

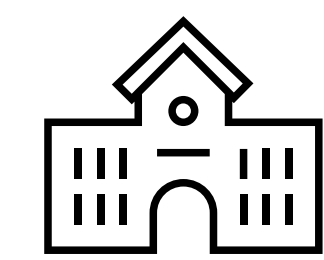
# What brought you here?: Exploring Asian International Undergraduate Women's Experiences for Studying in U.S. Liberal Arts Colleges

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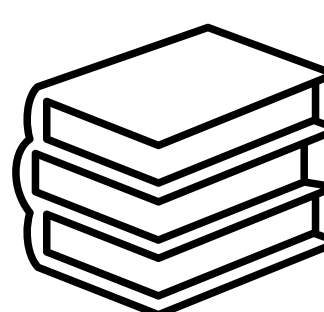
## INTRODUCTION



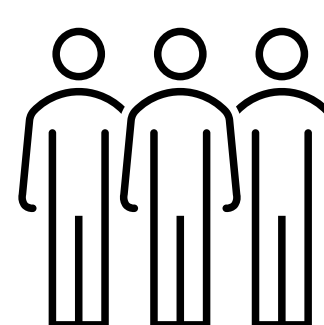
Asian students make up the largest group of international undergraduates in the U.S. (IIE, 2023) and often face unique academic, cultural, and social adjustment challenges (Cho et al., 2023).



U.S. liberal arts colleges emphasize holistic student development through critical thinking, close faculty interaction, and supportive, community-oriented learning environments (Baldwin et al., 2017; Seifert et al., 2008).



Intrinsic motivation consistently predicts higher behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in learning which in turn supports stronger academic performance (Ito & Umemoto, 2022; Howard et al., 2021).



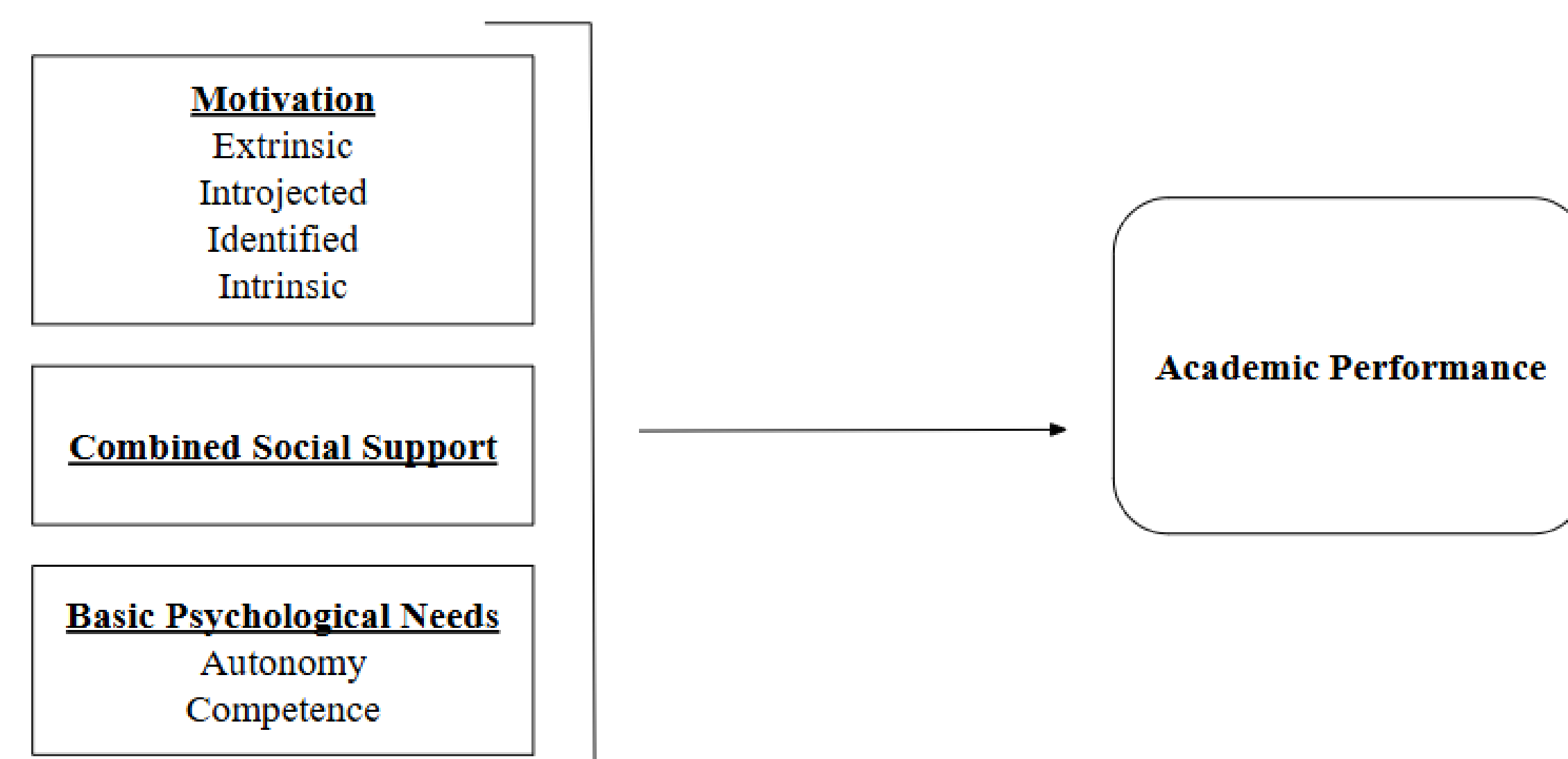
Social support is positively linked to academic performance (Yeo et al., 2025).

