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BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
David R. Dunaetz

MISSIO NEXUS PRESIDENT
Ted Esler

EMQ@MissioNexus.org | MissioNexus.org/emq

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Rethinking People Group Missiology

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:
Because of the herculean effort of those who compiled the articles for this issue, I gladly surrender the writing of this opening editorial to the members of that team. —MJN

In this issue of *EMQ*, scholar-practitioners have traced the ideas and influencers that provided the impetus for the "people group" conception of the unfinished task, and its impact upon the church and the world of missions. Over the past forty years this spiritual and conceptual tidal wave led to enormous activism, fresh initiatives, and breakthroughs. Nevertheless, certain challenges and changes – in the pews, on the field, and in the global church – have appeared, slowing progress, altering priorities, and raising questions about the validity of the unreached people group (UPG) concept and movement.

The passion for reaching all people groups has fluctuated over time, sometimes becoming more salient because of conferences, mobilization campaigns, influential leaders, and world events (e.g. turmoil in Islamic countries), or decreasing in importance due to shifting missional interests (e.g. social justice) and theological slippage. Critics claim that "the most significant issue with defining *panta ta ethne* as ethno-linguistic people groups is simple: to do so adopts a modern anthropological definition over a biblical-theological one."[1]

Other counter-arguments seem to betray a fear that prioritizing pioneer mission comes "at the expense of" support for one's own or other fields in Europe or Latin America. While framed biblically, some criticisms appear to function as an indirect defense of the value of other ministries and priorities. Here is a recent criticism: "With all the emphasis on people groups over the last fifty years, however, we've made a course correction at the expense of our mission. Specifically, the focus hasn't been on making disciples of all nations (evangelizing, baptizing, teaching, establishing churches, and training leaders) but instead on finishing the task (i.e., getting the gospel to every last people group)… And the results? Material and personnel resources have been redirected out of areas no longer deemed strategic. *Reached* nations have been abandoned, along with their seminaries."[2]

Such sentiments are understandable. Nothing said in this issue should be interpreted as devaluing any organization dedicated to training leaders and strengthening the global church! However, the notion of neglect and sense of injustice seems both misinformed and misplaced. As RW Lewis points out in this issue, "Today fewer than 4% of global missionaries work among Unreached People Groups with most of the world's non-believers." Despite the on-and-off visibility of the UPG movement, over 95% of the workers – and most of the resources – still go elsewhere. It would be more factually correct to say that, if anyone has been "abandoned" in terms of mission material and personnel, it is the least-reached UPGs.

Thus, considering the narrative, language, and the plain meaning of key biblical texts, the rejecting of the "peoples" paradigm as unbiblical does not seem justified to many. In light of these issues, a handful of mission thinkers felt that this is a good time to bring reflection to the people group concept. The intent is not to force a people group revival, but rather, in an atmosphere of genuine concern and discovery, to reexamine our understanding of people group missiology from the lens of Scripture, reflection, conversation, prayer, and what is being heard from field workers.

Most of the writers in this *EMQ* issue are part of the Rethinking People Groups Forum and knew each other prior to becoming part of the conversation – we had worked together on the field or otherwise come into contact with one another over the years. We all currently live in North America but in no way believe we are speaking for the North American church and missions world in these things – and certainly not for the global church. On the contrary, we very much want and need the voices of Asian, African, South American, and European church and missions leaders before confirming our thoughts. And we need your voice. Originally, we pursued this conversation for our own sake, but offer it now as part of a larger interaction.

Over the past year, we met fives times, both in person or via video conferencing to discuss this topic. These articles represent an overview of what we talked about, along with some suggestions about where we might go next. But we need your input – especially from the global church. (*Editor's note: at the end of each online article is a place to write a response to the article.)* Related issues to consider:

- What does "making disciples among every people" mean today?
- Where does people group thinking find its place among the many important initiatives being pursued by the global missionary community?
- How can we more clearly understand the dual responsibility of reaching all peoples and as many people possible within them?
- How do the realities of globalization, urbanization, diaspora, disciple-making movements, and everything else that God is doing today, inform a Christ-honoring twenty-first century understanding of *panta ta ethne*?

May the end result of this conversation be that every people group will soon have a vibrant church among it, and that as many individuals as possible within each group join in singing praises to the Lamb who was slain yet lives!

Rethinking People Groups Forum team:
Mike Latsko, Frontiers; Convener
Len Bartlotti, Missiologist; Co-chair and *EMQ* Guest Editor
Ted Esler, President, Missio Nexus; Co-chair

1. Darren Carlson & Elliot Clark, "The 3 Words That Changed Missions Strategy – and Why We Might Be Wrong." The Gospel Coalition, September 11, 2019. Accessed June 18, 2020 https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/misleading-words-missions-strategy-unreached-people-groups/. Cf. Peter T. Lee and James Sung-Hwan Park, "Beyond people group thinking: A critical reevaluation of unreached people groups." Missiology: An International Review 2018, Vol. 46(3) 212–225.
2. Carlson & Clark, "The 3 Words."

