

'Comprehensive, bold and packed with practical tips to inspire optimism
in the parents of Australia's rising generation' HUGH MACKAY

MARK McCRINDLE & ASHLEY FELL

WITH SAM BUCKERFIELD

GENERATION ALPHA

**UNDERSTANDING OUR CHILDREN
AND HELPING THEM THRIVE**



From the
renowned social
researchers
mccrindle
who coined the
term Generation
Alpha

Prologue

I have one of the best jobs in the world. I'm a social researcher, which basically means I study human behaviour. This involves observing different trends and their impact on how people behave, work, live, shop and communicate. The types of trends I focus on are often: technology trends – like the rise of artificial intelligence and robotics. Demographic shifts – like an ageing and more culturally diverse population. And one of my favourites, social trends – like understanding the mix of generations in our society. The year 2020 will go down in history as one of massive change, because COVID-19 accelerated and highlighted many of these trends.

But even prior to 2020, I began to notice an increase in the interest the world was taking in the next generation of children. To many people, they are a bit of a mystery. As a result, I regularly get to speak to groups of parents wanting to find out more about the world shaping their children, educators, and business leaders wanting to better understand them, and some

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of the leading technology platforms about what they need to know in order to remain relevant. What I have noticed is that people are starting to sit up and take note that a new generation is not only coming, but they are already here.

This is precisely why I decided to write this book, along with Ashley Fell, the Director of Advisory at my research and communications company McCrindle. Between us, we have been in social research for almost three decades. Both Ashley and I take a keen interest in the topic of generations, and are regularly asked to give presentations, media commentary and advice about them, based on our research. This research takes the form of surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Every day we get to speak to people from all over the world, sharing our research and hearing their opinions, stories and expertise on this topic – some of which we quote in this book. This area of research is important, because we believe great leaders are focused not on the next program, but the next generation. To tell Generation Alpha's story, we have also engaged Sam Buckerfield, a Sydney-based writer who is equally passionate about storytelling, to help us pen this book.

Across these pages we endeavour to bring you insights from our research on the world being created for children born between 2010 and 2024, a cohort that I have dubbed Generation Alpha. In this book you'll find statistics and percentages that show how different this generation is, because of the increasingly digital and global world they are being shaped in. You'll engage with stories from people who are on the ground equipping, empowering and leading Generation Alpha – people like you – parents, educators and professionals.

Over the course of my career and the thousands of presentations I have delivered, I consistently find that it is the topic of the generations that people have a great interest in.

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Perhaps because it is relatable – we all fit into one. Or perhaps it is because we all have an interest in reflecting on how it was and how it will be. Our work aims to help people understand the changing times so they can better engage with the world around them. Explaining why generational labels like ‘OK Boomer’ (the phrase Gen Z use to describe ideas that are outdated) or ‘KIPPERS’ (which is an acronym that stands for Kids In Parents’ Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings, used to describe adult children staying longer at home) exist, makes for fascinating social commentary. I enjoy this topic so much that I made it the focus of one of my previous books – *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations*. It was during my research for this previous book that something significant dawned on me. No one seemed to even be thinking about the next generation that was about to commence! There wasn’t even a label to describe them. At the time, the focus was on Generation Z, those born between 1995 and 2009. And yet a new generation was about to begin. With Z completing the Latin alphabet, there was no subsequent letter to assign to them.

So, I conducted a survey on what the new label could be. Many people suggested Generation A. But knowing this generation would be the first to be entirely born in the twenty-first century (with births commencing in 2010), I felt that they are not a return to the old, but the start of something new. Using this reasoning and drawing on the scientific nomenclature of turning to the Greek alphabet, I decided to name them Generation Alpha.

We explore the various stages of life that Generation Alpha will walk through including home and community, education, the workplace, health and wellbeing. Our hope once you’ve finished reading the book, is that you will have a greater

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understanding of the world Generation Alpha are growing up in. That you will not only be informed, but inspired and equipped with the tools to help them live and thrive in today's challenging and constantly changing world.

Mark McCrindle

Principal – McCrindle Research, 2021

CHAPTER 1

Talking About Your Generation

'People resemble their times more than they resemble
their parents.'

Arab proverb

When we approach the study of different generations, we often reflect on a quote by Stephen Covey, author of the acclaimed *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, who famously said, 'seek first to understand, then to be understood'.¹ In this chapter, we begin by painting a picture of each generation, the social context in which they have been shaped and the different parenting styles utilised by them. This will lay the foundation from which we can begin to understand the generation who are the focus of this book – Generation Alpha.

When you envision the next generation of children, what do you think about them? Perhaps you conjure images of them always being glued to their devices, impatient, and a little entitled. Or maybe you see them as being resilient, optimistic, adept at responding to change and good at taking risks.

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Perhaps a bit of both. Whatever your perspective, it is helpful to think about your assumptions for a moment.

Generational stereotypes are nothing new. Generation Y (Millennials, born between 1980 and 1994, the parents of Generation Alpha) have been labelled as lazy and entitled. Even older generations, like the Baby Boomers, were labelled in a similar way when they were growing up. In part, these stereotypes come from simply being young. But it is also true that today's younger generations look different to how older generations did at the same age.

A more accurate understanding can be gained by looking at the significant life events, social markers and formative technologies that have affected each generation. By taking the time to understand this – the context – we move away from 'generationalising' to generational analysis. Recognising the impact of the shared experiences, societal expectations and new inventions that shaped people in their formative years helps us to better understand those of different generations and overcome generational stereotyping. The stories of the different generations matter, and an understanding of the unique times, events and experiences that have shaped each generation and their era will allow parents, educators and leaders to be more relevant in these changing times.

Rather than looking at divisions among the generations, we believe it is important to develop understanding across them. This is the first step to facilitating better engagement and connection in places where different generations mix – particularly in families, schools and workplaces. An understanding of the different generations is also important because it enables us to honour those who laid the foundations of what we are building on today.

Our hope is that, through this book, parents, teachers, leaders and anyone who engages with Generation Alpha will have a more holistic overview of the context in which they have been shaped, and therefore who they are. The more these important groups of people understand Generation Alpha, the more they will be able to effectively help them fulfil their potential.

Generational change

Change is not unique to this era, but the speed, size and scope of the change that defines our current times is truly *unprecedented* (we know because, according to our research,² ‘change’ was one of the most overused words in 2020!). It is through the frame of the generations that we can best understand the shifts, analyse the trends and know the times.

