



# FULL-SPECTRUM THINKING

How to  
Escape Boxes in a  
Post-Categorical Future

**B O B J O H A N S E N**

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

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**BOB JOHANSEN**  
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**BK**

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## INTRODUCTION

# The Core Story

### WHAT CATEGORIES DO YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

I like to ask this question at the beginning of workshops, and I'm always surprised by how many different categories people use to describe themselves: mother, father, manager, accountant, leader, board member, soldier, cook, gardener, writer, and so on. Quickly listing 20 categories to describe oneself is not uncommon.

How many different categories does it take before you start thinking of yourself across a broad spectrum?

Categories coerce. Categories are thrown at people like capture nets over wild animals. Categories keep us in cages. Categories can kill.

Full-spectrum<sup>1</sup> thinking is the ability to seek patterns and clarity across gradients of possibility—outside, across, beyond, or maybe even without any boxes or categories—while resisting false certainty.

In today's political climate, categories dumb down the way we talk about each other. Categorical thinking moves us away from understanding the bigger picture. It lacks context. Categories lead us toward certainty, but away from clarity.



Full-spectrum thinking has the potential to diffuse polarities, to reveal that our differences are not as stark as they seem through the narrow lens of categories. My colleague Toshi Hoo, who leads Institute for the Future’s Emerging Media Lab, commented to me that full-spectrum thinking helps us find the multidimensional ways in which things are connected—not just the ways in which they are distinct from each other.

Think of the best leaders you have ever had, the people who inspired you the most.

How did those leaders categorize themselves?

How did they categorize you and others?

My guess is that your best leaders didn’t categorize others mindlessly. They made you feel recognized and empowered—but not stereotyped. They used appropriate categories to define your strengths and highlight your contributions, rather than pigeonhole you or degrade your efforts. They didn’t box you in or categorize you as something you are not. They saw the full amplitude of your potential. My guess is that your best leaders were clear about the future but rarely spoke in certainties.

This book is about how to seed and nurture a mindset that expands the characteristics that you already admire in the best leaders. Full-spectrum thinking fosters empathy. Mindless categorizing fosters contempt. Categories make it easy to write off others with tired labels like “immigrant,” “black,” “white,” “millennial,” “gay,” “Jew,” “Muslim,” or “old.” Choosing an identity for yourself is one thing, but being labeled by others is quite another—and the way you say it can be just as important as what you say.

The way forward is to develop full-spectrum thinking—not by advocating for our own stereotypes of others or by creating new boxes to throw people into without careful thought.

Being stuck in categorical thought doesn’t actually involve much thinking at all—you just assume without thinking that new experiences will fit into your old boxes, buckets, labels, generalizations, and stereotypes. Knee-jerk categorization of others is reckless. Even if after careful thought you decide to categorize, you should start by thinking about a full spectrum of possibilities first.

Categorizing is a convenient and time-honored strategy for gaining and maintaining power. Categorization can have psychological or material benefits by helping you develop your own identity and community. But lazy or careless categorizing of others is dangerous—and it will get even more dangerous in the future. Fortunately, a gradual shift from categorical to full-spectrum thinking has already begun.

Elite basketball players, for example, used to be categorized as a 1 (point guard), a 2 (shooting guard), a 3 (small forward), a 4 (power forward), or a 5 (center). Then came Magic Johnson and later LeBron James, and now even more broad-spectrum players can play more than one position. Categorizing basketball players no longer works in the same way it did. Today's best players are position fluid. They cannot be categorized easily or consistently. The serious players all have a spectrum of talents that defy static categories. They play multiposition—I'd call it full-spectrum—basketball.

But it won't be a total flip from categorical to full-spectrum thinking. I'm not against categories if they are accurate and fair and do no harm. All of us need to create structures and categories of some kind that work for us and for others. The categories that we choose can be empowering.