A Biblical Understanding of People Groups

Steve Hawthorne

What does the Bible say about people groups in God's mission? Far from being a recent construct of social sciences, the Bible speaks of the peoples, languages, and lineages of humanity, with all their diverse cultures, as God's creation, and as greatly valued covenant partners.

The initial burst of interest in people groups decades ago was all about breaking down the task of world evangelization into doable endeavors. While there are ample biblical grounds for clear and strategic gospel communication in every cultural setting, in the biblical account peoples are much more than mere objects of our messaging. Instead of focusing on our *outreach* to humanity, the Bible emphasizes the *outcome* of God being loved by every people. The Bible speaks of each of the world's peoples as having vast worth, and even glory, as greatly desired, much beloved worshippers.

God Creates All Peoples

Paul declares that God had "made … every nation (*ethne*) of humankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:26).[1] How did this story of nation-making unfold?

God's promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1–3 is often cited as the beginning of mission to humanity as families or peoples. Before Abram, however, we find the story of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). God is often presented in the story of Babel as judging and punishing humanity by scrambling their one language into many. But in fact, there is no explicit mention of sin or judgment in the Babel account. God simply intervenes, interrupting the construction of the uni-culture project before it went too far: "This is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them" (11:6).

Instead of inflicting punishment, the myriad of languages can be seen as God's way of helping and accelerating humankind to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (1:28, 9:1). The fullness of humanity on earth is more than mere geographic habitation. God created humanity in His image, which means, in part, that humanity was endowed with creative ability to form diverse cultures. Instead of being a curse, different languages gave each of the peoples capacity to cultivate distinctive intergenerational communities, flourishing with the glories and burdens of diverse cultures.

The Babel account describes the beginning of humankind being scattered "abroad over the face of the whole earth" (11:9). In the previous chapter, the so-called "Table of Nations" describes the dispersion in genealogical format, which means that it all unfolded over many generations. Four specific factors of ethnic formation are repeated four times (10:5, 20, 31, 32): according to their clans (*mishpachot*), according to their languages (*leshonot*), by their lands (*artsot*), and according to their nations (*goyim*).

As people scattered "over the face of the whole earth" (11:9), their languages and family groupings were constantly changing along with their locations. Ethnolinguistic factors were prominent, but the cultures and peoples were not fixed and unmixed realities. Even though we see specific names in the Genesis 10 "Table of Nations" genealogy, humanity then, as now, was not separated into discrete, unchanging entities. The peoples were morphing and blending as they were moving throughout the earth.

One Family to Bless Every Family

In the midst of this massive diasporic array of tribes, languages and peoples we meet Abram. He was told to depart "from your relatives and from your father's house" (12:1). Abram may be the only one in the Bible who was clearly called to separate from his family in order to obey God.

It must have been bewildering for him to hear God's promise that in him "all the families (*mishpachot*) of the earth will be blessed" (12:3). A common custom of that day was that a father's blessing, or inheritance, would reveal the extent of his own family. How was it possible that Abram, one man, would be able to bless many families? Later, God would change Abram's name to Abraham, "for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations" (17:5).

This promise of becoming God's blessing to all peoples was repeated twice more to Abraham, but with a key difference. Instead of all nations being blessed by one person (12:3), the nations would be blessed by Abraham's descendants (18:18–19, 22:18). God repeated this same forward-looking promise directly to Isaac, and yet again to Jacob, that all the peoples of earth would be blessed by their descendants (26:4, 28:14). Still, it was a mystery how one family would bring about blessing to all.

One People, Many Tribes

Near the end of his life Jacob recounted God's promise, "I will make you a company of peoples" (*amim,* Genesis 48:4), before bestowing a distinctive blessing on his twelve sons and the tribe that descended from them – "every one with the blessing appropriate to him" (49:28). Before leaving Egypt, Israel was one people consisting of multiple tribes.

At Sinai, God established a covenant with the twelve tribes, addressing them as "the house of Jacob … the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:3). Keeping the covenant would bring forth God's purpose – to be served, loved, and worshipped by a special, or holy people among all the peoples of earth. The language is extravagant, describing the people as a "special treasure" to God:

> If you will … keep My covenant, then you shall be My own special treasure among all the peoples (*amim*), for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*goy*). (Exodus 19:5–6)

God's purpose is relational, seen in the easily overlooked words, "to Me." The phrase "kingdom of priests" was a poetic way of describing their essential identity as worshipers. The primary task of biblical priests was to serve God, standing before Him and helping God's people give themselves to Him by their offerings and praise. To coin a word, the people were to bring a "God-ward" service, pleasing God as they came near in worship.

