

Promoting International Awareness of Psychological Research and Updating Course Material  
through Conference Summaries

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Conferences are excellent avenues for disseminating the latest psychological research. Unfortunately, the amount of information available at conferences is often overwhelming. One of the questions my advisor in graduate school would always ask me after a conference is "what is the take home message from this conference?" After posing the question we would spend some time discussing what each of us felt were the key findings and what some of the research trends were in the conference. This kind of discussion helped to summarize the vast amount of information gained through conference attendance into a manageable amount of information that could be readily applied in our own research. It also helped provide breadth since we did not always go to the same sessions. As a result, I have always tried to summarize the key points and research trends of conferences I attend into several short statements. I have found that the conference summary not only benefits my own understanding and research, but it directly impacts my students as well. When I return from a conference, I present the summary to my students and we discuss the latest research methods and results while drawing connections between the material we covered in class and the current trends in research.

Organizations will sometimes publish conference summaries. The American Psychological Association, for example, publishes summaries and highlights of different sessions of the annual APA convention in the *Monitor*. Similarly, highlights of the APS convention are presented in the *Observer*. Conference summaries are helpful for several reasons. First, these conferences are large enough that it is not possible to attend every session. Therefore, attendees who cannot attend one session because it conflicted with another session they attended, for example, can read a summary of the missed session and be aware of the important points addressed in it. The summaries are also valuable to people who could not attend the conference (e.g., students). However, there are numerous conferences of interest to psychologists that are not summarized in this way although a conference summary is occasionally published in a journal (e.g., Arnold, 1996; Bruhn & Parcel, 1982).

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Fortunately, there are a few journals that designate space for conference summaries. One of these journals is *Voprosy Psichologii*. This journal is one of the leading psychological journals in Russia (it is also one of two Russian journals indexed in PsychInfo). Summarizing a conference for an international journal such as this has at least two potential benefits. First, the conference summary can facilitate personal research and teaching as already discussed. Second, the summary allows researchers from another country to understand the current trends in psychological research conducted in the United States and to see how their own research can either add to or be benefited from that described in the summary. This type of cross-cultural-pollination of ideas can help enhance research and potential international collaboration. Thus, writing something as simple as a conference summary can have a significant impact on personal research, teaching, and international relations and research. We should continually search for opportunities such as this to move closer to a global research community in which international exchanges of research ideas and psychological theory emphasizing different perspectives facilitates understanding of psychological principles worldwide.

#### References

- Arnold, L. E. (1996). Sex differences in ADHD: Conference summary. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 24, 555-569.
- Bruhn, J. G., & Parcel, G. S. (1982). Current knowledge about the health behavior of young children: A conference summary. *Health Education Quarterly*, 2, 238-262.