

## **Childhood disability and clothing: (Un)dressing debates**

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### **Chapter summary**

This chapter considers the relationship between childhood disability and clothing. It stems from the understanding that a physical disability may be used as a cue to categorise a person as abnormal, different, or indeed ‘other’, and considers how clothing is used in the negotiation and presentation of self. This chapter reviews literature to discuss the social and symbolic status of clothing – both mainstream clothing (“fashion”) and adaptive clothing - for disabled children. In doing so, it provides an enhanced understanding of the lived experiences of these ‘other’ childhoods. A variety of normalising techniques are discussed throughout this chapter. For instance, ‘making do’ with ready-to-wear clothing through resourceful adaptations; deflecting attention from a disability toward more normative but slightly discrediting attributes; and concealment of the disability using clothing. Collating scholarship from a range of disciplines (including but not limited to geography, sociology, disability studies, health, and clothing and textiles studies) this chapter argues that rehabilitation professionals need to take clothing-related issues faced by children with disabilities more seriously (as opposed to seeing them as solely aesthetic), so that opportunities for social participation can be maximised.

### **Introduction**

Childhood disabilities are conditions that do, or are highly likely to, affect the trajectories of children’s development into adulthood. Many have a neurological basis, whilst other impairments often include musculoskeletal conditions or genetic syndromes, and cognitive, behavioural and communication disorders (Rosenbaum and Gorter, 2011). Clothing for those with a disability is a complex problem. For these wearers, clothing should be easy to put on and take off (facilitating independence in dressing), and comfortable and non-restricting (allowing mobility and movement). While some writing (e.g. Jyothi, 1988; Singh and Ghai, 2009) has argued that garments should disguise the disability to the extent possible, this is not a universally accepted viewpoint. Other writing adopts the stance of The Social Model of Disability, which sees society’s attitudes as the main problem for those with disability (as opposed to the disability itself). Further, an affirmation model of disability (see Swain and French, 2000) believes disability and difference should be celebrated and embraced. Such a viewpoint may therefore not agree that clothing should be used to conceal a disability.

Dress is an embodied practice; it “embellishes” the body, adding meanings to the body that would otherwise not be there (Entwistle, 2000, p. 324). Clothing plays a significant role in contemporary life and understanding of this role in the lives of children and young people with a disability is important. This is particularly so when considering the close relationship between appearance and self-concept (see Grogan, 1999). The fashion industry’s rigid standards of bodily norms of thinness, fitness and no deviances make this an interesting area for exploration (Peters, 2014; Radvan, 2013). For children with a disability, clothing can be seen as a coping strategy, what Goffman (1963, p. 92) terms “passing”. This “passing” enables individuals to protect themselves and their senses of self from detection by ‘normal’ others, and to avoid the full weight of stigma (Goffman, 1963). Where clothing features within this coping strategy is a significant area, particularly considering the polarity between mainstream fashion and adaptive clothing (Goodacre and Candy, 2011). The importance of clothing for those with a disability is apparent when considering Kabel et al.’s (2016) powerful argument that lack of appropriate clothing can stop those with a disability from fully engaging in everyday life, to the same extent as lack of appropriate sidewalk curbs and doorways.

In particular, this chapter discusses the social and symbolic status of clothing - both mainstream clothing (“fashion”) and adaptive clothing - for children and young people with a range of disabilities. In doing so, it aims to provide a better understanding of the lived experiences of these ‘other’ childhoods. This chapter is concerned with exploring the reality of the emotional and embodied experiences of everyday life for these children and young people, whilst also demonstrating how such ‘other’ children develop strategies that limit the experience of uncertainty and ‘deal with’ looking and feeling different. The range of disabilities discussed in the chapter are broad, though all are physical disabilities, including: Down Syndrome; spina bifida<sup>1</sup>; osteogenesis imperfecta<sup>2</sup> and visual impairments. Kabel et al. (2016, p. 2184) have argued that the relationship between clothing and marginalisation for people with disabilities is “powerful yet often invisible”. Since appearance is an important aspect of face-to-face interactions and of ‘first impressions’, the potential role of clothing in either ameliorating or worsening social situations merits consideration (Freeman et al, 1987).

This chapter makes important contributions to understandings of alternative childhoods in exploring how clothing is used by children with disabilities to ‘deal with’ looking and feeling

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<sup>1</sup> Spina bifida is a birth defect that occurs when the spinal cord, brain, or protective coverings for the spinal cord or brain do not develop completely.