We are also undergoing a significant generational transition. The median age of the global population is just under 30 years of age. The year that Generation Alpha began being born (2010) was, interestingly, the first year that generations Y and Z comprised more than half the world’s population. That is, those born since 1980 comprised more than those born before 1980.³ Generations Y and Z now also comprise the majority of the workforce, outnumbering Generation X and the Baby Boomers for the first time. This means the demographic and economic strength has shifted to the emerging generations (Gen Y and Z) and, with that, they have a new role as the dominant workers, consumers and household formers. As you will see in this chapter, these generations are different to those who have gone before, and so too are their leadership preferences, consumer expectations and parenting styles.

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In order for us to understand the tech-savvy and digitally literate Generation Alpha, we first need to look at where they fit in the generational mix. It is important to gain an appreciation of the people who are most likely to be their parents (Gen X and Y), their older siblings (Gen Z), their grandparents (Baby Boomers) and their great-grandparents (Builders). It helps to paint a picture of the people who have and are building the world, at an individual and societal level, that Generation Alpha will come of age in, which is an essential part of understanding the Alphas themselves.

The current generations:

Builders	(b. 1925–1945)
Baby Boomers	(b. 1946–1964)
Generation X	(b. 1965–1979)
Millennials, or Generation Y	(b. 1980–1994)
Generation Z	(b. 1995–2009)
Generation Alpha	(b. 2010–2024)

Meet your generation

One of our most consistent findings is that people love to talk about the different generations. The word ‘generation’ describes all of the people born within a similar time range, and we have found the most helpful span to be fifteen years. People born in a similar era are influenced by the same events, social markers and emerging technologies. This shared experience, particularly in their formative years, gives those within a generation a connection and collective identity. They are shaped by similar conditions, institutions and together share the same life stage. This cohort-experience creates shared perspectives, expectations and a sense of

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connection among people. It also leads to differences across other generations.

You don't have to look far to see the shared experiences and differences of generations in action. All it takes is a Gen Z teenager (or rather, 'screenager') to be captivated by their device at a family barbeque for a Baby Boomer to say, 'We never had technology like that in my day. We never had computers, and to speak to someone you had to use a telephone with a dial!' While all of those in a similar age bracket nod vigorously and agree, the children of today roll their eyes. They have never experienced such times, so don't understand the older generation's perspective of life without devices.

The Builders

The generation born between 1925 and 1945 we simply call 'the Builders' because they have built the cities we know, the communities we value and the way of life we enjoy. Today, they are the world's most senior generation. They were born into the crisis period of the Great Depression and the years up to and including World War II, and these events have heavily shaped them. During World War II, 70 million people⁴ fought with the Allied forces, and almost a million⁵ of those were from Australia. Tens of thousands of Australians died in battle, but over 900,000 men and women returned home after their military service.⁶ It's no wonder we honour these veterans around the world on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and Memorial Day.

The Builders have been referred to as the 'greatest' generation because of the hardships they overcame and their indefatigable attitude. Hugh Mackay, in his book *Generations*, labels them the 'lucky' generation because of the years of relative comfort that followed World War II.⁷ They are the

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generation that built the economy, infrastructure and society after the Depression. Growing up, this generation played out on the street, riding around on bikes or rollerskates; their parents drove Model T Fords and listened to their music on record players or the wireless. Screen time for this generation involved watching movies at the local cinema, or 'picture theatre' as it was often referred to. The Builders started their families as young adults during the post-war boom and they had a more authoritarian parenting style, intent on keeping order in the home.

While society is constantly evolving, the amount of change that the Builders have seen is truly phenomenal. They have lived through the introduction of electric ovens, refrigerators, washing machines and televisions and the invention and adoption of most of the technologies that we take for granted today.

The vast difference between the Builders' experience growing up and that of the Alphas is clearly seen when we interviewed Shirley, aged eighty-two.

'When I was seven, my mother assigned me the clothes-washing duties. Back then, without electricity, washing was a lengthy affair. My mother taught me to soak the clothes overnight, then the next day I had to soap, boil and rinse them, wring them out, put them through the mangle and hang them out to dry. If the clothes were especially dirty, I'd have to do this process three times. Technology has come a long way in my lifetime. I am concerned that young people are becoming increasingly sedentary. But, that said, I love FaceTiming my granddaughter, Daisy. Although she lives fourteen hours' drive away, I feel more connected to her than I did my own brother, who I grew up with.'

It's extraordinary how the older generations endured physical hardship to do daily chores around the home, compared to today's click-button appliances, robo-vacs, outsourced services and Uber deliveries.

The Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomers are the children of the Builders, and were born between 1946 and 1964. They were the last generation to span longer than fifteen years and be named after a sociological event – the post-World War II population and economic boom. This was a time of return to family and local community, with a subsequent boom in the fertility rate, which began its rapid rise in 1946, peaking in 1961. Interestingly, by the time we reached 1965 the rate dropped to the low levels of the war years and the baby boom was complete.⁸ In Australia, our population increased by more than half, from 7.4 million at the end of World War II to reach 11.4 million by 1965.⁹ While natural increase (number of births minus number of deaths) contributed to this, so too did changes in immigration, with millions of migrants arriving to settle in Australia after World War II. This was certainly an exciting time in the formation of what Australia has become today, a globally connected land of diversity and opportunity.

A defining event for the Baby Boomers was the United States' efforts to land humans on the moon. We are all familiar with Neil Armstrong's now-famous declaration as he set foot on the moon, 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.' This cultural event was one of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century, especially for the Baby Boomers as it instilled in them a sense of possibility and can-do spirit.

Baby Boomers would have played frisbee on the streets with their neighbours and listened to music in vinyl form and

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later audio cassette, while their leisure time at home was spent watching television at first in black and white, and by the mid 1970s in colour.

The Baby Boomers had a carefree childhood. When we speak to people of this generation, they often say things like, 'Back in those days, we would be out all the time, we would be on our bikes exploring the area with the only requirement to be back by sunset.' They were innocent days where there was high trust in the community, and parents felt their children were safe in the local area. From exploring the bushland to spending hours up at the park, Baby Boomers had far more free rein in their childhood than children do today.

Generation X

Generation X is a massive generation, comprising one in five Australians. Born from 1965 to 1979, Generation X are currently aged in their early forties to their mid-fifties and are in their mid-family years, mid-careers and mid-life. Their teen years were the 1980s and 1990s and they were the generation to first see computers enter their schools and homes. They were also the first to commonly have both parents working and experience higher rates of parental divorce than the generations before them. They were labelled 'latch-key kids' and the 'home alone generation' and became a more peer-orientated, independent and flexible generation. In 1991, Canadian author Douglas Coupland mused this emerging generation was different from the Baby Boomers, but weren't in need of a grandiose label. 'Call us X,' he wrote in his book *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*.¹⁰ Ironically, the anti-label ushered in the generational labelling regimen for the next thirty years.

