

REVIEW OF A CONSTRUCT OF EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

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Abstract. In this paper, I will address the theoretical construct of emotional awareness, based on the model developed by Lane, R.D. and Schwartz, G.E. (1987). First I will describe the theoretical conceptualization of emotional awareness as well as the instrument used to measure the construct (ie: the Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale), then I will discuss some research-relevant issues pertaining to the construct and I will conclude with an overall critique of model.

Key words: emotional awareness, Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale, Lane, R.D. and Schwartz, G.E.

The concept of emotional awareness

Lane & Schwartz (1987) view the overall domain of emotions as comprising the physiological, experiential and behavioral components. They view the experiential component of emotion as the most complex and critically important from a clinical perspective, yet the most difficult to research. The model of emotional awareness they developed addresses specifically the experiential (i.e., feeling) part of emotions. The authors use the words “emotional experience” and “emotional awareness” interchangeably, although they specify that the latter refers to the conscious part of emotional experience. The model was primarily developed in order to assess individual differences in the experience of emotion. The authors contend that, while a cognitive-developmental paradigm was used in various theories about ego development, object representations, self concept, moral reasoning, etc, no such paradigm has been applied yet to the domain of emotional experience.

The authors’ conceptualization of emotional awareness (Lane& Schwartz, 1987) is based on Piaget’s and Werner’s cognitive-developmental theories. Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development (i.e., sensory-motor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational) spanning the period from infancy to late adolescence. These cognitive stages represent structures that organize one’s knowledge about external world. Lane &Schwartz (1987) point out that Piaget was not so much interested in the content of one’s knowledge, but in the underlying mechanisms (i.e., structures) that enable one’s specific type of knowledge about the external world. Thus, in the authors’ view, Piaget’s stages of

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