## Research Question

What are the differences in attitudes towards education between first, second, and later generation Chinese Americans? And how do these attitudes manifest in their educational achievements?

Analysis

An analysis of the 1,460 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students within the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002) provides greater insight into these relationships. This study tracks a national sample of students from tenth grade onward, collecting data not only from the students and their school records but also from their parents, teachers, and school administrators. Key variables of interest to the research question are generational status, GPA for all courses taken in the 9th-12th grades, recognition for good grades, the importance of good grades to students, how often grades are discussed with parents, and the importance to friends to get good grades. The aggregation of each of these variables begins to reveal a clear significance of the role generational status plays in academics.

In Figure 1, a line graph of the average GPA score is shown across the three generational statuses (first generation, second generation, third or later generation). The GPA score isn't a one-to-one representation of the raw GPA, but is still able to hold GPA trends. A high GPA score equates to a

GPA Trend Across Generations (Figure 1)
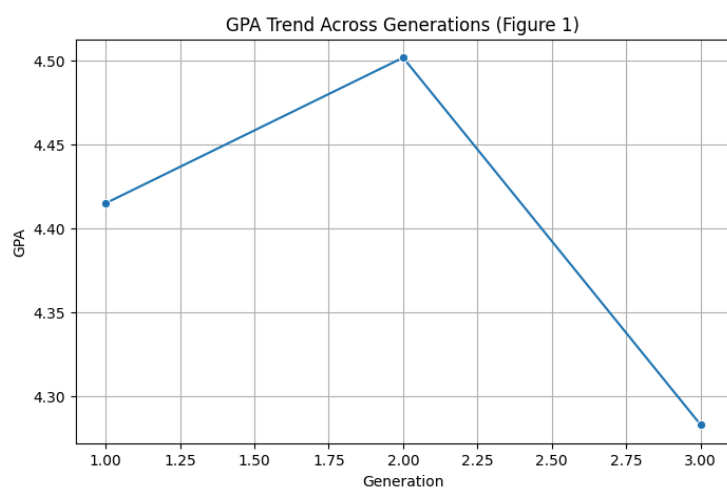
high GPA. On the survey, high school GPA scores are mapped with 0 representing 0.00 - 1.00, 1 representing 1.01 - 1.50, 2 representing 1.51 - 2.00, 3 representing 2.01-2.50, 4 representing 2.51 - 3.00, 5 representing 3.01 - 3.50, and 6 representing 3.51 - 4.00. The graph shows an initial rise in GPA from the first generation (4.415) to the second generation (4.502). This could suggest that second-generation Asian Americans may benefit from improved socio-economic conditions, better educational opportunities, or more effective integration into the educational system, which in turn might reflect a positive attitude towards education inherited from their immigrant parents who may prioritize academic success. The transition from the second generation (4.502) to the third generation (4.283) shows a significant decline where the GPA score drops to 0.219. This decline might indicate a shift in attitudes toward education, possibly due to a variety of factors including cultural assimilation, changes in parental expectations, or the dilution of the immigrant drive as the connection to the original immigrant experience becomes less direct. This trend may suggest that by the third generation, the emphasis on traditional academic achievement may wane, or other factors such as identity exploration and social integration may take precedence.

Figures 2 and 3 provide further insight into how academic sentiment changes through generational statuses. In Figure 2, there is a slight decrease in the recognition of good grades moving from the first to the second generation. This could imply a mild

