A study of children's emotion regulation, coping and self-efficacy beliefs

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Word count (exclusive of appendixes, list of references and bibliography):

36,100 words

A study of children's emotion regulation, coping and self-efficacy beliefs from the perspective of child, parent, and teacher

Abstract

The successful management of emotions, defined as 'emotion regulation' is a fundamental skill that has an impact on multiple outcomes later in life from social skills to academic success. The development of emotion regulation is influenced by a range of environmental factors such as maternal health, caregiving practices and also individual differences such as resiliency and temperament. Recent evidence suggests that emotional self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to manage emotions) plays a role in developing successful emotion regulation skills. This study aims to investigate the relationship between children's emotion regulation skills (as rated by themselves, teachers and others) and their emotional self-efficacy beliefs. Exploring children's own understanding of their emotion regulation skills has been championed by some as a much needed area for further research. This study explored the views of children towards their emotion regulation skills and the extent to which these related to teacher and parent perceptions.

The findings indicate that children have a good awareness of their emotions, which corresponded to teacher and parent perspectives in unique ways suggesting that context plays and important role in the children's levels of emotional awareness. Differences were found in coping strategies and skills when comparing children with behaviour and emotional difficulties to the main sample of children. In general, children tended to use distraction and avoidance techniques in order to help them cope with their feelings of anger and sadness and within this age group parents and caregivers are still perceived by the children as their main provider of emotional support.

The implications for further actions to elicit and engage the child in emotional dialogue alongside the formation of effective classroom interventions and strategies for the successful development of emotion regulation are also discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Richard Cowan who has been my academic supervisor for the entire three years of this Doctoral process! His patience with me, knowledge, wisdom and commitment to the highest academic standards has motivated me and encouraged deeper, critical thinking about this area of research. I am indebted to you for your feedback and support throughout this process.

I would also like to extend deep thanks to Ioanna Bakopoulou and Frances Lee, my professional supervisors, whose guidance allowed me to consider the true implications of this academic research for the role of the Educational Psychologist. I am truly grateful for your dedication and commitment to me.

My fieldwork consultant Bryony Wilford, my line manager, Katharine Sharpe, and my university tutor, Helen Upton, have been excellent sounding boards, critical friends, and motivators. They also allowed me flexibility in the final few weeks of write-up, which was much appreciated!

Special thanks to all the children, teachers and parents who took part in this study. Without your enthusiastic participation this research would not have been possible.

Finally, saving the best to last, I would like to say a very BIG thank you to my dear parents, Karen and Sandy Elsworth and my wonderful husband, Michael, for their never-ending support, encouragement and proof reading skills over three years. Your love and humour have kept me sane and helped remind me of the true purpose of this research. To make a difference in the world through better understanding and openness between people.

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family"

Mother Teresa

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Rationale for Research

The development of emotion regulation skills within children is a well established area of research as these skills have been found to have strong links with other developmental goals and life outcomes (Cole , Martin & Debbis, 2004) from social competence (Fabes, Eisenberg, Jones, Smith et al., 2003) and the development of empathy (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher and Bridges, 2000) to early school readiness (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000) and academic achievement (Graziano, Reavis, Keane and Calkins, 2006). Much research has focussed on the early development of these skills, exploring the relationships between infant and caregiver and the pre-school years. The process of acquiring higher order regulatory skills such as repression of an emotion and replacement of a true emotional expression with a false one is a later stage of emotion regulation development that would benefit from further understanding (Kochanska, Murray & Harlan, 2000). There is an acknowledged interaction between biological characteristics and environmental features that shape children's emotion regulation (Goldsmith et al., 2008). There are also contributory roles played by children's central executive skills and temperament (Posner & Rothbart, 2007; Rothbart & Bates, 2006). The influence of the environment on emotion regulation skills expands as the child gets older and develops their relationships with people other than their primary caregivers.

1.1 Role of others in the development of emotion regulation

The influence of people other than parents, such as peers and teachers, on the development of emotion regulation needs further exploration. As the children get older the peer group can grow in its influence over the child's emotional and social behaviour (Shields & Cichetti, 2001). Peer influence has also been found to be a positive, buffering effect for children who

have difficulties in regulating their emotions and risk becoming either bullies themselves or victims of bullying (Holt & Espelage, 2007). The children's perspectives on the influence of peers in supporting emotion regulation would benefit from further exploration particularly as it seems to have a protective influence on the most vulnerable in our schools – those that are bullying and at risk of being bullied.

The development of emotion regulation skills becomes more complex as children get older. It involves more self-regulatory behaviour as they begin to adopt coping strategies to manage their feelings. Self-regulation skills are strongly related to executive function skills that influence attention, focus, planning and flexibility in children (Whitebread & Basilio, 2012). Therefore, children's executive function skills and self-regulatory skills have an impact on the emotion regulation skills exhibited.

1.2 Coping styles and their relationship with emotion regulation

A widely used model of coping strategies in adults is the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This describes different types of coping that either attempts to ***change the situation*** that is provoking an emotional reaction or attempts to ***change the emotion*** that is elicited by the situation. These styles are known as ***problem-focussed coping*** and ***emotion-focussed coping***. The skill of choosing an effective coping strategy appears to predict life satisfaction ratings by college students (Lightsey, Maxwell, Nash, Rarey & KcKinny, 2011) and is related to lower anxiety levels and higher positive effect in adolescents (Caprara, Steca, Gerbino Paciello & Vecchio, 2006). There is some evidence from a study that explored the coping strategies of children with asthma that these coping styles appear to have a predictive influence on psychological adjustment and well-being (Barton, Clarke, Sulaiman & Abramson, 2003).

Due to the evidence that coping style has an impact on other areas of well-being and psychological adjustment it would be of interest to investigate whether a relationship exists between children's emotion regulation skills and coping styles.

1.3 National Context of the Research

In this climate of austerity there are concerns that educational interventions aiming to support children's emotional wellbeing may be discontinued. Indeed there is a growing focus by the Government on academic work and the importance of grades. This is evidenced by the introduction of self-government where high achieving schools are becoming Academies (The Academies Act, 2010; The Education Bill, 2011), the English Baccalaureate (the House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) and the closure of a range of vocational courses (the House of Commons Education Committee, 2011).

It is also the case that children who have impairments in executive functioning and additional needs such as anxiety disorder or ADHD also display emotion regulation difficulties (Barkley, 1997; Suveg & Zeman, 2004). Results from the Department of Education's most recent review on exclusion states that while exclusion rates have more than halved since 1996 there remains a significant disadvantage to children who have Special Educational Needs. They are seven times more likely to be excluded, and those who are eligible for Free School Meals (a common indicator of socio-economic disadvantage) are four times more likely to be excluded (Department of Education, 2012). As Raver (2004) emphasises, children in poverty are more likely to be exposed to environmental stressors that increase a child's risk of poor emotion regulation such as family instability, violence and greater stress from caregivers.

Children spend a great deal of time in schools and the continual development of their emotion regulation skills remains of critical importance for their future academic and social success.

Educational Psychologists have a responsibility within their work with school systems to communicate to parents and teachers the important role they play in promoting the skills of emotion regulation in children in order to reduce the risk of exclusion and social isolation of the most vulnerable in society.

The Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994) talks of the rights of children to have their opinions heard. In the United Kingdom the voice of the child is enshrined in legislation (Children Act, 2004). The Special Needs Code of Practice (DfE, 2001) states that *"children and young people with special educational needs have a unique knowledge of their own needs and circumstances and their own views about what sort of help they would like to help them make the most of their education"* (p.27). There is an expectation on Educational Psychologists that as part of the service offered to support schools, children and families, measures will be used to successfully identify and elicit children's perceptions and views of themselves and their world. If necessary, the Educational Psychologist is required to be the advocate of the child's voice to ensure that all interventions and support offered is child-centred. Despite these ideals, in reality the measures used to work with children are often not evidence-based and are dependent on the child's intellectual ability to access them. Often children's evaluations of an intervention such as Circle Time or a Nurture Group are done sporadically and are not incorporated into a systematic evaluation of an intervention programme. The purpose of this current study was to investigate the child's perspective of their emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills further.

The study adopted an Eco systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) by taking into account the different contexts of home and school with the completion of parent and teacher questionnaires. A mixed methodology non-experimental research design was used that facilitated the investigation of the relationships between the teacher, parent and child views

and explored how they related to a child's emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills. Further exploration of children's understandings of emotion regulation and their coping styles was undertaken with thematic analysis that enabled patterns to be identified within their reports. These patterns and themes were tested in relation to the Transactional model of stress and coping.

Children with emotion regulation difficulties vary widely and effective identification and support can vary depending on the type of difficulties a child has. Those that display impulsive, externalizing behaviour difficulties are more likely to be identified as they cause more disruption in class while others with an internalizing emotion regulation profile are more anxious and withdrawn. This withdrawn and internalizing profile can lead to a lack of identification and support being put in place (for a review see Eisenberg et al., 2010). Exploring the views of children on their emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy will help explore how their understandings may relate to the type of emotion regulation profile they exhibit. This hopes to support more effective identification and intervention of children who display both internalizing and externalizing behaviour difficulties in the class room.

1.4 Local Context of the Research

This research was supported by a Local Authority in the process of establishing Nurture Groups across the county, as they recognised the need to elicit the voice of the child as part of the evaluation of the programme. While there may be variation between nurture groups, primarily a nurture group is *"a class in a primary of infant school where a teacher and a learning support assistant work with 10 or 12 children who find it difficult to learn in a mainstream class. The children typically have a history of disruptive or withdrawn behaviour"* (Sanders, 2007, p. 45). The structure and set-up of the Nurture Group Model has

been found to have a significant, positive effect on children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties when compared to a control group who did not have access to a Nurture Group in their area (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001) and in a national study, children who attend nurture groups have been found to make significant gains in their social and emotional behaviour following two terms of intervention (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). They continue to make improvements in their academic gains throughout the third and fourth terms.

Little is known about how these children who attend the Nurture Groups may differ in their emotional awareness and coping skills. The opportunity to explore the child perspective on emotion regulation and coping strategies was agreed to be useful for the development of evaluation tools for this new Nurture Group programme. At a theoretical level this research is advantageous due to the fact that while much is understood of the early development of emotions in children it will be of interest to see how the emotion regulation skills continue to emerge in 8 – 10 year olds. The children's perceptions of emotion regulation aim to support further work in developing emotionally literate classrooms and effective strategies for developing emotion regulation within schools.

The inclusion of self-efficacy measures will also be a unique and important adaptation to the current emotion regulation measures. When planning an intervention children's own attitudes and beliefs towards their emotion regulation skills will be a fundamental element to consider. The children may require additional encouragement to develop their self-efficacy such as self-reflection activities as described by Perele et al. (2009).

In these times of limited funding it is crucial to build upon already existing resources. Whitebread and Basilio (2012) argue that self-regulatory skills are easily taught to children and therefore, it is important to facilitate this capacity within children to grow in their

emotional awareness through a supportive environment. The development of child report measures and further exploration of the child perspective in this area are relevant and useful topics of study to continue to identify factors that foster successful development of emotion regulation skills in the classroom.

1.5 Research Questions

The current study's overarching aim was to investigate children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills, their coping skills and their emotional self-efficacy beliefs. The research questions are:

1) Is there a relationship between children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills and the views of their parents and teachers and how do they compare?
2) Is there a meaningful relationship between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and their emotion regulation skills?
3) What are the coping styles children use in supporting them with their emotions?
4) How do children with behaviour difficulties compare to other children in their perceptions of their emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping strategies?
5) What reasons are given by the children for the importance of emotions and how do these relate to theories regarding the development of emotion regulation?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The present literature review provides a critique of contemporary research on the psychology of emotion regulation and self-efficacy. In the following sections, the concept of emotion regulation will be considered with respect to the developmental process, social learning theory, self-efficacy and the influence of emotion regulation on different coping styles used. Next, several approaches to measuring and assessing emotion regulation will be discussed highlighting key methodological issues that need to be considered.

2.1 What is emotion regulation?

The concept of emotion regulation is one that straddles a range of areas and disciplines from biology and neuroscience to psychology and philosophy yet it remains an ambiguous term, with many varied conceptualisations. Cole, Martin and Dennis (2004) suggest that researchers interested in the concept should either *"pursue the idea despite the cautions and challenges or abandon it as a diffuse, over-inclusive, poorly defined notion"* (p.318.) With these words of warning in mind, a systematic search of the literature involving a wide range of electronic databases such as PsychInfo and using key words such as 'emotion regulation' and 'children' was undertaken. A number of key authors were identified within this field and there are several articles that are cited frequently, whose findings have been replicated. These key studies and authors formed the foundation of this literature review. A working definition of emotion regulation will be attempted drawing from reviews of numerous studies led by key academics within the field (Cole et al., 2004; Eisenberg, Spinrad & Eggum, 2010; Gross, 2007, 1998; Rothbart & Bates, 2006; Thompson, 1994) Several key elements of emotion regulation will be discussed before a final working definition will be arrived at and justified in light of the research study.

Before a working definition is attempted, it is important to acknowledge that the predominant context of much of emotion regulation literature stems from neuro-scientific and cognitive psychology. This may help to explain the plethora of different terms used to define similar concepts and also the research perspective, which has tended to be experimental and laboratory based.

As Educational Psychologists, who are both scientist-practitioners and reflective-practitioners working directly with children, schools, families and communities it is important for us to bridge this divide between the 'academic world' and a real world context; attempting to apply scientific principles and critique scientific findings with practical application and implications in mind.

Whilst accepting there is a range of conceptual terms and concepts used in the research surrounding emotion regulation, in order to remain consistent for the purposes of this study I will use the term 'emotion regulation' to define children's skill in managing their emotions. As part of the literature review I will distinguish between effortful emotion regulation and reactive emotion regulation, which form two components of the construct, emotion regulation.

2.1.1 Emotion regulation: Extrinsic and Intrinsic processes

Thompson (1994) proposed the following definition of emotion regulation:

Emotion regulation consists of the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions...to accomplish one's goals. (Thompson, 1994, p. 27-28)

This definition highlights that emotion regulation includes both internal and external influences. This is of particular importance when considering the development of emotion

regulation skills within children. Early in life, extrinsic influences are most apparent where caregivers devote considerable energy to regulating the emotions of offspring through comforting distress, inducing positive feelings through smiles, tickling, and also altering children's perceptions of emotional events through social referencing and language (Cole, Armstrong & Pemberton, 2010). Studies by Braungart-Rieker, Garwood, Powers and Notaro (1998) find that intrinsic regulatory behaviour such as gaze aversion and self-sucking is evident even in 4 month old infants. Therefore, this definition emphasises the importance of viewing emotion regulation as a construct that includes intrinsic and extrinsic regulatory processes.

2.1.2. Emotion regulation: Effortful and Impulsive

Gross (1998) chooses to view emotion regulation as:

"A continuum from conscious, effortful and controlled regulation to unconscious, effortless and automatic regulation" (p.275)

The key feature within this conceptualisation is the gradual shift between conscious and unconsciously controlled emotion regulatory processes. Research led by Eisenberg has attempted to create a distinction between these two dimensions of emotion regulation – the conscious and the unconscious (Spinrad, Eisenberg, Cumberland, Fabes et al., 2006; Eisenberg, Cumberland, Spinrad, Fabes et al., 2001). These studies suggest that when measuring emotion regulation it should be differentiated into effortful, and reactive or involuntary forms of control.

Effortful control has been described as the cognitive aspect of emotion regulation, which affects the planning and monitoring of the emotional responses (Spinrad et al., 2006). Many of these skills cause brain activation in regions predominantly used for executive function such as the prefrontal cortex (Posner & Rothbart, 2007). This has led to a formation of close

links with executive function (Calkins & Bell, 2009). Metcalfe and Mischel (1999) suggest that the skill of self-control moves between a hot, affective, *"go"* system and a cool, cognitive, *"know"*, system. It is difficult to define and demarcate these two systems precisely however, Eisenberg, Spinrad and Eggums' (2010) review of emotion regulation suggests that the effortful control dimension of emotion regulation is fundamentally associated to the hot *"go"* system of executive function.

The reactive or involuntary component of emotion regulation appears influence children's behaviour differently to the effortful component of emotion regulation (which is related to executive function and self-control skills.) In a study led by Eisenberg, Spinrad, Fabes and Reiser et al (2004) effortful control and impulsivity were found to have differing effects on the development of resiliency, externalizing emotion regulation difficulties (defined as more anger and aggression) and internalizing emotion regulation difficulties (defined as more sadness, anxiety and withdrawn behaviour) in children. The effects of effortful control and impulsivity were distinct. The researchers argue that this corroborates the theory that emotion regulation should be viewed as comprising of two distinct components; effortful control and reactive or involuntary emotion regulation.

2.1.3 Emotion regulation: Biology and experience interact

This view of emotion regulation having both an automatic and an effortful component also emphasises the influence of both biological and environmental factors on the successful development of emotion regulation skills. Goldsmith, Pollack and Davidson (2008) argue that *Emotional processes appear to interact seamlessly with the contingency structure of the social environment..." (p. 7)*

Goldsmith et al (2008) reviewed research into the genetic and neural underpinnings of emotion regulation and the individual differences in emotion regulation capacity are

examined. The review explored twin studies by Rothbart and colleagues (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997; Rothbart & Bates, 2006) where individual differences in effortful control appeared to be moderately heritable yet there was an interaction between mother's behaviour during pregnancy and subsequent genetic profiles of the child (e.g. drinking during pregnancy). Goldsmith et al (2008) conclude that emotion regulation is influenced by both bottom-up and top-down processes (i.e. genetic predispositions and temperamental traits and also environmental factors such as caregiver practices). They suggest that the individual differences emerging in children's emotion regulatory processes can be viewed as coping strategies that are developed through environmental experiences. These strategies can gradually become adaptive or maladaptive. Evidence from studies investigating children who have been abused show how they can become more sensitive to certain cues and are more likely to automatically view ambiguous environmental cues as a threat. Their early experiences shape their brain development (Wismer, Fries & Pollack, 2004). This emphasises the complex nature of emotion regulation development, which can only be fully appreciated when exploring the neurological and genetic underpinnings of the construct.

2.1.4 A working definition of emotion regulation

In light of these theories and research the following working definition is proposed:

Emotion regulation should be viewed as both extrinsic and intrinsic, in that an individual can experience regulation of their emotions by another person (extrinsic emotion regulation) and an individual can also self-regulate their own emotional reactions (intrinsic emotion regulation). Emotion regulation needs to also be considered as being made up of two components: effortful emotion regulation and involuntary or reactive emotion regulation. These two components have been found to influence other factors in distinct ways suggesting they are related yet separable components of emotion regulation. Finally, emotion regulation

is a complex system that is moderately heritable but highly sensitive to environmental influences. Neuroscience research (Wismer et al., 2004) shows that the early experiences of the child have a strong impact on the development of the brain structures and subsequent emotion regulatory processes.

2.2 Why is emotion regulation important for educational psychology research?

Emotions play an important role both positively and detrimentally in many psychological processes such as supporting relationships, promoting problem solving and focussing attention (Cole et al., 2004). The key areas where emotion regulation has been found to have a significant impact on children's developmental outcomes is in school readiness, social competence, empathy and academic success. Evidence relating to these areas will be evaluated in turn.

2.2.1 Emotion regulation and school readiness

The concept of school readiness takes into account a number of skills that children require to access school successfully. This includes emerging literacy and numeracy skills and social and emotional competencies. Studies suggest that school readiness is influenced by children's early emotion regulation skills taking into account effortful control and executive functions.

Bierman, Nix, Greenberg, Blair and Domitrovich (2008) undertook an intervention investigating the effect of executive functions on school readiness. Their definition of executive function took into account not only the attention and control processes but also the effortful control component of emotion regulation (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Within this study school readiness accounted for social and emotional competencies as well as early literacy and numeracy skills. The social competencies measured were: emotion regulation skills, pro-social skills and aggression control.

The intervention targeted 4 skill domains a) pro-social friendship skills b) emotional understanding and emotional expression c) self-control and d) social problem-solving skills. Measures of emotion regulation were behavioural (through games that assessed their effortful control) and teacher report (the Social Competence Scale and Pre-school Social Behaviour Scale). Executive function skills emerged as important predictors of the acquisition of language/ emergent literacy skills and social-emotional competencies. What was particularly significant was that children growing up in poverty had poorer emotion regulation skills at the beginning of the year but made the most progress following the intervention. This study emphasises the importance of the environment and early intensive intervention on the development of emotion regulation skills. It also highlights the impact that emotion regulation, effortful control and executive function skills have on school readiness. A limitation of this study was the lack of clarity around how 'poverty' was defined and how the children were grouped. The researchers also report that the intervention was intensive and wide-reaching making it challenging to tease apart the specific influence of the emotion regulatory skills on the other skills that the children developed. The study does suggest that promoting early effortful control, executive function and emotion regulation skills has an influence on subsequent academic, social and emotional skills.

The importance of emotion regulation skills for school readiness has also been advocated by other research. Blair (2002) undertook a review of the literature and concluded that *"self-regulatory skills underlie many of the behaviours and attributes that are associated with successful school adjustment"* (p. 112). Children who have early difficulties in their physiological regulation of emotion are likely to experience difficulties in the development of higher order self-regulatory skills. Rothbart and Jones (1998) support this view and argue that within early child development there is a functional role for emotion in organizing and

directing cognitive development. This will subsequently be influenced by the types of interactions children have with adults and peers, which lead to individual differences emerging, and adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies being developed (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981).

A number of studies, such as Keogh (1992) have highlighted that children who are temperamentally less distractible and show more moderate levels of emotional intensity are rated by their teachers as being more teachable and achieve higher academic levels. Research from America suggests that there is a problematic rise in young children who have difficulties in regulatory behaviour. In a survey conducted by the National Centre for Early Development and Learning (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000) they found that 46% of a nationally representative sample of kindergarten teachers indicated that over half of the children in their class lacked the abilities and experiences that helped them function productively in the kindergarten classroom. In particular they suggest that children's 'regulatory readiness' was limited. The term 'regulatory readiness' referred to children's skills of managing their emotions and behaviour using effortful control and executive function abilities.

These studies, while predominantly being based on North American samples and measures, highlight how emotion regulation is perceived as an important skill that supports further higher order cognitive abilities to emerge that subsequently have an impact on children's school readiness.

2.2.2 Emotion regulation and social competence

Barrett and Campos (1987) state that one of the primary functions of emotion is communication, thus emotion has an inherent social purpose. In a longitudinal community study with 200 children undertaken by Spinrad et al., (2006) children's emotion regulation (differentiated into effortful control and impulsivity) was measured with rating scales at the

age of 4.5yrs and 7.9yrs. Resiliency and social competence (as rated by teachers and parents) were also assessed. Children's effortful control at the age of 4.5yrs was predictive of their social competency rating at the age of 7.9yrs. Levels of resiliency were found to have a mediating role between effortful control and social competence. This study highlights the long-term influence that emotion regulation skills have on children's social competency.

A further study highlighted that the quality and frequency of peer interactions (as a measure of their social competence) was predicted by the level of effortful control that preschool children exhibited (Fabes, Eisenberg, Jones, Smith et al., 2003). The influence of emotion regulation on social competence is exhibited in a primary school aged sample, where children who displayed disruptive behaviour in class and towards their peers had poorer emotion regulation skills compared to age-matched children (Cole, Zahn-Waxler, Fox, Usher & Welsh, 1996).

Due to the close association between emotion regulation and executive functioning, emotion regulatory difficulties appear to be linked to difficulties. Children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have been found to exhibit low emotion regulation ability, poor social competence and high levels of behaviour disinhibition (Barkley, 1997; Kats-Gold & Priel, 2009) suggesting that some learning difficulties can have an impact on children's regulation skills.

This view was supported by Beauchaine, Gatze-Kopp and Mead's (2007) study, which investigated the relationship between emotion regulation skills, motivation and perseverance in children with conduct problems. The children were aged between 4 – 18 years old. At all ages the children showed deficits in motivation and perseverance. By middle school (aged 7 – 10 years old) there were additional deficits in their emotion regulation skills compared to peers. The researchers argue that their findings support the notion that while conduct

problems may have a biological basis they can be amplified by social experiences that alter the children's behaviour and emotional profile in late childhood. The emergence of emotion regulation as a later impairment in this study of children with conduct difficulties does suggest that social and environmental experiences seem to play a critical role in the development of emotion regulation skills. This emphasises the importance of further research into the processes of emotion regulation development within the later primary school age group (8 – 10 years old).

These studies highlight the extent to which emotion regulation influences peer relations and social competence throughout childhood and into later life. The links with executive functioning mean that many disorders such as ADHD and conduct disorder result in an impaired emotion regulatory capacity and reduced social competence. There is evidence to suggest that the emotion regulation skills are sensitive to environmental influences.

2.2.3 Emotion regulation and empathy

Empathy functions as a social emotion, effectively bridging the affective states of one individual with another (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher & Bridges, 2000). Reasons for developing empathy are varied. An evolutionary perspective suggests that this empathic awareness develops in order to allow humans to predict each other's behaviour and, in the case of altruistic, helpful, or cooperative acts forge lasting bonds of trust within their social groups (Sober & Wilson, 1998).

Hastings et al., (2000) examined the development of concern for others (or empathy) and emotion regulation in different aged children with normative, subclinical and clinical levels of behaviour problems. Children aged 6 – 7 years with clinical behaviour problems had lower levels of concern for others (as reported by mothers, teachers and the children themselves) relative to other groups. There were no group differences at the younger ages suggesting that

concern for others may be one of the later areas to develop within the emotion regulation process. A further study by Main and George (1985) also found that toddlers who had experienced abuse showed no concern in response to the distress of another age-matched child compared to age-matched children who were from a similar socio-economic status but had not experienced abuse. This study only had a sample size of twenty children but the findings do suggest there may be some differences within the younger ages in terms of levels of concern shown to others and this relates to their level of emotion regulation. It may be that because empathic behaviour is less frequent in younger children, the differences become more noticeable as the children get older.

These studies suggest that the ability to regulate emotions plays a key role in the development of perspective-taking, theory of mind and empathy, which support successful social interaction.

2.2.4. Emotion regulation and academic success

As a fundamental component of the larger construct of 'self-regulation' that also incorporates the 'cold' executive function processes such as attention shifting, flexibility, problem-solving and working memory, measures of emotion regulation have been shown to have an impact on a range of measures for academic success. Blair and Razza (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of 3 – 5 year olds from low income homes in the United States of America and found that these children's early maths and reading abilities were uniquely predicted by their regulatory skills. This supported previous findings from Graziano, Reavis, Keane and Calkins (2006) who studied the role of emotion regulation in children's early academic success with a sample of 325 preschool children. Their results also show significant associations between the emotion regulation skills (as rated by the teacher) and teacher reports of children's academic success, as well as standardized scores of maths and literacy assessments. While

Blair and Razza (2007) relied on parent and teacher report to assess children's emotion regulation skills, Graziano et al (2006) depended on one sole measure of emotion regulation, which was teacher report. As the academic skills were also reported by the teacher this potentially confounds the study. Graziano et al (2006) did control for the student-teacher relationship and found that this did not mediate the association between the children's emotion regulation measures and their academic scores. This suggests that children's emotion regulation capacity appears to have a certain unique effect on their academic success.

Rubin, Coplan, Nelson, Cheah et al. (1999) found that early emotion regulation abilities, specifically measuring a young child's capacity to follow instructions, focus attention and cooperate with teachers and peers are predictive of early academic abilities. Other researchers argue that these skills can be developed and influenced by supportive environments. A review by Whitebread and Basilio (2012) highlights that a growing number of studies suggest that *"self-regulatory abilities are learnt and highly teachable"* (p.16). Key influences appear to be parental influence, classroom environment and the dialogues between peers and adults.

To conclude, there is a wealth of research highlighting the prominent role emotion regulation plays in the development of social competence, school readiness, empathy and academic success. The influence on children's success in school is significant. Bierman et al (2008) states that promoting the development of emotion regulation can have a crucial impact particularly on the lives of the most socially disadvantaged. Whitebread and Basilio (2012) suggest these skills can be taught to children and the environment, dynamics of the class and teacher dialogue have an influence on the development of regulation skills. The link between emotion regulation, learning and social competence results in this being an important area of research for Educational Psychologists to be involved in.

2.3 The development of emotion regulation across childhood

Studies have suggested that the changes in effortful and reactive components of emotion regulation occur rapidly within the early years and then begin to stabilise from school age (Eisenberg et al., 2004; Spinrad et al., 2006). Limited research has been conducted on school age children exploring the higher order emotion regulation skills that begin to emerge at this age. The primary focus of this study is the development of emotion regulation skills in 8 – 10 year olds therefore, this chapter will devote more attention to the development of the higher order emotion regulation skills that begin to emerge within this age group. This chapter will then explore the growing influence that other people have on children's development of emotion regulation, specifically parents/ caregivers and peers.

2.3.1 Development of emotion regulation in the pre-school years (3 – 4 years)

Identification of simple emotions and perspective-taking develop within the preschool ages. Older children attending nursery are able to recognise a range of emotions and generally understand that people do not always feel what they appear to feel and may also be experiencing two emotions more or less simultaneously (Flavell & Miller, 1998). Dunn and colleagues have also found evidence, through observational studies, that supports the theory that pre-school children are able to understand the perspective of others and show concern for others (Dunn, 1988; 2006).

