

# Stress, Adaptation, Growth

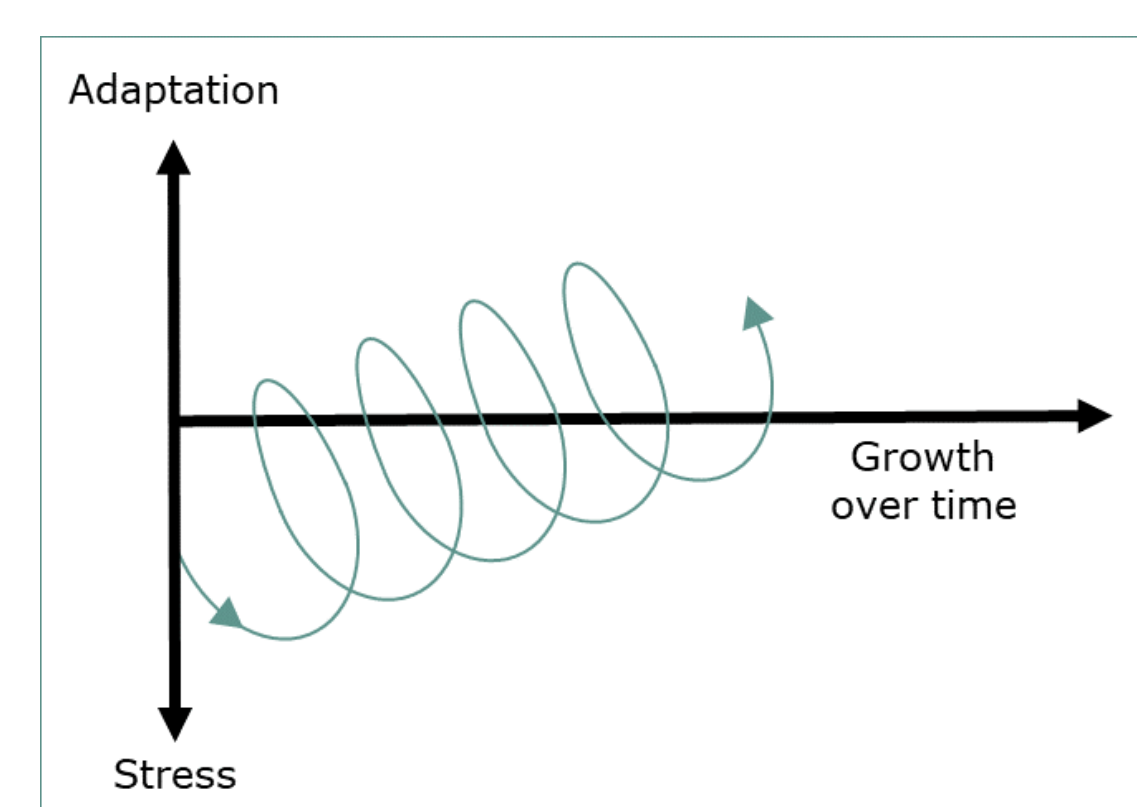
## International Students' Approaches to Scholarly Research & Academic Integrity

### Introduction

During the 2015-2016 academic year, more than one million international students studied in the United States (IIE, 2016). This study explored two research questions:

1. How do international graduate students in the United States conduct their academic research and writing?
2. How do these students perceive, engage with, and negotiate issues of academic integrity?

### Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory

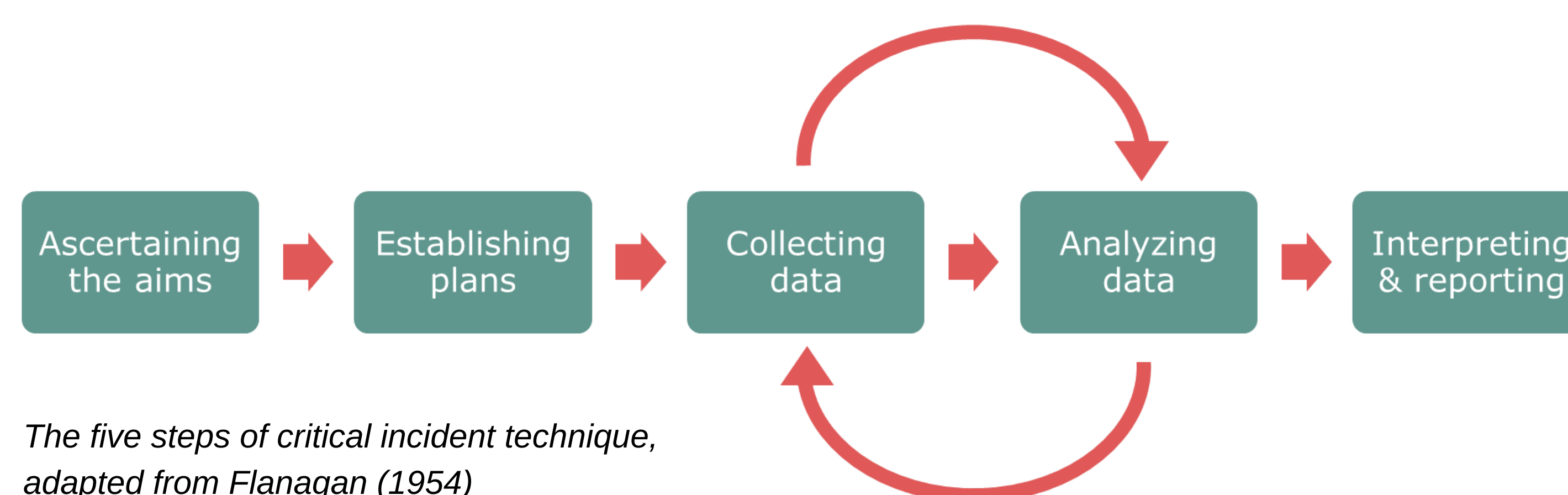


The stress - adaptation - growth dynamic, adapted from Kim (2001, p. 57)

Cross-cultural adaptation is “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” (Kim, 2001). The human desire to reach this stable relationship results in the theory’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic.

### Method

This qualitative, constructivist study was designed using **critical incident technique (CIT)**. CIT, pioneered by Flanagan (1954), is “a research process that invites respondents to identify events (incidents) they deem significant (critical) for a particular purpose” (Kain, 2007, p. 135). Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted with international graduate students at three North Carolina universities. During the interviews, participants described completing a class assignment that required research – the critical incident – and discussed their perceptions of academic integrity in the American context. Participants hailed from a variety of countries, and all were studying in the U.S. for the first time and spoke English as an additional language.



The five steps of critical incident technique, adapted from Flanagan (1954)

### Findings

Stressors related to the research process included identifying a research topic, finding a gap in the literature, reconciling different perspectives in the literature, analyzing data, finding and evaluating sources, and understanding scholarly materials. Participants sought advice from classmates and professors, and took advantage of campus resources like the library, peer tutors and the writing center in order to mitigate these stressors.

Some students spoke of fear when discussing academic integrity. They generally understood the concept, but worried about following the rules properly – especially regarding citations and plagiarism. The students developed a variety of behaviors to support adherence. For example, they described using tools like Mendeley and Google Scholar to help create citations. Students also emphasized the importance of paraphrasing.

All participants faced stressors and demonstrated adaptive behaviors. Their perspectives changed and became more complex. This indicates that information seeking and use for scholarly purposes can play a role in cross-cultural adaptation.

## ⊗ STRESS ⊗

## 💡 ADAPTATION 💡

## 📊 GROWTH 📊

“[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.”

- Marisa, Russia

“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.”

“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.”

- Victor, India

### References

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Amanda Bennett Click  
American University  
[aclick@american.edu](mailto:aclick@american.edu) | [amandaclick.com](http://amandaclick.com)