Today, Generation X are often labelled the 'sandwich generation', as many are sandwiched between caring for their

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elderly parents and their dependent children. And now, at the time of writing, after quite a wait, Generation X have one of their own as prime minister. Scott Morrison (born 1968) is the first post-Baby Boomer to be an Australian PM after a run of four Baby Boomer prime ministers. Australia joins countries like Canada (with Justin Trudeau) and France (with Emmanuel Macron) in having a Gen X-er at the helm. New Zealand took generational change to a new level in 2017 by electing a Gen Y to lead their nation (Jacinda Ardern was born in 1980).

In Australia, Generation X comprise more than a quarter of all voters and around a third of the workforce. This is the generation that grew up under Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke in Australia, and with Ronald Reagan in the White House and Margaret Thatcher as the British Prime Minister. They are the original computer generation, shaped in the audio cassette era, using the first VCRs, watching *Hey Hey It's Saturday* and the early days of MTV, and wearing acid-wash jeans, hypercolour T-shirts and the occasional turtleneck knit. They were tuned into the hype of Halley's Comet, impacted by the 1987 stock market crash and the resulting 'recession we had to have', and witnessed in real time the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and, with it, communism in Europe. This was the generation that experienced the rise of the two-income family, with both parents often working in order to be able to pay their mortgage and achieve a more aspirational lifestyle than their parents.

Having lived their formative years in the twentieth century, and many or most of their adult years in the twenty-first, Generation X are a unique hybrid of traditional, structural and analogue approaches combined with the adaptive, collaborative and digital thinking of today. They

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were shaped in a hierarchical world but they lead with a more participative style. Education for them was conducted with pen and paper and required closed-book exams, yet now they lead teams who interact on touch-screen devices and teach in an ‘open-book’ world, just a few clicks away from any piece of information on the planet. Their world began when Australia still looked to England, but amid several decades of cultural change and migration growth, they now see the strong connections to Asia and have a global outlook. Their parents were shaped in the post-World War II years while their children – Generation Z – have been shaped in an era of smartphones, social media and the gig economy.

In addition to all this, they are the Commodore 64, Nirvana, Rubik’s Cube, Ferris Bueller generation. Like every generation since, their music came portable – for them it was analogue not digital, and via a Walkman.

While their childhood wasn’t the total separation of the ‘children should be seen and not heard’ era, Generation X grew up in a world where adults lived in their adult world and kids lived in their own world. While parents cared for and guided their children, they didn’t feel the need to inhabit their world. Gen X kids consequently had more freedom, and felt independent from their parents.

Generation X brought about some significant changes. Through a subtle shift in values, they set new social behaviours. They were the generation to push marriage back from the mid to late twenties (which we see continuing today among Gen Y). Although Generation X were given much materially as children, some felt they lacked the more important things, such as valuable time with Mum and Dad. Consequently, as parents, this generation has tried hard to balance family and work life, and to keep the family unit together.¹¹ Statistics for

divorce show this. The divorce rate in Australia is now half of what it was in the mid-1970s,¹² during the childhood years of Generation X.

Generation Y

Generation Y describes those born between 1980 and 1994, which means they are now in the key family-forming life stage and are the next generation of parents, the ones most likely to be the parents of Generation Alpha. Because they have ‘come of age’ during the approach of, or in, the new millennium, they are also sometimes referred to as the Millennials.

Gen Y are often labelled as the tech-savvy and entitled generation that has been locked out of the housing market. They have different expectations around careers, family life and lifestyle, and most will admit they seek home ownership as well as enjoying a good smashed avo at the local café. They are most likely parents of Generation Alpha, and also the aunts, uncles, teachers and leaders of this emerging generation.

Generation Y grew up during some of the best economic times the world has ever seen, and for Australia, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was a blip rather than a crisis. In 2020 Australia experienced its first recession in thirty years, the same year the oldest Gen Ys turned 40. This means that, throughout their formative years, most Gen Ys hadn’t experienced economic hardship, high unemployment or inflation. Instead, they were used to everyday luxuries, like two or more cars per family, dinners out and huge family homes. As a result, Gen Y are an optimistic generation and enjoy life’s smaller indulgences, such as a weekend brunch and boutique espresso coffee, as well as the bigger-ticket items of overseas travel. These lifestyle priorities are often described

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as a pitfall of this generation, who have struggled to enter the property market and obtain the ‘great Australian dream’ of home ownership. While they have been criticised for expecting to start their economic life in the manner in which they have seen their parents finish theirs, we must consider that the national average house prices are more than ten times the average annual earnings, compared to roughly five times what they were for their parents’ generation.¹³ No wonder this generation are opting for the smaller luxuries in life when breaking into the housing market has been so unattainable in recent times!

During the GFC, which coincided with the start of their working life, Gen Y’s confidence in the economic security of the future was impacted for the first time – just as they were beginning their careers. Their lives were affected a second time during COVID-19, with many Gen Ys experiencing this global pandemic as they were beginning their key family-forming years.

One of the most significant events that shaped Generation Y was the September 11 attacks, a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks against the United States on the morning of 11 September 2001. Each generation has social markers that influence their worldview and expectations. The September 11 attacks changed the world as we knew it, with the impacts being evident in changes to airport security, the wars in Afghanistan and a global focus on counter-terrorism. In Australia, the acting prime minister at the time, John Anderson, was ushered to a safe house from where he addressed the nation, with intelligence briefings advising that there might very well be a series of attacks targeting other countries including Australia. Prime Minister John Howard invoked the ANZUS treaty (Australia, New Zealand and the United States) which meant

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that an attack on one would be an attack on all. So Australia went onto a war footing.

While other generations also experienced this event, it did not occur during their formative years like it did for Gen Y. This historic moment happened when Gen Y were coming of age, and signified a loss of innocence for this generation. As Bret, now twenty-seven, says, 'It was the first time we started to see that the world was a darker place. It opened my eyes a bit, and was the first time I realised, *Things can be pretty serious out there.*'¹⁴ Coming of age during the 'War on Terror' connected Gen Y to their peers all over the world, making them a truly global generation.