The theory that young children are able to have empathy and attribute mental states to other people is supported by further research by Rieffe, Meerum Terwogt and Cowan (2005). They found that when they showed children (aged between 4 – 6 years old) emotional expressions that were at odds to the expected expression (e.g. a person looking sad when they have been given a big birthday cake) children showed surprisingly accurate skills in taking the perspective of another person and referring to mental and emotional states as explanations for

another person's atypical emotion (e.g. perhaps she doesn't want the cake.) This suggests that younger children have more complex emotional awareness then we had previously assumed and the importance of ensuring that the measures used to assess children's emotional understanding are accessible and effective.

2.3.2 The early primary years (4 – 7 years old)

Hughes and Leekam (2004) suggest that emotion regulatory skills may be moderated by children's own levels of emotional understanding, which ultimately develops through language development and socialisation. This seems to have an impact on the more culturally influenced and complex regulatory skills that develop in the school years as opposed to the innate regulatory mechanisms of the early years.

Some research suggests that by the age of 7 emotion regulation skills have become relatively stable with skills such as attention levels and perseverance improving throughout the primary school (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Beauchaine et al (2007) appears to contradict this in their study, which found that children with conduct problems at aged 4 had impaired perseverance at all ages but at the age of 7 years they had additional impairments in their emotion regulation skills. This study suggests that emotion regulation is not stable by later primary school, but is continually influenced by the environmental interactions the children have. Other studies do suggest that the effortful control aspect of emotion regulation continues to improve as executive functioning develops throughout primary school years, with a plateau occurring as children enter the later years of primary school (Leon-Carrion, Garcia-Orza & Perez-Santamaria, 2004).

Although these studies varied in their sample numbers and whether they focussed on children with specific difficulties or a community sample the findings suggest differences in how researchers view the development of emotion regulation. These studies also highlight the

strong relationship between children's executive functioning skills and their growing ability to regulate their emotions, impulses and behaviour in more complex social situations.

2.3.3 The later primary years (7 – 10 years old)

Studies undertaken by Kochanska et al. (2000) support the theory that different executive function skills develop at differential rates and have distinct influences on emotion regulation development. Success on more complex effortful control tasks such as 'Simon Says' and 'the Disappointing Gift' (developed by Saarni, 1984) comes at a later stage. In the Disappointing Gift task children are asked to wait for a gift that the experimenter noisily wraps up. They are not allowed to look at the gift. When they finally open the highly anticipated gift the child discovers it is a plain looking wood chip. Children have difficulty exaggerating a positive expression until about 9 years of age.

This task is one that requires a powerful desire to be socially accepted and also to not upset someone. The child is required to repress their true emotional reaction and replace it with a false emotional reaction. The task assesses the child's ability to deceive successfully. Whether the purpose of the deceit is noble i.e. in this case, not disappointing the person who is giving you the gift, or not, the task highlights that the child is beginning to learn to hide and 'play' with their emotions in order to succeed socially. This task also considers children's use of emotion regulation to please another person rather than themselves. This sense of valuing others before themselves is a higher-order and more complex skill than simply using emotion regulation to meet their own needs. It is important to also consider how there will be cultural differences in how children respond to a task such as this due to the different social expectations placed on the children when the receive a gift. Carlson (2005) suggests that it is likely that maturational changes at both the ***biological*** and ***contextual*** levels govern executive function development and a child's effortful control in emotion regulation. This suggests that

a child's context may be influential in causing individual differences seen in children's more complex emotion regulation skills.

To summarise, the development of emotion regulation, in particular the effortful control component, is strongly associated with the development of executive function abilities (Calkins & Bell, 2009) and environmental influences (Carlson, 2005). Regulatory skills associated with more complex social skills such as empathy and the suppression of negative expressions develop later on in primary school. The factors influencing the successful acquisition of these higher order regulatory skills seen in older primary school children would benefit from further exploration.

2.4 The role of others in the development of emotion regulation

When discussing the influence of key adults in promoting emotion regulation development it is important to consider Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory' (1969) and Vygotsky's view of individuals as social beings (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Vygotsky believed strongly that an individual's community and context played a central role in the process of 'making meaning'. He argued that *"learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function"* (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90). Bandura also proposed that individuals are guided by a socialization process. They both argued that our behaviour is reinforced by the familiar customs of a culture; the language, educational, social and political practices of the society within which we exist. Within this viewpoint there is an inherent understanding of the importance that society, culture and the environment can play on children's learning and development. The zone of proximal development is a concept proposed by Vygotsky to define the level of mediation and challenge a child needs in order to learn at their optimum level. A high level of importance is

placed on the adult as a mediator of the learning for the child (Daniels, 2005). It is the adult's 'scaffolding' of the learning task that supports the child in their own learning skills.

This perspective also incorporates the sociocultural influences that exist for children and the profound socioeconomic influences on children's development of emotion regulation skills. Many of the factors that increase a child's risk of poor emotion regulation are more likely to occur alongside poverty and deprivation. Raver (2004) explains that children in poverty are more likely to be exposed to environmental stressors such as greater neighbourhood and family instability and violence and greater psychological distress among adult caregivers (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 1997; Gershoff, Aber & Raver, 2003). With the working definition of emotion regulation in mind (Goldsmith et al., 2008; Thompson, 1994) these stressors will impact upon the early interactions the children have, their perceptions of their environment and the subsequent emotion regulation processes they use to cope with emotionally intense situations. In light of the focus of this research study, the influence of parents, caregivers and peers will now be examined.

2.4.1 The role of parents/caregivers

One hypothesis about the way in which caregiving practices affect developing emotion regulation is through the child's attachment relationship (Chiu & Anderson, 2006; Calkins & Hill, 2007). Bowlby's evolutionary theory of attachment suggests that children innately seek out attachments with others as a survival mechanism (1969, 1988). Through automatic behaviours such as crying and smiling, the baby stimulates caregiving from adults. Attachment theory recognises the fundamental importance of not only food, but also care and responsiveness from the caregiver to the infant. Bowlby suggested that a child's initial attachment figure (predominantly their mother) acted as a secure base for exploring the world and that this first attachment relationship served as a model for future relationships. This

'model' is known as the internal working model and provides a cognitive framework of mental representations that help an individual understand the world, self and others. This internal working model affects a person's evaluations of their contact with others and influences subsequent interactions (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

Attachment processes are often activated in emotionally evocative contexts and serve emotion regulatory functions. Children who experience harsh parenting styles, abuse or have parents struggling with mental health difficulties will face challenges in developing a secure attachment with their caregiver. This reduced sense of security and inability to form a mutually regulating relationship will significantly influence the child's subsequent adaptation to a variety of developmental challenges (Bowlby, 1988).

The influence of maternal wellbeing on children's emotion regulation development was shown in one study where children's emotion regulation skills were found to be predicted by their mothers' own emotional state. Blandon, Calkins, Kean and O'Brien (2008) found in their study of children aged between 4 – 7 years old that children's emotion regulation skills were predicted by the severity of their mothers' depression (clinically diagnosed). The researchers argue that the study emphasises that the interaction between mother and child plays a crucial role in the early development of emotion regulation skills. Goodman and Gotlib (1999) also found that toddlers of depressed mothers were more likely to react negatively in response to stressful situations compared to age-matched children. A limitation of both these studies is that the measures of children's emotion regulation were completed by only one key adult (mother or nursery teacher). This reduces the reliability of the findings as they are dependent on just one report from the mother or teacher and the studies do not take into account the contextual influences on the child's behaviour. This single measure

methodology is not uncommon in the emotion regulation literature and will be discussed later in this review.

Early childhood abuse can also have a detrimental impact on the development of healthy emotion regulation (Wismer et al., 2004). This is supported by research from Pollack and Sinha (2002) who provide evidence that children who have experienced physical abuse seem to be more sensitive to the perception of angry facial expressions and automatically attune to threatening stimuli in their environments. They suggest that children who have experienced abuse tend to develop coping strategies based on survival responses (fight or flight) rather than a more reasoned approach to an emotional experience. These automatic coping strategies can lead to more impulsive and reactive emotion regulation strategies in social situations resulting in social and behavioural difficulties sometimes later in school life.

There is growing evidence that parental reactions to children's experience and expression of emotion influences the emergence of more complex, socialised regulation skills in children (for a review see Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998). The frequency and type of reactions expressed play a significant role in the development of children's emotion regulation skills. Cole, Armstrong and Pemberton (2010) observed a sample of children with their families and coded the types of phrases used to acknowledge, identify, resolve and support the child in their emotional experiences. This study highlights the parallel development of language. Supporting successful emotion regulation involved the parents recognising their own emotional needs and regulatory capacity, sharing this with their child appropriately, respond to their child's own emotional needs and also modelling effective regulation through their language and behaviour. This research built on previous studies revealing how the parent-child discourse about emotions seems to scaffold children's ability to reflect on their own and others' experiences (Brown & Dunn, 1991; Dunn, 2006). Saarni

(1999) argues that this mutual regulation and mirroring fosters emotional self-awareness, which enhances the children's emotion regulation skills.

Following on from this, other studies have shown that parenting style also has an influence on the development of emotion regulation. Some studies have explored the concept of 'acceptance', characterized by warmth and responsiveness (acceptance of children's feelings and behaviour, active listening, praise, encouraging appraisal of emotions) as well as emotional and behavioural involvement in children's lives. Spinrad, Eisenberg, Gaertner, Popp et al., (2007) in a longitudinal study over two years found that this type of parenting approach (researched in mothers only) helped promote preschool children's effortful control component of emotion regulation. Fathers were not included in the research and the findings were based on parent report and a delay task (where the child had to wait for a treat, which assessed their effortful control skills). These measures were completed by the children at 18 months and a year later.

In contrast to the warm 'accepting' style of parenting a harsh parenting style (which can include yelling, frequent negative commands, overt expressions of anger and aggression) has been found to impact on emotion regulation development as noted by Eisenberg, Cumberland, Spinrad, Fabes et al (2001) *"Parents who exhibit hurtful and hostile negative emotions frequently may model dysregulated behaviour for children to imitate"* (p.488). A study in China investigated whether this effect had cross-cultural implications with over 300 children aged between 4 – 6 years old and their parents. Maternal harsh parenting style (as measured by a Chinese version of the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 1986)) was associated to poorer child emotion regulation (as rated by parent and teacher report) more strongly than fathers'. Fathers' harsh parenting was more strongly associated with their child's aggression levels and affected sons more than daughters. The study

highlights potential cultural and gender differences, in addition to differences in the impact of mothers' parenting style compared to fathers'. The correlational design of the study precludes an examination of the causal direction in parent-child relations (Chang, Schwartz, Dodge & McBride-Chang, 2003).

Although representations of mothers seem more prominent than fathers, in later childhood the role of the father gains influence. Verschueren and Marcoen (1999) found that the father figure appears to uniquely predict children's skill in peer relationships and emotion regulation. This suggests that influences by other people such as peers and teachers may also impact upon children's emotion regulation skills in a distinct way.

The evidence suggests that parents and caregivers play a key role in offering children examples of how to regulate their emotions. Children learn from mirroring and talking with their caregivers', which develops their emotional self-awareness. If children have depressed mothers this negatively affects their own capacity to emotionally regulate while children who have experienced abuse are likely to regulate their emotions differently due to a heightened sensitivity to threat and anger. Research suggests that fathers and mothers appear to have distinct influences on children's development of emotion regulation skills. These findings suggest that emotional development is inextricably linked with social development and dependent on the child's interactions with others.

2.4.2 The role of peers

The overwhelming focus of the research into children's emotion regulation development has been on the parent-child relationship. There is limited knowledge of the role peers play in children's emotion regulation development. Peers may have a role in shaping children's behaviour to be socially acceptable from a young age. This can be a positive effect for most

children however it can also increase the likelihood that children who exhibit poor emotion regulation skills may be socially rejected or bullied by their peers (Shields & Cichetti, 2001).

The difficulty this can have for children who have poor emotion regulation skills is that this rejection from peers can serve to confirm their internal working model of how to react in social situations. This contributes to a continuation of their maladaptive coping strategies, social difficulties and peer rejection in the future.

Cichetti and Rogosch (1997) suggest that positive peer relationships can serve as a protective factor for children who have poor emotion regulation skills by shifting children's negative perceptions of the world. In their study 'maltreated' school –aged children (maltreated was defined by the experience of child abuse or neglect) were compared to typical age-matched peers in their development of resilience over three years. While a lower percentage of maltreated children developed resilience compared to peers, those who did rated themselves as having more positive, peer relationships. It is unclear within this study whether the children's peer interactions served to develop their resiliency or whether their resiliency levels supported more positive peer relationships.

A further study of 571 students in early adolescence did identify that the experience of prosocial peer interactions was a significant predictive factor in students' life satisfaction ratings and positive affect experiences (Martin & Huebner, 2007). Prosocial interactions also served to protect the students from increasing feelings of victimisation (there was a gender difference here as boys were more likely to report victimisation/ bullying than girls.)

While children with emotion regulation difficulties can be at risk of social rejection, further research by Shields and Cicchetti (2001) found that children who showed poor emotion regulation and difficult early life experiences were more likely to bully other children and

also be bullied. Both the groups of bullies and the victims showed problems with emotion regulation. The researchers administered logistic regression analyses (sample size of 169 children) and emotion regulation skill was a unique contributing factor in distinguishing between the bully and victim groups and those who did not have any bully-victim difficulties.

From these findings Shields and Cichetti (2001) argue that a greater understanding of the impact of peer relationships on the development of emotion regulation in middle childhood would help to identify factors that contribute to adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies and the protective influences over children. Their particular questions for future research centre around whether children with emotional difficulties are especially vulnerable to peer rejection and whether their coping strategies are maladaptive, leading to further social avoidance or restriction of emotional expression. They also argue that in order to shift a child's negative representations of the world that influence their behavioural responses there is a critical role to be played for fostering positive attachment relationships with these children.

As this study therefore suggests, emotion regulation skill appears to be a unique predictive factor in a child's risk of being a victim of bullying or engaging in bullying behaviour. Holt and Espelage (2007) asked young people to report the level of peer and maternal social support they felt they received. The young people were classified as bullies (14.3%) victims (12.5%) bully-victims (those that were both bullies and bullied) (11.6%) with the remainder of the sample (61.6%) serving as a control group who were uninvolved in any bully-victim interactions. Measures of anxiety and depression were also taken. Results indicate that the uninvolved youth report a higher perceived level of peer and maternal social support and lower levels of anxiety and depression. More specifically, the group of bullies and victims who reported moderate levels of peer social support had the least anxiety and depression

levels within their group. This suggests that perceived peer support relates to reduced levels of anxiety and depression in groups of bullies and victims. This study was purely associative and not longitudinal in design so the causal mechanisms surrounding peer social support as a factor influencing children's social vulnerability and bullying behaviour could not be identified.

A number of studies have explored the detrimental impact that poor emotion regulation skills can have on social functioning later in life while few have investigated the protective factors that peer support and close relationships outside the family can offer to children who have poor emotion regulation skills. The studies outlined above suggest that positive peer experiences and the perception of peer support may provide a protective factor for children with emotion regulation difficulties. This can lead to reduced levels of anxiety and depression, reduced risk of social exclusion and also provides another approach for changing children's maladaptive coping strategies through gradual exposure to more positive social interactions.

2.5 Correlates of individual differences in emotion regulation in children

As highlighted in previous sections the development of emotion regulation depends on the interlinking of biological (i.e. temperament and genetic) and environmental factors. This results in the emergence of individual differences in children's ability to successfully manage their emotions. The research suggests factors such as children's resiliency and self-efficacy beliefs play a key role in promoting effective emotion regulation. Evidence also suggests that some learning difficulties such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism and anxiety disorder also lead to impaired emotion regulation. Key studies will now be discussed that highlight the importance of children's resiliency and self-efficacy on their subsequent

emotion regulation skills and the impact that some learning difficulties can have on emotion regulation and self-efficacy.

2.5.1 Resiliency and emotion regulation in children

Resiliency can be as the skill of adapting to, and coping with, changing circumstances and stressful interactions (Eisenberg et al., 2004). Eisenberg et al. (2004) investigated the relationship between children's measures of resiliency to their effortful control skills and impulsivity between the ages of 4.5 – 8 years. The researchers also examined whether these factors predicted subsequent behaviour difficulties two years later. They believed that children who exhibited under-controlled or externalizing behaviour (i.e. displaying impulsive and aggressive behaviour) would have a different profile of resiliency and emotion regulation to children who exhibited over-controlled or internalizing behaviour (i.e. displaying withdrawn, anxious and inhibited behaviour.) They hypothesised that in order to adapt to change and new situations the capacity to be spontaneous – a bit impulsive – as well as the ability to control that spontaneity when necessary, were important skills. They suggested that a certain degree of impulsivity may actually be healthy in children and be linked to higher levels of resiliency that those children who showed an internalizing emotion regulation profile.

Emotion regulation was measured by parents' and teachers' completion of the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) and the Child Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ: Goldsmith & Rothbart, 1991). From a pool of 315 children they selected those with *T* scores of 60 or above on either internalizing or externalizing behaviour problems to take part in the study. They were then matched in gender, ethnicity, and age. Children's resiliency was measured by parent and teacher completion of an adapted form of the Block Q-sort measure, which requires the adults to sort and categorise 100 statements that describe a wide range of

personality, cognitive and social attributes. The descriptions selected by parent and teacher are then averaged to form a composite resiliency measure for each child (Block & Block, 1980.) Their findings highlighted that resiliency had a mediating role between measures of effortful control and impulsivity and subsequent internalizing behaviour difficulties but not externalizing behaviour difficulties.

This findings suggest that children who were low in effortful control or impulsivity (i.e. children who exhibited internalizing behaviour) tended to be low in their resiliency levels. The researchers hypothesise that these children lacked the spontaneity needed to try out new ways of dealing with stressful circumstances. They suggest that children's internalizing behaviour can be reduced through enhancing their resiliency though they stress that caution should always be taken when making claims of causality.

This research is supported by the findings of Cichetti and Rogosch (1997) who highlighted the relationship between resiliency and the development of positive peer interactions in children who had experienced abuse. They suggested that the peer interactions then become a protective factor for children with emotion regulation difficulties. Therefore, children's capacity to be flexible, adaptable and open to changing environments appears to be related to their emotion regulation profile (internalizing or externalizing), their success in managing their feelings and the creation of positive peer relationships.

2.5.2 Self-efficacy and emotion regulation

Self-efficacy was first established as a psychological concept by Bandura as part of his social learning theory (Bandura, 1969). He postulated that people's beliefs and perceptions of their own capacity have an influence on *"both the initiation and persistence of coping behaviour"* (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Bandura proposed that a person's level of self-efficacy not only influences the type of situations they choose to put themselves in but also affects

perseverance, effort and their attribution of success to either within-person factors (e.g. a person's own intelligence or effort) or environmental factors (e.g. the quality of teaching or parental behaviour.)

Self-efficacy has been found play an influential role in a range of life outcomes for children such as supporting academic achievement and effective self-regulation (Perele, Dignath & Schnitz, 2009), problem-solving and decision making tasks (Wood & Bandura, 1989 cited in Bandura, 1994), long-term life satisfaction (Lightsey, Maxwell, Nash, Rarey et al., 2011), psychological adjustment among children with disabilities or chronic illnesses (Dahlbeck & Lightsey, 2008) and intrinsic academic motivation (Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried, 1998).

A study undertaken by Perele, Dignath and Schnitz (2009) evaluated the importance of self-efficacy in promoting self-regulation and improved accuracy in maths through a self-reflection activity following a maths task. In this self-reflection phase the learner was asked to evaluate the result of their effort and draw conclusions for further learning processes. The aim was that the self-reflection phase would serve to increase the learner's sense of their abilities. The process also aimed to develop self-regulatory skills through developing the metacognitive strategies of forward planning and monitoring. The findings suggested that this activity increased the learner's engagement with the maths task and self-regulation skills improved. From this study it was not clear whether improved self-efficacy led to improved self-regulation or vice versa, or simply that the skills developed in parallel but were unrelated.

Children with disabilities or chronic illness are exposed to frequent stressors not only from their illness but from the stress that their illness places on their environment, quality of life and relationships. Dahlbeck and Lightsey (2008) investigated self-efficacy and coping style in children with disabilities with a sample of 42 children enrolled at a camp for children with

disabilities. They administered measures of generalized self-efficacy (GSE), self-esteem, anxiety, life-satisfaction and coping styles. Multiple regressions were administered. It emerged that self-efficacy, predicted anxiety levels and self-esteem mediated the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety. The researchers suggest that GSE is an important and valid construct among adolescents and children as young as 10 to measure self-reflection and general feelings of self-worth. They argue that future research should explore these effects over a longer period of time to determine whether coping styles, self-efficacy and self-esteem predict future life satisfaction and anxiety. The small sample size is also acknowledged as a limitation.

Studies focusing on self-efficacy beliefs have measured self-efficacy in different contexts with different age groups and in varied ways. Usher and Pajares (2008) suggest that due to this variability there has been very little consistency across studies in the measures used and consequently in the findings reported. Bandura (2006) highlights that self-efficacy beliefs need to tap specific areas of competency such as academic self-efficacy and emotional self-efficacy. When self-efficacy is seen as a whole construct (i.e. generalized self-efficacy, GSE) the explanatory power of self-efficacy beliefs is reduced. There are criticisms that the researchers developing self-efficacy measures have not been attentive to the theoretical guidelines relating to self-efficacy beliefs. It is important that these criticisms are taken into account when developing the methodology for assessing emotional self-efficacy within this current study.

2.5.3 Emotional self-efficacy, anxiety and emotion regulation

While some research suggests an association between generalized self-efficacy and self-regulation skills there is a paucity of research investigating how children's self-efficacy towards their management of emotions actually impacts on their emotion regulation skill.

Emotional self-efficacy refers specifically to a person's belief in their ability to understand and manage their emotional states. There is evidence from a study conducted by Lightsey et al (2011) with college students that self-efficacy for affect regulation, which the researchers define as *"self-efficacy for the ability to regulate one's negative emotions"* (p. 142) moderated the relationship between negative affect and life satisfaction in a sample of 191 college students. Life satisfaction in this study was defined as one of three core dimensions of 'hedonic well-being' and is regarded as a pivotal index of psychological health (Pavot & Diener, 2008; Shin & Johnson, 1978). Where students reported low levels of self-efficacy, negative affect was strongly and inversely related to life satisfaction. The researchers suggest that raising people's self-efficacy, in particular for anger regulation, through mastery experiences, cognitive restructuring and relaxation, will support a decrease in negative affect and subsequent improvements to their life satisfaction levels. As with the majority of these studies this was correlational in design and the researchers suggest using an experimental methodology in future would allow robust statistical analyses to be administered and the causality of these mechanisms to be examined further.

Replicating this type of study with younger children may be difficult due to concerns regarding their levels of understanding and awareness. A study was conducted exploring the concepts of emotional self-efficacy and emotion regulation with a sample of children aged between 8 – 12 years. Suveg and Zeman (2004) examined emotion regulation skills in children with anxiety disorder and the role of emotional intensity and emotional self-efficacy on these skills. Children who met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) criteria for an anxiety disorder were compared to age matched peers without a diagnosis of anxiety disorder on measures of emotional self-efficacy and emotion regulation. Measures involved a self-report questionnaire

and interview, mothers also completed the Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) to report on their child's emotion regulation. Children with an anxiety disorder were found to have more difficulty than their age-matched peers with managing worried, sad and angry experiences and reported significantly lower emotional self-efficacy beliefs. This indicates that the findings with younger children are parallel to those with college students by Lightsey et al. (2011) suggesting that children with low self-efficacy also have difficulties regulating negative effect. Suveg and Zeman (2004) hypothesise that anxious children may have poorer emotion regulation skills on account of them having little confidence in their ability to regulate this arousal.

The study conducted by Suveg and Zeman (2004) had a small sample size of clinically diagnosed children. Further research expanded on their findings and found support for a strong relationship between emotional self-efficacy and anxiety levels. Landon, Ehrenreich and Pincus (2007) compared typically developing children to children identified with clinical anxiety aged between 7 – 14 on their general self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy and their self-reported anxiety levels. Using child and teacher report the results indicated that across both typically developing children and those identified with clinical anxiety disorder there was a relationship between anxiety and emotional self-efficacy. Higher self-reported anxiety was associated with lower emotional self-efficacy. These findings also supported research by Muris, Schouten, Meester and Gijsbers (2003) who found that higher anxiety in a community population of children was related to lower perceived emotional self-efficacy. A gender difference also emerged in this research. Girls reported lower perceived emotional self-efficacy. In other self-efficacy domains there were no significant gender differences.

This suggests that emotional self-efficacy has a particularly salient relationship with anxiety, where children generally exhibit internalizing behaviour. A limitation of the study undertaken

by Muris et al. (2003) is that anxiety levels and self-efficacy were measured purely by self-report so the children's perceptions of their skills were not validated by a key adult.

This research study aims to build on Suveg and Zeman's (2004) work and explore whether in a larger community sample the children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs impact on their emotion regulation skills as perceived by their teachers and parents.

2.5.4 ADD/ADHD and emotion regulation

Children with attention deficit difficulties (ADD/ ADHD) and conduct disorder could be argued to be on the opposite end of the emotion regulation spectrum to children with high anxiety. Children with high anxiety display high levels of internalizing behaviour (withdrawn, shy and over-controlled) and are described by Eisenberg et al. (2004) as being over-regulated and inflexible in their emotion regulation profile. While children with ADHD or conduct disorder display high levels of externalizing behaviour (impulsive, aggressive and under-controlled) and are described as being under-regulated i.e. unable to regulate behaviour for different contexts (Eisenberg et al., 2004, 2010; Spinrad et al., 2006). While children with high anxiety report poor emotional self-efficacy and poor emotion regulation skills, recent research by an educational psychology doctoral student (Wilson, unpublished doctoral thesis) indicates that children who have a diagnosis of ADHD show limited awareness of their emotion regulation skills. Children with a diagnosis of ADHD have been found to have a clear impairment in their emotion regulation skills (Katz-Gold & Priel, 2009; Barkley, 1997). This research suggests that these children may have a limited awareness of their emotion regulation skills, which may impact upon interventions and support that is put in place to support their social and emotional development.

Wilson (unpublished thesis) assessed 25 children diagnosed with ADHD against age-matched peers from the same classes using the Trait Emotional Intelligence – Child Form (Mavrovelli,

Petrides, Shove & Whitehead, 2008). The results from the questionnaire indicate that children with ADHD believed that they had a different emotional experience from their peers. They felt that this affected their friendships but they did not perceive themselves as being more impulsive than other children. They also did not rate themselves as having any difficulties with understanding and managing their emotions compared to their peers. As these are key difficulties associated with ADHD the findings suggest that the children might not be fully aware of their social and emotional challenges. The researcher suggests that these children may need to be offered opportunities to develop their emotional awareness, self-regulation and monitoring skills.

These studies have particularly focussed on children with clinical diagnoses and highlight the wide variation in children's levels of understanding around their emotion regulation skills. This variation appears to be influenced by a range of factors, including children's emotional awareness, their level of resiliency and adaptability and their emotional self-efficacy. The research suggests that emotional self-efficacy is associated with the successful development of emotion regulation however, in light of the methodological criticisms raised by Usher and Pajares (2008) the relationship between emotion regulation and emotional self-efficacy needs further exploration.

2.6 Coping styles and emotion regulation

One of the factors that has a proven track record in mitigating the relationship between life stress and physical and psychological functioning is coping style (Lazarus, 1999). Barton, Clarke, Sulaiman and Abramson (2003) argue that the impact of a stressful event is only partly due to the actual event itself but that the impact can be mediated by people's appraisal of the stressor, how they manage the stress and the person's perception of the resources they feel they have at their disposal to cope with the stress. Coping efforts and styles are aimed at

reducing stress, managing a difficulty and regulating emotions. Their success has a significant impact upon psychological well-being. In this section theories describing coping styles and strategies will be critiqued with reference to their relationship with children's emotion regulation skills.

2.6.1 The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

This is a cognitive-behavioural model providing a framework for evaluating the process of coping with stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is well-regarded throughout the literature and has been used to evaluate coping styles across the age range. Studies have utilised this model of coping to explore effective defence mechanisms and coping in mid to later life (Malone, Cohen, Liu, Vaillant & Waldinger, 2013) resiliency and coping in university students (Beasley, Thompson & Davidon, 2003) and psychological adjustment and coping in children with asthma (Barton, Clarke, Sulaiman & Abramson, 2003) amongst others. This model of stress and coping holds that the impact of a stressful event is mediated by people's appraisal of the importance of the stress to them (primary appraisal) and the psychological, social and cultural resources at their disposal to address the stressor (secondary appraisal.) Psychological distress is therefore experienced when what is at stake is important and coping resources are judged to be less than adequate. This gives rise to efforts to cope with the distress, which can be divided into two conceptual approaches.

The first conceptual approach emphasises the orientation or focus of coping (problem focussed or emotion focussed) and the second conceptual approach emphasises the methods of coping (cognitive or behavioural). Problem-focussed coping (also known as approach coping or active coping) reflects cognitive and behavioural efforts to master or resolve a stressful situation. Strategies are directed at attempting to change the situation, improve or resolve the problem. Examples of problem-focussed coping strategies include planning,

information seeking and support seeking in an effort to find a solution. Emotion-focussed (or avoidance focussed) coping tends to be focussed on the emotional intensity of the situation and reflects cognitive and behavioural attempts to change the way one feels about a problem. Examples include expressing emotion through crying, avoiding the situation or actively engaging in an activity that changes the emotional intensity of the situation i.e. spending time with someone to make one feel better.

One study explored the coping styles of bullies and victims of bullying using an observational tool that categorised their observed behaviour into problem-focussed and emotion-focussed coping. Mahady-Wilton, Craig and Pepler (2000) found problem-focussed coping was associated with the de-escalation and resolution of bullying episodes while more aggressive strategies tended to perpetuate the bullying.