The best scientists, for example, learn how to use categories without being deluded by them. Categories have a long history and at times have been very useful. Nevertheless, John Fowles argued that we have become so steeped in categorical thinking that we sometimes cannot experience the spectrum of possibilities that the world around us offers. Often, we cannot see the forest because we're so focused on naming the trees.<sup>2</sup>

Full-spectrum thinking will apply across all levels of aggregation: individual, organizational, and societal. In the future, full-spectrum thinking will become both more necessary and less difficult because of a new range of tools.

A fresh mix of new and old technology and media tools will enable—and then require—full-spectrum thinking. Over the next decade, the current tools for full-spectrum thinking will get dramatically better, just as the need for more nuanced ways of perceiving and judging the outside world will increase.

Powerful digital media—including gameful engagement, big data

analytics, visualization, blockchain, and machine learning—will be both more powerful and easier to use. New clarity filters will get practical just as the need becomes urgent. Digitally amplified full-spectrum thinking will help us resist the temptations of premature categorization and false certainty. It will be an antidote to the dangerous polarization of today.

Full-spectrum thinking has the potential to reveal that commonalities are hidden in plain view. Full-spectrum thinking is about recognizing patterns, seeking clarity, and resisting certainty. A full-spectrum mindset is a great place to start in order to make sense out of ourselves, the world around us, and the future. It provides context. It encourages nuance.

Even though unexamined categorical thinking remains in force and is unconsciously followed in many fields, a more positive future is coming that will allow us to be much more nuanced and hopeful. The preferable future will be an intelligent blend of cautious categorical and disciplined full-spectrum thinking.

Increasingly, we will be able to use new digital tools for full-spectrum thinking to achieve breakthroughs in business, leadership, innovation, politics, community relations, and many other domains. Sloppy categorical thinking, so common today, will be inexcusable and embarrassing in the future.

The future will be a scramble: an asymmetrical patchwork of urgency, panic, imbalance, and hope. Full-spectrum thinking will make people more future-ready and better able to make sense out of new opportunities and threats. Some people practice full-spectrum thinking already, and their efforts will become more visible and powerful. It will also be much easier for novices to develop their own full-spectrum thinking abilities.

We will move toward—but never quite reach—a post-categorical future that will reward rigorous full-spectrum thinking. Categories won't disappear, but they will be far less coercive.

This book is about why now is the time to shift from categorical toward full-spectrum thinking. It will help you become more of a full-spectrum thinker. It will guide you in creating organizations that value and benefit from full-spectrum thinking. I have three goals in this book:

1. Improve how people think about the past, the present, and the future.

2. Improve how organizations identify and evaluate new business opportunities.
3. Depolarize strategic conversations to allow for a wider range of alternatives beyond binary choices.

This book is designed for use in training and executive development programs for corporations, nonprofits, government agencies, and the military. It is written for hiring managers, chief talent officers, CHROs, CEOs, CIOs, and innovators of all kinds.

The Conclusion includes a series of guidelines, tools, and actions you can take now to develop your own full-spectrum thinking mindset as well as spread this kind of thinking across your organization.

I want this book to seed and nurture full-spectrum thinking and a next generation of full-spectrum thinkers. My purpose is to encourage business leaders, educators, public officials, and individual people to think beyond simplistic labels, categories, boxes, slots, or buckets. The dangers of certitude are swelling.

*Full-Spectrum Thinking* can be read on its own or in concert with *The New Leadership Literacies* and *Leaders Make the Future*. In *Full-Spectrum Thinking*, I focus on the *mindset* that will be required to win in the future—and make the world a better place. I began this trilogy after my experiences at the Army War College, when I asked what kind of *skills* would be necessary for leaders to thrive in the post-9/11 world. Then, I became intrigued with leadership *literacies*—the disciplines and practices of leadership—beyond skills. I recommend that you begin with mindset, then consider literacies and skills.