<sup>2</sup> Osteogenesis imperfecta, often referred to as “brittle bone disease”, is a genetic bone disorder.

different. This chapter proceeds as follows. First, we present a brief overview of literature on children and clothing. We then contextualise the discussion by outlining debates on conceptualisations of childhood disability. Following this, we draw together studies on childhood disability, dress, and the body. In doing so, we consider the extent to which children with disabilities are othered by dress, or alternatively use dress to feel less othered. We break this section down into four thematic areas: finding appropriate clothing; clothing and the management of identity; disability, clothing and mobility; and dress and undressing. The chapter concludes with a call for rehabilitation professionals to take clothing-related issues faced by children with disabilities seriously - as opposed to considering them purely aesthetic -, so that opportunities for social participation can be maximised. Further, we signpost areas of possible future research interest.

### **Children and clothing**

Most children and young people have independent entry into social and cultural life, for instance through consumerism and fashion, thus offering opportunities for them to ‘do’ their identity differently (Valentine, 2000). In producing their own narrative of self, children and young people have to learn to negotiate their identity to position themselves correctly within adult and peer cultures (Valentine, 2000). We already know that making decisions about how to dress draws on personal creativity, but also on social constraint, and that clothing’s semiotic and sensual material propensities embody conventions about propriety, gender, ways of moving, and encode social relationships, status, biographies and identities (Candy and Goodacre, 2007). In this sense, children’s fashioned bodies act as a site through which they explore and express their self-identity.

Research into fashion and children has covered broad ground; for instance the commodification of children (Cook, 2004); the production of the “profitable child” (Crew and Collins, 2006, p. 7); branding and children (Ross and Harradine, 2004); symbolic consumption in teenagers’ clothing choices (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004); conformity to parents and peers in apparel purchasing (Meyer and Anderson, 2000); and the intergenerational gap of interpretation of young girls’ clothes (Rysst, 2010), including ‘sexy girls’ clothes’ (Torrell, 2004). Piacentini and Mailer (2004) find that the clothing choices made by young people are closely bound to their self-concept<sup>3</sup>, and are used both as a means of self-expression and as a way of judging the people and situations they face. Findings in this research also suggested that clothing has a

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<sup>3</sup> An idea of the self, constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others.

function in role fulfilment, making the wearer more confident and capable of performing tasks. In sum, clothing can be viewed as an essential social tool in the lives of children and young people. This considered, the important role of clothing in the lives of children with disabilities (who often worry about social situations and experience social exclusion) is an important area of attention.

A major body of work has considered identity in relation to children and clothing. For instance, Boden (2006) discusses how popular culture can influence children's social identities, self-styling and the presentation of their identity. Pilcher (2010) has discussed young girls, clothing and 'showing' the body. Drawing from an ethnographic study of children aged 6–11 years and their families, the paper presents girls' constructions of fashion in relation to their own bodies and to those of others. It is shown that although girls may both desire and 'dress up' in fashionable clothing, they present contradictory meanings for doing so. For some girls, 'dressing up' in certain clothes may be a way of 'ageing up' toward feminine adulthood, albeit in restricted contexts and after negotiations between themselves and their parents as to what can be worn and where. Young girls in the study also showed anxieties and disapproval of 'showing the body' through 'revealing' clothing. Certainly, anxieties around showing the body through revealing clothing may also be apparent in discussions of children with disabilities, although there is a deficit of research in this area.

### **Childhood disability**

In recent decades, there have been significant developments in research, policy and practice relevant to the lives of children and young people with disabilities (Kelly and Byrne, 2015). At an international level, disabled children and young people have been recognised as rights holders under both the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These international frameworks highlight the intersections between childhood and disability and affirm the rights of disabled children to protection, participation, and provision of relevant services and supports. Despite this, disabled children and young people continue to experience disadvantage, including higher levels of childhood poverty, lower educational attainment, limited engagement in employment, poorer health outcomes (see Kelly and Byrne, 2015), and social exclusion (Lindsay and McPherson, 2012).

The social model of disability has paid limited attention to disabled children, with few attempts to explore how far it provides an adequate explanatory framework for their experiences

(Connors and Stalker, 2007), which may be different to the experiences of adults. Rosenbaum and Gorter (2011) have argued that traditional biomedical concepts of disability are being incorporated into / expanded by new ways of formulating ideas about children and child development (see Goodley and Runswick-Colse, 2010 for a comprehensive discussion of theorising disabled childhoods). Connors and Stalker (2007) found that children experienced disability in terms of impairment, difference, other people's behaviour and material barriers.