2.6.2 Emotion-focussed vs. Problem-focussed coping in children

The research exploring coping styles in children appears to have predominantly focussed on children with chronic illness such as asthma (Barton et al., 2003; Ryan-Wenger & Walsh, 1994) anxiety difficulties (Compas et al., 2006) children with acute illnesses (Spirito, Stark & Tyc, 1994) and physical disabilities (Dahlbeck & Lightsey, 2008). This may be on account of the fact that these children clearly experience life stressors they cannot control (i.e. their disability or illness) and others that they can control (i.e. taking medication, doing therapy etc.) The level of control a person perceives they have on a situation will influence the coping style and strategies they choose to use. Barton et al. (2003) identified from a review of 26 studies examining coping styles in children with asthma that a range of coping strategies and styles were adopted. Children tended to use more emotion-focussed coping strategies when they perceived they had less control of the asthma. Some of the studies within the review indicated a relationship between the coping style used and the child's self efficacy.

This relationship between self-efficacy and coping has been found in further research in a typical population of adolescents. Their self-efficacy in managing positive and negative emotions contributed to positive expectations about the future and increased life satisfaction (Caprara, Steca, Gerbino Paciello & Vecchio, 2006). The adolescents who used less emotion-focussed coping and more problem-focussed coping appeared to show higher self esteem as shown in self-rating scales. This suggests that problem-focussed coping in adolescents appears to be related to higher self-esteem though the research is purely associative and did not use teacher or parent report to triangulate the adolescents ratings of their self-efficacy and coping styles.

Dahlbeck and Lightsey's research (2008) suggests that this adult model of stress and coping may not be easily mapped onto children's methods of coping. They investigated self-efficacy, self-esteem and coping styles in children with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses (these were predominantly: cerebral palsy, visually and hearing impaired children, haemophilia, muscular dystrophy and burns). They found that high levels of problem-focussed coping and high self-efficacy ratings predicted lower anxiety. The findings reveal that the different coping styles appear to influence life satisfaction and anxiety ratings in distinct ways. The researchers argue that the perception that problem-focussed coping is always helpful and emotion-focussed coping is always unhelpful is over-simplistic and does not account for the importance of context interacting with the individual. This is particularly the case with children who they suggest often do not have control over the problem or life stressor they are experiencing.

Dahlbeck and Lightsey (2008) recommend further examination of the relationships between self-efficacy and coping styles within children to investigate whether there are qualitative differences in their coping styles compared to adults.

2.7 *Limitations of methods measuring emotion regulation*

As discussed at the beginning of the review there remains ambiguity and conflict over the definition of the term 'emotion regulation' and the reliability of measures used to assess this construct in children (Cole et al., 2004.) In a review undertaken by Molly, Zeman and Veits (2011) research into emotion regulation skills in children was examined in terms of the measures and methodologies used. A range of measures were used to assess emotion regulation in children, generally questionnaires or rating scales. Nearly two thirds of research investigating emotion regulation in children relied on only one method of assessment. Molly et al. (2011) argue that this leads to less reliable data as there is no triangulation of this subjective data by an additional person. In this present review there has been an attempt to select the most frequently cited, relevant and reliable research using PsycInfo search filters. Despite careful selection criteria some studies that were relevant to the current research topic did only use one measure of emotion regulation, thus reducing their reliability (Chang et al., 2003; Goodman & Gotlib, 1999; Graziano et al., 2006; Kats-Gold & Priel, 2009). Two other studies used only one measure to assess emotional self-efficacy (Landon et al., 2007; Muris et al., 2003). The majority of the studies within this review have used a mixture of two measures to assess emotion regulation in children. The most commonly used for school aged children is parent and teacher report (Eisenberg et al., 2004; Hastings et al., 2000; Spinrad et al., 2006) or observational methods with parent or teacher report (Bierman et al., 2008; Fabes et al., 2003). Child report was used alongside both the teacher and parent report just once (Rydell, Thorell & Bohlin, 2007) and was used alongside parent report once (Suveg & Zeman, 2004). Molly et al. (2011) did find that self-report was more common in older children (aged over 8 years) while for younger children there is more reliance on observational methods (Biemiller & Meichenbaum, 1998; Braungart et al., 1998; Chiu & Anderson, 2009; Cole et al., 2003, 2010) and experimental tasks (Blair & Razza, 2007;

Kochanska et al., 2000; Leon et al., 2004). This has been raised as a concern by Rydell et al. (2007) who argue that there is a key gap in the emotion regulation research due to the dearth in child self-report research.

2.7.1 Limitations: lack of child-report measures

While observation and experimental methodologies are well-documented as effective means of assessing children that reduce the reliance on language skills, Rydell et al. (2007) state that *"children's thoughts about themselves are crucial to scientific understanding probably especially so regarding internal emotional states"* (p. 294).

There are valid concerns that using questionnaires with younger children may lead to language skills being a confounding factor in assessing their emotion regulation skills. Nevertheless, the contribution that effective and accessible child report measures would offer to the field of emotion regulation research is considerable.

2.7.1.1 The potential contribution of child-report measures

There is evidence that children appear to understand complex emotional concepts at a young age. Rieffe et al. (2005) suggest that much of what is known about emotion understanding (including emotion regulation) is dependent on the measures used to assess this understanding in children. Gathering effective child report measures across the age range will allow a more detailed picture of the development of emotion regulation to emerge. A more detailed picture of emotion regulation development will enable a clearer understanding of how it is influenced by other skills, such as executive function (Calkins & Bell, 2009) resiliency (Eisenberg et al., 2004) emotional self-efficacy (Suveg & Zeman, 2004) and other people, such as parents (Cole et al., 2003, 2010) and peers (Shield & Cichetti, 2001) across time.

Self-report has been found to offer a unique insight into children's understandings of their emotion regulation skills. Rydell et al. (2007) developed a self-report measure for 8 – 9 year olds to identify children's own understanding of their emotion regulation skills. The child report measure was triangulated with teachers and parents, who completed the Emotion Regulation Checklist and a Swedish translation of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-SWE; Malmberg, Rydell & Smedje, 2003). This questionnaire assessed children's social behaviour at school and at home (their pro-social orientation). Child ratings of anger and exuberance regulation significantly contributed to teacher ratings of children's externalizing behaviour difficulties and pro-social orientation. Child reports were not associated with parent ratings of their internalizing behaviour (fear and sadness).

The researchers argue that this indicates that children can communicate something about themselves that goes beyond what others perceive. Through the triangulation of child, parent and teacher report researchers were also able to see the different perceptions emerging from these two contexts – home and school.

The researchers state that no child self-reports of the management of emotions have been published other than the one they have developed. It is intriguing that in an area of research as wide as emotion regulation, there are only a small number of studies exploring the child perspective. This suggests a gap in the research field where this current study will provide a unique contribution to the emotion regulation literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology chosen to investigate the research questions. It will begin by examining the epistemological approach taken and the research design. There are separate descriptions of the participants, measures, procedures and analysis for Phase 1 and Phase 2. At the end of the chapter, the ethical considerations of the whole study are included.

3. 1 Approach of study: Epistemological considerations

This study will be adopting a mixed methodology design using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection though some researchers have argued that it is impractical to suggest that *"all parts of all methods, including data collection, carry epistemological or ontological commitments"* (Bryman 2001 cited in Gorard, 2004, p. 5). They argue that this division between the epistemological positions of qualitative and quantitative methods is both unhelpful and over-exaggerated and suggest that qualitative work should not be tied to a constructivist paradigm and quantitative work tied to a positivist paradigm.

With this in mind, Gorard (2004) suggests that it may be prudent to adopt *"a position of being ontologically largely realist (there must be something for us to research), epistemologically somewhat relativist (trying to make sense of and unify different perspectives), and methodologically fairly pragmatic (using whatever methods it takes to get the job done!)"* (Gorard, 2004, p. 6)

This study has adopted a pragmatic perspective in that the primary objective is to explore the views of children about their own emotion regulation and coping. Human practice and practical application is the primary focus of the study and the surrounding concepts, research and theories will be explored and used to help understand further a real world question. The pragmatic perspective acknowledges the importance of reflexive dialogue and changing

theory as the world changes and the research continues to expand. These theories need to be continually re-negotiated in light of their usefulness and application to the complexity of the social world and human practice. In my opinion, the current theories surrounding emotion regulation have been developed with very little consideration of the practical application to supporting children with their emotional development. There has also been minimal connection with other important psychological theories such as social learning theory and metacognition, which may well play a role in children's perceptions and awareness of their emotion regulation skills. They are abstract and require testing and challenging in order to ascertain their usefulness in explaining children's coping and behaviour.

This pragmatic perspective will have an impact upon how the data is analysed and interpreted in that each individual's perspective is unique and valuable while an attempt is made to synthesise the findings to enable theory testing and theory building to take place in relation to the research questions.

3.2 Research Design

The current study investigated children's perceptions of their skills in managing their emotions and to what extent their emotional self-efficacy and coping skills are associated to successful emotion regulation as perceived by teachers and parents.

This study adopted a two-phase, non-experimental, mixed methods research design. In order to ensure that the child report was accessible to the children and valid for the research purposes of this study piloting took place, which was the first-phase of this study. Phase 2 examined subjective questionnaire data (consisting of rating scales, closed questions and open questions) from children, teachers and parents. Finally, the reasons given by children for how important they thought emotions were explored (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study sought to overcome methodological limitations of previous research in several ways. Careful piloting took place to ensure the measures were accessible to the age group (8 – 10 year olds). Collecting the perspectives of both teachers and parents facilitated the triangulation of the child perspective with views from the home and school context. The purpose of this was to explore the contextual influences on children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping styles.

For questions that are unanswerable solely by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone, mixed methods research can be a valuable methodology to use (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Exploring children's viewpoints on the importance of managing their feelings needed more than quantitative methods to obtain meaningful data. Burke, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) outline how research methods should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers. They state that many research questions and combinations of questions are most fully answered through mixed research solutions.

The research questions are:

1. Is there a relationship between children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills and the views of their parents and teachers and how do they compare?
2. Is there a meaningful relationship between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and their emotion regulation skills?
3. What are the coping styles children use in supporting them with their emotions?
4. How do children with behaviour difficulties compare to other children in their perceptions of their emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping

strategies? How do the children's views relate to the views of teachers and parents within this group?

5. What reasons are given by the children for the importance of emotions and how do these relate to theories regarding the development of emotion regulation?

3.3 Ethical issues

The planning and implementation of this research was in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009). Ethical approval was provided from the Departmental Ethic Committee at the Department of Psychology and Human Development at the Institute of Education, University of London.

To obtain ethical approval, there was an understanding by schools, parents and children that participation within the study was voluntary and that data was confidential. The confidentiality of the data was assured through the storage of data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) in a secure cabinet in the Educational Psychology Department of the Borough, storage on an encrypted, password protected memory stick and through passwords on the researcher's computer.

Following an initial discussion with the Headteachers of both schools about the nature of the research and the children's role, a letter was sent out requesting their permission for the research to take place within the school (see Appendix A). Written consent is advised within the guidelines provided by the British Psychological Society (2009). The researcher then liaised directly with the schools' Special Needs Coordinators (SENCo's) to send out parental consent letters to all parents of children in Year 4 and Year 5 (see Appendix B). The letter outlined the purpose of the research and summarised how the children would be involved. In the letter, there was also an invitation for parents to contact the researcher if they had any further questions or concerns about the research and their child's involvement. The letter

requested that the parents complete a consent form to allow their children to take part in the study. If this consent form was not completed it was accepted that the child would not participate in the study.

Once written parental consent had been obtained the children themselves were given the opportunity to be central to the consent process (in accordance with Ridge & Millar, 2000). At the beginning of the sessions when the self-report was completed information was provided to the children about the study and the completion of the self-report. Confidentiality guidelines were explained to the children before they completed the child self-report emphasising to them that their individual responses to the questionnaires would not be shown to their teachers or their parents. The opportunity to access pastoral support was made available following the completion of the questionnaires to ensure that any emotional issues that may have been triggered from completing the questionnaire could be managed carefully.

3.4 Phase 1: Pilot Study

In order to ensure the child report measure was accessible to this sample of children piloting took place to check the children's ability to understand the questions and the validity of the measure for the purpose of this study. Outlined below are the full details of the stages of the piloting, sample characteristics and amendments.

3.4.1 Sample

Purposeful selection took place for this pilot sample following the receipt of all the parental consent forms. This ensured that the pilot sample was representative of the full sample in terms of ages, gender and ability. In the first stage of piloting, the researcher visited one

school and piloted the measure with three children. Following this stage, with amendments made, re-testing took place with two children in the other school.

3.4.2 Pilot sample characteristics

The sample consisted of two boys and three girls, from both the schools involved in the research. The researcher requested that the Special Needs Coordinators within the two schools identify children that represented the range of the year group from being academically able to others who struggled in class. Table 1 outlines the children's characteristics in more detail. This indicates the children were a representative sample of the main cohort with a range of ages (84 – 122 months) and SATS levels (2b – 5b) and two of them had identified learning difficulties on the SEN Code of Practice.

Table 1: Pilot sample characteristics

Participant	Gender (M/F)	Age (in months)	SEN	Reading	Writing	Maths
1	F	121	No	5c	5c	5b
2	F	122	SA+	2b	2b	2a
3	M	119	No	4b	3b	4a
4	F	84	SA	2b	2b	2b
5	M	119	No	4a	4b	4a

3.4.3 Child Self-Report Measure

Having looked at the resources available to assess children's emotion regulation skills and their emotional self-efficacy no single questionnaire was suitable. Therefore, items from a range of rating scales and questionnaires were selected and incorporated into a new measure assessing children's emotion regulation skills, coping strategies and emotional self-efficacy.

3.4.3.1 Theoretical rationale for the new child self-report measure

When reviewing the tools aiming to assess emotion regulation skills it was noted that, the design of some of the questionnaires was not specifically for the assessment of emotion regulation. Many of the rating scales and questionnaires used in the field of emotion regulation research have one purpose, which is the identification of 'problem' behaviour in the classroom (e.g. the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Achenbach, 1991; Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire, Goodman, 1997; Child Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ), Rothbart et al., 1994, 2001). While there is evidence that 'problem' behaviour and social competency indirectly relate to emotion regulation skills, it is unwise to use a measure that has not been created specifically to assess emotion regulation, for the assessment of emotion regulation. If the measures primary focus was not to specifically assess the construct in question i.e.

emotion regulation and emotional self-efficacy, then the validity of the findings would be questioned (Molly et al., 2011).

At the present time the majority of the measures specifically designed to assess emotion regulation have been designed for older children (aged 11+) such as the Children's Emotion Management Scales (CEMS; Zeman, Shipman & Penza-Clyve, 2001) or the Emotion Regulation Interview (Zeman & Garber, 1996). Research by Rydell et al. (2007) highlighted children as young as 8 years old were able to understand the concept of managing their emotions and identify factors that help and hinder them to do this. They based their findings on a new measure of emotion regulation developed by Rydell and colleagues (Rydell et al., 2003, 2007).

When considering measures of self-efficacy there have been criticisms from researchers such that in viewing self-efficacy as a broad construct rather than in the specific areas of competency as argued by Bandura (2006) the explanatory power of self-efficacy is reduced (Bandura 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2008). This has led to Bandura (2006) suggesting that some researchers are not adhering to the theoretical guidelines required for defining and measuring self-efficacy as a psychological construct.

3.4.3.2 Methodological rationale for the new child self-report

When considering measures of children's emotional self-efficacy there is limited choice available. The majority of questionnaires assessing emotional self-efficacy also aim to measure other domains of self-efficacy as well. Such as Muris (2001) who developed a self-efficacy questionnaire using a Dutch population (Self-Efficacy Questionnaire-Children: SEQ-C). The questionnaire built on the Children's Self-Efficacy questionnaire originally developed by Bandura with a US population (Bandura, 1997, 2006).

The construction of the SEQ-C allowed the measurement of three aspects of children's self-efficacy: social, academic and emotional self-efficacy. Within this questionnaire, emotional self-efficacy represents the perceived capability to cope with negative emotions.

One issue with this measure is that some of the items within the questionnaire do not come across as accessible to a primary aged cohort. Examples of some of the items are *"How well do you succeed in becoming calm again when you are very scared?"* or *"How well do you succeed in suppressing unpleasant thoughts?"* Words like 'suppressing' and 'succeed' are complex for children aged 8 – 10 years old to understand. Some of the sentences are long and require high level processing and memory skills to understand them

To summarise, the present measurement tools available do not effectively reflect both constructs this research study wishes to explore. There is no child questionnaire developed that assesses emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills together. In addition to this many of the current emotion regulation questionnaires have been designed for older children or for the purpose of assessing classroom behaviour rather than emotion regulation skills specifically.

The development of a child self-report measure assessing emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills will aim to explore:

- Children's perception of their own emotion regulation skills
- Children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs towards successfully managing their emotions
- Children's perceived coping skills and strategies they independently identify as being helpful in manage emotions
- Children's awareness of the importance of emotions

3.4.3.3 Process of constructing the new measure

Bandura (2006) guided the development of the emotional self-efficacy items within the new measure, encouraging the consideration of content validity, the construction of the response scales, response bias and reliability.

A range of research (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2010; Muris, 2001; Molly et al., 2011; Rieffe et al., 2005; Rydell et al, 2007) guided the selection of appropriate items for the child self-report measure. Descriptions of other rating scales are included in Table 2. The table provides details of the measures, the construct each measure aims to assess, and examples of items taken from the measures. For a copy of the first draft of the child self-report measure including references to the items used from other measures, see Appendix C.

3.4.4 Child self-report pilot

Piloting the new child self-report took place in two forms. Firstly, a review of the accessibility of the questions took place in collaboration with research supervisors. In addition to this guidance was sought from an Educational Psychologist with extensive experience of working with children in effectively gathering children's views on their thoughts and feelings. Following this initial stage of development and testing there were two stages of piloting across both schools involved to test the effectiveness and suitability of the child self-report. The first stage occurred in one school with three children (1 boy and two girls). The amendment of the self-report occurred following this stage and the second stage of piloting then took place in the other school with two children (one boy and one girl). The identification of children of ranging abilities by the Special Needs Coordinators ensured that the self-report was accessible to all in terms of language; format and content (see Appendix D for the final version of the child self-report).

When piloting the child report the amount of time it took children to complete it was reduced to no more than twenty minutes to reduce the risk of boredom and the children rushing through the questions.

The pilot stage showed that children this age were able to understand the concept of managing their feelings, identify coping strategies and reflect upon issues related to emotional self-efficacy. They were keen to express their views on this topic and the questionnaire appeared to be a suitable length for them to maintain interest and motivation. The questions were generally more accessible for children when using scaling questions such as those described by Bandura (1997, 2006) and also statements where they were asked to simply 'Agree' or 'Disagree'. These questions are widely used by applied psychologists due to the reduced language required to access them.

Table 2: Measures used for the development of the child report

Measure	Construct tapped	Example items
Children's Emotion Management Scales (CEMS, Zeman, Shipman & Penza-Clyve, 2001)	Emotion regulation	Responses to these statements are scored on a 4-point scale: "I do things like slam doors when I'm mad." "I get mad inside but don't show it"
Child Behaviour Questionnaire (CBQ, Rothbart et al., 1994)	Externalizing and internalizing behaviour profiles (parent/ teacher rated)	Responses to these statements are scored on a 7-point scale: "Likes going down high slides or other adventurous activities" "Gets so worked up before an exciting event that s/he has trouble sitting down"
Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach, 1991)	Problem behaviour at home and/ or school (parent/ teacher rated)	Responses to these statements are scored on a 3-point scale: "Argues a lot" "Impulsive or acts without thinking"
Emotion Regulation Interview (Zeman & Garber, 1996)	Emotion regulation and coping styles (child and parent version)	Child: "You really want to be on the soccer team so you decide to try out. Your mother goes with you to the try-outs. During the try-outs you practice kicking the ball back and forth with another child who purposely kicked the ball away from you. This makes you feel MAD. - How mad would you feel? - Would you show how mad you feel to your mother? - If this situation really happened to you, what would you do?
Emotion regulation checklist (ERC, Shields & Cicchetti, 1997)	Emotion regulation skills (parent/ teacher version)	Responses to these statements are scored on a 4-point scale: "Is easily frustrated" "Is able to delay gratification" "Responds negatively to neutral or friendly overtures by peers"
The Self-efficacy questionnaire – children (SEQ-C, Muris, 2001)	Social, academic and emotional self-efficacy (child version)	"How well do you succeed in cheering yourself up when an unpleasant event has happened? "How well can you prevent feeling nervous"

3.5 Phase 2: Main Study

This section includes full details of the main sample, characteristics, school demographics and descriptions of the measures along with a description of the data analysis used within the study to address the research questions.

3.5.1 Sample

To obtain the numbers required to conduct statistical analysis opportunistic sampling was undertaken. One hundred and nine children were recruited from two primary schools in the Local Authority where the researcher was on placement following agreement by Head teachers and parents. The exclusion criteria, illness and emigration from the country resulted in the final sample of children being 106. The children lived in a Local Authority in the UK where there was high employment and socioeconomic levels and a low percentage of ethnic minorities in comparison to the rest of the UK (ONS, 2011). The Ofsted reports outlined below provide a general summary of the school demographics.

3.5.1.1 Ofsted report describing the characteristics of School 1 (September 2010)

This is a larger-than-average primary school that takes most of its pupils from the local community. There is one form entry in Key Stage 1, which increases to three-form entry in Key Stage 2, with pupils joining from nearby local infant schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a single Reception class. The number of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The large majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average; most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties, while a few have autistic spectrum disorder, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or physical disabilities. The school has a number of awards, including the Primary Geography Quality mark.

3.5.1.2 Ofsted report describing the characteristics of School 2 (November 2008)

This school was last inspected in November 2008, there is an Ofsted inspection anticipated this year. There have not been any key changes since 2008 other than a change in SENCo, which occurred over two years ago. The current SENCo was previously a class teacher within the same school and knows the community and the school well. The Ofsted report from November 2008 describes the school as follows:

The school is larger-in-size than other primary schools and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. Most pupils are of White British heritage and the number of pupils whose first language is other than English is much lower than is typically found. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties, mainly behavioural or emotional, is lower than average, as is the percentage with a statement of educational need. The school has one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

3.5.2 Participants

The sample of this study consisted of primary-aged boys ($n = 45$) and girls ($n = 61$) who were in Year 4 and 5 across two schools (School 1: $N = 61$; School 2: $N = 45$).

Inclusion criteria for selection:

- All children had to have informed parental consent to participate in the study.
- There were no objections from the parents/carers, teachers or pupils themselves with regards to the children's participation.
- The pupils selected were from Year 4 and 5 cohorts.

Exclusion criteria for selection:

- Children who had English as an Additional Language (EAL) were not included. This was to ensure that the children's understanding of English did not prevent them from comprehending the questions in the child self-report.
- Pupils working directly with me in my capacity as the Schools link Trainee Educational Psychologist were not included. This was a requirement as part of the ethical approval gained from the University's Ethics Committee.

Following the selection criteria, three children with Statements of Special Educational Needs were excluded from the study due to me being involved with the pupils already as the Trainee Educational Psychologist for the schools. Table 3 highlights the mean scores and frequencies that describe the characteristics of the sample in terms of gender, age, reading, writing and maths scores and what proportion of the sample have an identified educational need on the SEN Code of Practice (2001).

The group are split quite fairly across gender, school and year group with slightly over half of the sample attending one primary school (56%). Year 4 children formed 45% of the sample.. There was a large range of ability within the sample, which reflects the nature of a typical mainstream classroom. The sample characteristics broadly reflect those of the local community and school context.

Table 3: Pupil characteristics in terms of age, academic levels and SEN

	Boys		Girls		Total sample	
	(n = 45)		*(n = 61)*		*(n = 106)*	
	M	*SD*	M	*SD*	M	*SD*
Age (in months)	119.6	6.3	118.6	7.7	119.0	7.2
Reading	24.6	4.5	25.3	4.6	25.0	4.6
Writing	21.9	4.2	23.4	4.1	22.8	4.2
Maths	25.5	3.9	24.7	4.3	25.0	4.1
Percentage at each SEN level:						
No SEN	73%		82%		76%	
School Action	9%		5%		6%	
School Action Plus	7%		2%		4%	
Statement	2%		2%		2%	

3.5.3 Data collection

Information was collected from teachers, parents and children in the form of rating scales and questionnaires measuring emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy, coping skills and behaviour such as inattention, social skills, lying and stealing. Descriptions of each measure are illustrated below.

3.5.3.1 Measures of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Educational Attainment

There is evidence to suggest that there is a strong association between children's cognitive skills, particularly central executive function, and their ability to regulate their emotions (Calkins & Bell, 2009; Graziano, Reavis, Keane & Calkins, 2007). Further research has also highlighted that certain learning difficulties such as ADHD and anxiety disorder seem to be associated with poor emotion regulation skills (Kats-Gold & Priel, 2009; Suveg & Zeman, 2004). It was important, therefore, to record academic skill and SEN to ensure that these were not confounding variables in the analyses. SENCo's in the schools provided their Special Needs Register and the National Curriculum Levels for Maths, Writing and Reading (Summer 2012).

3.5.3.2 Measures of Emotion regulation: Child self-report

The child self-report consisted of items using either a 3-point Likert scale or open questions to allow the children to describe their coping strategies to help manage their feelings. The items consisted of questions relating to angry, sad, excited (exuberant) and fearful feelings. Examples of some of the items included: *"I say mean things to others when I'm angry*" (Hardly ever, Sometimes or Often) *"Other children think I get too excited when we play games*" (Yes, Sometimes or No). Open-ended questions encouraged children to provide more information e.g. *"What helps you feel better when you are sad?"* At the end of the questionnaire, children rated *"how important do you think feelings are?"* (Very important, Kind of important or Not important) and were asked to give a reason for their answer (See Appendix D for final child self-report measure).

The child self-report split into three sub-scales: emotion regulation difficulties, coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy. Administering a Cronbach's alpha for each of these sub-scales helped to ensure there was internal consistency across the items. The emotion regulation sub-scale initially showed a reliability coefficient of .87. Following the deletion of a few items from the self-report, this increased to .9. Alpha values above .7 are commonly asserted to be acceptable for research purposes and alpha values above .8 are evidence of good reliability (de Vaus, 2002; Kline, 1999). The emotional self-efficacy scale comprised of only two items where children rated their self-efficacy in managing feelings of anger and sadness. As there were only two items comprising the self-efficacy scale a correlation was undertaken rather than a Cronbach's alpha, to identify the strength of the association across these two items ($r = .35$). The coping sub-scale assessed children's perceptions of their coping skills and had internal reliability of .74. The overall reliability of the child self-report was .91 suggesting that there was good internal consistency and reliability across the items in what they were measuring. From the reliability analyses, the items appear to be appropriate

for exploring the research questions of this study effectively. It is prudent to view the emotional self-efficacy scale with caution as it only includes two items and the strength of the association across the two items was below .7 (see Appendix E for the scoring of the items within the three sub-scales).

3.5.3.4 Measures of Emotion regulation: Parent & Teacher report

An additional assessment of the children's ability to regulate their emotions was a modified 10-item version of the Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC; Shields & Cicchetti, 1997; see Appendix F for items). The items request that parents and teachers rate their perceptions of the child's typical methods of managing emotional experiences on a scale of one (Never) to four (Always) (1 – 4). Examples include *"has rapid shifts in mood"* and *"overreacts to minor frustrations."* Some of the items required reversed scoring, which led to a relationship between higher scores and poor emotion regulation skills. In this study, administering the modified 10-item version of the checklist was due to its brevity. The hope was that this would improve the parental rate of return for the questionnaires, as it did not take long to complete. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the Teachers' version of the Emotion Regulation Checklist was .84 and the Parent version was a little lower at .77. (See Appendix F for the Emotion Regulation Checklist and scoring details). The Cronbach coefficients for each measure are included in the Table of Means in the Results Chapter (Chapter 4, Table 4).

3.5.3.5 Measures of psychological adjustment and social competence

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) was completed by parents and teachers. The purpose was to investigate whether an association existed between emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy, coping skills and other areas of psychological adjustment such as social and emotional well-being, across the contexts of home and school. Difficult behaviour, defined as 'conduct difficulties' (such as lying, stealing and bullying other children), emotionality (such as tearfulness and anxiety) and social competence were

assessed. Parents and teachers completed this brief rating scale that screens for a range of learning and mental health difficulties in children. The SDQ teacher and parent versions consist of 25 items. The items are scored on a 3-point scale with 0 = not true, 1 = somewhat true or 2 = certainly true (See Appendix G for parent and teacher versions and scoring details).

The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient within this sample of teachers (N = 10) was .84 for Total Difficulties score. With the 78 parents who completed the questionnaire within this sample, the reliability coefficient was .76 for the Total Difficulties score. This suggests that for both Parent and Teacher SDQ measures of psychological adjustment the Total Difficulties score is above the recommendation of .7.

3.6 Procedure

3.6.1 Stage 1: Parent and Teacher reports

The children's class teacher and their parents completed questionnaires regarding the children's emotion regulation skills. Following the receipt of parental consent for their child to take part in the study, parental questionnaires were sent home via the school. Teacher and parent questionnaires took no longer than 5 minutes to complete (Goodman, 2000).

Teacher ratings: After obtaining written consent from parents, the child's class teacher completed two questionnaires concerning the child's behaviour, emotion regulation skills and social competence in the school context (the brief version of the Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ- T)).

Parent rating: On receipt of parental consent, parents completed two questionnaires sent to them via the school. These questionnaires were parent versions of those given to the teacher

(the ERC and the SDQ). Parents reported on their child's behaviour, emotion regulation skills and social competence in the home context.

