

The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia.

Authors: Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton & Ruth Webber, **Publisher :** John Garratt Publishing. **ISBN :**9781920721466.

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A new book launched today, *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* reports that the outlook of today's young people is marked by their having grown up in a world that promotes individualisation and consumerism, and that the values that underpin these ideologies are detrimental to good citizenship.

The study is particularly innovative in that it divides young people into spirituality types, distinguishing those who are highly committed and those who are nominal or marginal adherents. Dr. Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, notes that the book throws the values and belief systems of those born between 1981 and 1995 into a new light and will provide better understanding of this talented and resourceful group of Australians.

In their study of a national sample of 1216 young people of Generation Y, authors Mason, Singleton and Webber from Australian Catholic University and Monash University, found that 71% of Gen Y are not involved in any kind of community service in a typical month - whether fundraising, office work, signing a petition, collecting for a charity or coaching a sporting team. The study found that 77% of those whose spirituality type is Secular and 51% of Active Christians are not engaged in community activities in any way and do nothing for others apart from close family and friends.

However, a significant proportion of Gen Y go against that trend. They demonstrate strong community values and are actively involved in their communities in ways that assist the marginalised and disadvantaged. Some do hard-edge volunteer work that requires both initiative and courage. This type of service takes them outside their comfort zone and provides them with new skills and confidence. Those who engage in voluntary work are likely to have a strong commitment to community values and be actively involved their faith. Active Christians and those New Agers who were brought up Christian demonstrate high levels of community involvement and altruism.

Spirituality type is also correlated with generosity: although 25% of Seculars and 8% of Active Christians give nothing to charity in a year, those Active Christians who do donate are generous in their giving.

Despite the proliferation of television series about witches and the paranormal, young people have not taken on New Age practices to a corresponding degree. The book argues that for the most part, young people are not active spiritual seekers, but instead have a highly individualistic and relativistic approach to life and spirituality, and are hardly familiar with religious traditions. Only a small percentage of Gen Y are actively religious. The religion of those young people who do belong to a denomination, is for the most part 'low temperature'.

Noting that strong engagement with a belief system is related to good citizenship, the authors pose the question: where will young people of the future learn civic values and a commitment to the common good? Who, apart from parents, is going to pass these values on to them and lead them to participate in community service?

Authors (available for interviews):

Dr. Michael Mason Australian Catholic University

Ph (03) 9817-9758 (Mobile): 0417 467 480

Email: Michael.Mason@acu.edu.au

Assoc Prof Ruth Webber Australian Catholic University

Ph (Work) (03) 9953-3221 (Home) (03) 9686-4068 (Mobile) 0429 142 782

Email: Ruth.Webber@acu.edu.au

Dr. Andrew Singleton, Monash University

Ph (Work) (03) 9905-5836 (Home) (03) 9317-5720 (Mobile): 0422 696 651

Email: Andrew.Singleton@arts.monash.edu.au