

### Research Questions

RQ1: How do international graduate students studying in the United States conduct their academic research and writing?

RQ2: How do international graduate students studying in the United States perceive, engage with, and negotiate issues of academic integrity?

### Research Design

Critical incident technique (CIT) is “a research process that invites respondents to identify events (incidents) they deem significant (critical) for a particular purpose” (Kain, 2007, p. 135). In this study, participants were asked to identify a graduate-level assignment that required research and writing, and describe the entire process of completing it from beginning to end.

**Table 1.** Summary of study design.

<b>Study population</b>	31 international graduate students at three universities in North Carolina
<b>Critical incident</b>	A major written assignment that required research in master’s-level coursework
<b>Data collection</b>	In-person semi-structured interviews

### Participants

All study participants were:

- 18 years or older
- classified as international students studying in the U.S.
- non-native speakers of English
- enrolled full-time in a master’s degree program
- enrolled in a degree program in the U.S. for the first time

**Table 2.** Numbers of participants by country of origin.

Country	Number of Participants
China	12
India	6
Colombia	2
Indonesia	2
Benin	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1
France	1
Greece	1
Iran	1
Kazakhstan	1
Russia	1
South Korea	1
Vietnam	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>

### Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Kim (2001) defines cross-cultural adaptation as “the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with this environment” (p. 31). The theory asserts that a human being is an open system, and will “struggle to regain an internal equilibrium in the face of adversarial environmental conditions” (Kim, 2009, p. 244). This human desire to reach a stable relationship with the host environment supports the theory’s stress-adaptation-growth process model.

**Table 3.** Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic with definitions and examples from the study.

	Stress	Adaptation	Growth
Definition	“state of disequilibrium, often manifested in emotional lows of uncertainty, confusion, anxiety, cynicism, hostility, avoidance, or withdrawal” (Kim, 2009, p. 244)	the “active development of new habits,” requires “forward thinking moves, striving to meet the challenges by acting on and responding to the environment” (Kim, 2009, p. 245)	result of “successful, long-term, and cumulative experiences of managing the stress-adaptation dialectic” (Kim, 2009, p. 245)
Marisa (Russia)	“[The biggest challenge was] to find the articles, like to do the search... I was even crying because I wasn't able to find something that I needed.”	“I just asked, you know, my peers to help me. Because I did not know how to do this. Just show me, like the keywords, or what filters they use, and how they do this.”	“But the most fun part I think was, you know, as soon as I got some skills, like how to do research, I really enjoyed it...I was really happy when I found what I needed. I was so glad that I did that.”
Victor (India)	“A student approached me and said, 'I just want to look at your assignment,' ...He took my Excel file, and it turns out that he just changed his name on it and submitted it. And the professor caught it.”	“I had to be straight...So I went to the professor and I told him clearly what happened. So [my classmate] came to me for help, I know I should have helped him by just showing my sheet and not sharing it with him, and that's where I went wrong.”	“But now, at least with this incident, I realized that there is a way in which you can help, and that's the way I should adopt. Giving someone your work is not the best way to help.”

### Common Themes

Participants **learned to use a variety of tools**, particularly when facing stressors related to writing and academic integrity. For example, students used Google Scholar to build citations and YouTube tutorials to develop writing strategies. The students also **sought help from people**, including professors, teaching assistants, and classmates. Many asked American students for assistance with conducting research, writing in English, and citing sources. Librarians might keep these themes in mind when designing outreach and instruction for this group.

### References

Kain, D. L. (2007). Critical incident technique. In S. G. Rogelburg (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 135-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

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