3.6.2 Stage 2: Child self-report

The children completed their self-report within the school day. They were withdrawn from lessons to complete them in small groups, which enabled me to ensure they could access all the items and they put their hand up if they found something difficult.

Child self-reports: The schools consented to allow me to withdraw the children from lessons in small groups of 5 – 7 children in order to complete the questionnaires in a time-efficient manner. Introductions and explanations of the task were provided clearly at the beginning of the session. The children were asked to answer questions about "*what they do when they feel angry or sad and what helps them when they have difficult feelings.*" Instructions at the top of the child self-report reminded the children that there were no right or wrong answers. The children were also reminded of this verbally. Children were able to ask for help throughout the process to ensure they understood the questions and felt comfortable in the session. The help offered included reading back the question carefully, re-phrasing the question if needed and writing a dictated answer for the open-ended questions if the child asked for help with their writing. There were no leading examples or questions as this would have affected the children's responses. The child self-reports were handed in at the end of the session. Children could ask questions and make further comments on anything concerning the project. The children received a sticker as a reward on completion of the self-report.

3.7 Analyses

This section explains the rationale behind the type of analysis used in this study and the process used to complete the analysis.

3.7.1 Statistical Analysis

A statistical programme (SPSS) was used to analyse the data from the questionnaires completed by the children, their teachers and parents. Statistical analysis allows for the generalisation of findings from a given sample to a population (Dancey & Reidy, 2004). The ability to generalise findings from a sample to the population is important in psychological research to enable the testing of theories and hypotheses.

3.7.1.1 Exploratory Statistics

Exploratory statistics showed notable departures from normality in most of the variables, particularly the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997). Due to the nature of the SDQ the distribution is always positively skewed. This is because there are only a small number of children who score highly on the measure (i.e. indicating poor psychological adjustment in all areas). This creates a skewed distribution in the sample. Therefore, non-parametric analyses and *t* tests were used in order to identify associations across the variables and compare groups.

3.7.1.4 Correlational Analysis

Administering a correlational analysis allowed possible relationships within the data between child, parent and teacher perspectives on the children's emotion regulation skills to be examined. It is important to highlight that a correlational relationship does not imply causation. The purpose of undertaking the correlation was to discover if children view their emotional skills in a similar or different way to their parents and teachers. It also enabled an exploration of the inter-relatedness of variables such as coping, emotional self-efficacy,

academic skills and psychological adjustment, and how these related to children's emotion regulation skills.

3.7.2 Qualitative Analysis

The child self-report included open questions asking the children to describe strategies that they use for managing their emotions e.g. *"What helps you calm down when you are angry?"* and *"What helps you feel better when you are sad?"*. The questionnaire also asked the children to rate the importance they placed on managing their emotions and requested an explanation from them for the rating they had given. This provided qualitative data in the form of written sentences by the children (some of the children were supported in their writing to ensure that children's writing ability was not a factor preventing detailed answers.) Data analysis in qualitative research manages words, language, and the meanings these imply (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose is to create rich descriptions and understandings of social life (Walker & Myrick, 2006).

3.7.2.1 Categorical Frequency analysis

One of the purposes of this current study was to explore children's methods of coping with difficult emotions. It was acknowledged that the interactions they have with parents/ caregivers, and in later childhood, with peers, can influence the success they have in managing their emotions (Cichetti & Rogosch, 1997; Eisenberg et al., 1998; Shield & Cichetti, 2001). A categorical frequency analysis was undertaken to explore which relationships were of primary importance to this sample in supporting them with difficult emotions. It is hypothesised that the majority of children this age will see their parents as having a central role to play in supporting them with difficult emotions. Frequencies of support ratings for other figures such as friends, and the child's own resources for coping will also be explored.

The examples children provided for coping strategies they used to help them in managing feelings of anger and sadness were categorised using the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping was categorised in terms of being either emotion focussed or problem focussed. The frequencies of these coping skills were then explored in relation to the children's emotion regulation and psychological adjustment scores to investigate whether this model of stress and coping relates to children's coping styles.

An observational tool developed by Eisenberg, Fabes, Murphy, Maszk, Smith and Karbon (1995) and validated by Mahady-Wilton, Craig and Pepler (2000) in their exploration of coping behaviours of bullying victims was adapted for the purpose of categorising the coping behaviours children identified in this study. The differences in coping styles used by children who show poor emotion regulation and psychological adjustment compared to other children with average scores in emotion regulation and psychological adjustment were explored with the view that they may present with different coping styles to the main sample.

3.7.2.2 Thematic analysis

Children were asked to rate how important they thought emotions were, and to provide a reason for this rating. The qualitative data from these open questions were analysed using thematic analysis (described by Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was felt to be more appropriate for analysing this type of data than other types of analysis such as grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) for the following reasons.

Firstly, thematic analysis enables both inductive analysis where new themes can emerge from the data and also the use of a priori theoretical frameworks to explore the fit of the data onto a particular theory or framework (in this research, a framework from emotion regulation and coping models was used.) This flexibility is advantageous for this particular study, which has research questions that aim to not only test existing theories surrounding emotion regulation

in children but also explore new areas of emotional self-efficacy and self-awareness, and how these impact on emotion regulation.

Secondly, thematic analysis allows the researcher to take into account contextualised information, which acknowledges the importance of environmental factors arising from the context in which the child completed the self-report when considering the findings.

Thirdly, thematic analysis can be used across a variety of mediums such as video, interviews, newspapers and other sources as well as questionnaires. The majority of other qualitative analysis requires in-depth face to face methods of data collection such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) or time-consuming observational methods such as Grounded theory (Glaser, 1998; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Within this sample each child completed a few sentences outlining their reasons why emotions were important. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to take into account each individual data item and synthesise these items of words and phrases into overarching themes that coherently unify the children's views on the value of emotions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Despite thematic analysis being a widely used tool for analysing qualitative data it risks being one of the most poorly defined methods of data analysis on account of its flexibility. It is not tied to any particular epistemological or theoretical position, which allows it to be used in a variety of ways. This flexibility has led, in some cases, to an absence of clear and concise guidelines for analysing data thematically with some researchers suggesting that thematic analysis has an 'anything goes' attitude (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2002). Braun and Clarke (2006) seek to more clearly define and demarcate the process of thematic analysis in their step-by-step approach to analysing data thematically. They aim to *"celebrate the*

flexibility of the method, and provide a vocabulary and 'recipe' for people to start doing thematic analysis in a way that is theoretically and methodologically sound" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5). To ensure quality and clarity within the thematic analysis process there are some key factors to take into account:

- There needs to be clarification of the overall research question that the analysis will be exploring.
- A description of how theme's are identified will need to be clearly explained. Will theme's be identified through prevalence, relevance to the research question or the particular potency of what has been expressed?
- There should be clarity over the type of thematic analysis being undertaken, whether it is inductive or deductive. The inductive approach means that themes are strongly linked to the data themselves while the theoretical or deductive approach is driven by previous theory in the area and is more explicitly analytical and theory driven. These different approaches will lead to differences in coding, identifying themes and the type of descriptions provided of data.
- Any account of 'emerging themes' needs to acknowledge the active role that the researcher plays in identifying these themes, selecting those that are of interest and choosing to report them to the reader.
- There needs to be ongoing reflexive dialogue on the part of the researcher throughout the analytic process.

3.7.3 Process of thematic analysis

It is important to initially define the terms used within thematic analysis. The data set refers to all the data that is being used for a particular analysis. Data item, is a term used to refer to each individual piece of data collected (e.g. each child's description of their coping

strategies) while a data extract refers to an individual coded chunk of data that has been identified from within a data item. Defined below are the six stages of the thematic analysis process though it is emphasised that there should be a process that develops over time and is more recursive than linear.

3.7.3.1 Stage 1: Familiarising yourself with the data

Each of the children's descriptions of why emotions are important were transcribed to form a new document with all the statements together. The re-typing of all these statements again lent itself to a reasonable level of familiarisation with the data. The statements were then re-read several times. It is emphasised by Braun and Clarke (2006) that this stage can be rushed by researchers keen to go straight into the coding stage, but this can lead to difficulties later on as codes may not fit with the overall sense of the data.

3.7.3.2 Stage 2: Generating initial codes

The generation of codes was done manually for this dataset on account of the fairly small amount of qualitative data (approximately 150 sentences). Significant features, phrases and common words were coded in a systematic manner across the data set and data items relevant to each code were linked. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a data item may link to more than one code and there can be as many codes as is felt to be necessary at this stage of the thematic analysis process. The important point was not to reduce the data to quickly and risk losing data that does not 'fit' with what is being quickly interpreted. No data item was ignored at this stage of the coding.

3.7.3.3 Stage 3: Searching for potential themes

Using the peer supervision process the initial codes and statements were shared, and themes were searched for between two researchers. One of whom was not involved in the current study. Codes were organised into potential themes, drawing together all the data extracts within the identified themes. Mind maps were used to present a visual image of how the

codes, themes, sub-themes and overarching themes interacted. Within these stage there was some moving between Stage 2 and back to Stage 3 as codes were extended, brought together and some discarded.

3.7.3.4 Stage 4: Reviewing themes

Themes were then reviewed within supervision to ensure that the data within a theme formed a coherent pattern. This phase involved much refining of the themes to ensure that the data within the themes showed internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990). Themes were created, refined and discarded accordingly in relation to the reviewing process and extracts were moved as appropriate. When the primary researcher was satisfied that the themes captured the coded data, the entire data-set was then re-read by the primary researcher to ensure that the themes worked across all of the data.

3.7.3.5 Stage 5: Defining and naming themes

When a satisfactory thematic mind map of themes and codes had been created this phase took place where the ultimate meaning of each theme and overarching theme was defined. Each theme should have a story that it tells about the data, in relation to the research questions and potentially further questions for future consideration. Sub-themes were created to give more structure to the more complex themes that form the overarching meaning within the data. Through supervision alternative interpretations of the data were explored and the specifics of each theme were discussed.

3.7.3.6 Stage 6: Producing the report

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of providing *"...a concise, coherent, non-repetitive and interesting account of the data – within and across themes"* (p. 23). Use of visual images such as mind-maps help portray the interconnectedness of themes and sub-themes with clarity and use of extracts should capture the essence of each point.

Chapter 4: Results

Findings of the child self-reports and how their responses relate to parent and teacher ratings of their emotion regulation skills, psychological adjustment and social skills are now presented. The findings cover:

1) Descriptive statistics: The means and standard deviation characteristics of the child self-report measure assessing emotion regulation difficulties, coping and emotional self-efficacy are presented followed by those of the parent and teacher measures.

2) The Main Correlations: The relationships between the child, teacher and parent measures of emotion regulation, psychological adjustment, academic scores and behaviour are explored using correlational analysis.

3) Analysis of Coping strategies: Using frequency analysis, the people children turn to for support is examined and children's coping strategies are categorised into emotion and problem-focussed coping styles and analysed.

4) Individual Differences: Children with high levels of behaviour difficulties were compared to the main sample in terms of their emotion regulation difficulties, coping and emotional self-efficacy beliefs.

5) The importance of emotions: The reasons given by children for the importance of emotions were explored using thematic analysis. The overarching themes and sub-themes identified from the data are described.

6) Additional Findings: During the process of data analysis additional findings were identified that were not part of the initial research questions. These offer some valuable insights into the area of emotion regulation and will therefore, be presented briefly.

4.1 Quantitative results

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics

4.1.1.1 Analysis of the child self-report measure

The mean scores and standard deviations of 106 children on the child self-report measure assessing emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy are shown in Table 4.

Higher scores for emotion regulation and coping sub-scales indicate an increased difficulty in regulating emotions and coping. Higher scores for the emotional self-efficacy indicate an increased confidence in the children's ability to manage their emotions.

Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviations from the child self-report across genders and the total sample

	Boys *(n = 45)*			Girls *(n = 61)*			Total sample *(n = 106)*			Cronbach's alpha
Measure	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	
Child Self-report										
Emotion regulation difficulty	1.69	0.32	1 - 3	1.74	0.42	1 – 3	1.72	0.39	1 - 3	.90
Emotional self-efficacy	3.80	1.04	1 – 6	3.87	1.18	1 - 6	3.84	1.12	1 - 6	.35*
Coping difficulty	1.86	0.35	1 – 3	1.94	0.45	1 – 3	1.91	0.40	1 – 3	.74

*emotional self-efficacy comprised of only two items asking children to rate their self-efficacy for managing anger and sadness. This is the correlation between these two items.

The means and standard deviations indicate there are no gender differences in how boys and girls perceive their skills of emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy. An independent samples t-test confirmed that there were no significant gender differences in the child self-report scores of emotion regulation difficulties, emotional self-efficacy or coping difficulties. Differences were found in how teachers and parents perceived boys and girls, which will be discussed later in the Results chapter.

4.1.1.2 Analysis of the parent and teacher measures

Table 5 presents the means and standard deviations of the questionnaires completed by the children's teachers and those parents who returned their questionnaires (*N* of boys' parents = 33; *N* of girls' parents = 45). These measures assessed the children's emotion regulation skills and psychological adjustment and behaviour at home and at school.

*Table 5: **Means and** standard deviations for teacher and parent measures across genders and the **total sample***

	Boys *(n = 45)*			Girls *(n = 61)*			Total sample *(n = 106)*			Cronbach's alpha
Measure	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	
Teacher report										
Emotion regulation checklist (T.ERC)	15.07	4.23	9 – 28	14.34	4.66	9 – 31	14.65	4.47	9 – 31	.84
SDQ difficulties (T.SDQ)	5.71	4.43	0 – 17	4.98	5.63	0 – 30	5.29	5.15	0 – 30	.83
Parent report										
Emotion regulation checklist (P.ERC)	16.3	4.22	8 – 28	15.38	3.81	11 – 24	15.77	3.99	0 – 28	.77
SDQ difficulties (P.SDQ)	8.79	6.11	0 – 26	6.93	5.60	0 – 24	7.72	5.86	0 – 26	.76

For the children whose parents completed the questionnaires (N = 78) these descriptive statistics suggest that teachers rate children as having fewer problems with their emotion regulation and their behaviour. A paired samples *t* test shows significant differences between teachers SDQ ratings and parent SDQ ratings ($t = -4.16$ (77), $p < .001$) and a significant difference in their emotion regulation ratings ($t = -3.06$ (77), $p < .003$)). This indicates

possible differences across contexts in the behaviour that children present and possible differences in teachers' and parents' perceptions and expectations of children's behaviour.

There was a skewed distribution for all of the teacher and parent measures, which meant that the statistical assumptions required to undertake parametric statistical analysis were not met. Therefore, it was decided that non-parametric analysis would be appropriate. This accounts for the skewed nature of the distribution in order to ensure that the findings are statistically valid and reliable.

4.1.2 Main Correlations: relationships between child, teacher and parent measures

Using non-parametric correlational analysis the relationship between the child, teacher and parent perspectives on the children's emotion regulation was analysed. National Curriculum levels for reading, writing and maths, the children's age and SEN levels were also included as further variables that have a potential influence on children's emotion regulation skills.

Table 6 outlines the non-parametric correlational analyses undertaken to explore the relationships across these measures.

The sub-scales of the child self-report (emotion regulation difficulties, emotional self-efficacy and coping difficulties) all significantly related to each other suggesting consistency across the child self-report measure. Child-rated emotion regulation is significantly associated with child rated coping difficulties and negatively associated with emotional self-efficacy. This suggests that children who rate themselves highly in emotional self-efficacy believe they have low rates of coping difficulties and low rates of emotion regulation difficulties.

Table 6: Main correlations between child, parent and teacher measures, academic skills and age

Spearman's rho non-parametric correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age (in Months)	1										
2. Emotion regulation difficulty	.11	1									
3. Emotion self-efficacy	.003	**-.46****	1								
4. Coping difficulty	.02	**.68****	**-.54****	1							
5. Teacher: SDQ difficulties (T.SDQ)	-.05	**.28****	**-.23***	**.38****	1						
6. Teacher: Emotion reg. difficulties (T.ERC)	.10	**.35****	-.22*	**.38****	**.69****	1					
7. Parent: SDQ difficulties (P.SDQ)	.001	.16	**-.37****	**.37****	**.50****	**.50****	1				
8. Parent: Emotion reg. difficulties (P.ERC)	.16	.16	-.17	**.25***	**.36****	**.34****	**.66****	1			
9. Reading	**.57****	-.07	**.22***	-.17	**-.40****	-.13	**-.31****	-.04	1		
10. Writing	**.51****	-.12	**.25****	**-.21***	**-.46****	**-.20***	**-.42****	-.12	**.89****	1	
11. Maths	**.42****	-.10	.14	**-.23***	**-.42****	-.17	**-.31****	-.13	**.79****	**.78****	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.1.2.1 Associations between the child self-report and teacher measures

Teacher reported emotion regulation (as measured by the Emotion Regulation Checklist - T.ERC) is significantly related to child reported emotion regulation and coping difficulties. The T.ERC is also negatively related to child reported emotional self-efficacy. This would suggest that teachers' perception of children's coping and emotion regulation difficulties corresponds moderately with children's own views of their levels of coping, regulating their emotions and their emotional self-efficacy beliefs. As Table 6 indicates teacher ratings of the children's psychological adjustment and behaviour in class (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire - T.SDQ) are also significantly related to child reported emotion regulation and coping difficulties. The T.SDQ is negatively associated with child reported emotional self-efficacy. This suggests that the behaviour and emotion regulation difficulties perceived by teachers in school moderately correspond to children's self-reported difficulties in emotion regulation, coping and lower emotional self-efficacy than other children. The relationships between the teacher and child measures appear to be stronger than those between the parent and child measures.

4.1.2.2 Associations found between child self-report and parent measures

Table 6 indicates that there is a moderate association between the parent rated measure of behaviour and psychological adjustment (P.SDQ) and child-reported emotional self-efficacy. The P.SDQ is also related to child-reported coping difficulties. This suggests that parent perceptions of children's behaviour difficulties correspond to children's self-reported level of coping difficulties. Parent rated emotion regulation (P.ERC) is also significantly related to child-reported coping difficulties as well. Children's self-reported emotion regulation is unrelated to any of the parent measures. These findings suggest that parent perceptions of their children's emotion regulation and behaviour difficulties do not correspond to children's

self-reported emotion regulation difficulties though there is moderate correspondence with children's perceptions of coping and emotional self-efficacy beliefs.

4.1.2.3 Associations across home and school contexts between teacher and parent measures

There are fairly strong associations between teacher and parent measures. Table 6 suggests that parent ratings of the children's behaviour and psychological adjustment (P.SDQ) are strongly associated to teacher ratings of children's behaviour (T.SDQ). The P.SDQ is also associated to the teachers measure of children's emotion regulation (T.ERC).

Table 6 highlights the relationship between parent and teacher ratings of the child's emotion regulation (P.ERC and T.ERC). The P.ERC measure of children's emotion regulation is also associated with teacher reported behaviour and psychological adjustment (T.SDQ). These findings suggest that across the contexts of home and school there is consistency between teacher and parent perceptions of children's management of emotions, their behaviour and psychological adjustment.

4.1.2.4 Associations found between child, parent and teacher measures, SEN, age and national curriculum scores

A correlation analysis was undertaken to identify whether the variables of age, special educational needs and academic skills (as measured by National Curriculum Levels) were associated with child-reported emotion regulation, coping, emotional self-efficacy. The correlation also identified whether these variables related to parent and teacher measures of emotion regulation (T.ERC and P.ERC), behaviour and psychological adjustment (T.SDQ and P.SDQ).

No significant effects of age were noted across the measures of emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy or coping difficulties though unsurprisingly, age had a significant effect on all the academic ability scores, in particular children's reading skills. Child-reported emotion

regulation was unrelated to the academic ability scores. Results suggest a relationship between child-reported emotional self-efficacy, reading and writing. Children in the sample who scored highly in emotional self-efficacy were likely to also score well in reading and writing. Writing and maths skills are negatively related to child-reported coping difficulties suggesting that children who rate themselves as having low levels of coping difficulties show higher scores in writing and maths.

Table 6 indicates there are significant relationships between the academic skills and the teacher measure of behaviour and psychological adjustment (T.SDQ). The academic skills of reading, writing and maths are all negatively associated to the T.SDQ. Children with higher levels of behaviour difficulties in class also tend to have lower scores in these academic areas. Children's writing skills were also negatively associated with teacher rated emotion regulation suggesting that those children with poor emotion regulation, as rated by teachers, also tended to have lower scores in writing.

The parent measure of behaviour and psychological adjustment (P.SDQ) is also negatively related to skills of reading, writing and maths. Table 6 suggests that there is no relationship between parent ratings of children's emotion regulation difficulties (P.ERC) and any of the academic scores.

4.2 Analysis of coping strategies used by the children

As part of the exploration into the coping strategies used by children, this study aimed to identify the people children turn to for support. A frequency analysis was administered with the aim of identifying the percentage of children who rated parents, peers or themselves as being most supportive when feeling angry and sad.

The coping strategies used by children were also categorised into emotion and problem-focussed coping based on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and sub-themes that had been previously created for children by Eisenberg et al (1995). These were also analysed using frequency analysis.

4.2.1 Frequency analysis of child rated parental, peer and self-ratings for support with managing emotions

The frequencies of parental, peer and self-support were analysed to see whether there was a difference across anger and sadness in the people the children turned to for support. Figure 1 highlights the differences across the two emotions.

4.2.1.1 Frequency analysis of child-rated parental support

The findings displayed in Figure 1 show that across both anger and sadness parents and carers are consistently rated as the children's main support for helping manage emotions. 57% of the children rated parents as the most important in supporting them with feelings of anger with 60% of the children rating parents as the most important in supporting them with sadness. This emphasises that within this age group (8 – 10 year olds) parents and caregivers remain the most important figures providing emotional support.

4.2.1.2 Frequency analysis of child-rated peer and self-support

The rest of the findings are ambiguous in that there do not appear to be any significant differences across the emotions (anger and sadness) or between peer or self-support seeking behaviour. When feeling sad, 85% of the children chose to seek the company of someone else compared to 75% when feeling angry. When feeling angry, 19% of the sample identified themselves (i.e. *'my own strength')* as being their greatest support compared to only 9% when feeling sad. These were not found to be significant differences.

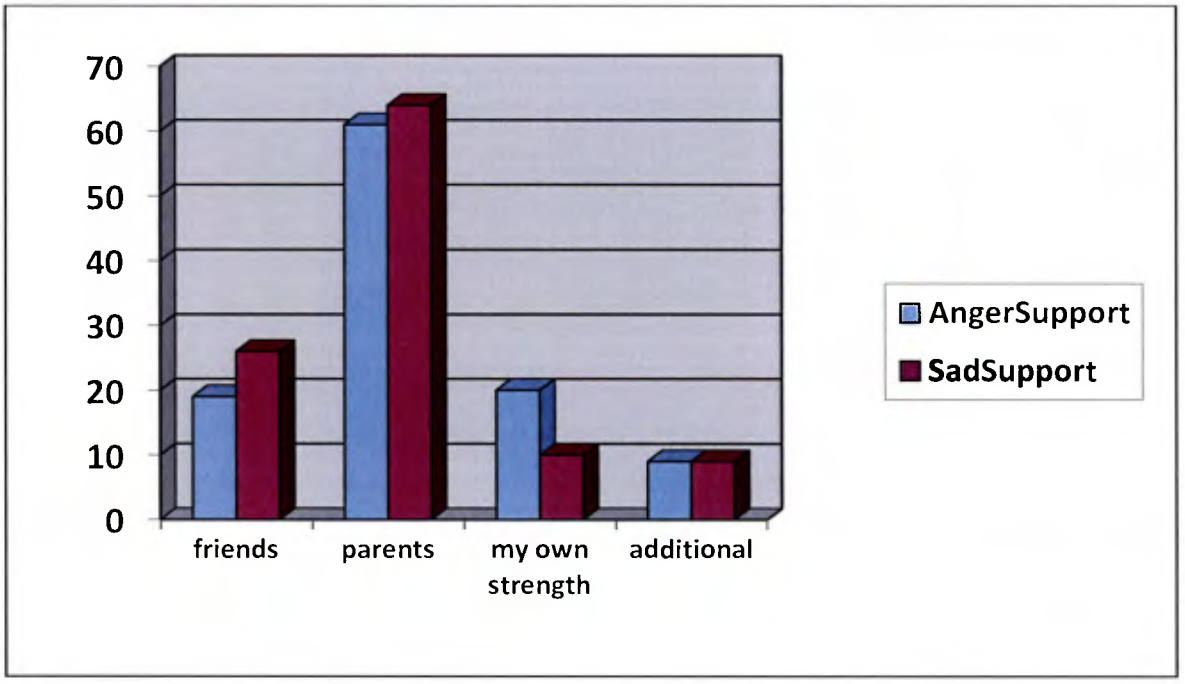


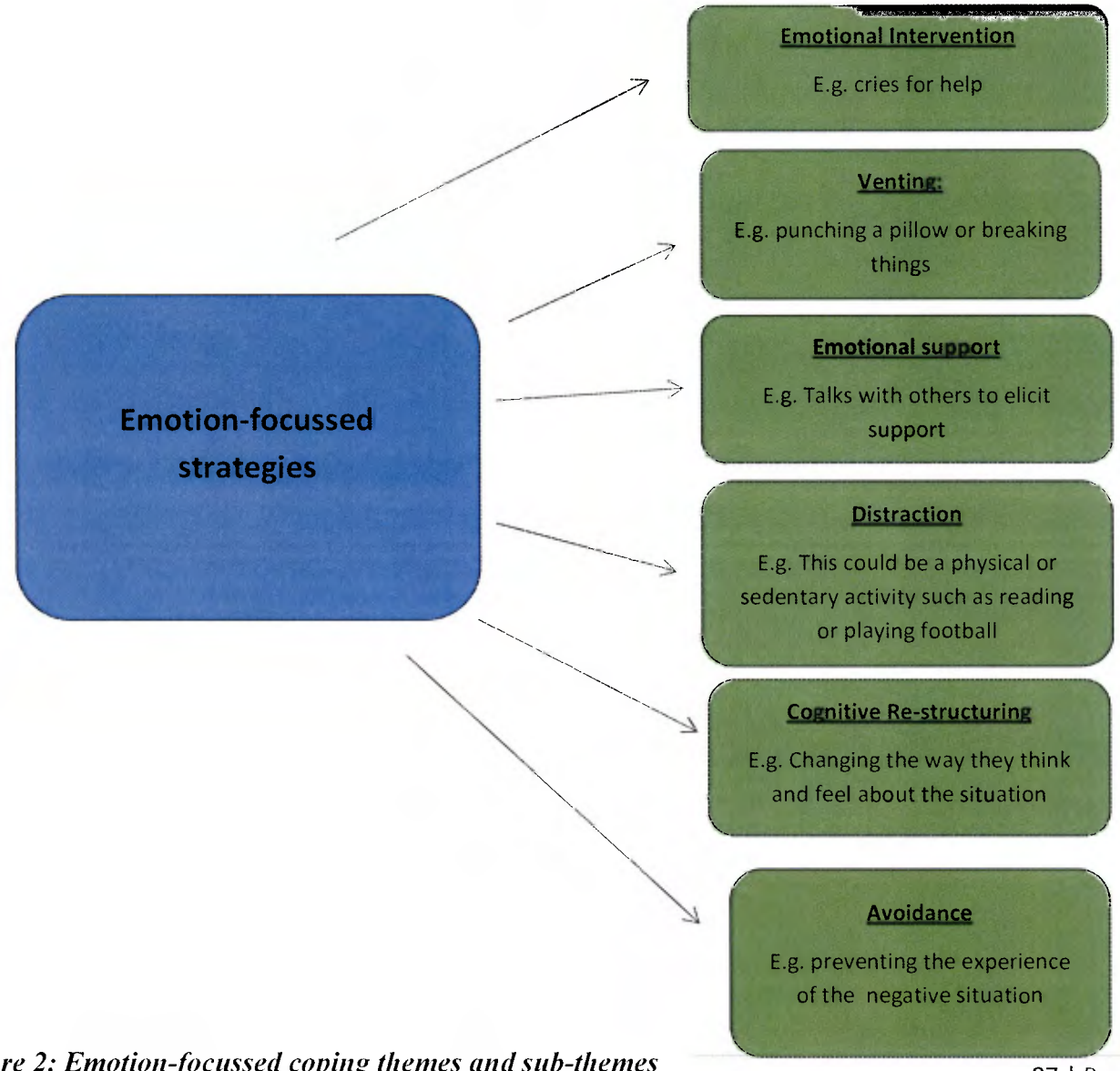
Figure 1: Bar chart showing frequencies of people the children turn to for support

To summarise, parents and carers remain the most important people in the children's lives in supporting them with managing feelings of sadness and anger. There may be some emotion-specific support strategies children use such as preferring to seek the company of another person when feeling sad or preferring to be alone when angry. These results are inconclusive and these hypotheses would need further investigation.

4.2.2 Problem focussed or Emotion-focussed coping strategies?

Within the child self-report children were asked to describe activities that help them when feeling angry or sad. The coping strategies identified by the children were then categorised into problem-focussed and emotion-focussed coping styles.

Using these established categories a frequency analysis was undertaken to explore the preferred methods of coping within this sample. Figure 2 outlines the overarching themes and sub-themes defining emotion-focussed coping while Figure 3 outlines the overarching themes and sub-themes defining problem-focussed coping. See Appendix H for details of the categorization process of the coping strategies.