It may be especially critical for Asian international college women who often experience reduced support abroad (Constantine et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2025).

## GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

- Most research examines international students broadly, rather than Asian international women specifically (cite needed).
- Existing studies mainly focus on acculturation and adjustment, not on predictors of academic performance (cite needed).
- The liberal arts college context is rarely considered, despite its distinct features (small classes, close faculty relationships) (cite needed).

## HYPOTHESIS

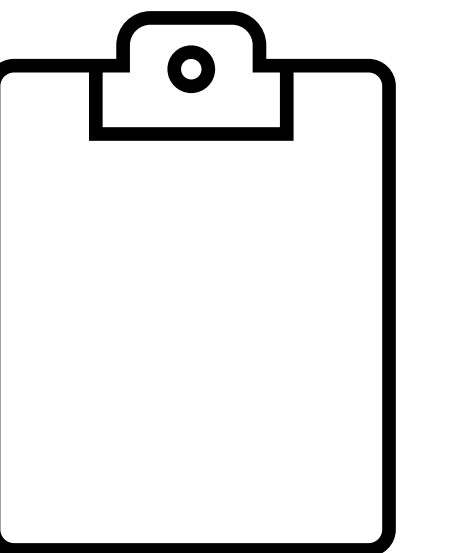


## METHOD

**Participants** → 65 Asian international undergraduate women (including those assigned male or intersex at birth). 91% identified as East Asian. Mean age was 20.25 years. Class year was distributed fairly evenly among freshmen, sophomores, and seniors, with considerably fewer juniors. Majority reported a high GPA in the 3.5–4.0 range ( $n = 45$ ).

### Measures:

- **The Self-Regulation Questionnaire—Study Abroad.** (Chirkov et al., 2007).
- **The Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale.** (Malecki & Demaray, 2002).
- **Basic Psychological Needs.** (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003).
- **The Student Engagement Questionnaire.** (Handelsman et al., 2005).



## BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Extrinsic Motiv.	3.79	.577										
2. Introjected Motiv.	1.42	.740	.885									
3. Identified Motiv.	1.86	.742	-.018	<b>.571**</b>								
4. Intrinsic Motiv.	4.17	.838	.128	<b>-.514**</b>	-.226							
5. Parents	4.71	.695	<b>.461**</b>	<b>-.399**</b>	<b>-.303*</b>	<b>.320**</b>						
6. Friends	4.43	1.155	<b>.345**</b>	<b>-.343**</b>	-.188	<b>.271*</b>	<b>.806**</b>					
7. Professors	4.74	.853	.174	<b>-.305*</b>	<b>-.270*</b>	.203	<b>.721**</b>	<b>.316*</b>				
8. Combined Social Support	4.33	.882	.087	<b>-.551**</b>	<b>-.314*</b>	<b>.772**</b>	<b>.294*</b>	.227	.265			
9. Autonomy	5.01	.827	<b>.304*</b>	-.263	<b>-.365**</b>	<b>.348**</b>	<b>.525**</b>	<b>.444**</b>	<b>.328*</b>	<b>.367**</b>		
10. Competence	5.01	.849	.215	-.256	<b>-.369**</b>	<b>.473**</b>	<b>.496**</b>	<b>.369**</b>	<b>.373**</b>	<b>.477**</b>	<b>.895**</b>	
11. Academic Performance	4.44	.958	.094	<b>-.555**</b>	<b>-.276*</b>	<b>.803**</b>	<b>.326*</b>	<b>.279*</b>	.231	<b>.880**</b>	<b>.293*</b>	<b>.340*</b>

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

## LINEAR REGRESSION

Extrinsic Motivation ( $t = -.248$ )

Introjected Motivation ( $t = -.090$ )

Identified Motivation ( $t = -.336$ )

**Intrinsic Motivation\*\* ( $t = 3.022$ )**

**Combined Social Support\*\*\* ( $t = 6.566$ )**

Autonomy ( $t = 1.982$ )

**Competence\*\* ( $t = -2.713$ )**

Academic Performance

Age, class year, and number of courses were included as control variables.

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the <.001 level. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

## FUTURE STEPS

- Larger and more diverse samples.
- Examine English proficiency, given its influence on social engagement and academic outcomes (Yu et al., 2024; Kim & Lee, 2025).
- Qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups) may better capture cultural values, family expectations, and social dynamics.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Academic success is shaped by the interaction of motivation, social support, and culturally informed practices.
- Liberal arts colleges should integrate these insights into policies, curriculum, and student support programs to create more equitable and supportive environments.