Many Gen Ys were in their teen years when 9/11 happened, and so the harrowing footage of the planes flying into the twin towers is etched in their memory. As Sophie, a Gen Y, told us, 'I'll never forget waking up that September morning to see those planes fly into the twin towers on TV. At first I didn't think it was real, but then it kept being replayed over and over. I don't remember the details vividly, but I remember feeling uncertain, and could tell something really big was happening.'

Another defining trait of Generation Y is that they are a tech-centric generation. They are clever multi-taskers who can work on several major projects at once with aplomb. This generation grew up in a time shaped by the emergence of digital technology, laptop computers, the internet and the sharing economy, which had significant impacts on the workforce. Gen Y is the generation of Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook founder), Evan Spiegel (Snapchat founder), Melanie Perkins (Canva co-founder), Daniel Ek (Spotify founder) and Drew Houston (Dropbox founder), all of whom exemplify work flexibility, entrepreneurship and a belief that anything is possible.

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Generation Y have invested significantly in their education and are committed to growing their careers. Far from being the ‘snowflake generation’, as some disparagingly label them, it turns out they are resilient and are now settling down, buying property and having a family – although this is happening later in life as they continue to push back these significant life markers. When Generation Y were born, their parents were largely in their late twenties, while today the median age of first-time mothers is the early thirties.¹⁵

Generation Z

Generation Z describes those who were born between the years 1995 and 2009. They have come of age in the twenty-first century and been influenced by growing cultural diversity, global brands, social media and a digital world.

This is the first generation of school leavers to emerge into the working world of the digital economy where robotics, automation, big data and machine learning are now mainstream. When we type something into Google and it answers our question before we’ve asked it, this is artificial intelligence in action. Those automated playlists on Spotify are examples of predictive algorithms at play. While previous generations of school leavers could set plans, make decisions and track towards the future, these days the future is coming at us with increasing velocity and often from an unknown direction. In an era that is less structured, sequential and predictable, it is a good thing that Gen Z are more aware of the global changes, technology trends and digital disruptions. This means this generation is well set to not only thrive amid these changing times, but also bring positive transformations to workplaces and communities.

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In the nearly twenty-four years of their lifespan they have seen more change than any cohort before them at the same age. They began their life in the internet era but are being shaped in the world of mobile devices and social media. With the youngest entering their teen years, their lexicons are filled with terms that didn't exist at their birth: apps, tweets, memes, tablets, smartphones and cloud computing (not to mention the more colloquial slang terms like 'bae' and 'yass queen!'). These trends have transformed society so much, it is radically different to the times that shaped their parents and unrecognisable to the world their grandparents first knew.

Generation Z have been at the heart of social media, with the socialisation of their formative years taking place on online apps and platforms. This generation have grown up watching videos on YouTube, sending Snapchat messages to each other and communicating largely through social media platforms. It has helped them be more connected with each other and allowed them to express themselves through their own content, and often connect with like-minded people globally. It has, however, also led to challenges. YouTube bloggers sometimes have to deal with challenging negative comments, and growing up on these platforms can lead to people experiencing FOMO (fear of missing out). Constantly seeing your friends posting videos or photos of holidays or parties can make you feel excluded or unworthy.

Generation Z are truly a global generation, having been shaped in an era of digital devices and increasing connectivity. Global events that have happened in Generation Z's formative years are Donald Trump's 'against-the-odds' election as the President of the United States in 2016, as well as the role that celebrities and social media influencers played in the election of Joe Biden in

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2020. Brexit, and the GFC, also had a big impact. However, the biggest social marker of them all was the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impacts. Increasing awareness of climate change from activist Greta Thunberg (a Gen Z herself) has also shaped this generation to become one that is recognising they have a voice and can speak up and be heard.

When it comes to leadership, Generation Z prefer a style of consensus and collaboration rather than structure and hierarchy. Their perspectives are global. It is social influence, not just expert advice, that shapes them. This generation are tuned in to social activism but tuned out to traditional politics. This is significantly different from what politicians have experienced in the past. Understanding the worldviews of their younger constituents will be a challenge, but one that can be overcome if time is taken to understand them and engage with them where they are at.

Generation Z have experienced a change in parenting styles as well. Born to older mums and dads, they live highly organised lives with little unstructured time and have the fewest siblings of any generation. With an increasing focus on education in a globally competitive environment and with an education system focused on standardised testing, academically streamed classes and selective schools, it is unsurprising that they live largely indoors. It is clear that their parents place priority on homework, coaching and extracurricular activities over a carefree childhood. Furthermore, given fears about child predators, their parents are more cautious about letting their youngsters play with friends on neighbouring streets and in nearby parks. Their parents' style is one of consensus and collaboration, involving their Gen Z children in decisions and being influenced by their ideas around purchases and holiday destinations.

Generation Z and COVID-19

COVID-19 wasn't simply a generational social marker, it ushered in the biggest societal transformation in a century. The nearest comparable pandemic, the Spanish Flu, occurred almost exactly one hundred years before, in 1918.

The spread of COVID-19 was speedy, the effects devastating. Entire populations were effectively quarantined in their own homes. Only essential service outings, like visits to the supermarket and doctors, were permitted. In some countries you had to obtain a pass to leave the home at all and in many countries, streets were monitored by police, and the military with authority to fine those who breached the imposed quarantine. These were extreme but necessary measures to curb the spread of the virus and alleviate the impact on the nations' health facilities. In the same way that world wars, stock market crashes and September 11 shaped their predecessors, it seemed that the defining social marker for Gen Z and Generation Alpha had arrived.

For Generation Z, COVID-19 had a direct impact on them during a significant life stage – their teen years and early twenties. This life stage is normally characterised by education and study, as well as socialising with friends after school or during breaks at university. Weekends are normally filled with sport and shopping, going out or hanging at a friend's place. Goals and dreams of Generation Z before COVID-19 were to do well in exams, spend quality time with friends and work to save up for travel adventures. COVID-19 changed much of this. Their schools and universities shut, learning moved online, sport stopped, and their social lives almost ceased to exist during the various lockdowns. Many of this generation also had to forsake certain rites of passage that come with this life stage – school formals and graduations were cancelled, gap

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years delayed and, to the mixed feelings of parents, schoolies was cancelled. While Generation Z were not as vulnerable to the virus itself, a McCrindle national study of 1,002 Australians¹⁶ at the time suggested individuals were more likely to feel anxious, frustrated, overwhelmed, confused and unprepared about the unfolding COVID-19 situation than any other generation. While this less-than-ideal school and social situation proved to be challenging for Generation Z, it has also instilled in them a unique resilience.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 were also felt by younger generations seeking to establish themselves in the workforce. According to one of our national surveys during the pandemic, Gen Y and Gen Z were the most likely to have felt the biggest negative impact financially (33 per cent Gen Z and 37 per cent Gen Y compared to 28 per cent Gen X, 20 per cent Baby Boomers and 12 per cent Builders).

