afterlife, regardless of their religious affiliation (Miller-Wilson, n.d.). Thus, our chrysalis shroud garment was intended to emphasize both love and hope, while capturing the feelings of burdensomeness and lack of belonging many TGD people feel. We wanted to create a soft, healing garment that conveyed symbolic acceptance. The garment speaks to the often-profound sense of loss, loneliness, and rejection TGD people feel while struggling with their identities. As allies, we wanted the cocoon to offer preemptive acceptance instead of post-mortem regret.

To create the fabric, one of the designers relied on concepts from Ayurveda whereby natural silk fibers are dyed and soaked in healing herbs and dyes; the infused herbs then enter the body through the skin by contact with the textile (Minocheherhomji & Solanki, 2015). To create fabric for this medicinally functional clothing, the fabric designer used aromatic plants especially those associated with mental health-- St. John's wort, ginkgo, ginseng, ginger, saffron, magnolia-- and then relied on turmeric to obtain the natural golden orange color and hibiscus, lavender, passionflower, and logwood to obtain the purple color. Purple, yellow, black, and white were chosen as these are the colors in the non-binary flag. An additional fabric friendly aromatherapy mist was created (frankincense, saffron, magnolia, lavender, passionflower, orange oil and lavender) to re-infuse and prolong the mental health properties of the fabric. Then, the fabric designer used the Korean paper-making practice called joomchi to create feltable paper cranes. Cranes symbolize longevity, purity and peace in Korean culture (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, n.d.). Deconstructed messages were written on some of the silk with fabric pens; then the joomchi cranes and all of the silk fabric were wet-felted with merino wool to create nuno-felted, eco-friendly yardage for the garment.

Traditional Korean burial shrouds during the Joseon dynasty period (1392-1910) used cloth to cover the body, face, hands, feet, and head (Burial garment, n.d.). The Korean shroud and somoja (a small cap without brim) and dupo (noblemen's coat) were all used as inspiration for the outfits. For the hood and part of the outer garment, the clothing designer used triaxial weaving to create a surface pattern that mimics the infinity symbol—signifying eternal love. Triaxial weaving is made on three axes: a vertical and two diagonals. Purple, white, and yellow colored felted fabric strips were hand woven together. First, 1" felted strips were placed in a specific order vertically as the warp. The second set of felted 1" strips were woven into the vertical strips at a 30-degree diagonal angle as well as a sequential color pattern. The mix of two sets of color strips were then woven in the opposite direction of the first 30-degree diagonal angle to create the woven triaxial pattern. A small pocket for additional herbs was placed inside the outer garment.

Overall, our provocative chrysalis shroud was inspired by historical Korean death clothing and culture. The life-promoting garment was enhanced to create a metaphorical cocoon, one of healing and well-being. Our medicinally functional garment was made from 100% natural and environmentally friendly materials and contains multiple metaphors and deconstructed messages of love and support. The authors, both LGBTQ and TGD allies, wanted to promote

resilience and bring awareness to the emotional anguish and too frequent suicide that occurs in this stigmatized, marginalized, and stressed population.

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