**Colleague Ivelis Response to Discussion 1 Week 1**

**Traditional Learning Theories**

          This week’s readings focus on the classical and operant conditioning theories which were proposed by Pavlov and Skinner. Both theories are used in the study of behavioral psychology. Classical conditioning (Pavlov’s theory) refers to a learning process that involves the use of two different stimuli to elicit the same involuntary response, such as when Pavlov’s dog learned to associate the sound of a bell ringing with food and began to salivate (McSweeney& Murphy, 2014). Operant conditioning (Skinner’s theory) refers to a method of learning based on rewards and punishments where the individual associates behavior with either a positive or negative consequence. It can be said that classical conditioning is associated with passive learning while operant conditioning is associated with active learning (McSweeney& Murphy, 2014).

            Both Pavlov and Skinner made great contributions to the field of psychology. Pavlov’s research showed that not all behaviors stem from the subconscious, while Skinner revealed that some behaviors are linked to personal experience. Both theories maintain that behaviors can be attributed to external factors, which is helpful when assisting individuals with problems that are directly caused by association.

            Behaviorists believe that psychology should focus on outcomes that can be observed, measured, and changed by external factors. Skinner discovered individuals may respond differently to a particular stimulus based on the absence of factors such as parental involvement during development. Pavlov discovered that behaviors can diminish or completely fade away when the expected outcome is no longer presented (the constant sound of the bell, but no food).

            Both Pavlov and Skinner made significant contributions that brought about changes in the field of behavioral psychology. Of the two, Pavlov’s research was the most controversial. Pavlov took many risks by performing artificial research, yet he argued that some ecological validity must be sacrificed when studying complicated reflexes and that the results would still be valid and credible. The American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct serves as a guideline for individuals in scientific and educational roles (Bersoff, 2003). The rules established by the APA concerning the conduct of psychologists are enforceable. Both Pavlov’s and Skinner’s research would be deemed unethical by APA standards because they do not adhere to set rules and principles when performing their experiments.

            For many years, it was assumed that personality could be determined based on physical appearance. Over the years, this idea evolved, and it was found that physical appearance can be misleading and is just one factor that can be used to determine an individual’s personality. There are now many tools that are used in determining personality type; the most common being personality assessments that also assist in predicting behaviors. Pavlov’s and Skinner’s research designs have evolved, but the foundations they set still assist with understanding and analyzing behaviors through personal interaction.

References

Bersoff, D. N. (2003). Ethical conflicts in psychology. American Psychological Association.

McSweeney, F. K., & Murphy, E. S. (Eds.). (2014). The Wiley Blackwell handbook of operant and classical conditioning. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/