'igure 2: Emotion-focussed coping themes and sub-themes

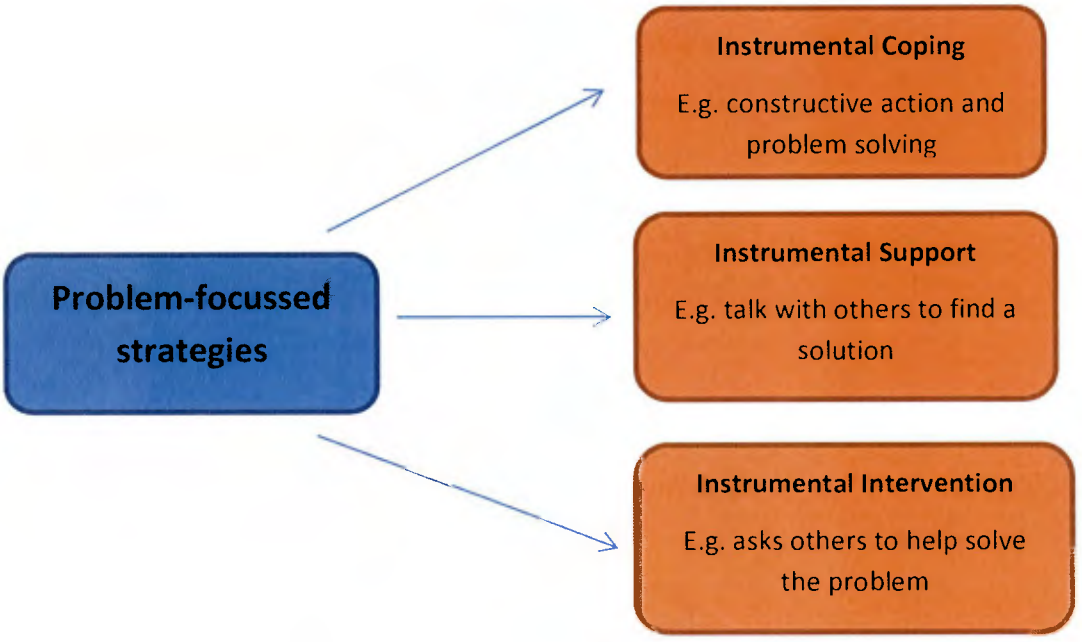


Figure 3: Problem-focussed coping themes and sub-themes

Some of the children identified more than one strategy for coping. The frequencies will out-number the number of children in the sample. Table 6 below presents the coping strategies identified by the children and their frequencies.

Table 7: Frequency analysis for children's coping strategies

Emotion-focussed		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Emotional intervention	6	4%
Emotional support	41	25%
Venting	7	4%
Cognitive re-structuring	8	5%
Avoidance	24	15%
Distraction	64	40%
Problem-Focussed		
	Frequency	Percentage
Instrumental coping	3	2%
Instrumental support	5	3%
Instrumental intervention	3	2%
Total	**162**	

Emotion-focussed strategies form over 90% of the coping strategies described by this age group. Within this category distraction strategies account for 40% of the identified coping strategies within this age group. Examples of emotion-focussed coping using distraction are:

"I go to my bedroom, lie on my bed and cuddle my favourite toy" (Participant 23)

"Go up to my room and watch TV" (Participant 48)

These strategies were activities that the children did either by themselves or with other people to distract them from the emotions they were feeling. These activities could be physically active (e.g. playing football) or sedentary (e.g. *"I relax by watching TV"*, Participant 90).

Seeking emotional support from other people formed a quarter of all the coping strategies identified by the children. Predominantly this emotional support took the form of 'talking to Mum' but other family members such as Grandma, Dad and cousins and friends were also identified as being supportive. For example:

"My family make me feel a lot better because they comfort me" (Participant 69)

"Speaking to my friends" (Participant 13)

Avoiding the emotional situation through escaping and being alone was also a commonly identified strategy for coping with difficult emotions. Examples include:

"Hide and talk to myself" (Participant 34)

"Go somewhere calm and in a dark place." (Participant 64)

The frequencies across the remaining coping strategies do not differ so much. Some children implement cognitive re-structuring techniques to help them view the difficult situation differently (these strategies referred to 'the mind' or 'thinking processes' to help change their

perspective) while others suggest that they prefer to vent their emotion. Examples of venting and cognitive re-structuring include:

"punch a pillow, talk to someone, slam a door." (Participant 106)

"I punch an extreamly humungus cution" (Participant 12)

"Think of really good times in my life" (Participant 86)

This suggests that children predominantly find support through seeking company and distraction from other people, though they also identify being alone as sometimes being helpful.

Very few children identified problem-focussed strategies as effective methods of supporting them in emotional situations. Examples of various problem-focussed strategies are:

"Sit down and think it through" (Participant 17)

"I just think why I am angry and try to sort it out" (Participant 86)

These are problem-focussed strategies that use instrumental coping methods where problem-solving techniques are being used to try and solve the problem to attempt to change the situation in the future. A further example of a problem-focussed strategy is:

"When my friends come over and ask what's wrong, I tell them what's wrong" (Participant 19).

"When I'm angry my friends sit me down and say "it's ok just tell me what's wrong and I'll help you" (Participant 98)

These are strategies where support is elicited from others that helps provide solutions to the specific difficulty or problem they are experiencing. This differs to emotional support from

friends and family in terms of how the children phrase this strategy. An emotion-focussed strategy eliciting emotional support tends to refer to the family and friends as helping the children 'feel better' e.g. *"my friends make me happy"* (Participant 59). If the children simply refer to 'friends' or 'Mum' this was categorised as an emotion-focussed strategy eliciting emotional support as there is no explicit reference to an attempt being made to find a solution to the problem.

Finally, within this sample of children parents are referred to as being able to solve the children's problems for them. No other person was identified in this way. This style of problem-focussed coping is known as 'instrumental intervention'. Examples include:

"My mum helps me" (Participant 15)

"I tell my Mum or Dad about what made me angry and they will sort it out" (Participant 22)

While some children identified problem-solving techniques and actively sought parents or friends to support them in solving their difficulties problem-focussed strategies within this sample were not common. The implications of these findings are expanded upon further in the Discussion chapter.

4.3. Individual Differences: children with behaviour difficulties

Children with higher levels of behaviour difficulties were differentiated from the main sample and further analysis was undertaken to explore how this distinct group compared to the main sample in their child-reported emotion regulation, coping difficulties, emotional self-efficacy and the teacher and parent measures of emotion regulation, behaviour and psychological adjustment.

The coping strategies identified by these children were also examined and compared to the main sample in relation to problem and emotion-focussed coping style and techniques.

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics for children with behaviour difficulties

The children who comprised this small group had scores on the teacher rated Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire that were over 13. Goodman (2001) identifies these scores as being indicators of significantly high levels of behaviour difficulties relating to emotional and peer difficulties, conduct problems and attention and concentration difficulties. The teacher rated SDQ was used as opposed to the parent rated measure as the parent measures were not returned for every child. Table 8 provides the descriptive information for this group and the mean scores of the group in order to compare these to the main sample means.

The group consisted of seven children (3 boys and 4 girls). Four children in the sample were in Year 5 and three in Year 4 with significantly poorer scores in reading, writing and maths compared to the main sample. The majority of this group (6 out of 7 children) attended School 1.

Table 8: Characteristics and mean scores of the group of children with behaviour difficulties

Gender	Year Grp	School	Coping Difficulties *Mean*	Emotion Regulation Difficulties *Mean*	Emotional Self-efficacy *Mean*	Teacher: Emotion reg. difficulties (T.ERC) *Mean*	Teacher: SDQ difficulties (T.SDQ) *Mean*	Parent: Emotion reg. difficulties (P.ERC) *Mean*	Parent: SDQ difficulties (P.SDQ) *Mean*
Male	5	1	2.1	2.7	2.5	23	14	14	9
Male	5	1	1.8	1.3	3.0	17	17	16	6
Male	5	1	1.9	1.8	2.5	21	15	20	11
Female	4	1	2.9	2.7	1.5	24	22	20	14
Female	4	1	3.0	2.6	1.0	19	16	18	17
Female	5	1	2.1	2.5	2.0	31	30	N.C	N.C
Female	4	2	2.4	2.0	3.0	17	14	N.C	N.C

N.C = not completed by the parents

Further exploration of this group in comparison to the main sample suggests that six of the group rate themselves as having emotion regulation difficulties that are above the mean for the main sample (M = 1.72, SD = 0.39). Six of the group also rate themselves as having coping difficulties that are above the main sample average (M = 1.91, SD = 0.4). All seven of the children have lower emotional self-efficacy ratings compared to the mean of the main sample (M = 3.84, SD = 1.12). The majority of the group have ratings of emotional self-efficacy one standard deviation or more below the mean of the main sample. The analysis highlights, that this group of children show increased self-reported coping difficulties and emotion regulation difficulties and also much lower emotional self-efficacy compared to their peer group. The large proportion of these children who attended School 1 warranted further exploration.

4.3.2 Associations between child, parent and teacher measures within this subgroup of children with behaviour difficulties

The scores shown within Table 8 suggest that teacher ratings of these children's emotion regulation difficulties, behaviour and psychological adjustment are higher than the parent ratings. This differs from the main sample where teacher ratings were significantly lower than the parent ratings. It is important to note that with a small sample size any findings should be treated with caution.

4.3.3 Coping strategies used by children with behaviour difficulties

Table 9 displays coping strategies identified by the group for helping them manage feelings of anger and sadness. These coping strategies have been categorised into emotion and problem-focussed coping.

Within this group eight coping strategies were identified. All of them were emotion-focussed with the majority of them identifying distraction or avoidance strategies most frequently.

A comparison of the strategies used by this group against those used by the main sample suggests that the most common strategy continues to be emotion-focussed coping using distraction similar to the main sample. There appears to be a lower level of support seeking within this group. Only two people person identified parents or friends as helping them. Though the sample is very small it appears that within this group of children there is a preference for distraction techniques that involve solitary activities, as opposed to seeking comfort from another person, to help them cope with difficult emotions.

Table 9: Coping strategies used by children with behaviour difficulties

Participant number	Coping strategies	Coping style
45	My teddy's and a CD called Paddington bear	Emotion-focussed – distraction technique
55	When I am alone I calm down quickly. I do things I enjoy doing	Emotion-focussed – avoidance and distraction
60	Sitting down	Emotion-focussed – distraction
1	My mum forgiving me and Mum and Dad cheering me up	Emotion-focussed – emotional support
9	Play with my friends	Emotion-focussed – distraction and emotional support
36	Going outside and getting rid of my energy	Emotion-focussed – distraction
64	I normally go and lie down in my bed or go somewhere calm	Emotion-focussed – avoidance

4.4 The importance of emotions: Analysis of children's views

One of the purposes of this research study was to explore children's perceptions of how they manage their emotions and to discover whether they view this skill as important in their daily lives. In order to address this a thematic analysis and further frequency analysis was conducted on the information children provided.

The child-report completed by 106 children contained two questions asking children to explain how important they thought emotions were to them. The first question was:

"How important do you think emotions are?"

They were asked to circle: *"1: Very important, 2: Kind of important or 3: Not Important".* These ratings are presented in a frequency analysis to identify the predominant viewpoint of this age group on their perspective towards the importance of emotions.

The child-report also contained an open question asking the children:

"Why – what do they help with?"

This open question aimed to elicit qualitative written data on children's reasons for the rating they had given in order to explore the patterns of responses.

The frequency analysis and then the thematic analysis will be discussed in turn.

4.4.1 The importance of emotions: Children's ratings

The findings indicate that within this age group they strongly agree that emotions play an important role in their lives. The reasons given by the children for these ratings were varied and will be explored using thematic analysis.

4.4.2 The importance of emotions: Thematic analysis of children's reasons

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis were applied to analyse the data. These stages involved: Familiarising yourself with the data; Generating initial codes; Searching for themes; Reviewing themes; Defining and naming themes and finally, producing the report. Two overarching themes were found to be prevalent within the data with sub-themes within them. These are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5.

Each overarching theme will be discussed in turn, focusing on the subtheme within the narrative.

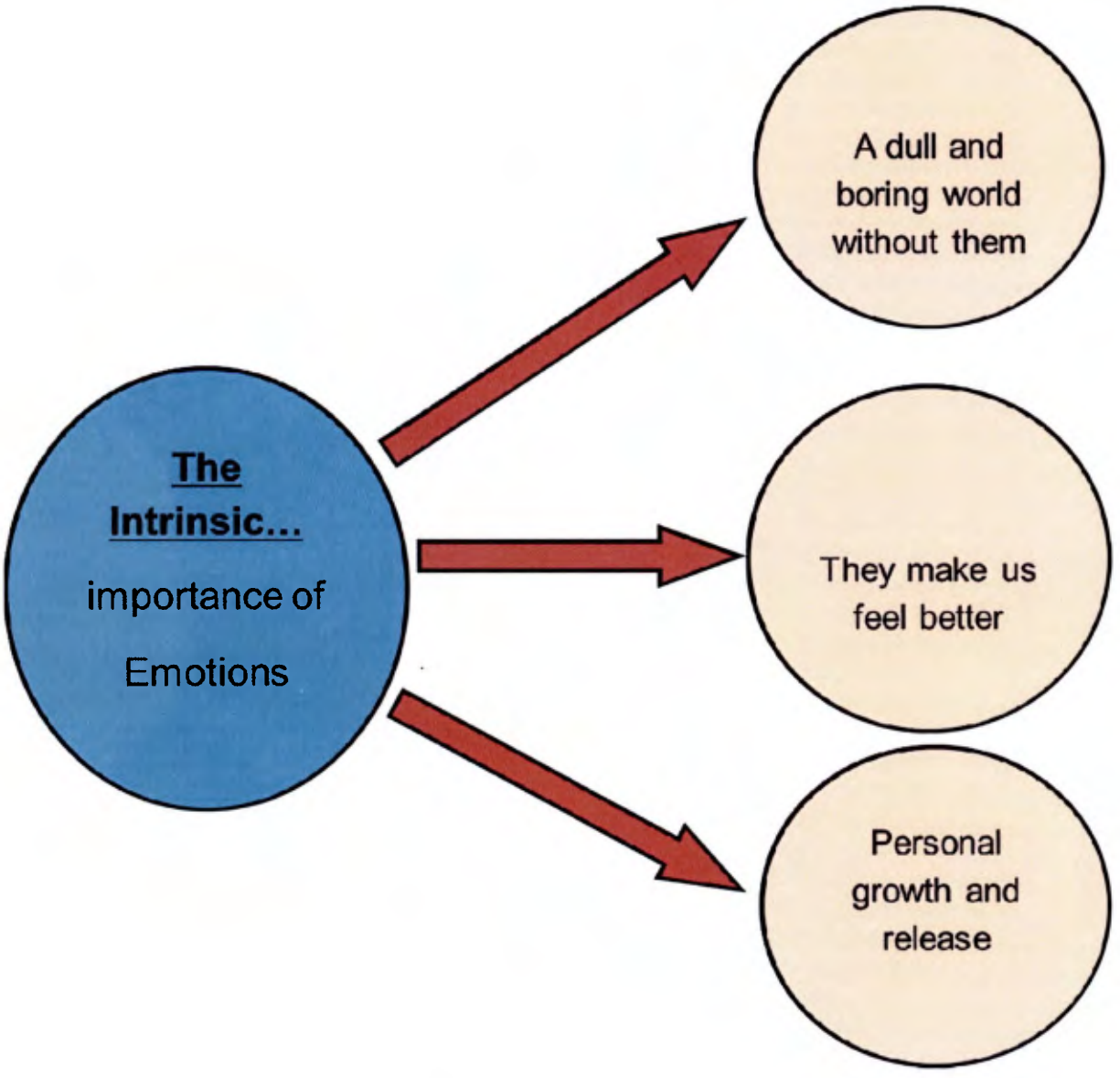


Figure 4: Overarching Theme 1 – The intrinsic importance of emotions

4.4.2.1 Overarching Theme 1: The intrinsic importance of emotions

The message that came across powerfully for 41 of the children that feelings have an intrinsic value for a range of reasons. Within this theme, three sub-themes were identified which were, i) the importance of emotions for influencing the children's own capacity to be happy or sad, ii) the importance of emotions for children's personal development and iii) how dull the world would be if we had no feelings.

Sub-theme 1: "To make us feel better" - The importance of emotions for influencing the children's own capacity to be happy or sad

Within this sub-theme 23 children identified emotions as being important for helping them feel better, feel happier and to stop them feel sad. They perceived the emotion as having the power to influence their reactions. This was a slightly different perception to other children who recognised that other factors such as the environment, people or themselves control how emotions affect us.

Some examples of this sub-theme include:

"I think feelings are important because it can calm me down, stop feeling sad and stop me being angry" (Participant 74)

"If you are crying they help you to stop crying and feeling sad" (Participant 29)

"They can keep me happy when I am feeling sad" (Participant 69)

Considering these examples it seems as though the children can sometimes personify emotions describing emotions in the third person such as 'They' and 'It'. The children then view emotions as distinct from themselves with the power to control and influence how they feel and how they respond emotionally. This third-person perspective of emotions was quite common in this age-group.

Sub-theme 2: "Personal growth and release" - The importance of emotions for children's personal development

This second sub-theme describes children's reference to their own personal development and maturity as a reason for the importance of emotions. Nine children identify emotions as being beneficial in their process of growing up and maturing, developing their identity and for, what they describe as a 'release'. Examples include:

"They help with growing up" (Participant 25)

Personal 'release,'

"They help me so I can let everything in my head go out so I feel less emotional then actually was in the past" (Participant 98.)

And with their identity

"Because it makes us who we are" (Participant 84)

Within this sub- theme children refer to emotions as helping to express or release something from inside of them. They do not refer to this expression as a form of communication but more as an individual and personal form of coping. Similar to sub-theme 1, the children use the third person to describe emotions but rather than viewing emotions as simply 'controlling their feelings' these children see emotions within in the context of their development. They suggest emotions help with growing up. This sub-theme had less prevalent codes than some of the other sub-themes suggesting that these are not the most common reasons given by children but these do potentially highlight an emerging awareness of how emotional responses to situations are developed through maturing and influence our sense of self and identity.

Sub-theme 3: "A dull, boring world without them" - how dull the world would be without feelings

This sub-theme was identified by nine of the children in the sample where they wrote that in their view the world would be boring if no one had any feelings.

"Emotions are very important because they help you get on if we didn't have emotions the world would be dull! We wouldn't enjoy doing things that we love doing and we wouldn't be interested in doing anything special." (Participant 105)

Some of the children seemed to have difficulty conceiving a world without feelings without referencing to feelings. Suggesting everyone would be miserable if there were no emotions reflects an inability to grasp the concept of a world without emotion where no one has any emotion at all.

"It will be a boring weld because everyone will be mizbell" (Participant 15)

Within this sub-theme there was also reference to the inability to feel anything in extreme situations such as when someone you love dies or when you are do something really great. Examples include:

"If someone died we would not be sad" (Participant 95).

"If you didn't have emotions you wouldn't feel anything and it would be very hard to get on in life without happiness or getting excited or even being sad" (Participant 96).

This suggests that some children view emotions as intrinsically important to give meaning and emotional expression to the world and the activities we experience.

Figure 5 outlines the second theme and sub-themes identified within children's descriptions of why emotions were important to them.

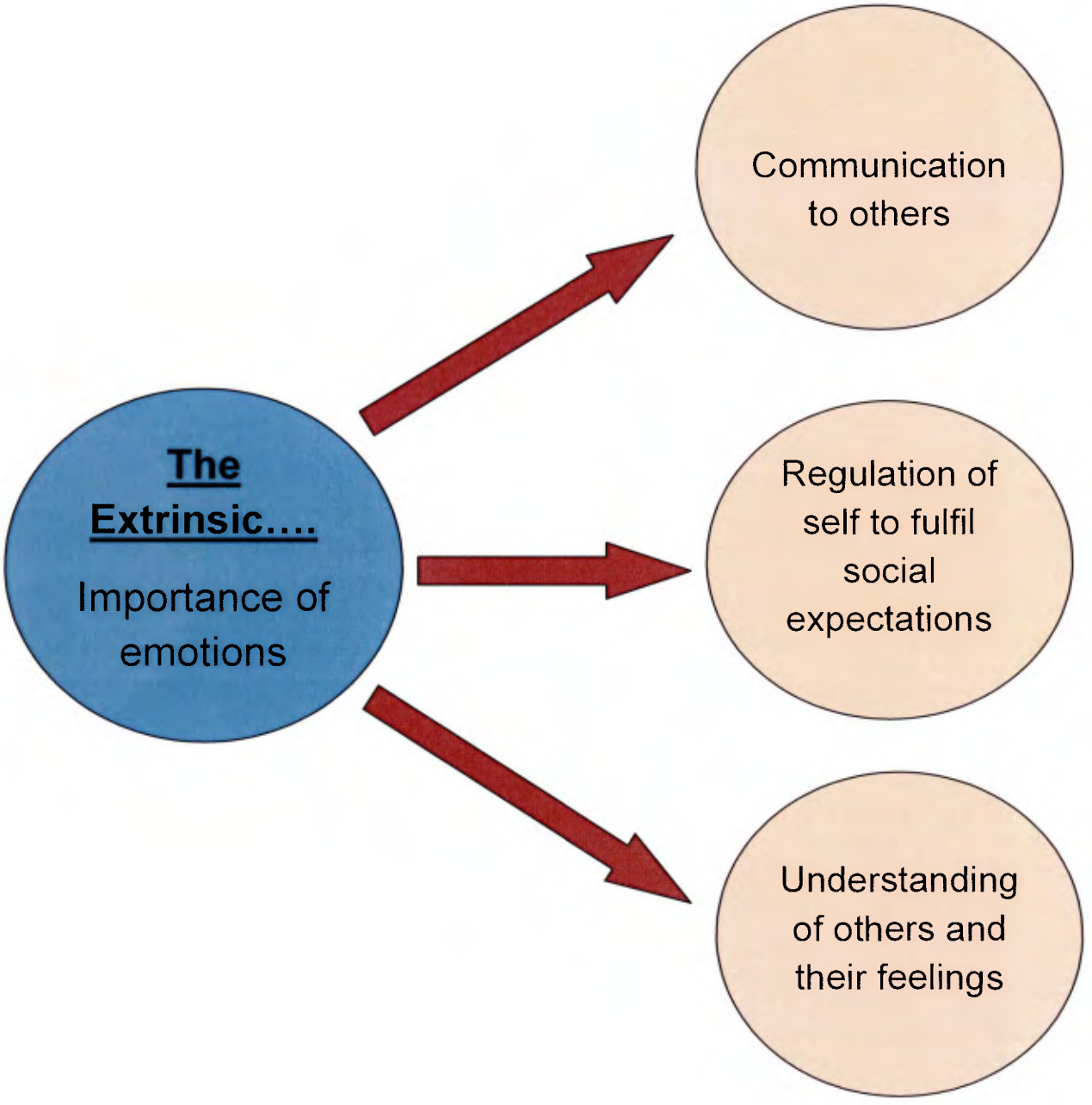


Figure 5: Overarching Theme 2 – The extrinsic importance of emotions

4.4.2.2 Overarching Theme 2: The extrinsic importance of emotions

The second overarching theme was the most prevalent for this age group with 76 children identifying emotions as a social tool for supporting friendships, social interactions and the successful management of behaviour in social situations. The overarching theme was divided into three sub-themes that were: i) communication with others, ii) understanding of others and their feelings and, iii) regulation of self in order to fulfil social expectations.

Sub-theme 1: "Communication with others" – the importance of communicating with other people

44 children in the sample alluded to the importance of emotions as a communication tool with others. On one level the children said that emotions were important because they showed other people how you were feeling. Twenty eight children provided this simple explanation. Examples include:

"If we didn't have any (emotions), people wouldn't know how you were feeling" (Participant 10)

"To show how you are feeling" (Participant 37)

"To show how sad you are in case you are scared and no one knows.." (Participant 81)

A further sixteen children explained that through this communication of emotions someone would then help you.

"If you show your emotions people can help you depending on the way you feel" (Participant 39)

"They help you express your feelings so an adult can cheer you up" (Participant 76)

"They help you with life so other people can understand and help" (Participant 86)

This suggests that there is a range of understanding of the role others play in supporting us with our emotions. A large number of the sample identify emotions as a form of communication while some make explicit reference to the reason for this communication in facilitating help from another person in some way.

Sub-theme 2: "Understanding of others" – the importance of understanding others and their feelings

Thirteen children formed part of this second sub-theme in making a reference to how emotions can be helpful for supporting other people with their feelings and for understanding the reasons behind other people's behaviour. Examples include:

"to show what you and other people are thinking" (Participant 53)

"They show you how sad other people are" (Participant 13)

"because if someone was sad it's important to make them happy" (Participant 72)

This suggests that some children within this sample identify that emotions are important for the development of healthy relationships, which involves thinking of others and how to support their feelings as well as our own. Friendships were referred to in the dataset a few times, for example:

"...you can see how to make people HAPPY and how to make people SAD. You see what they like and dislike and if they like you. You can see if your friends are angry..." (Participant 103)

"They help me understand my friends" (Participant 73)

Within this sub-theme some children appear to recognise the power of emotions to support or harm relationships. These children saw emotions as mechanisms or processes that they controlled for the facilitation of relationships. This contrasts the view of other children who viewed emotion as an object outside of their control that had the means to cause happiness or sadness.

Sub-theme 3: "Regulation of self" – the importance of emotion regulation in order to meet social expectations

This sub-theme was made up of 19 children who implied that emotions were important in order to cope with the environmental stressors and social expectations on them.

"Dealing with stuff at school, dealing with stuff at home" (Participant 27)

These reasons sometimes referred to self-control of emotions to 'confirm' with social expectations.

"They help you with all sorts of things like school, being at home and other places. I feel that my emotions can get a little out of control but I can control myself easily" (Participant 54)

"...sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to..." (Participant 66)

Some of these reasons seem to suggest a deeper level of emotional awareness that describes not only emotion regulation and also the manipulation of emotion for the purpose of achieving a goal or controlling the environment and relationships around you.

It is important to identify that within this sample there were fourteen children who chose not to answer the questions or said that they did not know why emotions were important.

4.4.3 Importance of emotions: Comparison of reasons given by the group of children with behaviour difficulties and the main sample

The reasons given by this subgroup of children were explored and apart from Participant 1, who had answered *'I don't know'* they had all provided reasons for why they felt emotions were important.

Their reasons seem to link with the first theme where emotion is viewed as being distinct from the person and with external control over influencing happiness or sadness. For example:

"They help me be happy" (Participant 36)

"They help me with things when I'm sad" (Participant 60)

"They can show how you feel to others and then I can feel better" (Participant 64)

One of the children views the world as boring without emotion, which relates to the first theme of the intrinsic importance of emotions.

"It would be strange not to have emotions, it would be a bit boring" (Participant 45)

No reference is made to emotion being important for social situations, supporting friendships and relationships or for self-regulation. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.5 Further observations from the data analysis

Through the process of analysing this data and exploring the relationships between the various measures some additional findings emerged that were not part of the initial research questions but warranted further examination.

4.5.1 Gender differences across the child, teacher, parent and academic measures

Although no significant differences were found between boys and girls in their child self-report measure there were differences in the relationships between the child self-report, teacher and parent ratings of emotion regulation, behaviour and psychological adjustment. The dataset was split by gender to enable an examination of boys and girls in the various measures separately. A non-parametric correlation revealed different relationships between the boys and girls self-report measures, their teachers and parents measures and their academic skills in reading, writing and maths. These are detailed in Table 10.

The findings show no relationships between the boys' self-report measure and their academic scores on reading, writing and maths while girls' self-rated coping difficulties were negatively related to reading, writing and maths indicating that higher levels of coping difficulty in girls was associated to poorer academic scores. The girls' emotional self-efficacy ratings were also related to their reading and writing ability but not maths. This suggests that there is a gender difference in how children's emotional skills relate to their academic skills.

Table 10 also highlights gender differences in how the children's self-reported emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy were related to parent and teacher measures. Boys' self-report measure of coping difficulties was significantly related to teacher ratings of behaviour and psychological adjustment (Strength Difficulties Questionnaire – T.SDQ). The other self-report measures completed by the boys were unrelated to any of the teacher and parent measures.

Table 10: Spearman's rho correlation of the measures for boys and girls

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
BOYS										
1. Coping Difficulties	1									
2. ER difficulties	**.67****	1								
3. Emotional self-efficacy	**-.49****	**-.44****	1							
4. T.SDQ	**.31***	.23	-.18	1						
5. T.ERC	**.46****	**.39****	**-.32***	.70**	1					
6. P.SDQ	.23	.21	-.26	**.45****	**.65****	1				
7. P.ERC	.18	.06	-.34	.28	**.41***	**.59****	1			
8. Reading	.05	.04	.12	**-.35***	-.11	**-.42***	**-.42***	1		
9. Writing	-.06	-.06	.22	**-.44****	-.21	**-.53****	-.33	**.84****	1	
10. Maths	-.02	-.08	.13	**-.37***	-.17	-.30	-.30	**.81****	**.81****	1
GIRLS										
1. Coping Difficulties	1									
2. ER difficulties	.69**	1								
3. Emotional self-efficacy	-.58**	-.50**	1							
4. T.SDQ	**.44****	**.32***	-.24	1						
5. T.ERC	**.34****	**.33***	-.15	**.66****	1					
6. P.SDQ	**.38****	.12	**-.47****	**.49****	**.39****	1				
7. P.ERC	**.32***	.23	-.10	**.43****	.27	**.65****	1			
8. Reading	-.30*	-.13	**.28***	-.39**	-.12	-.14	.22	1		
9. Writing	-.33*	-.16	**.28***	**-.42****	-.14	-.25	.05	.90**	1	
10. Maths	**-.32***	-.10	.14	**-.46****	-.18	-.23	.002	**.80****	**.81****	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The self-report completed by the girls on the other hand, was significantly associated to both parents and teachers for a number of measures. Both teacher and parent measures of behaviour and psychological adjustment (T.SDQ and P.SDQ) were significantly related to girls' ratings of their coping difficulties. This suggests that higher levels of coping difficulties are associated to higher ratings of behaviour difficulties by teachers and parents in girls but

not boys. Self-reported emotion regulation difficulties in girls was also associated to the T.SDQ but not the P.SDQ. Girls emotional self-efficacy beliefs were negatively related to the P.SDQ measure of behaviour difficulties at home but was not related to the T.SDQ measure of behaviour difficulties in class. This suggests that girls who rated themselves low in emotional self-efficacy were likely to be perceived as having behaviour difficulties and poor psychological adjustment by their parents but not their teachers.