Discussing 'notions of self' and the lived realities of children with disabilities in India, Singh and Ghai (2009) find that children with disabilities desired to appear similar to 'non-disabled' children. Within the Indian context, disabled children have typically been categorised as silent, voiceless victims (Corker and Davis, 2000). This has led Singh and Ghai (2009) to argue that disabled children must be understood as social actors, as controllers, and as negotiating their complex identities within a disabling environment. Goodley et al. (2016) discuss the 'DisHuman child', beginning with an analysis of the close relationship between 'the disabled' and 'the freak'. In order to find a place for disabled children in a social and cultural context that has historically cast them as "monstrous others", the authors develop the theoretical notion of the "DisHuman"; this is, a bifurcated being that allows us to recognise their humanity whilst also celebrating the ways in which disabled children reframe what it is to be human (Goodley et al. 2016, p. 771). The authors suggest that the lives of disabled children and young people demand us to think in ways that affirm the inherent humanness in their lives but also allow us to consider their disruptive potential. As can be seen, the theorising of childhood disabilities is a contested terrain.

Few studies have focussed specifically on children's perceptions and experiences of disability, with much research in this area speaking to parents, and principally mothers, to understand their experiences of looking after their child. For instance, the constructing of daily routines between mothers and young children with disabilities (e.g. Kellegrew, 2000), and of parents' facilitation of friendships between their children with a disability and friends without a disability (Turnball et al. 1999). Arguably, the difficulty to gain ethical approval to speak to disabled children directly can be a reason for this lack of direct engagement with children. However, there are exceptions (for a recent exception see Runswick-cole et al. 2018) and some researchers have adopted different methodologies when researching into / with disabled children to deepen their understandings. Davis (2017) adopts an ethnographic approach to 'get at' the 'unspoken understandings' of disabled children. Wickenden and Kembhavi-Tam (2014)

use participatory research to actively include disabled children and young people in research that explores their lives. Picerig (2016) uses diaries and interviews with disabled children and young people to gauge their opinions on adapted cycling. These more recent efforts made to include children with disabilities in research are important as we have much to learn about their own experiences, including in the domain of clothing.

Textiles and clothing scholars have addressed concerns of people with disabilities since the 1950s. Although, as Lamb (2001) points out, early research on clothing for people with additional needs occurred within a social-political context dominated by a medicalised view of disability. Lamb (2001) argues that a social view of disability is compatible with textiles and clothing scholarship on appearance and social realities. The social view of disability suggests that clothing designers would be more successful if they involved disabled consumers throughout the design process. In the discussion that follows, we focus on four thematic areas in the literature: finding appropriate clothing; clothing and the management of identity; disability, clothing and mobility; and dress and undressing.

### *Finding appropriate clothing*

Caregivers of people with disabilities have long reported the difficulties in finding clothing with desired features, such as elastic waistbands that are age, size and situation appropriate (Watson et al. 2010). Writing more than 20 years ago, Thorén, (1996, p. 389) argued that the clothing market is “not adapted for people with unusual body dimensions and/or different kinds of functional impairments”. For instance, their figures do not fit into clothes made according to the sizing system used (this is a particular complaint by children with Down Syndrome and their carers).

A growing body of more recent literature has explored the clothing needs and desires of people with a range of disabilities (e.g. Chang et al. 2014; Stokes, 2010). For instance, different types of materials might restrict movement from devices such as crutches or braces (Reich and Otten, 1987). Further, individuals with sensory-related or skin conditions may have physical or behavioural reactions to different types of fabrics (Hilton et al. 2010), and conditions such as spina bifida and osteogenesis imperfecta can result in spinal curvature that affects how clothing fits (Kidd, 2006). Attempts to improve clothing choices available for those with disabilities include adaptive apparel manufactured and marketed directly to consumers with disabilities, as

well as research on, and commodification of effective ways to modify clothing purchased from venues selling mass-produced non-adaptive items (Banks, 2001; Caroll and Kincade, 2007).

Mainstream clothing that is readily available on the high street may not be suitable for all types of bodies. For instance, body parts and joints may be affected by disability and certain clothing ‘cuts’ may not be appropriate. As such, there is an established body of literature citing a definite need for specially designed clothing to improve the disabled persons’ comfort and confidence (e.g. Chang et al. 2009; Reich and Shannon, 1980; Stokes and Black, 2012). Thorén (1996) questions: why is it difficult for disabled users to find suitable clothing? The author discusses how, owing to the lack of suitable clothing available, sewing courses are given, especially for parents who want to learn how to make clothes for their disabled children. Further, clothing patterns for different kinds of impairment have been produced. For instance, patterns adapted to sitting in wheelchairs and unusually big or small bodies (Thorén, 1996).