The impacts on the Australian job market in the first few months of COVID-19 had been unparalleled since the Great Depression. The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that between March and April 2020, the number of underemployed people increased by more than 620,000 to 1.8 million.¹⁷ These job-loss rates were highest for those under twenty, with almost one in five (19 per cent) losing their job. For those aged twenty to twenty-nine, more than one in ten (12 per cent) lost their job while just 5 per cent of those aged thirty to sixty-nine lost their job. This means that those under twenty were almost four times more likely to have lost their job than those thirty and over.¹⁸

Despite an uncertain outlook, Generation Z were also well positioned to stay connected during COVID-19, even from a distance. From TikTok videos to Zoom or House Party apps, their skills in connecting through online platforms

proved helpful during COVID-19. For many, it also changed their education experience. For university students, their on-campus experience was vastly different due to COVID-19. As Gen Z-er Hannah told us, ‘The turnaround period from in-person classes to online was less than a week, and while I know the lecturers tried their best, there was an obvious decline in the quality of teaching as we moved to a fully online classroom. Despite this, fees remained the same and I ended up having less overall contact hours with my tutors and little to no opportunity to work collaboratively with other students, which was an important part of my degree.’

Generation Z felt sharply the shift of BC (Before COVID-19) to DC (During COVID-19). The full impacts of COVID-19, and particularly the global and economic responses, will roll on for some years to come (even in an AC world – After COVID-19). Generation Alpha will also be significantly shaped by COVID-19, not in the dramatic way experienced by Gen Z, but in the ongoing adjustment to life in the new reality.

Naming Generation Alpha

Every generation since the Baby Boomers spans fifteen years, regardless of events and circumstances. They are also labelled using letters (X, Y, Z and now Alpha) – a more scientific approach to categorisation. There have been other attempts to label generations. The ‘Millennials’ is one example. The problem with this label is that it defines them around a single event (the start of the new millennium), but creates a vague birth range. Are the Millennials born from the mid-1980s until 2000, or are they born in the first decade of this millennium?

There has been some talk of Generation Alpha being labelled the ‘Coronials’ due to the COVID-19 pandemic that

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began in the middle of their fifteen-year span. Yet this is short-sighted; they will shape and be shaped by the next three, five or ten decades. The virus does not define them. Using a set span of birth years and a non-descriptive label allows objective analysis for each generation. Just think: when someone says ‘Millennial’ it’s often with a roll of the eyes and a derogatory tone of voice. We wouldn’t want a similar experience for Generation Alpha. So, a label like ‘Generation Alpha’ provides a blank canvas on which a generation can create their own identity. This is much better than having a descriptive label, relevant for just a portion of the generation or for just a period of time, pinned on them. In fact, the Baby Boomers signify the last generation defined and labelled by an external event – the post–World War II baby boom.

In our initial survey about this new generation, we asked respondents what they thought the generation after Z might be called. For many, the logical answer to our question was to ‘go back to the beginning’. Generation A was suggested by a quarter of respondents. The respondents who suggested Generation A said the label also signified what we could expect of this generation and their times: a new and positive beginning for all, with global warming and terrorism controlled. Respondents made similar comments when they suggested the following labels: the Regeneration, Generation Hope, Generation New Age, the Zoomers, Generation Tech, the Onliners and Global Generation. Others suggested the Neoconservatives, because the upcoming generation will have grown up aware of their impact on the environment and the economy.

Our survey took place just after the Atlantic hurricane season of 2005. There had been a number of storms up to that point and the normal alphabetic names had been used up and so, for the first time, the Greek alphabet was engaged.

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Taking into consideration these survey results, along with the scientific nomenclature of using the Greek alphabet in lieu of the Latin, and having worked our way through Generations X, Y and Z, Mark settled on the next cohort being Generation Alpha – not a return to the old but the start of something new – to signify the new world in which they will be shaped. In contrast to the domineering and entitled connotations of ‘alpha’ in phrases like ‘alpha type’ or ‘alpha male’, this new generation is inclusive, collaborative, global in outlook and keen to learn.

It appears as though the Greek alphabet approach is due to stick, with publications and platforms like *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post* and the *World Economic Forum* acknowledging Generation Alpha. Following this nomenclature, Generation Beta will be born from 2025 to 2039, followed by Generation Gamma (2040 to 2054) and Generation Delta (2055 to 2069). But we won't be getting there until the second half of the twenty-first century, so there is plenty of time to reflect on the labels!

Generation Alpha

From 2010 the world saw the start of Generation Alpha, the first to be fully born in the twenty-first century. Alphas have been born into an era of record birth numbers. When this generation is complete, in December 2024, Generation Alpha births will total almost two billion globally, and they will be the largest generation in the history of the world.

Generation Alpha are the first generation to have been born and fully shaped in the twenty-first century. And most of them will live to see the twenty-second century.

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Generation Alpha have only ever lived in a world where glass is linked to interaction and connection. Technology and customisation have shaped their childhood. While Generation Z experienced the rise of customisation, Generation Alpha have seen personalisation – where everything from Nutella jars and Coke cans to storybooks can be ordered featuring their name.

The younger generation, like a younger sibling, carves out an identity in reaction to the one that went before. They don't feel bound to the previous era and so have a freedom to chart their own course.

In their life so far, the biggest social and cultural marker has been the COVID-19 pandemic. As we have explored, COVID-19 also had a significant impact on Generation Z, yet Australians believe it will transform how Generation Alpha approach technology, education, work, face-to-face interaction, mental health and resilience.¹⁹

The oldest Generation Alphas are currently moving into tweendom, a term describing children aged between eight and twelve, the period between childhood and adolescence. The relatively new world of 'tweendom' is evidence of the 'up-ageing' (growing up faster, being 'older younger') of today's emerging generations. Tweens have emerged as their own demographic and influence the purchasing patterns of their household. It is during these years that children often get their own smartphone, change their online behaviour and begin to take on their own identity and responsibility. These young people have access to more technology, information and external influences than any generation before them, and at a younger age than generations past. As

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brand influencers, tweens are a unique segment to engage with. Social media has been integral to the development of tweens in the twenty-first century, who are actively engaging on websites, being creative on TikTok, uploading their own YouTube videos and connecting with friends on Instagram and Facebook. Many websites are targeted specifically to this demographic. Tweens can create virtual pets, play games and interact online with other people their age with ease.

