In this section, the authors ask some critical questions of disabled children’s childhood studies as a theoretical movement in the lives of disabled children and their families. Each chapter draws upon the multiple intimacies in the life of the Othered child, exploring how affect, emotion, love, care, family, community, belonging, participation, advocacy and a range of relationships are contoured and mitigated through the everyday of disability and dis/ableism. In exploring and exposing intimacies and their disruptions, contributors offer alternative theorisations of disabled childhoods.

In the chapter “What’s Wrong with ‘Special’? Thinking Differently in New Zealand Teacher Education About Disabled Children and Their Lives”, Gill Rutherford and Jude McArthur describe approaches to teacher education in New Zealand that seek to disrupt student teachers’ understandings of disability, education and rights, and to move away from models of education based on deep-seated negative assumptions about ‘difference’ in childhood towards more respectful understandings of all children’s rights and capabilities. They explore the ways in which they work with student teachers to make schools better places for disabled children and young people.

In the chapter “A Diversity of Childhoods: Considering the Looked After Childhood”, Luke Jones and Kirsty Liddiard explore the possibilities of disabled children’s childhood studies, asking to what extent might it be a useful political, methodological, and theoretical framework to think through the forms of (non-normative) childhood. Centring the lives of Looked After Children (LAC) – those who come to be looked after by the State – the authors draw upon their own lived and affective experiences of being family foster carers. In doing so, their reflexive analysis examines the overlaps in the
lived experiences of disabled and LAC. These include professional surveil-
ance, incessant measurement against the ‘standard child’ (and subsequent
pathologisation and psychologisation) and disruptions to familial intimacies.
The chapter ends by re-examining the role of vulnerability in the futures of
disabled and LAC and young people.

In the chapter “A Relational Understanding of Language Impairment:
Children’s Experiences in the Context of Their Social Worlds”, Helen Hambly
explores the experiences of children with a diagnosis of language impairment
(LI), alongside the experiences of family, friends and the professionals that
support them. The label of LI is given to children deemed to have difficul-
ties with various aspects of speech, language and memory. Highlighting the
need for ethical research that listens to children and families, the author
stresses the need to move away from cognitive, linguistic, neurological and
biological explanations for atypical communication to instead explore LI as a
psychosocial experience: one that acknowledges the child not as deficit but as
a relational subject.

In the chapter “Resilience in the Lives of Disabled Children: A Many
Splendoured Thing”, through a critical focus on resilience and disabled child-
hoods, Katherine Runswick-Cole, Dan Goodley and Rebecca Lawthom
contest normative and individualist modes of what it means to be a ‘resilient
child’. Centring the lives of disabled children and young people, they reframe
resilience not as a humanly possession – something we hold as individuals –
but as a dynamic interplay of the human and a host of resources around them.
Resources such as community participation and acceptance are keys to the
promotion of positive identities. Importantly, the authors locate this analysis
in the context of the global economic crises and subsequent austerity policy
in the UK. In doing so, they highlight the precarity of resilience in the lives
of disabled children at a time where resources that support advocacy and care
are routinely under threat.

In the chapter “Growing Up Disabled: Impairment, Familial Relationships
and Identity”, Brian Watermeyer offers an important reflexive analysis of the
relationships between family, disability and self. In doing so, he centres his
own family story and lived experience of an inherited visual impairment to
explore the divide between family-centred, politically-aligned analyses of ‘dis-
ability families’ and psychological approaches curious about intra-psychic and
relational implications of impairment. The author concludes by considering
the impact of the ‘disability curriculum’ that emanates from within the fam-
ily upon subsequent relationships, self-formation and growth, and emotional
selfhood.
In the chapter “Autistic Development, Trauma and Personhood: Beyond the Frame of the Neoliberal Individual”, Damian Milton unpacks Western neoliberal notions of child development and personhood, situating autistic development not as a disorder but as an affront to pervasive ideas of productivity and functionality and autonomous notions of selfhood. Through auto-ethnography, which centres autistic subjectivity, the author explores a series of small photographic projects carried out with his immediate family. Focusing on family trauma, with his mother he creates an alternative family album which centres upon emotional impact. This enabled connections to grow between himself and his mother, a retracing of intimate family relationships and traumas, and a new aut sense of self within histories of fragmentation and fracture.