Writing on creating special occasion garments for young women with special needs, Kidd (2006) argues that while young people “loath to appear different”, circumstances beyond their control, such as disability, may set them apart visually from the appearance of their peers. Most ready-to-wear dresses have to be altered to accommodate the physical disability of young women. However, it is often difficult to adapt this clothing to create safe and functional garments, and as such the young people are often disappointed with the look and fit of the altered garment (Brandt, 1990). Kidd (2006) documents a creative design project involving the construction of custom-designed special occasion dresses for four women, aged 16-20, that have spina bifida or osteogenesis imperfecta. Common physical characteristics of these disorders include severe spinal curvature, resulting in extreme body asymmetry that requires the use of forearm crutches and waist-to-foot braces for upright mobility. Results of the research suggest that draping the muslin sample garments directly on the body is the most successful method of achieving good fit and creating the illusion of body symmetry and proportion. Some interesting design choices were made by the young people in the study, taking into consideration their disability. For instance, the participants chose long dresses to completely hide their leg braces. Further, sleeved styles were rejected because sleeves often got caught in their crutches as they walk.

Some people with physical disabilities, to meet their physical needs, wear functional clothing - incorporating self-help and/or special-fit features. However, these garments and features are

not unproblematic; garments may not be desirable, due to distinct normative features. For instance, special features such as the use of Velcro, large zippers and other such features in unconventional places may be sources of stigma through differentiating the disabled from the non-disabled (Kaiser et al. 1985). Freeman et al. (1985) found that people with visible disabilities often feel internally stigmatised even if special features on functional clothing are well hidden from others. The extent to which clothing is stigmatising depends on its difference from the norm.

### *Clothing and the management of identity*

The manipulation of appearance symbols (such as clothing) affords opportunities for individuals to present other aspects of the self and to communicate visually to others that the disability is not the only aspect of the self (Kaiser et al. 1985). Due to its close (physically) relationship to the body, clothing can be a key area of manipulation by those with a disability. However, through the manipulation of clothing and accessories, those with a disability may emphasise other aspects of self, if total concealment of the disability is not possible (Kaiser et al. 1985). Kaiser et al. (1985) discuss strategies adopted in the management of identity by persons with physical disabilities. Such strategies include using clothes to conceal a disability' deflecting attention from a disability toward more normative but slightly discrediting attributes; and compensation through fashionable dress. Other students in this study used dress to take advantage of their social uniqueness, through techniques such as wearing bright or prominent clothing.

Social competence and social self-esteem for those with Down's Syndrome, with particular reference to clothes, is the focus of Rothschild's (1997) work. Children born with Down's Syndrome have numerous congenital defects. They do not attain normal height; their arms, legs, fingers and toes are short; their muscles lack tone or tension and the abdomen tends to be prominent. The face of the child is stigmatised by a large tongue, open mouth, saddle nose and epicanthal folds. Rothschild (1997) finds that clothing is an important cue in the formation of perceptions about the wearer. Clothing and the reaction elicited from others could be used to enhance self-esteem. Thus, identifying and understanding self-esteem builders such as clothing comfort, may help the young people, their parents and educators, find specific methods to inculcate constructive behaviour.

Other research in this area has focussed on stigma and the lives of children and their families with disabilities (e.g. Green, 2003; Craig and Scambler, 2006; Barg et al. 2010; Werner &

Shulman, 2015). The word stigma applies to any mark or attribute that sets some people apart from others and denotes a ‘spoiled’ social identity (Goffman, 1963). Goffman (1975) describes stigma as an attribute that casts deep discredit on the person who possesses it. Goffman (1975) presents three types of stigma: abominations of the body (various physical disfigurements), ‘blemishes of individual character’ (alcoholism, fascism etc.) and ‘tribal’ stigma (nationality, religion etc.) It is the first of these types of stigma that we are concerned with (see Pearson’s discussion of street children, this volume, as an example of stigma related to ‘blemishes of individual character).