These findings show that girls perceptions of themselves correspond more strongly with the views of their teachers and parents than the boys. Girls' emotional self-efficacy are also strongly related to the views of their parents. This suggests gender differences may exist in emotional awareness and also potential gender differences in the parent-child, teacher-child relationship.

4.5.2 School differences in the child, teacher and parent measures

Table 11 highlights the non-parametric correlation analysis of the associations found when the dataset has been split by school. Significant differences in the relationships were found between the child, parent and teacher measures and also the academic scores when the schools are analysed separately.

4.4.2.1 Associations between child and teacher measures across School 1 and School 2

A similarity across both schools was that children from both schools had self-reported coping difficulties and emotion regulation difficulties that significantly related to teacher measures of psychological adjustment and behaviour (T.SDQ). Therefore, across both schools children who perceived themselves as struggling to cope and with poor emotion regulation were also rated as having poor behaviour in the classroom.

Differences were found in the relationships between other measures. Children who attended School 1 showed emotional self-efficacy scores that were negatively related to their self-reported emotion regulation, while the emotional self-efficacy beliefs of children in School 2 were not associated to their emotion regulation scores. In addition to this, emotional self-efficacy beliefs corresponded to teacher ratings of behaviour and psychological adjustment (T.SDQ) only in children from School 1.

4.4.2.2 Associations between child and parent measures across School 1 and School 2

The relationships between child and parent measures also differed depending on the school. Parents of children attending School 1 had perspectives on their children's behaviour, which corresponded to their children's own views of their coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy. Table 11 shows that the parent measure of behaviour and psychological adjustment (P.SDQ) for children attending School 1 also corresponds with the teacher measure of behaviour (T.SDQ).

The children's reading, writing and maths skills were negatively related to the behaviour ratings completed by parents of children attending School 1 (P.SDQ). This suggests that the perception of parents with children attending School 1 shows moderate correspondence to their children's own perspectives of coping and emotional self-efficacy, their academic skills and also, the views of the class teacher. Parents whose children attended School 2 presented behaviour ratings of their children (P.SDQ) that were unrelated to any of the other measures completed by the child or the teacher. These findings indicate that parents from School 2 have perceptions of their children's behaviour and psychological adjustment that do not correspond with the views of their children, the class teacher or academic skills.

Table 11: Spearman's rho correlation of the measures for School 1 and School 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
School 1										
1. Coping Difficulties	1									
2. ER difficulties	.68**	1								
3. Emotional self-efficacy	-.68**	**-.60****	1							
4. T.SDQ	.38**	**.28***	-.31*	1						
5. T.ERC	.36**	**.42****	-.42**	.67**	1					
6. P.SDQ	.45**	.24	-.40**	**.62****	**.59****	1				
7. P.ERC	.40**	.22	**-.31***	**.43****	**.34***	.70**	1			
8. Reading	-.14	-.05	.14	**-.49****	-.18	**-.39****	-.14	1		
9. Writing	-.17	-.17	.20	**-.57****	**-.31***	**-.55****	**-.31***	**.88****	1	
10. Maths	-.16	-.04	.06	**-.42****	-.13	**-.38****	-.27	**.81****	**.75****	1
School										
1. Coping Difficulties	1									
2. ER difficulties	**.70****	1								
3. Emotional self-efficacy	**-.30***	-.22	1							
4. T.SDQ	**.41****	**.33***	-.09	1						
5. T.ERC	**.40****	.28	.05	**.70****	1					
6. P.SDQ	.16	.09	-.35*	.28	**.47****	1				
7. P.ERC	-.005	.07	.05	.23	**.35***	**.57****	1			
8. Reading	-.28	-.15	**.38***	-.26	-.02	-.13	.09	1		
9. Writing	-.29	-.12	.37*	**-.33***	-.08	-.16	.20	**.88****	1	
10. Maths	**-.36***	-.24	.24	**-.42****	-.18	-.14	.16	**.76****	**.83****	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed)
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed)

4.4.2.3 Associations between teacher and parent measures across School 1 and School 2

Distinct differences were found across the two school contexts in the level of correspondence between the measures completed by the teachers and the parents. Teachers and parents within School 1 have perceptions of the children that are related to each other, while the teacher and parent perceptions within School 2 are not significantly associated with each other. This suggests that the expectations and judgments of teachers and parents on the children's behaviour and psychological adjustment are more varied within School 2 compared to School 1. These findings suggests that differences exist in how children are perceived within these schools, and across home and school contexts. The school context appears to impact upon level of correspondence found between teacher and parent perceptions of the children's behaviour, emotional skills and academic performance. It also appears to influence the relationship between children's own perceptions of their emotion regulation, coping skills and emotional self-efficacy.

4.6 Summary of Results

Table 12 presents a summary of the results discussed in this chapter.

Table 12: Summary of results

Section Heading	Key Findings
Descriptive statistics	No gender differences found in children's perceptions of their emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy beliefs. Significant differences found in teacher and parent ratings of children's emotion regulation and their behaviour. Teacher ratings of the children were more positive than parent ratings, indicating less difficulties with behaviour and emotion regulation in the class.
Main correlations	Children's perceptions of their emotion regulation, coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy beliefs corresponded to each other. Children who rated themselves as having difficulties with emotion regulation and coping tended to have lower emotional self-efficacy beliefs. Teacher measures of emotion regulation and behaviour corresponded more strongly to children's views of their emotion regulation than the parent measures did.
Analysis of coping strategies	The majority of children used emotion-focussed coping styles. Distraction, emotion support seeking and avoidance were the most frequent emotion-focussed coping strategies. The majority of this age-group also rated their parents as the people they would turn to for support in managing feelings of anger or sadness.
Individual differences	Children with behaviour difficulties had lower academic scores than their peers and also rated themselves high in coping and emotion regulation difficulties and lower in emotional self-efficacy. Their coping strategies were also emotion-focussed but tended to be more solitary than the main sample.
The importance of emotions	The overwhelming majority of the children viewed emotions as important in their lives. Their reasons formed two overarching themes, which presented emotions as being important both intrinsically (for personal growth, feeling happier and making the world a better place) and extrinsically (to communicate, support relationships and fulfil social expectations.)
Additional findings	The level of correspondence between child, parent and teacher measures and their academic scores differed across boys and girls. This suggests gender differences in children's level of emotional awareness and in the parent-child and teacher-child dynamics. School differences were also found in the relationships between the measures, in particular the level of correspondence between parent and child, teacher and parent.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents a discussion of the main results of this study and the implications they have for professionals working with children, their families and schools.

The discussion will address the research questions in turn with the additional findings being addressed within each relevant section serving to qualify the overall findings of the study:

1) Is there a relationship between children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills and the views of their parents and teachers and how do they compare?
2) Is there a meaningful relationship between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and their emotion regulation skills?
3) What are the coping styles children use in supporting them with their emotions?
4) How do children with behaviour difficulties compare to other children in their perceptions of their emotion regulation skills, emotional self-efficacy and coping strategies?
5) What reasons are given by the children for the importance of emotions and how do these relate to theories regarding the development of emotion regulation?

5.1 Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between children, teachers and parents perceptions of children's emotion regulation skills?

There appears to more correspondence between the teacher and child perceptions of the child's behaviour and emotion regulation than between the parent and child measures.

5.1.1 Relationship between child and teacher measures

When teachers rated children as having poor classroom behaviour this corresponded to children rating themselves as having poorer emotion regulation skills, higher levels of coping difficulties and lower emotional self-efficacy beliefs compared to their peers. The teacher ratings of the children's emotion regulation, behaviour and psychological adjustment were also significantly related to children's academic skills. This suggests that teachers perceptions of the children appear to be in tune with what children perceive their emotional skills to be.

It should also be acknowledged that the children completed their questionnaires within the school, during lesson time. This may be a further contextual factor that explains the stronger correspondence between child and teacher measures.

5.1.2 Relationship between child and parent measures

The relationships between the parent measures of children's behaviour and emotion regulation skills and the children's perceptions of their emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy were either weak or non-existent.

No relationship was found between the parent and child reported emotion regulation difficulties. No relationship was found between the parent measure of children's emotion regulation and any of the academic skills. There was a moderate relationship between the parent measure of children's behaviour and psychological adjustment and children's perceptions of their coping difficulties and their emotional self-efficacy but not their emotion regulation skills. Parental perspectives of their child's behaviour also appeared to be moderately associated to children's reading, writing and maths skills. Children exhibiting poor behaviour at home, tended to score poorly in their reading, writing and maths skills.

This highlights a potential connection relating to emotional self-efficacy, coping skills and academic skills, that is strong between the parent and the child. When considering emotion regulation skills however, the children's viewpoint varies significantly from that of their parents and corresponds more to the viewpoint of their teachers. There may have been different relationships found across parent, teacher and child measures if the children had completed the questionnaires at home or if they had been asked to comment specifically about behaviour at home and their behaviour at school.

5.1.3 Relationship between teacher and parent measures

While there were differences in how parent and teacher perspectives related to the child perspective of their emotional skills, there is some consistency between teacher and parent perceptions of how the children manage their emotions and behave. If a child is behaving poorly and struggling at home, it is likely that teachers will also recognise this behaviour at school.

This study provides mixed support for the well-documented links between effortful control and central executive skills (Calkins & Hill, 2007; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Through the triangulation of child, parent and teacher reports of the children's emotion regulation skills there is limited evidence that emotion regulation skills in children are associated to their academic skills. The teacher measure of emotion regulation related weakly to writing skills. None of the other measures of emotion regulation corresponded to the academic skills. The studies that have found links between effortful control and central executive skills have tended to use observational or experimental methods (Bierman et al., 2008; Kochanska et al., 2000; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). In future research the use of a varied range of emotion regulation measures (i.e. questionnaire/ observation and practical activity) may enable the exploration of these links more effectively.

This study was completed within the school, using academic scores completed by teachers and therefore, it is not such a surprise that the teacher perspectives correspond more closely to the children's measures. As educational psychologists whose professional context is predominantly based within schools, using predominantly teacher-reported measures may be missing an opportunity to access the valuable and distinct contribution that parents provide towards their child's emotional development and areas of strength and challenge in their focus on schools rather than homes.

These conclusions offer support to the findings of Rydell et al. (2004), which highlighted the unique perspective children offered on their emotion regulation skills that was distinct yet related to the views of their teachers and parents. The findings also suggest that context may impact upon perceptions of emotion regulation, coping and emotional self-efficacy beliefs.

5.2 Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and their self-rated emotion regulation and coping skills?

There was strong correspondence between children's ratings of their emotion regulation difficulties, coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy suggesting that children who perceived themselves as being poor emotion regulators tended to also perceive themselves as having lower levels of coping and emotional self-efficacy.

5.2.1 Relationship between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and emotion regulation skills

In this current study children's self-ratings of their emotion regulation were significantly associated to their emotional self-efficacy ratings and their perceived level of coping difficulties. Children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs also corresponded with teacher

measures of emotion regulation and behaviour. There was a moderate correspondence between children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs and parent measures of children's behaviour but no relationship was found between the parent measure of emotion regulation and the children's emotional self-efficacy beliefs.

These conclusions provide some support to Suveg and Zeman (2004) who found a relationship between emotion regulation and emotional self-efficacy in a population of children with anxiety disorders. Within their study parent and child reported emotion regulation was related to the child's emotional self-efficacy. This was not found within this study though teacher and child reported emotion regulation was related to children's emotional self-efficacy.

There were only two items within the child self-report assessing their emotional self-efficacy therefore, caution should be taken when considering these findings. A potentially important role for emotional self-efficacy appears to exist in the promotion of effective emotion regulation. This would benefit from further examination with a more in-depth measure of emotional self-efficacy.

5.2.2 Relationship between child rated emotional self-efficacy and coping skills

It is of interest that the coping difficulties sub-scale of the child self-report appears to be the only element of the child self-report that consistently corresponds to all the teacher and parent measures and children's writing and maths skills. This suggests that children's perception of their degree of coping is more in tune with parents and teachers than their perception of their emotion regulation skills or their emotional self-efficacy. It may be useful to consider the reasons why this sub-scale was particularly aligned with the perceptions of teachers and parents. Potentially, the items used within this sub-scale were presented in a more accessible

way for this age group. It may also be the case that conversations between children, their parents and teachers more frequently relate to more practical discussions about coping rather than talking about emotion regulatory behaviour or emotional self-efficacy, which may be seen a more abstract concepts.

The findings support past research suggesting that from a young age children are capable of understanding complex mental states, showing a high level of emotional awareness (Brown & Dunn, 1991; Rieffe et al., 2004; Rydell et al., 2004).

5.3 Research Question 3: What coping styles and strategies are commonly used by children to support them in managing their emotions?

Using the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) children's coping strategies with emotional situations appeared to most frequently be emotion-focussed in style with the majority of the children using distraction, avoidance or seeking emotional support from others.

5.3.1 The support of others and emotion-specific coping strategies

Parents and carers were consistently rated as being the most important people in the children's lives for supporting them in managing their emotions. This is despite this study also finding that parents perception of their children's emotion regulation skills was unrelated to children's own perceptions of their skills. These seemingly conflicting findings suggest a possible emotional distance between parents and children despite children identifying their parents as the key support for helping them manage their emotions. Cole et al. (2010) argued that the conversations at home were crucial for children to have the opportunity to observe successful emotion regulation, role play and learn effective ways of expressing and coping

with difficult or intense emotions. There is an important role for parents and carers in developing their own emotional awareness and skills in communicating to their children to effectively model good emotion regulation and coping skills.

The conclusion from these findings is that within this age group parents remain the most important people in the children's lives for supporting them with difficult emotions. It would be of interest to explore this potentially growing emotional distance further by exploring children at different ages' perceptions of their emotion regulation and coping and whether the level of correspondence between the child and parent perspective shifts over the primary years. Within this age group they appeared to be more likely to seek company when feeling sad than when feeling anger. Though this was not a significant difference it would be of interest to explore whether there are emotion-specific coping strategies, which the children identify.

5.3.2 Emotion-focussed and problem-focussed coping strategies

This current study provides evidence that within this age-group of children the most frequently used coping style for managing emotional experiences is emotion-focussed. Predominantly, the children used distraction activities, avoidance and emotional support-seeking from family and friends in an attempt to change the emotional response or emotional intensity of the event. Other children used cognitive re-structuring as a way of viewing the situation in a more positive way in order to change the emotion experienced.

Very few of the children used problem-focussing coping, which refers to activities that attempt to find a solution to the difficulty or problem. The children that did identify this as a strategy tended to draw on instrumental coping, where they independently used problem-solving, thinking and planning as methods to actively find a solution to the problem. A few

children also identified instrumental intervention as a strategy, where they would simply ask a parent to intervene and help them.

These conclusions suggest that children tend to modify their emotional response to a situation rather than seek to change or solve the given difficulty. This provides some challenge to previous studies, which had found problem-focussed coping styles are more related high self-esteem and emotional self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2006) and reduced levels of anxiety (Dahlbeck & Lightsey, 2008).

In light of the age group, it may be that actively solving the problem is potentially not within their grasp or capacity to do. Children in general do not have much control over their lives and the decisions that influence them. Therefore, it may be a more effective strategy to focus on altering their emotional state so that they can 'feel better' than attempt to solve the difficulty or problem, which may be simply not possible as a child. Past research that explored coping styles within children who have chronic disabilities found that the level of control a person perceives they have on a situation will influence the coping style they choose to use (Barton et al., 2003).

Much of this research is purely correlational and this study has provided evidence of some clear relationships between children's perceived level of coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy. It would be of benefit to explore in more depth the different contexts in which children may identify emotion or problem-focussed coping and whether these are influenced by their emotional self-efficacy and perception of coping difficulties.

5.4 Research Question 4: How do children with behaviour difficulties compare to the main sample?

This study aimed to explore the individual differences in children's awareness of the emotion regulation skills and their emotional self-efficacy ratings and whether these were influenced by children's behaviour difficulties. Differences were found in these children's perceptions of their emotional skills, and in the strategies they use to cope with emotional situations.

5.4.1 Children with behaviour difficulties: their emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills

A group of seven children were identified as having high levels of behaviour difficulties, as rated by their teachers. The majority of the group rated themselves much lower in their emotion regulation skills and as having higher levels of coping difficulties when compared to the main sample. The group were also significantly below the mean of the main sample in their emotional self-efficacy ratings. This suggests that while some of the children in this group did score within the average range for their self-reported emotion regulation and coping skills, all of the group displayed a reduced confidence in their emotional skills.

Past research suggests there is an impaired awareness of emotion regulation skills in children with ADHD (unpublished doctoral thesis, Wilson). While this study cannot comment specifically on the emotional awareness of children with ADHD as those children were not specifically highlighted, the study does suggests that children with general behaviour difficulties exhibit good awareness of the difficulties that they have with managing emotions.

5.4.3 Children with behaviour difficulties: their coping styles and strategies

The coping strategies described by this group for helping them manage feelings of anger and sadness were categorised into emotion and problem-focussed coping. Within this group the

most common coping style is emotion-focussed coping using distraction techniques. This is similar to the main sample of children. There does appear to be a reduced level of coping strategies where emotional support is sought from parents or friends. Only two children in this sample identify their parents or friends as being helpful in supporting them with feelings of anger or sadness.

Considering how aware these children are of the difficulties they have in managing their emotions and also considering their low emotional self-efficacy it may be that children with behaviour difficulties view solitary activities as more effective coping strategies for them.

Within the literature review, a wealth of research has identified the role of the parent and the attachment relationship in promoting healthy emotion regulation (Bowlby, 1969, 1980; Bretherton & Monholland, 1999). It may be the case that children with behaviour difficulties and poor emotion regulation skills may also have difficulties in their attachment relationships with their caregivers. Children with poor emotional regulation may also have parents who have harsh parenting styles and regulate emotion poorly themselves. These factors would impact on whether the children judge their parents as being effective in supporting them emotionally and whether they felt able to seek emotional support from others.

When developing emotionally enriching environments within schools, more solitary, distraction-type activities should be made available to the children to facilitate self-regulation of their emotions. It will also be important to address their social difficulties through gradual, positive social experiences within small peer groups and with consistent, familiar and kind adults. This experiences would aim to effect change in the children's internal working model of how to behave with other people. Through modelling appropriate emotion regulation and providing opportunities to talk about their feelings and learn from others about how they

manage and cope with their emotions more socially focussed coping strategies and effective emotion regulation would begin to develop.

5.5 Research Question 5: How emotionally aware are the children and what reasons are given for why emotions are important?

Emotion regulation mechanisms are governed by self- and other-regulatory processes (Thompson, 1994). As children get older they increase in their ability to manipulate their own emotional responses (Kochanska et al., 2000). When considering metacognitive theory, the level of awareness children have of these self-regulatory skills and their function in everyday life will have an impact on their motivation to develop and improve these skills further (Whitebread & Basilio, 2012; Perele et al., 2009).

Researchers studying the concept of metacognition argue that when children grow in their awareness a) of the knowledge base concerned (first component of metacognition) and b) the on-going cognitive activities necessary (second component of metacognition) their skills can be developed. This implies not only for emotion regulation but for a range of other skill sets such as maths ability (Perele et al., 2009), play skills that foster imagination, social interaction and language (Whitebread, 2010) and working memory strategies (Whitebread, 1999).

5.5.1 Children's awareness of the importance of emotions

The majority of the children identified emotions as being important to them in every day life suggesting that there is general recognition of the importance of emotions to this age group. Further questioning highlighted a range of reasons for them considering emotions as important.

5.5.2 Children's reasons given for the importance of emotions

Two overarching themes were identified as providing a coherent perspective of the children's reasons for the importance of emotions. These two overarching themes both had three sub-themes within them relating to different elements of the overarching theme.

The first overarching theme presented emotions as being *'Intrinsically'* important, with sub-themes relating to the importance of emotions for influencing the children's capacity to be happy or sad; the children's personal development and maturity; and how dull and boring the world would be without emotions. Many of the children described emotions as a separate or distinct entity from the children themselves, which had the power to influence how they felt and what they did. A minority of children viewed emotion more as a process that they had control over rather than an objective entity that controlled their feelings.

The perspective of emotions as being intrinsically important was given by some children who saw how emotions were part of their development and growth. They viewed emotions a supporting their maturity and personal growth.

Emotions as a social tool came across in the second overarching theme, where emotions were seen as being *'Extrinsically'* important. This theme comprised of three sub-themes, which identified emotions as important for a) communicating with others, b) helping to understand other people and their feelings and, c) supporting children's own self-regulation in order to fulfil certain social expectations. Within this second theme, some children identified emotions as a 'regulation tool' that helped them conform with societal expectations. A few children even identified the fact that they could 'choose' whether they showed their emotions to someone.

The reasons given by the children highlight the range of understanding and awareness within this age group for the role and purpose of emotions and their own interactions with emotions.

Children in general, perceive emotions as having a social function. Some children viewed emotion as a process or tool that they can control, while others viewed emotions as being distinct and controlling entities that control them, their behaviour and the world.

The analysis of reasons given by the group of children with behaviour difficulties suggest that within this group there are some difficulties with understanding the role of emotion as a social tool and in perceiving themselves as having control over the emotions. Though this was something that many other children this age found difficult as well – tending to view emotion as distinct from themselves and out of their control. This supports the other finding in this study that suggest this group of children are more likely to cope with difficulties by themselves then seek company and emotional support.

5.5.2.1 The importance of emotions: Conclusion

The conclusions from these findings indicate that within this age group there is a clear awareness of complex emotional skills, functions and their own role within these. In light of the analysis undertaken with the small group of children with behaviour difficulties, interventions designed to support emotion regulation development and emotional well-being within this age group should consider drawing on guidance from emotional self-efficacy theory and metacognitive theory. Children with behaviour difficulties appear to have lower emotional self-efficacy than their peers and a limited awareness of emotions as tools for social functions. Emotional interventions should aim to support children's confidence in their ability to control and manage their own emotions and also raise their awareness of the purpose and functions of the emotional skills they use.

5.6 Additional Findings: Gender and School, as factors that influence emotion regulation

While undertaking this research gender and school differences were found in the relationships across the parent, child and teacher measures. These additional findings suggest fundamental contextual influences, not only on how emotion regulation skills are perceived in children but also on how these skills develop and influence other areas of ability.

5.6.1 Gender differences in the associations between child, parent and teacher measures and academic skills

No differences were found between boys and girls self-ratings of their emotion regulation skills, coping difficulties and emotional self-efficacy. There was, however, a difference in how these measures related to teacher and parent measures of emotion regulation, behaviour and psychological adjustment and also the children's academic scores for reading, writing and maths. This suggests that if two children, a boy and a girl, have rated themselves the same in terms of emotion regulation skills, coping and emotional self-efficacy, they may be viewed very differently by parents and teachers. These ratings would also correspond to their academic skills differently.

Self-ratings of coping difficulties by boys was related only to teacher measures of behaviour and psychological adjustment. No other measure completed by the boys was associated to any of the teacher and parent measures or their academic scores. The measures completed by the girls on the other hand, were all significantly related to parent and teacher measures.

The higher correspondence between girls reports of themselves and parent and teacher measures suggest that girls may be more attuned to their emotional skills and difficulties than boys. Potentially, girls may experience more conversations exploring their emotions and

behaviour, with their teachers and parents than boys do. This provides girls with a an emotional viewpoint that corresponds more closely with their teachers and parents.

The self-reports by girls also corresponds to their academic skills, unlike the boys self-reports. The higher level of awareness that girls show towards their emotional skills may result in their self-report measures being potentially more reliable than the boys who are less aware of their emotional skills. This would lead to the boys self-report measures being less likely to relate to academic skills or teacher and parent perceptions.

While no gender difference was found in this current study for academic scores given by the teachers there is a well-known 'gender-gap' in school attainment levels at this age (Gorard, Rees & Salisbury, 2001; Tinklin, 2003). Gorard et al. (2001) undertook a longitudinal study over six years exploring the factors that may contribute to the differences in attainment levels between boys and girls from Key Stage 1 to A-level. They suggest that the gap seems to be more apparent in the mid-to-high- attaining children.

They highlight the importance of considering socio-economic, classroom and individual factors in contributing to the gender effect. Tinklin (2003) suggests that factors such as boys and girls' different attitudes, approach to learning and the influence of peer pressure may help to explain the different progression rates between males and female. The different emotional dynamic that exists between and girl and their teacher or parent, in contrast to a boy and their teacher or parent may be a factor that influences subsequent skills such as self-awareness and self-regulation. These in turn have an impact on the children's academic skills. These findings and those of the school differences, will be discussed in relation to Attribution Theory shortly.

5.6.2 School differences in the associations between child, parent and teacher measures and academic skills

Significant differences were identified across the two schools in how the child, parent and teacher measures of emotion regulation related to each other, and how these related to the children's academic scores.

While children across both schools had self-reported emotion regulation and coping scores that corresponded to teachers reports of their behaviour and psychological adjustment in class, only children from School 1 had emotional self-efficacy ratings that related to their self-reported emotion regulation and teacher measure of their behaviour. This suggests that children who exhibit poor behaviour from School 1 were more likely than similar children from School 2 to have low ratings of emotional self-efficacy. The teacher ratings for children in School 1 were also negatively associated with academic skills whereas teacher ratings from School 2 were not.

There appeared to be some differences in the relationship between parents and teachers within each school. Parents in School 1 had a perspective of their child's behaviour and emotional skills that corresponded significantly to that of the teacher. Parental perspectives from School 1 also related significantly to the children's academic scores. Parents with children who attend School 2 on the other hand, presented a more varied perspective that did not correspond with the teacher view or their children's academic scores.

These findings highlight the role of the school context, and other people, such as teachers, in supporting the children's development of their emotional awareness and emotion regulation skills. Children in both schools present with a good level of awareness of their emotion regulation and coping skills as there was strong correspondence between the teacher measures of behaviour, and children's ratings of their emotion regulation and coping skills

across both schools. There were are differences however, in the children's emotional self-efficacy ratings and in the relationships between parents and teachers. In School 1 the ratings of teachers and parents appear to be strongly related and correspond closely to the children's perspectives and their academic scores. In School 2, potentially because of the more disparate viewpoints between home and school, the parental and teacher perspective were unrelated to academic scores.

It is difficult to tell from these purely correlational findings what these results may suggest in practice. It appears that School 2 may not prioritise the whole-school discussion of emotional understanding and regulation as much as School 1. This is evidenced by the limited correspondence between teacher, parent and child perspectives. This lack of a shared understanding suggests potentially limited discussion about children's emotional development. The lack of correspondence across home and school perspectives also suggests there may be less communication specifically between parents and teachers about children's on-going emotional development, skills and areas of challenge.

5.7 Implications for Educational Psychology

The findings of this study have clear implications for the practice of Educational Psychologists across all levels from supporting individual children and schools to contributing to research at a local and national level. Furthermore, there are theoretical implications from this research in terms of providing a framework for the development of effective measures of emotion regulation and the use of psychological theories such as attachment and metacognition in supporting the development of emotion regulation development in children.

5.7.1 At the individual child level

This study suggests that children in the later primary years exhibit a good awareness of their skills in regulating their emotions and coping with difficulties. Therefore, as advocates for the child Educational Psychologists have a key role in effectively assessing children's views and perspectives on their emotion regulation further. The work of Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry and Osborne (1983) suggests that students' emotional reactions towards their classroom and their teacher were central to their subsequent success in embracing the challenge of a new learning situation. This is defined succinctly by Ingleton (1999) who states *"learners are highly complex beings whose emotions interact with their learning in powerful ways... the dynamics of emotions, in the context of experiences of success and failure, may dispose students to act positively or negatively towards the classroom"* (p. 1). Having an awareness of the children's emotion regulation skills will help inform the type of learning interventions that will be effective in order to promote a positive experience of learning.

This study also suggests that children with higher levels of behaviour difficulties may exhibit lower emotional self-efficacy and a reduced awareness of the social role emotions play. Geddes and Hanko (2006) share that children with over-reactive or impulsive behaviour *"without any apparent self-awareness or control... cause great concern and (the behaviour) leads to high levels of exclusions from school..."* (p.6). The developmental theory relating to emotion regulation suggests that past experiences such as early trauma, parental practices, stress and poverty can be significant factors that impact upon the development of emotion regulation. Early experiences can be critical in helping children develop effective mechanisms for dealing with difficult emotions. This can be problematic for children who have experienced abuse or have had disrupted attachment relationships due to the care system. Educational Psychologists often play a critical role in supporting children who are

Looked After, fostered or those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The impact that early experiences will have on these children's emotion regulation skills will be important for Educational Psychologists to share with teachers, foster carers and in our role in multi-agency teams to support increased understanding and inclusive practices for these children. There is also a role for us to scaffold these children socially through approaches such as the Circle of Friends (Newton, Taylor & Wilson, 1996) in order to promote their positive peer experiences. This aims to promote their regulation skills through modelling and a gradual shift in their internal working model, leading to more adaptive coping strategies and behaviour.