Generation Alpha are 'up-agers' in many ways: the onset of physical maturity occurs earlier than previous generations, so adolescence for them will begin earlier. While adolescence begins earlier, it also extends later – the adult life stage, once marked by marriage, children, mortgage and career, is being pushed back. This generation will stay in education longer, start their earning years later and so will stay at home with their parents for longer than was previously the case. The role of parents, therefore, spans a wider age range, still housing (and funding!) their adult children. Generation Alpha will no doubt continue this trend. In Australia, as we've mentioned, we've labelled the stay-at-home twenty-somethings the KIPPERS, which stands for Kids In Parents' Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings.

While we're not particularly fond of well-worn phrases and clichés (and avoid them like the plague, we say!), they are often rooted in truth. Based on both research and observation we can confidently say that the *future is bright* for Generation Alpha. As author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series C. S. Lewis stated, 'There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.' That statement is not to diminish the past but to champion the future. As is true of days past, the days ahead will have their complexities and challenges, but they will also be replete with innovation and opportunity. And as you will

see from the chapters that follow, Generation Alpha are living on the edge of an extraordinary age.

Busting myths about Generation Alpha

Myth: Generation Alpha won't live as long as previous generations

Some people think that Generation Alpha will be the first generation to not live as long as their parents. This is due to their increasingly sedentary lives, the rising rates of obesity and greater access to junk food. But the opposite is actually more likely to be true. Due to medical advancements, improved public health measures, pharmaceutical breakthroughs, declining smoking rates and workplace and public safety measures, Generation Alpha will live longer than any previous generation, with life expectancy for a Generation Alpha born in Australia today approaching the mid-eighties.

Myth: Generation Alpha won't work as late into their lives as current or past generations

We often hear people say that Generation Alpha won't work as much throughout their life due to labour-saving devices, leisure lifestyles and a universal basic income. People often think that these trends will enable them to work less throughout their life and enable them to retire early. Once again, the opposite is most probably the case. Generation Alpha will work later into their life than any previous generation. Why? Because they will live longer and therefore have a need to work later to supplement this longer life. With machines helping to ease the physical burden of work, they will be able to work less physically. Additionally, work will have a purpose for them beyond remuneration – it will be a place of social interaction, purpose, stimulation and lifelong learning.

Myth: Generation Alpha's future will be entirely virtual

Generation Alpha are being raised in increasingly technologically integrated times, so many people think their future will be entirely virtual. They think Generation Alpha will have no need to interact with other human beings in a work-from-home future that is full of technology and robotics. But a timeless human need is for relational connection and social interaction. During the working from home and learning from home measures that COVID-19 necessitated, we once again experienced that while digital connectivity is convenient, it's no permanent substitute for the physical interaction that is core to the human experience. As we will explore in more detail in Chapter 6, Generation Alpha will have a greater need for interpersonal skills such as communication and leadership to thrive in a more machine-assisted future.

Generation Alpha focused on personal growth

Generation Alpha are being shaped in an education system that encourages them to set their own goals and resources them through technology both in school and at home, to progress and explore beyond the classroom instruction. They are given time for personal reflection, and there is a strong focus on the development of multiple intelligences beyond just the numeracy and literacy of old, which focused on 'the three Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic.

We've found in our research with educators and parents that Generation Alpha are both agile and adept. Educators told us that they believe the mindset of Generation Alpha is different to that of Generation Z. When faced with a challenge, educators believe Generation Alpha are significantly more likely to persist than to give up, when compared to Gen Z.

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Educators think Generation Alpha are more likely to ask for help while Gen Z are more likely to struggle in silence. When they experience failure, educators think Gen Z are more likely to see it as a personal deficiency while Gen Alpha are more likely to see it as an opportunity to learn.²⁰ As Generation Alpha grow up it will be interesting to see how this mindset shapes their experience and approach to life.

Whether children hold a growth mindset or a fixed mindset can have a big impact on their education, achievement and success. A fixed mindset cultivates a belief that intelligence or talent is a fixed trait, so people with this mindset tend to give up when a challenge or problem arises. Whereas those with a growth mindset believe their abilities can be improved through hard work, which leads to growth, success, a love of learning and greater resilience. So how can parents develop and encourage a growth mindset in their children? Here are some tips:

- **Place value on the effort being made.** Praising children's effort and how they approach a challenge is more helpful than their intelligence, ability or how well they did. By praising their effort, it encourages more of it in different situations and gives them agency to work hard. As Carol Dweck says, 'If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep learning. That way, children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.'²¹
- **Use the power of 'yet'.** It's amazing how such a small word – 'yet' – can have a big impact in shifting a child's worldview and approach to difficulty. Instead

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of a child saying, 'I can't read', it's much more empowering for them to say, 'I can't read, yet'. It's encouraging to hear that teachers are incorporating this into their teaching. Helena, a primary school teacher, told us how her class has a routine where every Friday they sing the growth mindset song from *Sesame Street* called 'The Power of Yet'. Helena says that even though 'they are in year six, they love it. They sing it as they walk out the door every single Friday and remember it over the weekend. It's the difference between the mindset of, "Oh this is too hard, I'm not going to do it" and "I'm going to have a go".'

- **Avoid labelling children.** Whether the label is positive or negative, labelling children springs from a fixed mindset and can prohibit parents, teachers and leaders from encouraging effort and hard work to develop and grow. Neuroscience research shows that the human brain is continually learning and adapting – not just in our formative years but throughout our lives.
- **Reframe failure as a normal part of the process, rather than a negative outcome.** An important part of building resilience in children is to not let failure stop them from working to improve. While it might seem natural to say to a child, 'It's okay if you aren't very good at maths, don't worry about it', this can inhibit them from persevering and learning new things. Rather, encourage them to think about what they learnt from not doing well, what the next steps could be and what they could do differently next time.

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- **Model a growth mindset and share examples from your own life.** As most parents know, children are like sponges, picking up the behaviours and attitudes of the adults in their life – namely their parents. By modelling an attitude of growth and an ability to learn, parents can set a positive example for their children. Sharing stories or examples of growth and overcoming challenges can also be an effective way for parents to show their children that they aren't alone in making mistakes or approaching a task or obstacle in a certain way.