This book flows through three related parts:

- Part One is focused on the core concepts and how futures thinking and full-spectrum thinking can break us out of the categorical constraints of the past and present.
- Part Two is focused on the emerging tools, the networks, and the true digital natives who will engage with the scrambled world around us and expand full-spectrum thinking on a global scale.
- Part Three is focused on the future that is already beginning today.

It will show you examples of broader spectrums and new applications that will become possible first, then mandatory.

New spectrums of meaning will become possible as people see the future with more clarity, but less certainty.

Many people are certain, but few are clear.

That's about to change.

## PART ONE

# THE PAST CANNOT CONTINUE

THE FUTURE WILL PUNISH CATEGORICAL THINKING BUT reward full-spectrum thinking.

The future will be a global *scramble* that will be very difficult to categorize. You will need a full-spectrum mindset to have any hint of what is going on. The next decade will see staggering shifts like the increasingly visible rich-poor and asset gap, cyber warfare and cybercrime, and global climate disruption.

The scramble will be fraught with toxic misinformation (not necessarily intentional), disinformation (intentional), and distrust. In this future, it will be very dangerous to force fit new threats or new opportunities into old categories of thought. Fortunately, new spectrums of thought will become possible in new ways over the next decade. Full-spectrum thinking will be required in order to thrive.

If you have a carton of eggs, as the old folk story goes, you can decide how you want to cook them. Once you've scrambled the eggs, you cannot unscramble them. You can, however, make the scrambled eggs into some kind of new egg-based dish.

During the scramble, many things that have been stuck will become unstuck. Some things will unravel. The scramblers of the present world—we see them all around us today—won't be very good at putting things back together again.

In the scrambled future I am forecasting, you can expect an unusual number of unexpected consequences from the scrambling. You will have a range of creative new options that weren't on the menu in the past. The future will get even more perplexing over the next decade, and most people—including most leaders—are not ready.

Our old categories will work adequately when new opportunities or threats match prior understanding. Simplistic categorization, however, will be perilous if people stereotype others superficially or boil new experiences down too far or too fast. People categorize to try to understand, but categorization often yields a superficial or false understanding. Sometimes categorizing demeans or devalues others.

A full-spectrum mindset is not new. In fact, full-spectrum thinking was probably more common among our ancestors than it is now. You can argue that children are born with it until we crush it out of them with labels, rigid intelligence and educational testing, autofill tools, and binary computing where everything ultimately must be reduced to a zero or a one.

In the effort to create simple stories to help people understand the scramble, *overly simplistic* stories will abound—especially those created by extreme politicians and extreme religions. People will struggle to make sense of emerging futures that often won't make much sense at all. Comforting labels will be both alluring and fraught with danger.

Full-spectrum thinking is, in a way, a step back to analog even as it is a step forward to an ever more digitally enhanced world.

Producer George Martin joined the Beatles just as they tired of live performances because of the inane screaming of fans. He was a practitioner of full-spectrum thinking before it was called that. His mentality was to move beyond the live performance to something different that was a kind of hybrid of analog and digital. He didn't try to simulate concert performances; he tried to create something profoundly different and, at least in some ways, better. He was thinking beyond either/or. Now, analog has shifted to digital

in the music world, but at a price that sometimes comes at a cost of reduced quality to the ears of those who prefer vinyl records.

Now, we can—as George Martin and the later Beatles did for music—create a new spectrum of experiences that has the nuances of the analog world with the power and scale of digital.

Thinking across spectrums (not even just one spectrum) will become much easier. Our brains are very good at putting new things into old boxes. Next-generation tools and networks will help us teach our brains the new tricks of full-spectrum thinking.

Neuroscience (an important influence for this book) teaches us that our brains are very good at putting new experiences in old categories. Simplistic categorization will be perilous, however.

Neuroscientist Kevin Ochsner, a Columbia professor, was the respondent to my keynote speech at the NeuroLeadership Summit on October 4, 2018, in New York. I talked about the value of strategic foresight and futures thinking. Professor Ochsner's response was that foresight can “lift us up from the eternal present,” where our brains function by default.