This study has also highlighted the importance of children's perceptions of themselves and the role we can play to support children in developing and enhancing their self- perceptions. There was a strong correspondence found between children's perceptions of their emotional self-efficacy and coping and their skills in emotion regulation, therefore, it is important for us to engage children actively in helping them consider their perceptions and the reasons underlying these views. Working with the children to create more positive perceptions of themselves and their coping strategies is an important approach to supporting successful emotional awareness.

5.7.2 With parents

This study has clearly highlighted that children rate their parents and caregivers as the people they would seek emotional support from. This study also, paradoxically found that parent perceptions of children's skills in regulating their emotions did not correspond to children's views. It also suggests potential distancing between child and parent about emotions, their reactions and responses to emotional situations. As this was not a cross-sectional study of different ages it is difficult to confirm this hypothesis. This lack of correspondence may also

be due to parents not being the only important relationship to the children at this age. They are influenced socially and emotionally by peers, school and their teachers etc. as well.

The importance of dialogue in the development of emotion regulation is widely evidenced in the early years (Brown & Dunn, 1991, Cole et al., 2010). In both studies, the language used within the home context with children aged from 2 years – 6 years old was studied and their interactions with primary caregivers observed. They present the view that discourse about emotion is important for communicating needs and regulating frustration. The adult scaffolds the children's ability to reflect on their own and other people's experiences to foster emotional self-awareness and reflection. This in turn promotes emotion regulation. These studies emphasise that there is a continual, reciprocal dialogue and interaction between parents and their children that facilitates the development of emotion regulation in the early years.

Educational Psychologists have a role to play in effectively engaging parents about the importance these conversations are with their child. The earlier this parental involvement occurs, the more effective it will be, therefore within nurseries and Children Centres, Educational Psychologists could engage in opportunities to offer drop-ins, family play sessions and parent workshops on supporting language, emotion and behaviour in the home.

This study also found that the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and children's responses to their coping difficulties provided good correspondence between the child, teacher and parent perspective of emotion regulation, behaviour and academic scores. The SDQ is quick and easy to complete and as there is a version for both parents and teachers, it can also be a fairly useful way of collecting perspectives from the children's different contexts of home and school.

5.7.3 With class teachers and schools

As discussed earlier in this chapter, when considering the development of interventions to promote emotion regulation there should be a focus on supporting metacognitive awareness within the children and also promoting their emotional self-efficacy. Whitebread and Basilio (2012) highlight the opportunities provided within a classroom situation for promoting children's self-regulation skills. Classroom environments, dialogue and activities that enable children to a) develop their knowledge and understanding of emotions and b) be provided with cognitive activities to enable their emotion regulation skills to be developed, will influence the ability of children to develop effective emotion regulation. Examples include, 'reciprocal teaching', where the learner teachers new material to fellow learners, 'thinking aloud' where the teacher verbalises their thought process to model effective problem solving to the children or encouraging the children in developing questions about new material (Joseph, 2010). Educational Psychologists can support the development of emotional discourse within the classroom using self-reflection methods with teachers such as the use of video. A study undertaken by Brown and Kennedy (2011) used videos of interactions between teachers and children at a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties as a method of discussing the dialogue and interactions using between the teachers and children. The aim was that through the self-reflection and observations of their own interactions with the children, teachers would develop their use of conversation and dialogue to actively engage the children and incorporate their ideas into the learning process to foster self-regulation through collaborative learning.

Since the late 1990's there has been a significant shift in schools perception of their role in supporting children's emotional well-being. Initiatives such as the Healthy Schools

Programme established in 1999 (2010) and the SEAL programme (2006) encouraged schools to assess and support the emotional health of the children in their care, as well as their physical health. Despite these developments teachers report that they do not feel appropriately qualified to support the emotional needs of the children in their class. Roeser and Midgley (1997) interviewed 95 regular classroom teachers' in America on the role the felt they played in supporting children's mental health needs. While the majority of the teachers believed that addressing these needs was part of their role, they felt burdened by these needs. This has been supported by more recent research by Walter, Gouze and Lim (2006) who surveyed over a hundred teachers. These teachers felt that their lack of information and training was the greatest barrier to supporting children's mental health difficulties and that 50% of the children with mental health issues were those with the most disruptive behaviour in class. The teachers also reported that they had very little involvement with mental health professionals, despite all of them having taught disruptive students with mental health difficulties. Although these are US based studies they imply that Educational Psychologists have a role in supporting teacher confidence and awareness of the role they play in children's emotional development. Through the consultation approach (Wagner, 2000) Educational Psychologists aim to support teachers to reflect, problem-solve, think more collaboratively and feel more support, in working with children in their class with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

It is important that Educational Psychologists support school staff in developing their own emotion regulation skills and in recognising the importance of emotionally literate classrooms. Particular training paths Educational Psychologists could offer may be around effective strategies for managing anger, delivering self-efficacy building activities and metacognitive strategies and dialogue into classroom practices, and providing opportunities

for self-reflection with teachers to develop their own emotional awareness and adapt their responses to the children with behaviour and emotional difficulties within the class. It may helpful to open up these training opportunities up to parents as well to build more home-school communication about emotional development.

The role of a supportive, consistent caregiver is also highlighted as being critical in development emotion regulation. Geddes and Hanko (2006) argue that this role can be taken on by someone other than the parent; for example the teacher, a learning mentor or classroom assistant. Educational Psychologists have a role in supporting these positive attachments through developing the teachers understanding, empathy and increased self-efficacy towards the child. Approaches such as Circle of Adults (Newton, 1995) encourage the adults around the children to work closer together as a team and develop their emotional understanding and strategies for supporting children with behavioural difficulties.

Further systemic work within schools could also include the development of Nurture Groups (Boxall & Lucas, 2010). This intervention focuses on supporting children whose behaviour and emotional vulnerability is impacting upon their inclusion in school and their learning. In a national research study by Cooper and Whitebread (2007) children attending a nurture group show statistically significant improvements in their social, emotional and behavioural functioning. This study also found that schools with well-established Nurture Groups (operating for over three years) had the highest impact. They suggest this highlights a potential impact of a nurture group on whole-school approaches to nurturing and supporting children's emotional wellbeing. Lucas (1999) argues that *"when the theory which underpins Nurture Groups is applied to the whole school with a clear curriculum focus, a positive cycle of growth and development is set in motion, teacher and learning become more effective for*

all children..." (p. 14). Educational Psychologists can play a key role through offering inset, regular refresher training days and development opportunities to schools to enhance their understanding the six Nurture Group principles and enable these to shape classroom and whole school practice. The application of these principles will lead to the shaping of Nurturing school policies and practices, which can have an impact on the wellbeing of staff and pupils and ultimately, how the schools support the learning, inclusion and achievement of their pupils.

5.7.4 Community and Local Authority Level

This study suggests that the home-school contexts have differing relationships with children's perceptions and therefore, it will be important to ensure that the home context is taken into consideration as much as possible when working with children. Educational Psychologists are expanding their role within the community through fostering links with Children Centres, Health and Social Care partners as well as the collaborative practice with the voluntary sector. There is a role for further developing this to ensure more effective inclusion of the parental and community perspective when working with children to support their learning and wellbeing effectively.

Educational Psychologists do not work in isolation and therefore, sharing knowledge and working closely with other professionals working in different contexts supporting children such as social care, family support workers and the health service, will enable more effective practice.

Part of the reasoning behind the current study was due to the development of Nurture Groups across the Local Authority. Since then, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) have

also been trained in a number of schools in the Local Authority where this research was conducted. These are Learning Support Assistants who are specifically trained and supported by the Educational Psychology Service to address pupils' emotional needs (Burton, 2008). One of the aims of the study was to provide further information to help guide the development of effective evaluation tools for these county-wide emotional interventions to ensure that children's perceptions were at the heart of the evaluations that took place.

The aim is that the findings from this study will support the inclusion of accessible and appropriately designed child measures that assess the effectiveness of emotional interventions from the child's perspective.

With the changing face of Educational Psychology delivery resulting in more services moving to a traded service, there is an opportunity presented by this current study. There may be an opportunity to work in partnership and collaboratively with the voluntary sector with children's charities such as Barnardo's and the Children's Society who already commission large-scale educational and well-being research (The Good Childhood Report, 2012). The opportunity to lead on commissioned research projects may be more possible for Educational Psychologists as the role moves out of the public sector and becomes more flexible and creative.

5.8 Strengths and Limitations

5.8.1 Theoretical and practical strengths of this research

There were a number of key aspects of this study, which were implemented to overcome limitations inherent in previous research regarding emotion regulation development in children.

First, the study included three different emotion regulation measures completed by teachers, parents and the children themselves in order to provide more reliability and control over the influence of context. Molly et al. (2011) report that nearly two thirds of the research investigating emotion regulation in children rely on only one method of assessment. They argue that this is less reliable as there is no triangulation of this subjective data. The inclusion of both home and school perspectives enabled a more systemic exploration of children's perceptions of their emotion regulation skills and coping to be undertaken. The eco-systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) advocates that each individual is influenced and shaped by the layers and systems around them – these could be school, home, friendships, family and greater societal influences. The findings of this study support the view that context appears to shape perspectives and the level of shared correspondence between people in their viewpoints. This study also appears to suggest some gender differences in how children are perceived by others in their emotion regulation and coping skills. This may well relate to wider, societal expectations placed on girls and boys, which influences the parent-child and teacher-child dynamic. This study has contributed to a wealth of research advocating the importance of working with children using an eco-systemic framework ensuring that we, as professionals, are aware of the systems and levels influencing them.

Secondly, the study employed a mixed methodology to allow for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data in order to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the research questions. Using a mixed methodology enabled thematic analysis of the children's reasons for the importance of emotions to be explored more thoroughly then would be possible using quantitative analysis.

Thirdly, the study developed a child-report measure that specifically assessed emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping. The measure incorporated items from a range of past measures assessing emotion regulation and emotional self-efficacy separately. Using

multiple questionnaires with children reduces the accessibility of the assessment for them. Previous studies have used more than three questionnaires to assess children's emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping styles (Dahlbeck & Lightsey, 2008), this increases fatigue in the children and can risk a reduction in accuracy as the children rush to complete them. A single child measure of emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping will help practitioners identify children's perceptions of their skills in a more accessible manner.

5.8.2 Limitations of this research

While this study offered a unique contribution to understandings of emotion regulation, emotional self-efficacy and coping skills in children however, as with all research, limitations exist the need highlighting.

The research design was non-experimental and the data predominantly correlational, which leads to a difficulty in establishing causality and a need to acknowledge the fact that many factors influenced this data that could not been controlled for (e.g. maternal education and poverty). An additional limitation was in relation to sampling, which was opportunistic as it depended on informed, written parental consent. Parents who gave in the consent forms may have possibly been more motivated than other parents, which may have led to a bias in the sample of children and parents who participated in the study.

While this study did triangulate the views of teacher, parent and child to provide increased reliability to the measures, the measures relied purely on rating scales. There are well-known criticisms of rating scales due to the Halo effect (Thorndike, 1920) where a general perception of certain characteristics (e.g. children's academic success) will have an influence on how the children are perceived in other areas (in this case, emotion regulation skills and behaviour in class). This has been evidenced within the classroom by Foster and Ysseldyke

(1976) who asked teachers in mainstream and special schools in the USA to watch a range of videos of typically developing children. The teachers had been told that the children were either emotionally disturbed, had a learning disorder or were typically-developing. Teachers held more negative expectations towards those children who had been labelled emotionally disturbed or learning disabled. If possible, future research would benefit from additional measures of emotion regulation such as observation or experimental tasks, to be used alongside the rating scale to more effectively assess constructs such as emotion regulation.

Finally, following the thematic analysis of the final question in the child self-report asking the children "why are emotions important?" it is possible that this was too broad a question for them. Although the reasons provided by the children formed a coherent pattern of themes that meaningfully related to emotion regulation and emotion as a social tool it may have been more appropriate to create a question that specifically linked to emotion regulation skills such as "why is managing emotions important?" This would have been more closely related to the other questions focussing on children's emotion regulation skills.

5.9 Future research

A number of ideas have been discussed on ways of extending and moving forward with this research.

Firstly, within this study due to the time-restraints on the child self-report the emotional self-efficacy sub-scale only comprised of two items. The development of a more detailed emotional self-efficacy sub-scale within the child self-report could allow the causality of these relationships between emotion regulation, coping skills and emotional self-efficacy to be investigated further.

This study found children's perceptions corresponded more with those of their teachers rather than parents. A number of reasons for this have been presented, including the possibility of that there is an emotional distancing between parents and children of this age. A cross-sectional study across age ranges would enable this to be explored further.

This study has emphasised the awareness children offer towards their emotion regulation skills and coping, and the importance of reliable measures for eliciting these views effectively. It would be advantageous to explore alternative methods of collecting child views such as iPad apps or interactive computer programmes as an alternative, more accessible method of data collection.

Children with behaviour difficulties tended to opt for coping strategies that were more solitary. Within this study children were not asked to assess the success of their coping strategies across different situations. This would be of interest to examine, particularly in children with behaviour difficulties, in order to identify the most successful and unsuccessful types of coping behaviour and whether this relates to the coping style being problem-focussed and emotion-focussed.

The opportunity to elicit the view of teachers and parents regarding their own perceptions of the importance of emotional development in children and their perceived role in supporting children to develop their emotion regulation skills was beyond the scope of this study. It would benefit from further exploration, in particular, how teachers from different schools compare in their perceptions of their role and the view of emotion regulation as an important concept to consider in schools.

5.9.1 Attribution Theory to explain school and gender differences

It may be helpful to consider the impact of the contextual factors of school and gender in light of Attribution Theory. Attribution theory refers to the argument that an individual's implicit, causal explanations how events occur will influence the way they behave and approach particular tasks and goals. Dweck (1988) categorises individual's cognitive responses as being either 'mastery oriented' (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980), which involves the *"seeking of challenging tasks and the maintenance of effective striving under failure"* (Dweck, 1988, p. 256) or 'helpless'. A helpless response can be characterised as *"an avoidance of challenge and a deterioration of performance in the face of obstacles"* (Dweck, 1988, p.256).

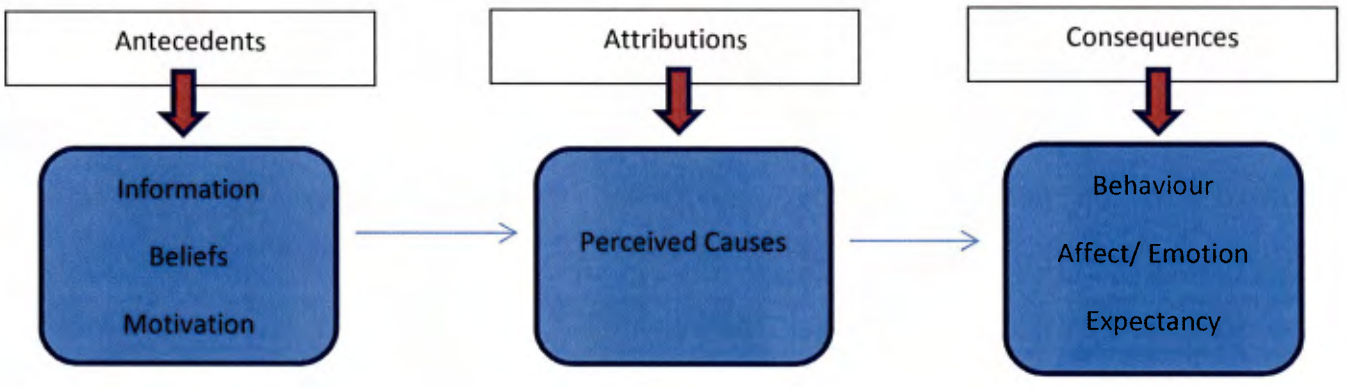


Figure 6: General model of the attribution field

When children take on a more mastery-oriented response they view their skills as changeable and open to development through their own effort. They perceive themselves as having the control to influence their skills *(incremental theory)*. This contrasts to when children take on a helpless response where they view their skill set as being fixed and unable to be changed through their own effort or resources *(entity theory).* These different responses mediate the children's motivation, self-efficacy and coping response (Hong, Dweck, Chiu, Lin & Wan, 1999). These researchers argue that the attributions placed on children by their teachers and parents will impact on the children's subsequent beliefs about themselves and whether they take up a mastery oriented response or a more helpless response.

A longitudinal study would enable further investigation of the extent to which the school context and teacher attributions of children's development of emotion regulation impacts on the development of these skills and children's own perceptions of how these skills develop i.e. whether they are fixed or incremental.

Finally, there may be a role for further exploration of children's awareness of their emotion regulation skills, coping and emotional self-efficacy within specific groups of children e.g. those with a diagnosis of ADHD or anxiety disorder, or who are at risk of exclusion. This study focussed on a community sample and did not have the numbers to fully examine the differences in children's emotional awareness and regulation skills within these different difficulties.

5.9 Conclusions

This exploratory study has offered support to previous research suggesting that children offer a unique understanding of their emotional capacities. The findings have highlighted an important role for children's perceptions of coping and emotional self-efficacy and also the

impact of context on these relationships. The study has offered some insight into the coping skills and strategies of primary aged children and how children with behaviour difficulties compare in their levels of emotional self-efficacy and methods of coping.

Educational Psychologists are encouraged to develop further, accessible methods of eliciting child views both for assessment, and evaluating interventions. There is also a valued role in supporting teachers and parents in raising their awareness and understanding of the importance of emotion regulation skills for children and facilitate effective emotion regulation in the classroom and in the home.

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APPENDIX A

Leading education and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

April 2012

Educational Psychology Research Project

Dear Head Teacher

I am writing to invite your school to take part in a research project supported by Surrey Local Education Authority and in partnership with the Institute of Education, University of London.

The project aims to find out more about children's understanding of managing their emotions, bearing in mind the increasing focus on promoting emotional well-being in the class room. The skill of managing emotions plays a significant role in school readiness, social and academic success as measured by National Curriculum levels. By learning more about children's' own understandings of how they manage emotions it will be possible to identify strategies for promoting the successful management of emotions in the classroom.

The project will do this by studying a cohort of children in Year 4 and 5 and interviewing Year 4 and 5 class teachers. The children will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire exploring their understanding of managing emotions in different scenarios, strategies used in different scenarios and confidence in their skills of managing emotions. This will not take longer than twenty minutes. The class teachers will be asked to complete a brief rating scale measuring children's emotion regulation skills in the class room, parents will also be asked to complete this rating scale.

I would also appreciate interviewing Key Stage 2 Teachers for no more than 15 – 20 minutes to explore with them their perspective of children's ability to manage their emotions, how they see these skills presented in the class room and how these skills develop.

I have successfully passed enhanced CRB checks. The project has received ethical approval and I am bound to abide by the British Psychological Society and British Educational Research Association codes of conduct. Pupil's participation is voluntary and requires consent by parents/ carers. The teacher interviews require consent by each individual teacher; their participation is also entirely voluntary. All participants are free to stop participating at any time. All information is strictly confidential and it will not be possible to identify individual children, teachers or schools from any reports resulting from the project.

Schools that participate will be responsible for obtaining consent from the parents and carers of Years 4 and 5 pupils and providing suitable places where I can assess the children. The children can be assessed in a group. The assessment will take between 20 – 30minutes. Template parental information and consent letters and questionnaires for parents and teachers will be provided by the researcher.

I will contact you in a week to confirm your acceptance to take part in this research project. For any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on: 01737 737777 or email me on: miquela.elsworth@surreycc.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Miquela Elsworth

Educational Psychologist in Training

Leading education and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Dear Parent/Carer,

Research Project in the School

Our primary school has agreed to take part in a research project supported by Surrey Local Education Authority and in partnership with the Institute of Education, University of London. The project aims to study how children manage their emotions. The skill of managing emotions has strong influence on children's social and academic success as measured by National Curriculum Levels. By learning more about children's own understandings of how they manage emotions it will be possible to identify ways of supporting children in schools.

Children from Year 4 and 5 are invited to take part and we would be grateful if you could complete the consent form below for the researcher to be able to work with them.

The project involves the children completing a questionnaire that will look at their ways of managing their emotions in different situations. This should not take more than half an hour. We would also appreciate you completing a brief questionnaire exploring your child's ability to manage emotions at home.

The findings of the research will be confidential and used only for the research project. Individual children's results will not be shared or discussed with the school but if you wish to have feedback you can contact the researcher.

If you have any further questions, please contact Miquela Elsworth either through the school, or by email: miquela.elsworth@surreycc.gov.uk.

Please give in the consent form BEFORE……. **FRIDAY 6TH JULY**

Thank you for your support,

Best wishes

Miquela Elsworth

Educational Psychologist in Training

CONSENT FORM FOR EMOTION RESEARCH PROJECT

I (name of parent)…… am happy to allow my child…… (name of child) to take part in the research project being carried out in Key Stage 2.

My contact details are: …… Post code: ……..

…… Tel: ……

Signature:…… Date:……

APPENDIX C

EMOTION REGULATION AND SELF-EFFICACY CHILD SELF-REPORT

CEMS: Anger

This form asks you what you usually do when you're feeling **MAD.**

Emotional self-efficacy items Emotion Regulation items Coping items

Inhibition **Dysregulation items**

1.	When I'm feeling mad, I can control my temper.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
2.	**I hold my anger in.**	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
3.	I stay calm and keep my cool when I'm feeling mad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
4.	**I do things like to slam doors when I'm mad.**	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
5.	**I hide my anger.**	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
6.	**I attack whatever it is that makes me very angry.**	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
7.	**I get mad inside but I don't show it.**	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3

8. I can stop myself from losing my temper when I'm mad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
9. I say mean things to others when I'm mad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
10. I try to calmly deal with what is making me mad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
11. I'm afraid to show my anger.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3

When you feel angry, How much do you think you are able to make yourself feel better?

1	2	3	4
Not At All	A Little Bit	Some	A Lot

What/ who helps you calm down when you feel angry? (circle which one you feel is most important)

My Mum My Dad My Teacher My friends My own strength

What do you do to help you calm down when you are angry?

CEMS: Sadness

This form asks you what you usually do when you're feeling **SAD.**

1. When I'm sad, I can control my crying and carrying on.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
2. I hold my sad feelings in.	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often

	1	2	3
3. I stay calm and don't let sad things get to me.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
4. I whine/fuss about what's making me sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
5. I hide my sadness.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
6. When I'm sad, I do something totally different until I calm down.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
7. I get sad inside but don't show it.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
8. I can stop myself from losing control of my sad feelings.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
9. I cry and carry on when I'm sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
10. I try to calmly deal with what is making me sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
11. I do things like mope around when I'm sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3

12. I'm afraid to show my sadness.	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often
	1	2	3

When you feel sad, How much do you think you are able to make yourself feel better?

1	2	3	4
Not At All	A Little Bit	Some	A Lot

Who helps you cheer up when you feel sad? (circle which one you feel is most important)

My Mum My Dad My Teacher My friends My own strength

What do you do to feel better when you feel sad?

Emotion Regulation items for children

Anger

When I am angry, I can think of something that stops me being angry

Other children think that I sometimes get too angry – reversed

Grown-ups think I sometimes get too angry – reversed

If I am angry and my teacher tells me to calm down, I can control myself

When I am angry, talking with other children helps me calm down

When I am angry, talking with grown-ups helps me calm down

When I am angry, I calm down pretty quickly

I can stop myself from losing my temper

If I am angry, I find something to do until I am not angry anymore

If I fall out with a friend, I stay angry for a long time – reversed

Exuberance

If I am having a really good time and my teacher tells me to calm down, I can control myself

If I am too excited, I can make myself calm down

If I am too excited, a grown-up can calm me down

Other children think I get too excited when we play games

If I am playing a game that I enjoy very much, I can get too excited to calm down – reversed

If other children tell me to calm down, I calm down quickly

If I am having a good time at break, it is difficult for me to settle down when class starts

Fear

If I am scared by things I see or hear, I can think of something so I won't stay scared

If I get scared, it is easy for a grown up to make me stop being

If I get scared of something I see on TV, I stay scared for a long time – reversed

If I get scared, I can calm down on my own

I can get beside myself with fright

If something scares me when I am in bed at night, I may lie sleepless for a long time – reversed

If I get scared, other children help me stop feeling scared

Sadness

When I am sad, I can think of something to cheer me up

When I am sad, a grown-up can help me to cheer up

When I am sad, I can stop myself from becoming too sad

When I am sad, other children can cheer me up

When I am sad, I try to think through the things that made me sad

When I am sad, I can decide how much I want to show my sadness

When I am sad, I can think of something to stop me from staying sad

When I am sad, I usually try to cheer up by talking with a friend

When I am sad, I usually try to cheer up by talking with my Mum or Dad

APPENDIX D

EMOTION REGULATION AND SELF-EFFICACY CHILD SELF-REPORT

Name:

Date of Birth:

Class:

This form asks you what you usually do when you're feeling ANGRY. **Please circle the one that you think is most like you.**

1.	When I'm feeling angry, I can control my temper.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
2.	I keep my anger inside and don't show it.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
3.	I stay calm even when I am feeling angry	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
4.	I do things like shout and slam doors when I'm angry.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
5.	I am able to stop myself from losing my temper when I'm angry.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
6.	I say mean things to others when I'm angry.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
7.	I try to calmly deal with what is making me mad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3

8. When you feel angry, How much do you think you can make yourself feel better?

1	2	3	4
Not At All	A Little Bit	Some	A Lot

9. Who helps you calm down when you feel angry? (Circle the two you feel are the most important and number then 1 = most important or 2 = second most important)

My Mum My Dad My Teacher My friends My own strength

10. What helps you calm down when you are angry?

This form asks you what you usually do when you're feeling **SAD.**

11.	When I'm sad, I can control my crying.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
12.	I hold my sad feelings in and don't show anyone.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
13.	I stay calm and don't let sad things get to me.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
14.	I talk a lot about what's making me sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
15.	I can stop myself from losing control of my sad feelings.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
16.	I cry a lot when I'm feeling sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3

17. I try to calmly deal with what is making me sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often (rev) 3
18. I do things like sulking when I'm sad.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3
19. I'm afraid to show my sadness.	Hardly ever 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3

20. When you feel sad, How much do you think you are able to make yourself feel better?

1	2	3	4
Not At All	A Little Bit	Some	A Lot

21. Who helps you cheer up when you feel sad? (Circle the two you feel are the most important and number then 1 = most important or 2 = second most important)

My Mum My Dad My Teacher My friends My own strength

22. What helps you feel better when you are sad?

Emotion Regulation items for children

Please circle which one best fits what you would do: Y = Yes; N = Never; S = Sometimes

Anger

23. When I am angry, I can think of something that stops me being angry	Y	S	N
24. Other children think that I sometimes get too angry (rev)	Y	S	N
25. Grown-ups think I sometimes get too angry (rev)	Y	S	N

26. If I am angry and my teacher tells me to calm down, I can control myself	Y	S	N
27. When I am angry, talking with other children helps me calm down	Y	S	N
28. When I am angry, talking with grown-ups helps me calm down	Y	S	N
29. When I am angry, I calm down pretty quickly	Y	S	N
30. I can stop myself from losing my temper	Y	S	N
31. If I am angry, I find something to do until I am not angry anymore	Y	S	N
32. If I fall out with a friend, I stay angry for a long time (rev)	Y	S	N

33. The person who helps me the most when I am feeling angry is: (please circle)

My mum My Dad My teacher My friends Myself

Exuberance

34. If I am having a really good time and my teacher tells me to calm down, I can control myself	Y	S	N
35. If I am too excited, I can make myself calm down	Y	S	N
36. If I am too excited, a grown-up can calm me down	Y	S	N
37. Other children think I get too excited when we play games (rev)	Y	S	N
38. If I am playing a game that I enjoy very much, I can get too excited to calm down (rev)	Y	S	N
39. If other children tell me to calm down, I calm down quickly	Y	S	N
40. If I am having a good time at break, it is difficult for me to settle down when class starts (rev)	Y	S	N

41. The person who helps me the most when I am too excited is: (please circle)

My mum My Dad My teacher My friends Myself

Fear

42. If I am scared by things I see or hear, I can think of something	Y	S	N
so I won't stay scared	Y	S	N
43. If I get scared, it is easy for a grown up to make me stop being scared	Y	S	N
44. If I get scared of something I see on TV, I stay scared for a long time (rev)	Y	S	N
45. If I get scared, I can calm down on my own	Y	S	N
46. Lots of things make me scared (rev)	Y	S	N
47. If something scares me I find it difficult to stop feeling scared. (rev)	Y	S	N
48. If I get scared, other children help me stop feeling scared	Y	S	N

49. The person who helps me the most when I am feeling scared is: (please circle)

My mum My Dad My teacher My friends Myself

Sadness

50. When I am sad, I can think of something to cheer me up	Y	S	N
51. When I am sad, a grown-up can help me to cheer up	Y	S	N
52. When I am sad, I can stop myself from becoming too sad	Y	S	N
53. When I am sad, other children can cheer me up	Y	S	N
54. When I am sad, I try to think through the things that made me sad	Y	S	N
55. When I am sad, I can decide how much I want to show my sadness	Y	S	N
56. When I am sad, I can think of something to stop me from staying sad	Y	S	N
57. When I am sad, I usually try to cheer up by talking with a friend	Y	S	N

58. The person who helps me the most when I am feeling sad is: (please circle)

My mum My Dad My teacher My friends Myself

59. How important do you think emotions are?

Very important Kind of important Not important

60. Why - what do they help with?

Scoring for the Child Self-Report

For the first two sections score as follows:

Hardly ever (1 point) Sometimes (2 points) Often (3 points) – unless item is reversed (rev)

	Coping Difficulties	**Emotional Self-efficacy**
Anger	1, 3, 5, 7 (max = 12)	8
Sadness	1, 3, 5, 7 (max = 12)	20

High emotional self-efficacy score = High self-efficacy

High coping scores = High levels of coping difficulties

Emotion regulation checklist (amended from Rydell et al., 2007)

For the next sections score as follows:

Yes (0 points) Sometimes (1 point) No (2 points) – unless item is reversed (rev)

	Total: ER skills
CEMS Anger and Sadness	2, 8, 4, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19
Anger	
Exuberance	1, 2, 3, 4 (reversed), 5 (reversed), 6, 7 (reversed)
Fear	1, 2, 3 (reversed), 4, 5 (reversed), 6 (reversed), 7
Sadness	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

High score for Total = LOWER ABILITY

Identified Support:

1 = Parents; 2 = Peers; 3 = My own strength; 4 = Other

APPENDIX F

Emotion regulation checklist – Parent Version

Please could you answer a few questions about your child. The answers will be treated confidentially.