Our research shows that Generation Alpha are more teachable than previous generations, as measured by the degree to which they see failure as a learning opportunity, are not afraid to take on harder tasks beyond their capacity and take constructive feedback more openly.²² We're aware that they will be the most materially endowed, formally educated, longest-living generation – but what will their contribution be? To whom much is given, much is required, or as Peter Parker, aka Spiderman, puts it, 'With great power comes great responsibility.' This is the sense that we have around Generation Alpha – they have been set up with great opportunities in life to propel them into their future. In this privileged position, there is an expectation that they will each make a contribution to society at large. This isn't necessarily about hyper success, but making a contribution, achieving some goals and leading a life where they're an example to others. It's exciting to imagine the potential future for Generation Alpha.

Environmental consciousness

In our research, the theme of Generation Alpha being an environmentally conscious generation came up numerous

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times. We know that for Generation Z (Generation Alpha's older siblings) this is a key issue of concern. Many people began paying attention in 2018 when fifteen-year-old Greta Thunberg from Sweden began protesting outside the Swedish Parliament in place of going to school. Her small display of personal conviction had a ripple effect and ignited a global youth climate movement. In 2019 she was recognised as *Time's* 2019 Person of the Year and was the 2019 International Children's Peace Prize Winner.

According to Amnesty International's survey of more than 10,000 people aged between eighteen and twenty-five, Gen Z rank climate change as the most important issue of our time, followed by pollution and terrorism.²³ This is the generation that Generation Alpha are looking up to, and they have formed movements and organisations that encourage people to take action. These kids care. When asked about why younger generations are having such impacts, twenty-two-year-old Steph told us, 'Our generation is living in a world that is more interconnected than ever. With our online communities, we share the realities of climate change at home and can see the reality of it further abroad. Seeing and sharing these realities motivates us to take action and think about what we can do to ensure a better planet for the future. The resources and education we have at our fingertips gives us a voice as a generation of activists, developing campaigns, initiatives and putting pressure on our governments to do more.'

Generation Alpha are being influenced by their environmentally conscious older Gen Z counterparts, and both emerging generations are using their voice to speak up on broader social issues – even at home. According to a survey we conducted of parents, 80 per cent said their child/ren have

A name given to a new generation, like a name given to a new baby, is part of their identity but it is not who they are. What is more important than the name we are given is the name we make for ourselves.

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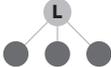
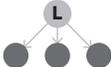
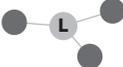
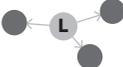
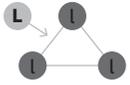
influenced their actions or consumption decisions, making them more environmentally aware.²⁴

In addition to the influence of Gen Z on their concern for the environment, the products, toys, shows and entertainment that Generation Alpha engage with are also increasingly focusing on environmental issues, which is also having an impact on them.

Monica Dreger, Head of Global Consumer Insights at Mattel, one of the world's leading toy and children's entertainment manufacturers, believes one of the greatest strengths of Generation Alpha is that they have the belief and action to effect change. She told us that she is seeing kids as young as seven or eight talking about environmental issues and what they can personally do, which she has never seen in a generation before. She said, 'Even though they didn't create this mess, they are still taking ownership of these issues that they wouldn't have in the past. Activism is part of their mentality of being able to do something about it, even something small. In my family, my kids are plant-based eaters, because they want to do their share for the environment. They would be mortified right now seeing me with a Starbucks cup, because it's not reusable! We are not allowed to do that anymore in our house and that is something that is really guided by the Generation Alphas.' The challenge for Generation Alpha in a post-COVID-19 world will be living with hygiene protocols requiring single use and disposability, amid environmental concerns and a desire for reusability.

We have put together an infographic (see the next page) that shows how each generation is shaped by unique social markers, iconic cars, toys, music devices, leadership styles and even screen content.

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Generation	Iconic toys	Music devices	Leadership styles	Screen content
 <p>BUILDERS 1925-1945</p>	 <p>Roller skates</p>	 <p>Record player LP, 1948</p>	 <p>Controlling</p>	 <p>Cinema</p>
 <p>BABY BOOMERS 1946-1964</p>	 <p>Frisbee</p>	 <p>Audio cassette 1962</p>	 <p>Directing</p>	 <p>TV</p>
 <p>GENERATION X 1965-1979</p>	 <p>Rubik's cube</p>	 <p>Walkman 1979</p>	 <p>Coordinating</p>	 <p>VCR</p>
 <p>GENERATION Y 1980-1994</p>	 <p>BMX bike</p>	 <p>iPod 2001</p>	 <p>Guiding</p>	 <p>Internet</p>
 <p>GENERATION Z 1995-2009</p>	 <p>Folding scooter</p>	 <p>Spotify 2008</p>	 <p>Empowering</p>	 <p>Device</p>
 <p>GENERATION α 2010-2024</p>	 <p>Fidget spinner</p>	 <p>Smart speakers Now</p>	 <p>Inspiring</p>	 <p>Streaming</p>

Parenting styles

Now that we have a better understanding of the different generations we can look at how parenting styles have changed over time. The significant people shaping a child's life – their parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, friends and teachers – can belong to different generation. By understanding the transitions of parenting styles, we gain a better understanding of Generation Alpha.

Those tasked with the incredibly important job of parenting today's children are likely to be those of generations X and Y. They are parenting their children (Gen Z and Gen Alpha) in different ways to how they themselves were parented. Parents of today have, in general, departed from a 'one size fits all' approach to parenting. Along with changing gender roles, we have seen changes in the expectations of mums and dads in their parental responsibilities. While most Baby Boomers were shaped in households where fewer mums worked outside the home, today the majority of the parents of Generation Alpha are two-income earning. Along with the massive increase in the proportion of mums working full-time, expectations towards fathers have also changed, as many have become more actively involved in childrearing. From attendance at parent-teacher nights and class concerts to the school drop-off, pick-up, and taking parental leave, it's the dads of Generation Alpha, not just the mums, who are stepping up.