Our brains, he went on, have evolved to constantly categorize and predict what's next—to try to keep us safe and out of trouble. Even though predicting the future is impossible, our brains do it anyway. When faced with a confusing situation, our brains' default reaction is fear and dread, fight or flight. Our brains were programmed in the past to do continuous prediction of what's coming next. The brain practices of the past, however, will get us into a lot of trouble in the future.

The emerging future will require us to teach our brains new tricks, to move from unexamined categorical thinking to mindful full-spectrum thinking. Sometimes categories are weaponized to inflict violence. Sometimes people categorize to pretend they understand. Sometimes people categorize to demean or devalue others.

Full-spectrum thinking will help people strategize with a future-back approach (I call it Now, FUTURE, Next), which we have an urgent need to do in order to thrive in the scramble. This book shows you how to do that.

Many people today—including some of the most popular political and religious leaders—think only within their own rigid boxes of thought. Some



leaders, however, have developed an ability to think across the boxes, and those are the ones who deserve our attention.

This part of the book will show why we cannot continue to be locked in categorical thinking. Chapter 1 introduces full-spectrum thinking at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Chapter 2 explores the dilemma of categories that were intended to help us understand what is around us but which we often take too seriously. Then, Chapter 3 introduces futures thinking to help us move beyond the past and make a better future.

### Chapter 1

#### Ramping Up to Full-Spectrum Thinking

*More Clarity, Less Certainty*

### Chapter 2

#### The Coercion of Categories

*Please Don't Stamp Me with **Your** Label*

### Chapter 3

#### Escape the Boxes of the Past

*How to Use Futures Thinking*

Categorical thinking allows little room for subtle differences. Full-spectrum thinking is both nuanced and scalable. Tension will remain, since cultures are very good at detecting and reinforcing categories, but the spectrum of possibilities will continue to broaden.

For example, people talk about being online or offline—but that will be increasingly difficult as our connectivity grows. Ten years from now, there will be a spectrum of online/offline realities. Today, most of us are offline unless we are on. In the future, most of us will be online unless we are off. It will seem quaintly out of touch to distinguish between being online and offline. “Logging onto the internet” will be a foreign concept with no meaning except to very old or out-of-touch people.

Categories won't go away, and simple categories will work fine when they accurately match a new situation to an old one. But simplistic categories, labels, generalizations, and stereotypes will be exposed for what they are: sloppy and dangerous. Racism, sexism, and other prejudices will be much harder to justify in a world of everyday full-spectrum thinking skills and capabilities.

### **Priority Questions for Part One**

As an individual, how can you constructively question your unexamined assumptions about categorizing yourself and others?

As an organization, how can you categorize mindfully and in ways that draw out the best in people rather than boxing them in? How can you consider a broader range of business and social value that you might deliver?

How can societies avoid the dangers of stereotyping? How can societies and cultures seed and employ full-spectrum thinking in order to make the future a better place and space?



## Ramping Up to Full-Spectrum Thinking

### More Clarity, Less Certainty

SOFT DRINK CANS, HALF OF THEM STILL BOUND TOGETHER with plastic collars, were scattered across a coffee table in the small family room when we arrived in the early afternoon to visit Peter Drucker in his 95th year, about a year before he died in 2005. We were there to talk with the famous management guru<sup>1</sup> about the future of work and the human resources function.

I walked into that room with AG Lafley, then the CEO of Procter & Gamble; Dick Antoine, P&G's head of human resources; and Craig Wynn, a visionary P&G thinker. I felt fortunate to have been invited and was impressed by the fact that the CEO of one of the world's best companies had flown across the country in his corporate jet to spend the afternoon with this remarkable 94-year-old.

