

Generation Alpha: Understanding our Children and Helping them Thrive

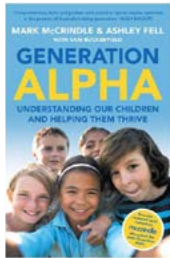
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Reflections, Impressions & Experiences



Generation Alpha: Understanding our children and helping them thrive

Mark McCrindle & Ashley Fell (with Sam Buckerfield). (2021).
Hatchette, 358 pages.
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Social researchers McCrindle and Fell draw on their experience in following trends in technology—information management, social media, robotics and artificial intelligence; demographic trends—ageing and diversity in the population, and social trends including interactions between the mix of generations within current society. They assert that in 2020 the impact of COVID-19 has “accelerated and highlighted” trends, including a widespread uncertainty amongst parents, educators, and social, business and political leaders about younger populations, challenging their sense of understanding “their world” and the influences shaping it.

The purpose of the book is “that you will have a greater understanding of the world Generation Alpha are growing up in. ... be informed, but inspired and equipped with the tools to help them live and thrive ... in today’s changing world” (p. 3, 4). The chapter structure of the book follows this purpose by firstly observing “the increasing speed, size and scope of change” (p. 7) then clarifying the concept of generations (Builders, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Y - millennials, and Z) ultimately explaining the identification of Generation Alpha (GA) with birth within the years 2010 to 2024. Chapter Two defines Generation Alpha, being characterized as digital, social, global, mobile, and visual. It suggests they will live longer, work later into their life of necessity, but retain a need for relationships, connection and social interaction, with an increased emphasis on communication and leadership skills.

Three subsequent chapters are functionally oriented describing interaction with Generation Alpha in parenting (Chapter 5), educating (Chapter 6), and leading (Chapter 8). The remaining chapters are descriptive of *The Wellbeing Generation*—an emergent social focus (Chapter 3), *The Great Screen Age*—benefits and hazards (Chapter 4), *The Future of Work* (Chapter 7), *Generation Alpha’s Lifestyle* (Chapter 9), *The Alpha Consumer* (Chapter 10), and *The World of Alpha: A Future Forecast* (Chapter 11). Important and useful design elements are the inclusion of: poignant attention focussing quotes that introduce each chapter, full page quotes (white text against a grey background)

that visually interrupt text and stimulate contemplation of author valued opinion challenges, ‘key takeaways’ at the end of each chapter, 315 numbered endnotes and an extensive index.

Nelson Mandela’s claim “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (cited p. 186), affirms teachers in their role as the reader begins Chapter 5. It traces educational change from a moral conduct emphasis in colonial times to the current emphasis on social contribution (p. 187). The discussion provides a useful summary of the issues most practicing educators could feel informed about including: STEM and technology in the classroom, new teaching styles characterised as—individualised, self-directed, collaborative, and inquiry based learning; equipping and future proofing students—21st Century skills, creating learners for life. A unique inclusion is an early assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 (p. 195-198) and a commentary on “rising parent engagement”, two in five have increased their involvement over the last two years, while 50% have given it higher priority (p. 215).

It is interesting that while parents are increasingly exercising choice to enrol their children in non-government schools the author’s do not identify any religious schools specifically other than in comparative enrolment data (p. 188) indicating no unique contribution to future proofing students though earlier research investigated independent schools (McCrindle 2019). In discussing building positive schools, however the importance of vision, values and unity are discussed as factors in thriving school environments and illustrated by quotes from principals of schools with religious affiliation. The authors acknowledge, “The best teachers have always been focused on students. The focus is not on what they’re learning but who they are becoming” (p. 208).

Other chapters offering perceptions of the future inform the reader so they may be active participants in shaping preferred futures.

This work’s value lies in the coalescence of ideas with an extended research base, one that confidently contextualises interaction with Generation Alpha. Its easy reading style provides a sound resource for informing parenting and initial social backgrounding course work for professionals interacting with children. Further, it is suitable for professional reading within continuing education units or as professional development pre-reading to ensure orientation for institutional or commercial planning and adaptation to change.

This work it is highly recommended since its content and readable style will readily support, enhance and affirm research based professional practice.

References

McCrindle, M. (2019). *Building social capital: Measuring the social impact of independent education in Australia*. Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia. <https://mccrindle.com.au/wp-content/uploads/work/AHISA-Social-Capital-Report.pdf>

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