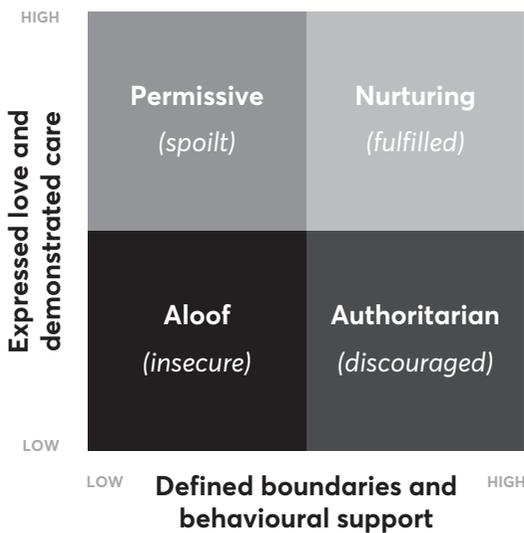
The increase in news coverage of issues around child harm and abuse have led to an increased focus on safety, with the introduction of home surveillance and 'helicopter' parenting. And beyond safety, there's the trend known as Tiger parenting, where parents drive the academic success of their children through an authoritarian approach. Tiger parents put their

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children in top-performing schools and pay for after-school tuition to ensure their kids are given every opportunity to get high grades, which will then lead to acceptance into a high-ranking university and a prestigious profession.

Parenting styles

Though there are different parenting trends, from our analysis we have found four different styles of parenting, mapped across two key areas – the degree to which love is expressed and care demonstrated, as well as boundaries defined and behavioural support offered.



Permissive – The permissive parenting style comes from an environment where there is expressed love and demonstrated care and affection, but there are few, if any, defined boundaries. There is also no culture of discipline or attempts to modify children’s behaviour. This style invariably leads to children that in the past would be described as ‘spoilt’ and are today labelled ‘entitled’ and ‘undisciplined’.

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Authoritarian – This parenting style is the opposite to the permissive approach. While authoritarian parents have clearly defined boundaries for their household and compliance is expected, there is a lack of expressed love, affection and care. The result is that children can be discouraged and unconvinced of their parents' love.

Aloof – The aloof parents are low in each of the key areas. There are few, if any, boundaries or behavioural expectations and nor is there a family culture of love and affection. Children are likely to become insecure because of the lack of expectations around appropriate behaviour and the absence of expressed parental love.

Nurturing – The ideal parenting style is high in both key areas. We call this the nurturing parent. These parents are clear on behavioural expectations, and their children develop self-discipline from being brought up with an understanding of boundaries and the consequences of breaching them. All of this takes place in a relationship where love and affection is repeatedly expressed and demonstrated, and the value of the child and the care the parents have for them is continually evident. This parenting style creates fulfilled children.

Societal trends are not so much a road down which we travel ever further, but rather a pendulum, which swings to an extreme before correcting back again.

Every generation has a mix of parenting styles, but traditionally, parents of the Baby Boomers tended to use a more authoritarian style. Then we saw the pendulum swing the other way to the permissive approach for parents of Gen Y. What we see emerging today is a more balanced approach,

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where both mums and dads show love and affection for their children – both verbally and physically. At the same time, parents recognise the benefit of raising children who understand boundaries, are emotionally equipped to make wise choices and are aware of the consequences of breaching boundaries and exhibiting poor behaviour. Today, children are asked to contribute to household tasks rather than just being told to do chores. Consequences for poor behaviour are discussed, with children taking ownership for their outcomes, rather than simply being ‘given a punishment’. High standards and appropriate behaviour are expected now, as in the past, but a culture of discipline is shaped very differently to prior eras.

Generation Y, who will comprise the greatest number of parents of Generation Alpha, are parenting in different ways to those in the past. Having been shaped in their twenties by technology, this generation of parents are turning to the internet, not just family or friends, for parenting advice. As a result, they know more about child development than ever before – which, as many parents know, can be both empowering and overwhelming. This new generation of parents are documenting their kids’ lives on social media, along with their family activities and parenting philosophies. Gen Y fathers are more likely to take on housework and childcare than in the past – even though women are still doing most of it.

Generation Y parents are well positioned to raise children who are empathetic, holistic and have a well-rounded understanding of the global and diverse society they live in. Their children are more often viewed as little people to be understood and guided rather than ‘blank slates’ to be prescribed and directed. As Emma, a Gen Y new mum, told us, ‘I’m excited to keep discovering more about my son Caleb and what he is interested in and passionate about, his skills

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and talents, his sense of humour and idiosyncrasies. And I'm excited to watch him discover those things about himself. His whole life is ahead of him and it's full of potential.'

Baby naming traditions and trends

An important (and early) part of the parenting journey is choosing a name for your child. Parents of Generation Alpha have more access to information than at any other time in history, and are inundated with options, research and meaning when it comes to deciding on a name. Prior to the baby-name books of the 1980s, baby names were influenced by family and religious traditions. In recent years, the internet has facilitated an explosion of blogs, websites and even baby-naming apps. There are not only baby-name lists but baby-name search engines. It has never been easier to search the history of a prospective name and suitable sibling name options, assess its popularity, and get feedback on the opinions of others.

The average first-time parents of today were born in the early 1990s. These parents are likely to have grown up with several classmates named Matthew, Chris, Sarah and Jessica. In today's digitally connected world a name is more than what a teacher calls you. A name is now a social media handle, personal brand and possible web domain. For parents of Generation Alpha there is a trend to select a less common name, with names for this generation considered digital real estate in an increasingly global era. But this name will need to carry the child through a lifetime of multiple careers and jobs. That is why we see a more varied list of the most popular baby names and names that are more traditional than trendy. The top girls' names in Australia are Charlotte, Olivia and Amelia and the boys' names are Oliver, Noah and Jack.²⁵

Key takeaways

In this chapter we have painted a picture of the different generations and shown how people born in a similar period display characteristics arising from shared experiences that lead to similar perspectives, and even parenting styles. We have examined both the present day and the past by looking at the characteristics of the generations shaping Generation Alpha. We've looked at parents (who are older), cultural mix (more diverse), socio-economic factors (slightly wealthier), family size (smaller) and life expectancy (longer). By looking at these characteristics we can understand the context in which Generation Alpha are being shaped and in turn predict much about their future. Then there is the research about the people most likely to be their parents, Generation Y, which gives us a sense of how they will be raised. The parents of Generation Alpha are moving homes and changing careers more frequently, are more materially endowed, more technologically supplied and are outsourcing aspects of parenting such as childcare, birthday parties and even meal provision.

In the pages ahead we will be uncovering the trends, technologies and characteristics that are shaping Generation Alpha and that will, in turn, define them. We will unpack the future of education, what work will be like, what will differ in their shopping experience and, of course, we'll look at keys to parenting this emerging generation. Our hope is that you'll not only be informed but feel equipped and inspired to play your part in leading Generation Alpha into a new and exciting world.