We were told in advance that we would be meeting in a simple setting with no staff support, but Peter Drucker welcomed us warmly to his modest ranch-style house in Claremont, California—just a short walk from the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. Peter Drucker was slow in body by that time in his life, but still very active in

mind. My brief time with him was mindset altering and has become the anchor story for this book.

He told us that for the first half of your life, you should try many different kinds of work and make it a point to work with many different kinds of people—since you won't yet know who you are or what you want to become. Try out a spectrum of possibilities, he taught us.

For the second half of life, Drucker said, you should only work on things you are passionate about and only work with people with whom you love to work. Focus is good, he said, but don't focus too early. Categories of work aren't necessarily bad, unless they lock you into a categorical cage.

By “first half of life,” since he was approaching 100 years of age at the time and still thinking strong, I took him to mean about 50 years. Now, more than 20 years later, I realize that Peter Drucker was encouraging us to have a full-spectrum mindset about work and life—especially at key milestones. I realize now that he was thinking across all levels of aggregation: individual, organizational, and societal.

### **Look beyond Binary Choices**

Peter Drucker was encouraging us to see beyond the caging and coercion of categories. Try many kinds of work while you are less than 50 years old. Don't allow people (like your parents or your friends or your professors or your first boss or your company) to categorize you too soon or label you as this or that. Don't box yourself into a job or a career trajectory that is not a calling for you. Search for a vocation, not just a job.

Many parents I know just assume that their kids will go to college. Many of their kids, however, aren't so sure. Many young people are not sure what they want to do, they are not sure about the value of a college degree, and they don't want student loan debt. Stalemated by the binary choice of college or not, a growing number of families are choosing a gap year when a young person can explore. The gap year is a simple example of broader-spectrum thinking.

Parents often have more specific expectations than their kids. My young colleague Gabe Cervantes became my research assistant after graduating

from Williams College as a first-generation college student and first-generation American-born (his parents immigrated from Mexico). When he joined me, he had already done a few different things since graduating and was on his way to law school when he decided instead to join Institute for the Future (IFF) and work on this book with me. His family was shocked: they wanted a lawyer for a son—not a futurist. In fact, they had never heard of a career category called futurist. Gabe had a goal that he had shared with his parents: go to law school and work his way up to the point where he could advise senior executives at corporations. He chose working with me so that he could have the experience of working with top executives sooner, but this was not a path that his parents understood or could even imagine. Gabe may still go to law school, but he wanted a wider experience before making that choice.

Peter Drucker urged those P&G executives to offer their workers many options and assist them in navigating obstacles and choices. Don't assume that people will follow those career tracks routinely. Encourage people to go off the rails now and again.

Most people do not find a calling early in life. Many people never do find a calling. Many people work for long hours and many years in jobs they don't even like, let alone love. Drucker himself began as a journalist and had at least six distinct careers in his life. He had definitely found his calling long before we met him that sunny afternoon, but it wasn't until his mid-60s that he settled down and focused on his true calling.

Just after AG Lafley first became CEO of Procter & Gamble, his first official speech was in Chicago for the P&G alumni network. Up to that point, P&G—a bastion of employment from within—hadn't even acknowledged the existence of the P&G alumni network. The alumni were often viewed as an annoyance. In that speech, Lafley embraced the alumni as part of the global family of P&G and a powerful network that included both full-time employees and alumni. This message was very well received.

The common wisdom outside P&G was that working even a few years at the company was a terrific resume builder—perhaps equivalent to an MBA. The common wisdom within the company was that employees had to move up or out. P&G promoted from within and rarely recruited senior

leaders from the outside. I have worked on projects with P&G since just after I got out of graduate school, but I learned early on in my work with them that when someone left the company, I wasn't supposed to talk about them anymore. When they left P&G, it seemed to me, it was as if they had died, or at least their lives were somehow diminished because they left the mother ship. AG Lafley changed that feeling.

