Discussions about emotion—whether by anthropologists, psychologists, or linguists—often concern differences among types of emotions. At issue are questions such as: How to characterize happiness versus sadness versus anger; how to distinguish such basic emotions from more complex, derived ones like guilt or schadenfreude; whether Tahitians ever experience something like guilt or Americans ever experience the apparently commonplace Japanese emotion of amae; whether emotion categories are natural kinds or social constructions? An assumption underlying many, if not all, of these discussions is that emotions, generically, refer to a person's internal experiential feelings, whatever their specific stripe. According to this presupposition, emotions are internal, mental, psychological states; call this a mentalistic construal of emotion. A mentalistic construal of emotion is common in scientific discussion and is also obvious in the everyday emotion conception of Western European and North American cultures and languages. Indeed, the common scientific assumption no doubt reflects this everyday construal. An intriguing question for this volume, therefore, focused as it is on everyday emotion understanding across a variety of different languages and cultures, concerns this generic characterization: Do all cultures conceive of persons as having internal emotional experiences? Do all folk recognize the existence of some such psychological states, regardless of the specific emotion categories they do and do not honor? Or, alternatively, are there cultures that refer to various facial expressions, affective situations, and "emotional" reactions without understanding those in terms of inner, subjective feelings?

I cannot address this question, at least not directly, but will address instead a related, developmental question: In English-speaking culture, which certainly construes emotions in a mentalistic fashion, when do children begin to understand emotions in internal, psychological terms? The answer to this developmental question is of interest in its own right and can shed at least some light on the cross-cultural question as well. Suppose on the one hand, that our children only come to appreciate emotion's inner subjective side after an extended immersion in our
culture's mentalistic, psychological, subjective approach to persons. Suppose, for example, they begin by mistaking emotions and emotion terms as referring to merely the external behavioral properties of persons and situations, and that an understanding of emotions as internal, subjective feelings only appears late in development. If a mentalistic understanding of emotional experience is the endproduct of extensive development and socialization in our own case, then it is easy to imagine alternative cultures with a very different sort of endproduct. Suppose, on the other hand, that very young children begin the process of emotion understanding with the assumption that persons have internal emotional lives. Then it is easier to imagine that social understanding in all cultures might honor this assumption in one form or another. Even on this alternative, children would be left with sizable developmental tasks, such as that of learning their specific community's categories and terms for emotion types, their community's understanding of the importance of and strategies for emotion expression and emotion regulation, and so on. In short, this would still leave considerable room for a wide variety of specific emotion ethnotheories, but theories all based on the existence of internal emotional experiences.

Asking this developmental question highlights emotion's status as a mental phenomenon, in our ethnotheory. And indeed, in this chapter I will not limit myself to consideration of children's understanding of emotional states, but will consider their understanding of mental states more broadly. But I begin with emotion.

**Emotion**

The nature of young English-speaking children's understanding of emotion is controversial. Crudely put, two contrasting descriptions have been advanced, along the lines I have just described. One description portrays young children, 2-, 3-, 4-year-olds, as generally confused or ignorant of emotions as internal psychological states, and thus characterizes such young children as mistakenly taking emotion terms to refer to external aspects of persons' actions, appearances, or situations. For example, a large literature exists that demonstrates that by age 3 or 4 years children understand a good deal about the situations that elicit various emotions (e.g., Barden, Zelko, Duncan, & Masters, 1980; Borke, 1971; Harris, Olthof, Meerum Terwogt, & Hardman, 1987; Trabasso, Stein, & Johnson, 1981). Young English-speaking children evidence substantial knowledge about typical events, such as birthdays, large dogs, and wrapped-up presents, that elicit emotions such as happiness, fear, and surprise respectively. Underlying these findings is a conceptual possibility (see, e.g., Harris & Olthof, 1982; Harris, 1989)–the young child's understanding of emotions may be confined to the notion that certain situations simply elicit corresponding emotional reactions (e.g., birthdays make you happy). Call this a situationist understanding of emotion. In a situationist understanding, emotional reactions are viewed as objective in the sense that situations affect everyone similarly. Birthdays are happy events, everyone having a birthday will be happy, and thus the attractiveness of birthdays resides more in the