Parent Name: .....

Name of Child: .....

Is your child on the SEN Register? (please circle)

School Action School Action Plus Statement

Does your child have any additional educational needs (please specify if possible)

.....

.....

Directions: Please tell us how often each description is true for this child (please tick the box you feel is most accurate for describing your child).

	Never true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true
1. Can recover after stressful experiences				
2. Has rapid shifts in mood				
3. Can acknowledge unpleasant experiences				
4. Overreacts to minor frustrations				
5. Is warm and responsive				
6. Shows recognition of others' feelings				
7. Develops genuine and close relationships				
8. Tends to be rigidly repetitive in stress				
9. Is inappropriate in showing emotion				
10. Tends to go to pieces under stress				

Emotion regulation checklist – Teacher Version

Child's Name ..... Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

Directions: Please tell us how often each description is true for this child.

	Never true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true
1. Can recover after stressful experiences – rev				
2. Has rapid shifts in mood				
3. Can acknowledge unpleasant experiences – rev				
4. Overreacts to minor frustrations				
5. Is warm and responsive – rev				
6. Shows recognition of others' feelings – rev				
7. Develops genuine and close relationships - rev				
8. Tends to be rigidly repetitive in stress				
9. Is inappropriate in showing emotive behaviour				
10. Tends to go to pieces under stress				

Scoring:

Never True (0 points), Sometimes true (1 point), Often true (2 points), Almost always true (3 points) – unless items are reversed (rev)

Coping strategies used

Participant	Anger Strategies	Sadness Strategies	Emotion regulation group (2 = poor 0 = average 1 = good)	Emotional self-efficacy skill (1 = low, 4 = high)	Theme and sub-theme EF = emotion focussed PF = problem focussed
1	My mum forgiving me	My Mum and Dad cheer me up (sometimes!)	2.00	12.00	EF Emotional support
2	Sitting down and watching TV	Sitting down and watching TV	.00	28.00	E.F Distraction
3	Doo nuthink	Nuthink	.00	19.00	E.F Avoidance
4	Talking to my friends and family, going on my ipad and staying calm	Speaking about it to my friends and family	1.00	31.00	P.F Instrumental coping and E.F Distraction
5	Talking to my mum and dad	Speaking to my mum, my dad or my friends	1.00	31.00	E.F Emotional support
6	I lock myself in my room	my friends	2.00	14.00	E.F Avoidance and emotional support
7	My dog	My dog	1.00	30.00	E.F

					Distraction
8	My rabbit	My friends	2.00	10.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
9	Play with my friends	Play with my friends	.00	23.00	E.F Distraction and emotional support
10	Pinky (my teddy) I hug her	Being alone for a while	.00	21.00	E.F distraction, emotional support and avoidance
11	I cuddle my Mum	I cuddle my Mum	.00	21.00	E.F emotional intervention
12	On my bunk bed I punch a extreamly humungus cution	looking at happy photos of me and my parents	.00	25.00	E.F venting and distraction
13	Play outside with my dog	Speaking to my friends	.00	24.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
14	Letting friends play	Practice my poptastic dance in my room	.00	29.00	E.F distraction
15	My mum helps me	My Mum helps me	.00	20.00	P.F Instrumental intervention
16	My pillow	Drawing, watching TV or talking to myself	2.00	12.00	E.F Venting and distraction
17	To sit down and	Talk to my	1.00	24.00	P.F

	think it through	Mum about it			instrumental coping and instrumental support
18	My Mum mainly but sometimes my Dad	Going to sit with my friends or playing with them	.00	22.00	E.F Emotional, support and distraction
19	When I see friends	When my friends come over to me to say whats wrong and I say whats wrong	.00	18.00	E.F emotional support And PF instrumental support
20	My mum talking to me	Mum	.00	22.00	E.F emotional support
21	Keeping calm and crying a bit	Cuddling my teddys and reading	.00	27.00	E.F emotional intervention, distraction
22	I tell my Mum or Dad about what made me angry and they will sort it out	Cuddling my Mum or Dad	.00	23.00	P.F instrumental intervention and E.F emotional support
23	I go to my bedroom, lie on my bed and cuddle my favourite toy	My Mum and Dad and sometimes my favourite cuddly toy	.00	25.00	E.F avoidance, distraction and emotional support
24	Usually looking at something a long distance away	Doing something different to get my mind off it	.00	26.00	E.F Distraction
25	My tangle helps	Watching TV	2.00	17.00	E.F distraction

26	Going to bed and listening to my CD	Going to bed and listening to my CD	.00	16.00	E.F Distraction
27	Being on my own	Being on my own, Rainbow - my teddy and being in my room, talking to someone about it	.00	20.00	E.F Avoidance, Distraction and P.F instrumental support
28	Doing something on my own	Going on my game console	.00	22.00	E.F avoidance and distraction
29	My teddy's	My teddy's	2.00	17.00	E.F distraction
30	Being on my own	The comfort of my Mum or being in my own space	2.00	18.00	E.F avoidance and emotional support
31	I talk to my Mum	My dog cheers me up	.00	23.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
32	Play my Xbox 360	Put music on or go out with friends	.00	17.00	E.F Distraction
33	Music, being alone	Music, being alone	2.00	13.00	E.F avoidance and distraction
34	Fidaling with things, brak things	Hide and talk to myself	2.00	19.00	E.F Venting and avoidance
35	some sweets or art or other things that I really like	Funny faces and funny things	.00	25.00	E.F Distraction
36	Going outside	Funny things	.00	24.00	E.F

	and getting rid of my energy				Distraction
37	My friends	My mum and friends	.00	24.00	E.F emotional support
38	Don't know	Friends	.00	22.00	E.F emotional support
39	Cold things, cold water/ ice	Happy stuff	.00	26.00	E.F Distraction
40	not answered	not answered	.00	23.00	Unanswered
41	Lying on the sofa away from the sorce of my anger watching TV	Lying in my bed listening to Taylor Swift with a drink	.00	26.00	E.F Avoidance and Distraction
42	Fiddling with my hand	Being in my room alone	.00	25.00	E.F Distraction and Avoidance
43	putting my face in my pillow	to play on my DS	2.00	20.00	E.F Avoidance and Distraction
44	I play with my toys and forget about it	I just calm down by myself	.00	15.00	E.F Avoidance and Distraction
45	My teddy's and a CD called Paddington Bear	My teddy's and a cd called paddington bear	.00	20.00	E.F Distraction
46	Most of the time I just stop getting angry suddenly	I stop thinking about it	.00	24.00	E.F cognitive re-structuring and distraction
47	Not much	Nothing really	.00	21.00	E.F denial

48	Go up to my room and watch TV	Try and go to sleep	.00	26.00	E.F distraction and avoidance
49	I talk to myself and my teddies a bit	Talking with my mum and resting on the sofa	.00	27.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
50	Lie in bed and read	Reading	.00	24.00	E.F distraction
51	Thinking about my friends and the good times I've had with them	Thinking about my friends and the good times we have had together	.00	16.00	E.F cognitive restructuring
52	I normally get sent to my room to calm down but if I was angry because of something at school I would tell Mum	Normally a hug from mum or going to bed early	.00	24.00	P.F instrumental intervention E.F Emotional support
53	Thinking and cutting out posters	Thinking	.00	24.00	E.F cognitive restructuring and distraction
54	Often crying a lot and hugging my mum and dad. I also think about it positively but that doesn't always work	Talking about it with my friends or parents or hugging (it always works!)	.00	22.00	E.F emotional intervention, emotional support and cognitive re-structuring
55	When I am alone I calm down quickly	When I am sad I do things I enjoy doing	1.00	30.00	E.F avoidance, distraction
56	Lying on my bed just chilling	I like talking things through	.00	27.00	E.F emotional

					support
57	Reading my book	Talking to someone about it	2.00	15.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
58	My teddies	Teddies	.00	22.00	E.F distraction
59	My friends make me happy	My Mum plays games with me	.00	21.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
60	Sitting down	Sitting down	.00	26.00	E.F distraction
61	Staying by myself	Being with people who are my friends	.00	22.00	E.F emotional support
62			.00	19.00	Unanswered
63	People saying dose it matter or what would happen if someone was angry at me and how I would feel.	Talk to people or have a cuddle with my mummy	.00	22.00	E.F emotional support
64	I normally go and lie down in my bed or go somewhere calm	To go somewhere calm and sometimes in a dark place	.00	22.00	E.F avoidance
65	When I am angry I wach TV	Hamster	.00	19.00	E.F avoidance and distraction
66	I go into my room and lay on my bed listening to the birds outside or put on peaceful music	I go up to my room or I go outside and swing on my swing	1.00	25.00	E.F distraction

67	Talk to someone	Talk to someone	2.00	12.00	E.F emotional support
68	Sit in my room and stare at the wall	I stare at my favourite toys, stroke them (the animals)	.00	20.00	E.F avoidance
69	I have a refreshing drink	My family make me feel a lot better because they comfort me	.00	19.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
70	My guinea pigs	Thinking about having a dog	.00	21.00	E.F distraction
71	Talk with my mum	Talk with my mum	2.00	17.00	E.F emotional support
72	I try and not be angry	Enjoy with everybody else	2.00	13.00	E.F cognitive restructuring and emotional support
73	Being alone	Talking to my Mum and Dad	.00	17.00	E.F emotional support
74	Lie in bed and try and calm down	Try to think of something else	.00	21.00	E.F avoidance and distraction
75	I punch a pillow or something else to calm me down	Going away for 5 minutes	.00	25.00	E.F venting and avoidance
76	My teddy bear	My teddy bear	.00	25.00	E.F distraction
77	My family	My family	.00	26.00	E.F emotional support

78	Chocolate or colouring	Teddy bear	.00	23.00	E,F distraction
79	Go up to my room and sit on my bed alone, trying to calm down	Sit on my bed	.00	23.00	E.F distraction and avoidance
80	Sitting on my bed alone	Sitting on my bed	.00	24.00	E.F avoidance
81	Playing	Playing with my toys when I'm sad like my teddy	.00	25.00	E.F distraction
82	People like my mum and dad calm me down	Thinking of stuff a like doing a lot	.00	28.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
83	Lay down	My family	.00	20.00	E.F avoidance and emotional support
84	Going places with my friends and keeping my distance from my brother	Playing with friends, doing something and taking my mind off it	.00	25.00	E.F emotional support and distraction
85	I go to my room and read	Having fun to forget about it	.00	24.00	E.F distraction
86	I just think why I am angry and try to sort it out	I think of really good times in my life	.00	22.00	P.F instrumental coping and E.F cognitive restructuring
87	I go up to my room or just walk away	Talking to someone , my friends or a	.00	23.00	E.F avoidance and emotional

		teacher			support
88	My Mum comes to find me and talk to me	My mum helps me feel better	.00	16.00	E.F emotional support
89	Going somewhere with my friends	Listening to music and lying in bed	.00	20.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
90	I lie down and read a book and sometimes talk to my mum about it	I talk about it and relax by watching TV	.00	24.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
91	Telling someone	Telling someone	.00	19.00	E.F emotional support or P.F instrumental support
92	Clench my fist	Playing outside is what helps me feel better	.00	25.00	E.F venting and distracting
93	Play football	Playing football	.00	25.00	E.F distraction
94	Play football on my own	Playing football	.00	20.00	E.F distraction
95	Talking to other people	Talking to other people	.00	21.00	E.F emotional support
96	Punching a pillow in my room	Talking to other people	.00	25.00	E.F venting and emotional support
97	I do stuff that I like to do	Try and forget about what is making me sad	.00	27.00	E.F distraction
98	When I'm angry	When I see my	.00	19.00	P.F

	my friends sit me down and say "it's ok just tell me what's wrong and I'll help you"	Dad and friends also my Nan it makes me feel like I don't have to keep it in			instrumental support
99	Art, holding my chemeleion, [unching a pillow	Same as when I am angry	.00	21.00	E.F distraction
100	What helps me calm down is a nice hug from my mum or talk to my friends	What helps me feel better is sometimes going out for pizza or ice cream with my Mum or my friends	.00	25.00	E.F distraction and emotional support
101	I play lego and try not to think violent thoughts	I play on the 'wii' or I play lego	.00	21.00	E.F distraction
102	I think of something I like	I think of something happy and nice	.00	23.00	E.F cognitive restructuring
103	Watching telly or playing with brothers/ friends helps me calm down	Playing fun games helps me feel better	.00	26.00	E.F distraction
104	I have a relaxing bath or I count to 10 slowly and take a few deep breaths	Let all the tears come out and for someone to cheer me up or I talk and I sing	.00	19.00	E.F emotional intervention, distraction and emotional support
105	I try to forget about what makes me angry and I think of happy things	Crying helps me feel better when I'm sad and telling people	.00	25.00	E.F distraction, cognitive restructuring and emotional

					intervention
106	Punch a pillow, talk to someone, slam a door	Cry, talk to someone	2.00	16.00	E.F venting, emotional intervention

APPENDIX H

Importance of emotions: Ratings and reasons given by the children

Rate how important feelings are and give a reason why – what do they help with?

Participant	Rating for importance of feelings	Reason given
1	1	I'm not sure
2	1	We would bee mishreble
3	2	I don't know
4	1	Because, if someone is bullying you then if you don't show it know no one can stop it from carrying on. And if your sad people can try to cheer you up so sometimes you have to show it
5	1	If you are sad you can get over it or if you get angry then it might not carry on
6	2	So you can be happy, sad, angry
7	2	To make us feel better
8	2	So we feel better
9	1	If you didn't have emotions when someone hurts us they might not know and keep on hurting us!
10	1	If we didn't have any, people wouldn't know how you were feeling
11	2	Because you can tell people how your feeling
12	1	Personal confidence
13	1	They show you how sad other people are
14	0	Don't know
15	1	It will be a boring weld because evryone will be mizbell
16	1	Because otherwise you wouldn't be sad when your mum or dad or someone you know dies
17	2	They help to make you show your feelings
18	1	So we are happier in life and can do fun things instead of being in my room sulking!

19	1	I don't know
20	1	I don't know
21	1	If we didn't have feelings then people wouldn't know when you need help
22	1	My emotions help me with telling people things with out having to tell them whats wrong
23	1	If you are angry and you didn't show it no one could help you to stop being angry
24	2	If you're happy, you're usually with someone and something good has happened. Same when you're sad or angry.
25	1	They help with growing up
26	1	I think they are important because they help you understand why you feel how you do
27	1	Dealing with stuff at school, dealing with stuff at home
28	2	They don't help they are just there
29	2	If you are crying they help you to stop crying and feeling sad
30	1	Because sometimes things can get worse
31	2	I don't know
32	1	With behaviour
33	3	Not important because I hate using them
34	2	To make yourself sad, play computer
35	1	Don't know
36	1	They help me be happy
37	1	To show how you are feeling
38	2	They help you in the future
39	1	If you show your emotions people can help you depending on the way you feel
40	1	not answered
41	1	Because they help people notice what kind of feeling I have without me having to explain

42	1	Because then people know if your happy or sad and it helps you get your feelings wright
43	1	To show others you feel sad and other emotions
44	2	They can show people what you are feeling
45	1	It would be strange not to have emotions it would be a bit boring
46	1	They help with what you do
47	2	Not much, I don't really think about it
48	2	To help yourself stop feeling sad
49	2	They help to show what has happened to you
50	1	Lots of things that are bad
51	1	If your sad then someone can help you cheer up, if your angry someone can help you calm down etc...
52	1	They let people know what you feel
53	2	To show what you and other people are thinking
54	1	They help with all sorts of things like school, being at home and other places. I feel that my emotions can get a little out of control but I can control myself easily!
55	1	Emotions are very important because they show how we react to things and they can help us understand things
56	1	They help people know what you are feeling or what you have felt
57	2	I don't really know
58	2	To show how you feel
59	1	They help me calm down a lot
60	2	They help me with things when I am sad
61	1	Sometimes if I am angry I can think of something to make me happy
62	1	I don't know
63	1	Showing other people how you feel and so other people can help
64	1	Because they can show how you feel to others and then I can feel better
65	2	Emotions are important because they help if we want to be cheed up

66	1	They help you to show people what your feeling and they can get people to understand how your feeling but sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to. I think that if we didn't have emotions we would have a hard time because we would have to say we were sad and explain why instead of emotions showing people
67	1	My anger
68	1	Because then you wouldn't have feelings for anyone not even your family
69	1	They keep me happy when I am feeling sad
70	2	Scaredness emotions
71	2	Helping if need it
72	1	Because if someone was sad its important to make them happy
73	2	They help me undestand my friends
74	1	I think feelings are important because it can calm me down, stop feeling sad and stop me from being angry
75	2	They are important otherwise you would never be happy or excited
76	1	They help you express your feelings so an adult can cheer you up
77	1	With homework
78	1	Calming down
79	1	Controlling myself
80	2	Getting through difficult situations
81	1	To show how sad you are in case you are scared and no one knows or something
82	1	They can make you think of stuff that calms you down
83	1	Anger
84	1	Because it makes us who we are
85	2	They help with showing other people how you feel
86	1	They help you with life so other people can understand and help
87	1	They help with everything, emotions are feelings
88	1	To show how we are feeling

89	1	So everyone else can treat you the same feeling you are feeling
90	1	They help you to feel certain things inside like happiness and sadness
91	1	Feeling better
92	1	I don't know
93	1	I cant explain but they are
94	1	There not helpful to me
95	1	If someone died we would not be sad
96	1	If you didn't have emotions you wouldn't feel anything and it would be very hard to get on in life without happiness or getting excited or even being sad
97	2	If someone said something nasty, they could keep doing it if people didn't tell someone
98	2	They help me so I can let everything in my head go out so I fell less emotinal then actully was in the past-tent. And know I fell much better talking about it.
99	2	They show your feelings
100	1	Making friends with new people, makes me feel happy
101	2	They help with letting it out and then I forget about it
102	2	They help with stuff I have emotions on like my family or stuff I like
103	1	Emotions help you decide what you want or not want to do etc. Play football for a team, or it can help you by telling you about other people like if they get too excited when playing certain games or get too upset when you mention something. You see how to make people HAPPY and how to make people SAD. You see what they like and dislike and if they like you. You can see if your friends are angry. I think emotions are very important.
104	1	They help when I am down they would talk soothingly to solve why my emotions are down
105	1	Emotions are very important because they help you get on if we didn't have emotions the world would be dull!! We wouldn't enjoy doing things that we love doing and we wouldn't be interested in doing anything special.
106	1	Making friends, calming down

Thematic analysis – initial codes

Code 1: 'a miserable/dull world without feelings'

We would bee mishreble (P.2)

It will be a boring weld because evryone will be mizbell (P.15)

It would be strange not to have emotions it would be a bit boring (P.45)

If you didn't have emotions you wouldn't feel anything and it would be very hard to get on in life without happiness or getting excited or even being sad (P.96)

Emotions are very important because they help you get on if we didn't have emotions the world would be dull!! We wouldn't enjoy doing things that we love doing and we wouldn't be interested in doing anything special. (P.105)

Code 2: 'To show people how you are feeling'

Because, if someone is bullying you then if you don't show it know no one can stop it from carrying on. And if your sad people can try to cheer you up so sometimes you have to show it (P.4)

If you didn't have emotions when someone hurts us they might not know and keep on hurting us! (P.9)

If we didn't have any, people wouldn't know how you were feeling (P.10)

Because you can tell people how your feeling (P.11)

They help to make you show your feelings (P.17)

If we didn't have feelings then people wouldn't know when you need help (P.21)

My emotions help me with telling people things with out having to tell them whats wrong (P.22)

If you are angry and you didn't show it no one could help you to stop being angry (P.23)

To show how you are feeling (P.37)

If you show your emotions people can help you depending on the way you feel (P.39)

Because they help people notice what kind of feeling I have without me having to explain (P.41)

Because then people know if your happy or sad and it helps you get your feelings wright (P.42)

To show others you feel sad and other emotions (P.43)

They can show people what you are feeling (P.44)

They help to show what has happened to you (P.49)

They let people know what you feel (P.52)

To show what you and other people are thinking (P.53)

Emotions are very important because they show how we react to things and they can help us understand things (P.55)

They help people know what you are feeling or what you have felt (P.56)

To show how you feel (P.58)

Showing other people how you feel and so other people can help (P.63)

Because they can show how you feel to others and then I can feel better (P.64)

They help you to show people what your feeling and they can get people to understand how your feeling but sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to. I think that if we didn't have emotions we would have a hard time because we would have to say we were sad and explain why instead of emotions showing people (P.66)

To show how sad you are in case you are scared and no one knows or something (P.81)

They help with showing other people how you feel (P.85)

To show how we are feeling (P.88)

If someone said something nasty, they could keep doing it if people didn't tell someone (P.97)

They show your feelings (P.99)

Code 3: So people can help you to feel better and get help

Because, if someone is bullying you then if you don't show it know no one can stop it from carrying on. And if your sad people can try to cheer you up so sometimes you have to show it (P.4)

If we didn't have feelings then people wouldn't know when you need help (P.21)

If you are angry and you didn't show it no one could help you to stop being angry (P.23)

If you show your emotions people can help you depending on the way you feel (P.39)

If your sad then someone can help you cheer up, if your angry someone can help you calm down etc... (P.51)

Showing other people how you feel and so other people can help (P.63)

Emotions are important because they help if we want to be cheed up (P.65_

They help you express your feelings so an adult can cheer you up (P.76)

They help you with life so other people can understand and help (P.86)

So everyone else can treat you the same feeling you are feeling (P.89)

If someone said something nasty, they could keep doing it if people didn't tell someone (P.97)

They help me so I can let everything in my head go out so I fell less emotinal then actully was in the past-tent. And know I fell much better talking about it. (P.98)

Emotions are very important because they help you get on if we didn't have emotions the world would be dull!! We wouldn't enjoy doing things that we love doing and we wouldn't be interested in doing anything special. (P.105)

Code 4: Intrinsically important - feelings

So you can be happy, sad, angry (P.6)

To make yourself sad, play computer (P.34)

I think feelings are important because it can calm me down, stop feeling sad and stop me from being angry (P.74)

They are important otherwise you would never be happy or excited (P.75)

They help you to feel certain things inside like happiness and sadness (P.90)

Code 5: Emotions help us 'feel better' – calm down and be happy

To make us feel better (P.7)

So we feel better (P.8)

So we are happier in life and can do fun things instead of being in my room sulking! (P.18)

If you're happy, you're usually with someone and something good has happened. Same when you're sad or angry. (P.24)

If you are crying they help you to stop crying and feeling sad (P.29)

They help me be happy (P.36)

They help with what you do (P.46)

To help yourself stop feeling sad (P.48)

They help me calm down a lot (P.59)

They help me with things when I am sad (P.60)

Because they can show how you feel to others and then I can feel better (P.64)

They keep me happy when I am feeling sad (P.69)

Helping if need it (P.71)

They can make you think of stuff that calms you down (P.82)

They help with everything, emotions are feelings (P.87)

Feeling better (P.91)

Making friends with new people, makes me feel happy (P.100)

They help when I am down they would talk soothingly to solve why my emotions are down (P.104)

Code 6: Maturity, Identity and decision-making

Personal confidence (P.12)

They help with growing up (P.25)

Because it makes us who we are (P.84)

Emotions help you decide what you want or not want to do etc. Play football for a team, or it can help you by telling you about other people like if they get too excited when playing certain games or get too upset when you mention something. You see how to make people HAPPY and how to make people SAD. You see what they like and dislike and if they like you. You can see if your friends are angry. I think emotions are very important. (P.103)

Code 7: To identify how others are feeling

They show you how sad other people are (P.13)

To show what you and other people are thinking (P.53)

Because if someone was sad its important to make them happy (P.72)

They help me undestand my friends (P.73)

Emotions help you decide what you want or not want to do etc. Play football for a team, or it can help you by telling you about other people like if they get too excited when playing certain games or get too upset when you mention something. You see how to make people HAPPY and how to make people SAD. You see what they like and dislike and if they like you. You can see if your friends are angry. I think emotions are very important. (P.103)

Making friends, calming down (P.106)

Code 8: Wouldn't feel anything if something good or bad happened – 'numb'

Because otherwise you wouldn't be sad when your mum or dad or someone you know dies (P.16)

Because then you wouldn't have feelings for anyone not even your family (P.68)

If someone died we would not be sad (P.95)

If you didn't have emotions you wouldn't feel anything and it would be very hard to get on in life without happiness or getting excited or even being sad (P.96)

Code 9: Release and expression

So we are happier in life and can do fun things instead of being in my room sulking! (P.18)

Sometimes if I am angry I can think of something to make me happy (P.61)

They can make you think of stuff that calms you down (P.82)

They help me so I can let everything in my head go out so I fell less emotinal then actully was in the past-tent. And know I fell much better talking about it. (P.98)

They help with letting it out and then I forget about it (P.101)

Code 10: Easier than talking/ explaining verbally

My emotions help me with telling people things with out having to tell them whats wrong (P.22)

Because they help people notice what kind of feeling I have without me having to explain (P.41)

They help you to show people what your feeling and they can get people to understand how your feeling but sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to. I think that if we didn't have emotions we would have a hard time because we would have to say we were sad and explain why instead of emotions showing people (P.66)

Code 11: To understand behaviour and other people's actions

I think they are important because they help you understand why you feel how you do (P.26)

Emotions are very important because they show how we react to things and they can help us understand things (P.55)

They help people know what you are feeling or what you have felt (P.56)

They help you to show people what your feeling and they can get people to understand how your feeling but sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to. I think that if we didn't have emotions we would have a hard time because we would have to say we were sad and explain why instead of emotions showing people (P.66)

They help me undestand my friends (P.73)

They help you with life so other people can understand and help (P.86)

They help me so I can let everything in my head go out so I fell less emotinal then actully was in the past-tent. And know I fell much better talking about it. (P.98)

Code 12: Coping with environment – school, home, friends and social expectations

Dealing with stuff at school, dealing with stuff at home (P.27)

They help with all sorts of things like school, being at home and other places. I feel that my emotions can get a little out of control but I can control myself easily! (P.54)

They help you to show people what your feeling and they can get people to understand how your feeling but sometimes you can choose not to show emotions if you don't want to. I think that if we didn't have emotions we would have a hard time because we would have to say we were sad and explain why instead of emotions showing people (P.66)

Getting through difficult situations (P.80)

Making friends with new people, makes me feel happy (P.100)

They help with stuff I have emotions on like my family or stuff I like (P.102)

Emotions help you decide what you want or not want to do etc. Play football for a team, or it can help you by telling you about other people like if they get too excited when playing certain games or get too upset when you mention something. You see how to make people HAPPY and how to make people SAD. You see what they like and dislike and if they like you. You can see if your friends are angry. I think emotions are very important. (P.103)

Making friends, calming down (P.106)

Code 13: Regulation of emotions – behaviour, fear and anger, negative emotions becoming more socially appropriate

Because sometimes things can get worse (P.30)

With behaviour (P.32)

Because then people know if your happy or sad and it helps you get your feelings wright (P.42)

Lots of things that are bad (P.50)

They help with all sorts of things like school, being at home and other places. I feel that my emotions can get a little out of control but I can control myself easily! (P.54)

My anger (P.67)

Scaredness emotions (P.70)

With homework (P.77)

Calming down (P.78)

Controlling myself (P.79)

Anger (P.83)

Making friends, calming down (P.106)

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

T 4-16

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year.

Child's Name ..... Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often lies or cheats	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Thinks things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please turn over - there are a few more questions on the other side

Overall, do you think that this child has difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes- minor difficulties	Yes- definite difficulties	Yes- severe difficulties
☐	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered "Yes", please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

- How long have these difficulties been present?

Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties upset or distress the child?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties interfere with the child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
PEER RELATIONSHIPS	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLASSROOM LEARNING	☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the class as a whole?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

Signature ..... Date .....

Class Teacher/Form Tutor/Head of Year/Other (please specify:)

Thank you very much for your help

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

P 4-16

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months.

Child's Name ..... Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often lies or cheats	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Thinks things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Please turn over - there are a few more questions on the other side

Overall, do you think that your child has difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes- minor difficulties	Yes- definite difficulties	Yes- severe difficulties
☐	☐	☐	☐

If you have answered "Yes", please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

- How long have these difficulties been present?

Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties upset or distress your child?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties interfere with your child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
HOME LIFE	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIENDSHIPS	☐	☐	☐	☐
CLASSROOM LEARNING	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEISURE ACTIVITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐

- Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the family as a whole?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
☐	☐	☐	☐

Signature ..... Date .....

Mother/Father/Other (please specify:)

Thank you very much for your help