AG Lafley was very attracted to Drucker's notion of experimenting widely in life. He told me, when I showed him a draft of this chapter, that he had changed majors every year in college: math to English to French to history. He once invested 47 weeks just to become fluent in Hebrew. He loaded freight cars for the railroad, ran punch presses and riveting machines in a metal fabrication factory, and taught several different courses as a substitute teacher in high school. He didn't start at P&G until he was 30. In an e-mail to me, AG Lafley reflected back on our afternoon with Peter Drucker: "I believe Drucker was right about not settling, not getting trapped in a category or a career."

### **Employment vs. Employability**

When he became CEO, Lafley observed that P&G could no longer promise lifelong employment but that the company could and would offer lifelong *employability*. This was a major shift toward full-spectrum thinking about work and life.

The P&G diaspora of former employees (the "lost children," as longtime employees sometimes called them with a wink) was finally recognized by the new CEO. P&G is still largely a promote-from-within company, but it is a more inclusive network now. There is a full spectrum of possibilities for how you can work and how you can stay engaged with the P&G community, whether or not you are a full-time employee. Even though I have never been a P&G employee, I feel very much a part of the P&G diaspora.

This giant company has gradually shifted from thinking of P&G employees as either in or out. It is no longer a binary choice. Once people become part of the P&G diaspora in any way, they are in for life.

It seemed like bad news at the time for workers who had hoped for a job

for life, but it turns out that—in the long run—it was good news. Being employable for multiple opportunities in life is much better than being locked into a job you don't like for life. There is now a full spectrum of ways to work with P&G, including the possibility—not a promise—of a full-time job for life. Being associated with P&G is a good thing.

I've learned a similar lesson with employees at Institute for the Future. I invest a lot in the young people we bring into the Institute, and I used to find it very painful when they decided to leave. Now, I've learned that leaving IFTF doesn't mean the end, it means the beginning of a new kind of relationship. Sometimes, former full-time employees become clients, and other times they become new kinds of colleagues. I had a limited view of what it meant to be an employee.

Categories limit our vision. Categories coerce. Categories can be cages.

What categories should you be using to describe yourself? What categories do you use to describe others? Over the next decade we will move gradually from rigid categorical to flexible full-spectrum thinking for individuals (yourself and others), organizations of all kinds (including businesses, nonprofits, religious organizations, and governments), and societies. Here are some examples of the broader-spectrum shift that is coming as we ramp up to full-spectrum thinking.

### **Full-Spectrum Thinking for Individuals**

As shown in Table 1.1, each individual is shifting toward multiple identities that will become increasingly important as the next generation of the internet scales globally and virtual identities become as important as in-person identities. Each person will in fact be many different identities at different times and different places.

Adopting an identity for yourself can be an important way to develop community with others. Categorizing is one way to develop an identity and sense of self-worth. For some people, it is also important to categorize who you are *not*. For many people, their sense of self is defined by a category: I'm Black or I'm a Christian or I'm a Jew or I'm queer or I'm a professor. Identities, however, will become more fluid and multilayered.



**TABLE 1.1 Full-Spectrum Thinking for Individuals**

<b>From Categorical</b>	<b>Toward Full Spectrum</b>
Each person is categorized with a single role or title.	Each person will have multiple roles, with fewer titles.
Each person has a fixed identity.	Each person will have multiple, fluid, and multilayered identities in physical and virtual space.
Shoppers are considered passive consumers of products.	Expect active and engaged shoppers in search of products, services, experiences, and personal transformations.

Categorizing others is much more problematic and risky. It can be judgmental and demeaning. Gradually, people and institutions are becoming more aware of how they categorize others.

In the past, advertising was often based on segmentation, breaking consumers down into target markets. The consumer of the future, however, will be much harder to categorize. Each person will be multiple identities in mixed virtual and in-person worlds. The consumer of the future won't even like being called a "consumer," because that term will be way too passive. Each person will be an identity of multiples. Fortunately, new digital tools will help us think across a continuum of possibilities—not just force people into categories.