Stigmatisation can occur at several levels, depending on the degree to which the body is blemished or disfigured, and the character of the person discredited (Goffman, 1963). How clothing may be used to camouflage/hide certain disfigurements, or to detract attention from ‘imperfections’ is very interesting. There has already been research revealing that camouflage can bring its own problems in relation to issues of identity (are people responding to the real me?); over-reliance on the camouflaged image in social interaction; and fears that the “truth” will be discovered (see Coughlan and Clarke, 2002). Further, the extent to which clothing is stigmatising may depend on its difference from the norm, as in the case of a special zipper or other fasteners in unconventional places (Freeman et al. 1987). Goffman (1963) notes that many ‘blemished’ individuals suffer devaluation because of their reduced participation in the normal world, and their own reflections on a poorly idealised body image. Stigmatised individuals tend to hold the same ideas about identity as non-stigmatised individuals; as such, they tend to downplay the ‘visibility’ of their stigma (Goffman, 1963, p. 4)

In the ways discussed so far above, fashion can be considered as a way to disguise physical defects in which dressing becomes an “act of deception” (Woodward, 2007, p. 125). When we dress we do so to make our bodies acceptable to a social situation (Entwistle, 2000). Clothes, then, are central to the performance, or “curation”, of our identities (Buse and Twigg, 2015, p. 1). Going further than this, Adam and Galinsky (2012, p. 919) in a discussion of “enclothed cognition”, posit that wearing clothes causes people to “embody” the clothing and its symbolic meaning. Clothing has been identified as a sensual mediator between personal and social worlds, with the potential to provide insights into wearers’ feelings; how they express identity, comprehend social mores; and prepare for social interaction (Candy and Goodacre, 2007). However, as Harvey (2007) reminds us, although clothes conceal, they also may emphasise what they conceal. Other research has found that fashionable and attractive clothing is an

effective means of appearance management by children and young people with disabilities, and is used to enhance social acceptance (Kaiser, 1997), and to foster feelings of belonging (Kidd, 2006).

### *Disability, clothing and mobility*

Whilst mobility is a clear focus of attention in disability studies, particularly in studies of wheelchair bound children, or children using walking aids, the relationship between fashion choices and individuals with mobility issues has not yet been adequately explored. Lamb (2001, 138) raised this argument, stating that most often the concern of disability scholars regarding mobility is with the built environment, as opposed to the “near, portable environment of dress”. There are some exceptions, however. Kratz et al. (1997) discuss wheelchair users’ experience of non-adapted and adapted clothing during sailing, quad rugby or wheel-walking. Kratz et al. (1997) found that the wheelchair users in their study all associated significantly greater comfort with use of the adapted clothes. Further, the wheelchair users set a higher priority upon work or leisure activities than upon independence in activities of daily living. The results of the study confirm the value of adapting sportswear for handicapped people. Further, in Kidd’s (2006) previously mentioned study into the construction of custom-designed special occasion dresses for young women with spina bifida or osteogenesis imperfecta, the author found that sleeved styles of dresses were rejected because sleeves often got caught in their crutches as they walk. This demonstrates the importance of considering mobility and movement in the design of clothing with children with disabilities.

Nicholson et al. (2001) assess the upper-limb function and movement in children with cerebral palsy wearing lycra garments. The authors found that lycra garments are helpful for some children with cerebral palsy, for instance in improving stability in sitting and in smoothness of arm movements. However, children in the study had problems in wearing the garments, including problems with toileting. Results suggest that the functional benefit of lycra garments for children with cerebral palsy is mainly due to improvements in proximal stability but this should be weighed against the inconvenience and loss of independence.

With attention to ability, adaptation and engagement, Kabel et al. (2016) consider clothing-related participation barriers. The authors find that the lack of adaptive or appropriate clothing or apparel for people living with disabilities can become a barrier, preventing engagement in

meaningful activities. Ultimately, this has negative implications for rehabilitation. Liskey-Fitzwater et al (1993) discuss clothing importance and self-perception of female adolescents with and without scoliosis. Clothing variables were operationally defined by scores on an instrument used to measure the following clothing factors: conformity in clothing, modesty in clothing, psychological awareness of clothing, clothing to enhance self-concept, and interest in clothing. There was a difference between the two groups on only one clothing measure; the scoliosis sample had significantly lower scores on clothing to enhance self concept than did their peers. This research highlights the potential importance of clothing for self-perception by some children and young people with disabilities.