shift in the educational environment or expectations that might not as strongly reinforce or
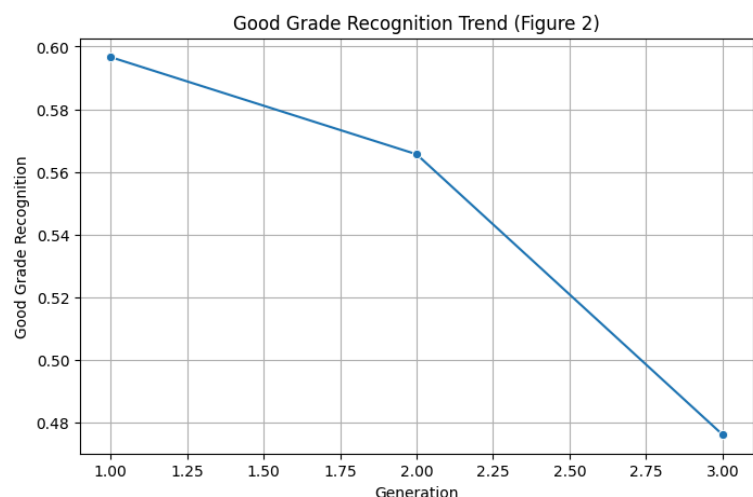
reward high academic achievement. The recognition for good grades decreases more sharply from the second to the third generation. This substantial decline may suggest a significant change in attitudes towards education, where academic achievements might not be as highly valued or recognized. The decline in good grade recognition could correlate with the observed decrease in GPA among third-generation students shown in Figure 1. If achievements are less recognized or valued, this might influence students' motivation and overall performance, manifesting in lower GPAs. It is important to note that there is only a correlation between these two variables which may be confounding. As such, causal relationships are still unclear. Figure 3 continues analysis into trends of academic sentiment, illustrating the averages in the perceived importance of grades across three generational statuses among Asian Americans. When moving from the first to the second generation, there is a gradual decline in the

Grade Importance Trend (Figure 3)
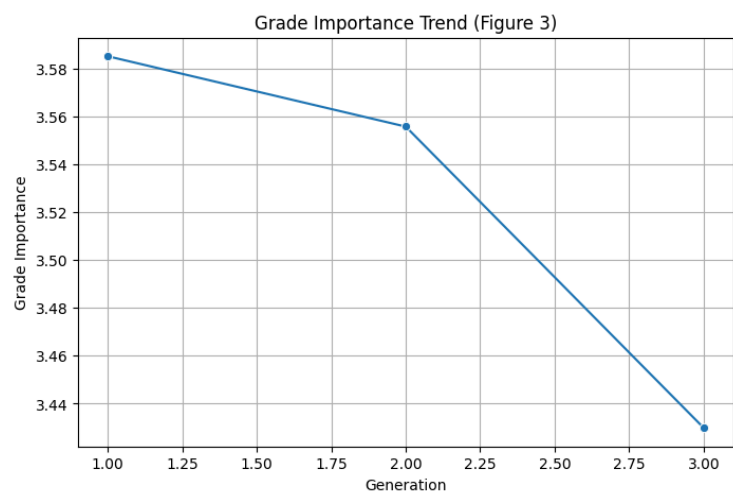
importance attributed to grades. This suggests a beginning shift in educational values, potentially influenced by the blending of cultural values as generations assimilate more into the broader society. The trend of decreasing importance continues, becoming more pronounced in the third generation. This substantial decline indicates a significant change in the cultural and educational priorities of later-generation Asian Americans. The observed decline in the perceived importance of grades, as depicted in Figure 3, can be directly linked to the trends shown in Figures 1 and 2, offering a clearer story between generational shifts in attitudes and their consequent impact on academic performance among Chinese Americans. Recall Figure 1 illustrates the decrease in

GPA from the second to the third generation. This decline can be partly explained by the decreasing importance of grades seen in Figure 3. As successive generations perceive grades as less significant, their motivation to achieve high GPA scores may diminish, leading to lower academic performance overall. The alignment of these trends suggests that as educational values evolve, so too do the educational outcomes, reflecting a widening shift in the role of academic achievements in younger generations' lives. Recall Figure 2 illustrates a steady decline in the recognition of good grades across generations. This trend builds on top of the findings in Figure 3 as decreasing importance placed on grades could naturally lead to a reduction in the acknowledgment and reinforcement of academic achievements. If grades are deemed less important both personally and within the broader social context of schools and communities, the incentives for achieving and recognizing high grades are likely to wane.

Citations

Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002). 2002. Washington, D.C.: National Center for
        Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/.

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Frequency of Discussing Grades With Parents Trend (Figure 4)

Importance of Grades To Friends Trend (Figure 5)

Correlation Matrix of Variables Across Generations (Figure 6)