Instead of labeling the people who buy their products as "consumers," companies will call them "people" and will seek to understand the different identities that people adopt actively at different times in their lives. At Walt Disney World and Target, for example, consumers are called "guests."

### **Full-Spectrum Thinking for Organizations**

How do today's organizations categorize? How will this range of possibilities change in the future? What types of organization attract you the most?

As Table 1.2 shows, organizational forms will become increasingly fluid.

**TABLE 1.2 Full-Spectrum Thinking for Organizations**

<b>From Categorical</b>	<b>Toward Full Spectrum</b>
Traditional jobs	More gigs and other less formal and more flexible ways of making a living without having a job
Single specialized roles like manager, staff, leader, follower, employee	Many hybrid roles for each person, with fewer full-time jobs, more computer augmentation, and some job automation
Command-and-control	Leaders who are very clear about where they want to go, but very flexible about how you will get there
Fixed hierarchies with rigid organization charts and reporting lines	More shape-shifting organizations where hierarchies come and go
Centralized authority	Distributed authority
Focus on products	Focus on a spectrum of business value from products to services to subscriptions to experiences to transformations
More closed and inward facing	More open and outward facing

Rigid hierarchies will still work in slow-moving predictable environments, but that kind of stability will be rare. For most of us, we are in a continuing rotation of being leaders and followers.

Command-and-control hierarchies just don't work as well in fast-changing unpredictable environments. In Chapter 8, I will discuss how the military has developed more flexible forms of hierarchy that still have clear commander's intent, but much more flexibility about execution.

People will play multiple roles within these dynamic organizations of the future. Leaders will morph into followers as the projects change, then morph back into leaders again. Organizations will encourage and reward this kind of behavior. The boundaries of the organization will be more

**TABLE 1.3 Full-Spectrum Thinking for Societies**

<b>From Categorical</b>	<b>Toward Full Spectrum</b>
Focus on separate societies, countries, or cultures	Focus on a diverse range of cultures, values, and beliefs across different societies and cultures
Centralized governments	Distributed governance
Nationalism	Globalism and regionalism
Culture focused: us vs. them	Cross-culture focused: what we have in common
Power held by a few	Power shared by many
Isolated	Connected
Generational cohorts by age	A youthquake of young activists with digital savvy, global connectivity, and growing power

porous as people come and go. On special forces teams in the military, for example, people play multiple roles depending on the circumstances, while still applying their areas of expertise in varied ways.

### **Full-Spectrum Thinking about Society**

What categories do societies and cultures use to describe their citizens? As diversity increases, demographic categories will break down, with many more people who categorize themselves as “other.” When they are asked if they are members of a church, which used to be an easy question to answer, many people now say that they are “spiritual, but not religious.” Comfortable categories are breaking down, and that makes some people uncomfortable. They want to know who is in and who is out. Table 1.3 shows the direction of change over the next decade.

As migration grows, negative stereotypes will abound and the need for full-spectrum thinking will grow. Some countries and cultures will cling to the comfortable categories of the past, but the future will require full-spectrum thinking and action.

Peter Drucker was a full-spectrum thinker without the digital tools that are now emerging. The tools for full-spectrum thinking will be so much better over the next decade, just as the need for full-spectrum thinking grows. Constraining categories will yield to full-spectrum thinking, but it won't be an easy shift.

*Youthquake* is one of the terms I've adopted for describing the young people who grew up with digital media and have very high expectations for the world around them. These young people will have the vision and the tools to think across full spectrums of possibility and make the world a better place. After the Parkland shooting in Florida, for example, high school students organized themselves quickly into a national movement for gun control action. These young people cannot be categorized as a cohort; they are way too diverse. They are truly different, but we don't yet know how different they will be as they become adults.

I write this entire book through the lens of foresight. If you read it now in 2020, full-spectrum thinking will give you an early advantage. Later, full-spectrum thinking will be a prerequisite to success.