### *Dress and undressing*

Independent dressing skills by young people with multiple disabilities has also been the focus of some research (Hughes et al. 1993; Young et al. 1986), as has the putting on and removing of coats and jackets (Reese and Snell, 1991). This area of scholarship is particularly important when considering that dressing difficulties of disabled persons has emerged as a relatively new concern for rehabilitation (Lamb, 2001), whilst learning to dress has long been considered a fundamental skill toward independence for the disabled (Levitin-Rheingold). In recognition of this, a learn-to-dress storybook has been developed in conjunction with a practical and functional children's wear range, to aid children with autism (see Moosa, 2010). This is an excellent example of impactful research and of the importance of co-production.

For some children with disabilities, such as those with visual impairments, dressing is a very difficult and often impossible task (Sudha and Bhawana, 2011). Chitora (2011) considers the clothing practices of visually impaired children. The author finds that children with visual impairments face many problems, such as zipping up a coat, tying their shoes laces or buttoning their shirts, as well as identifying the fabric and colour of clothing. Front opening garments were preferred by respondents in Chitora's (2011) study due to ease in fastening. This also helped respondents to distinguish the front from the back of the garment. Whilst attributes such as comfort, durability and style affected the buying of clothing, the major decision about clothing purchase was taken by respondent's family members.

A related yet distinct concern is decisions around *undressing* or 'disrobing' as it is more frequently called in the field of disability studies. Stokes and Black (2012) assess the clothing needs of adolescent girls with disabilities. In doing so, they pay attention to the functional,

expressive and aesthetic consumer needs. While functional considerations were most often reported, adolescents also indicated a number of expressive and aesthetic considerations. Regardless of their level of clothing interest, the common functional considerations identified were issues with fit and difficulty “donning and doffing” (putting on and taking off clothing) including difficulty with garment fasteners (Stokes and Black, 2012, p. 179). Carlson et al. (2008) discuss public disrobing in two children with developmental disabilities who demonstrated public disrobing in school settings. The children also urinated in their clothing, in order to gain access to new and more preferred clothing. The intervention gave the children a choice to change into high-preference clothes at scheduled opportunities during the day. The intervention decreased and eliminated incidents of public disrobing and urinary incontinence with both children. This research found that scheduling opportunities to change clothes lessened each child’s motivation to disrobe. Garments have also been designed which restrict unassisted disrobing (e.g. see Royal, 1993). Research into the disrobing practices of children and young people with disabilities is relatively scant and is an area worthy of further academic attention..

## **Conclusion**

This chapter is concerned with the experiences of choosing and wearing clothing for children and young people with a range of disabilities, and how clothing is used to express identity, comprehend social mores, and prepare for social interaction. This chapter has shown that scholarship from the field of disability studies provides opportunities for research on clothing and identity in the lives of disabled children and young people. A variety of normalising techniques have been discussed throughout this chapter. For instance, ‘making do’ with ready-to-wear apparel through resourceful adaptations; concealment of the disability through use of clothing; and deflection of attention towards other aspects of the self which may be perceived as less discrediting.

We highlighted four key thematic areas in the literature: finding appropriate clothing; clothing and the management of identity; disability, clothing and mobility; and dress and undressing. This chapter has highlighted that, for some children and young people with a disability, mainstream clothing is not appropriate for their needs. As such, they turn to functional clothing with self-help and special-fit features. However, some special features on functional clothing can lead to feelings of stigmatisation if they are not well hidden from others. Other research reviewed found that fashionable and attractive clothing is an effective means of appearance

management by young people with disabilities, and is used to enhance social acceptance (Kaiser, 1997), and to foster feelings of belonging (Kidd, 2006). Importantly, however, the aesthetics of clothing needs to be weighed up against their functional aspects, as research reviewed in this chapter found that lack of adaptive or appropriate clothing or apparel for people living with disabilities can become a barrier, preventing engagement in meaningful activities (Kabel et al. 2016). Ultimately, this has negative implications for rehabilitation.

It is clear that rehabilitation professionals need to take clothing and apparel-related issues faced by children with disabilities into account, so that opportunities for social participation can be maximised (Kabel et al. 2016). Geographers, as well as researchers in other disciplines, could address the extent to which items of dress may contribute to social exclusion for those with a disability. A second line of inquiry might consider the implications of normalising appearance versus emphasising social uniqueness. Finally, while there has been an emphasis on the wearing of clothes in social situations in a more static (stationary) sense, there is more work to be done on dressing and undressing and clothing and im/mobility. After all, the more we understand about how children are permitted, or restricted, to move in, through, and beyond spaces and places, by their clothing, the more we can work towards assisting their inclusion in a variety of spaces.

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