



Literature Review on Nomenclatures for Clothing Targeting People Living with Disabilities

Kerri McBee-Black, and Jung Ha-Brookshire, University of Missouri

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Tommy Hilfiger and Target recently unveiled adaptive clothing lines for adult men and women, and children living with a disability (Heasley, 2017). Although these products would be extremely useful for people living with disabilities (PLWD), the use of the term, adaptive clothing, to describe these products may not satisfy PLWD. That is, PLWD want the same clothes as everyone else, and therefore, labeling clothing as adaptive may further serve to accentuate the disability and cause loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Corrigan, Larson, & Rüsçh, 2009). In today's marketplace, a variety of nomenclatures exist for clothing marketed to PLWD. Some use adaptive, while others use functional (Banks, 2001; Wingate, Kaiser, & Freeman, 1985). Freeman, et al. (1985) suggest that special features, often associated with adaptive and functional clothing, can be construed as obtrusive to the wearer or outside of the norm. This is supported by Reid-Cunningham (2009) who posited that PLWD are often labeled as 'others,' and seen as separate from people who are not considered disabled, which adds to their feeling of stigmatization and alienation. Meanwhile, in the literature, researchers use the terms, inclusively or universally designed clothing, for PLWD (Carroll & Kincade, 2007), often without direct connections with adaptive or functional clothing.

The inconsistent use of clothing terms for PLWD leads to confusion amongst researchers and consumers, often creating lack of collaboration between research and industry communities. Therefore, this paper aimed to provide a review of the definitions, contexts, and usage of nomenclatures surrounding clothing marketed to PLWD currently used in the literature and the marketplace. We believe the results will help clarify the terms and contexts used and better communicate what industry offers and what consumers want. To achieve this objective, we first conducted a series of Internet searches focusing on the commonly used nomenclature of clothing targeting PLWD. The initial search for adaptive and functional clothing resulted in the discovery of five key brands, including Buck and Buck, Silverts, NBZ apparel, and Target, offered as of spring 2018. Then, additional terms, universal design and inclusive design, were searched in the literature because these terms are often used when designing products for PWLD.

Table 1 shows the summary of the literature review. Overall, each term seems to be used in slightly different contexts and with different nuances. Adaptive and special needs adaptive had no formal definitions in the literature; however, they seem to suggest such clothing meets 'special' needs that might seem obtrusive to non-PLWD. Furthermore, the term functional clothing may possess no negative meaning for some, however, for PLWD it can be a source of additional stigma due to its non-normative connotation. Finally, universal and inclusive design seemed to communicate products appealing to a broad range of users and abilities. To our knowledge, this study is the first attempt to summarize the nomenclatures used to identify

clothing for PLWD. The results could help apparel industry communities be more conscious of how they communicate when marketing to PLWD. Rather than the exclusive or potentially obtrusive image of products, perhaps the image of more inclusive and universally acceptable products may be more effective. The results could also help researchers and industry incorporate adaptive or functional components into their design practices. In this light, we call for future research that would clearly define, clarify, and differentiate (if needed) these terms. A more consistent use of the terms could make them less or non ‘obtrusive’ to PLWD. The results would further enhance industry and research collaborations and ultimately the well-being of PLWD.

Table 1. Terms Currently Used to Describe Clothing for People Living with Disabilities

Term	Definition	How Used	Problems	Industry Example
Adaptive Clothing	No formal definition found in the literature.	Clothing with special features for ease of donning and doffing (see Buck and Buck and Silvert))	Seen as not fashionable; Suggests that PLWD need special clothing (Freeman, Kaiser, & Wingate, 1985).	Buck and Buck, NBZ Apparel, Silverts, Target, Tommy Hilfiger
Special needs adaptive clothing	No formal definition found in the literature.	Clothing which is manipulated to meet the needs of PLWD (see Buck and Buck and Silverts).	Insinuates customization being the only option of clothing intended for PLWD.	Buck and Buck, NBZ Apparel, Silverts, Target, Tommy Hilfiger
Functional Clothing	A generic term for clothing that performs multiple functions – from aesthetic to basic protection from the elements (Gupta, 2011).	Clothing which protects from hazardous conditions, facilitates movement for PLWD & enhances body shape (Gupta, 2011).	Seen as not aesthetically pleasing; could be a source of stigma alienating them from society (Freeman, Kaiser, & Wingate, 1985).	REI, Under Armour, Nike, Champion, Patagonia, The North Face, DRI, Bass Pro, Buck and Buck, NBZ Apparel, Silverts.
Universal Design	Products which “suit a broad range of users, including children, older adults, PLWD, and people with	Approach to design functional products for PLWD.	Not broadly used in the industry.	Not found

	atypical size or shape” (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998).			
Inclusive Design	“Consumer products that cater to populations with varying physical abilities” (Carroll & Kincade, 2007).	Design products that are safer and more appealing to a broad range of users and their abilities (Carroll & Kincade, 2007).	Seen in special features introduced by some brands.	MagnaZip, Magna Ready, Tagless Labels.

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