The Twelve Tribes and the All-Peoples Throng

The God-ward purpose of the Sinai covenant shines in John's opening words of the Revelation: Christ has "made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:5–6). This kingdom of priestly worshippers is heard again in the "new song," exalting the slain Lamb:

> Worthy are You … for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth. (Revelation 5:9–10)

As the new song extols the worthiness of the Lamb, John also hears of the worth of the diverse peoples. At the tremendous cost of the blood of the Lamb, men, women and children from every tribe (*phule*), language (*glossa*), people (*laos*) and nation (*ethnos*) have been purchased "for God" in order to become priests, or worship-servants, "to our God" (5:9–10).

John continued to hear, not a song, but a numbering of "those who were sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel" (7:4). The enumeration of the twelve tribes specifically mentioned the twelve tribal names (7:5–8). Then John saw what he had only heard. He must have been stunned by the sight of a vast expanse of people.

> After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation (*ethnos*) tribe (*phule*), people (*laos*), and language (*glossa*), standing before the throne and before the Lamb …." (Revelation 7:9)

It was an immense, uncountable multitude, but John recognized that there were some from every ethnicity – every which way that humanity continues life together in any abiding way. Every. All. The fullness of humanity, ever-enduring as diverse, and yet united in the Lamb.

Israel's many tribes had been formed together as one worshipping people, foreshadowing this great multitude comprised of persons of every people glorifying God in full-hearted worship.

We have jumped from the beginnings in Genesis to the end of days. But of course, there is more to the story of how God called to Himself a people from all peoples, tribes and nations.

Prophetic Expectations: The Pilgrimage of Nations

Many songs and prophecies of Israel lifted an expectation that many, or even all of earth's peoples would come to His house – the temple – to worship Him. More than a dozen texts describe the nations streaming toward the mountain, the city, or the temple of the Lord to worship and learn to walk in His ways. This eschatological movement of the peoples in worship has been described as "the pilgrimage of the nations."[2]

The psalter resounds with this hope: "All nations (*goim*) whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name" (Psalm 86:9).

Zechariah describes many peoples not just coming to the temple, but becoming part of God's people. "Many nations (*goim*) will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people (*am*). Then I will dwell in your midst …" (Zechariah 2:11). Note that the foreign peoples will not be merely mingling in public gatherings. They will actually somehow "join themselves to the Lord."

Isaiah wrote of a coming day when non-Hebrew people, described as "foreigners," would "join themselves to the Lord" in order "to minister" as worship-servants "to Him" (Isaiah 56:6).

> … The foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD … even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be pleasing on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer from all the peoples (*amim*). (Isaiah 56:6–7)

The phrase "to love the name of the LORD" means that they would come to love God truly by embracing all that they heard about Him. Take note of the relational splendor of their worship: As they offer themselves to God by their offerings, God Himself is pleased, gladdened as they give themselves in worship. And He will make them joyful. Ultimately, this will not be limited to a few select foreigners. God promised to draw men and women "from all the peoples" of the earth to enter this relational fullness.

At a climactic moment of His life's work, Jesus expounded Isaiah 56 before the crowds at the temple (Mark 11:15–18). It's common to hear the phrase "house of prayer" as referring to local churches that focus on intercessory prayer for other countries. But Isaiah 56 does not speak of intercessory prayers. When read in context, the phrase "house of prayer" must refer to the temple, not a congregation or church. The foreigners bring sacrificial offerings intended to express honor and thanks. Jesus was announcing God's purpose to receive worship *from* "all the peoples (*ethne*)" of the earth (Mark 11:17).

The Mandate to Disciple All Peoples

These promises perplexed Jewish leaders before Christ's day. Would the nations come spontaneously? Or should Jewish people take initiative to become the promised "light to the nations (*goyim*)" (Isaiah 49:6)?

For years some streams of Judaism had sent emissaries who traveled "on sea and land," to help Gentiles to become Jewish proselytes (Matthew 23:15). Proselytes were those who had passed through a two-fold process of conversion: the ceremony of circumcision and washing, thought to bring a ritual purity or holiness. This was followed by rigorous training to follow one of the traditions of Torah observance. By doing so, proselytes essentially renounced their family and ethnic identity.

Christ's mandate in Matthew 28 calls for incorporating non-Jewish people into God's people in a radically different way than converting individuals as proselytes. Jesus' description of discipling involved two things which correspond to the two-fold process of proselytizing. Instead of circumcision as an initiation rite, baptism brought disciples into covenant belonging with the triune God ("baptizing them into the name …"). Instead of learning a package of Torah-keeping traditions, the new communities learned to obey Jesus ("teaching them to obey all that I commanded you").

Neither baptism or obeying Jesus as Lord necessarily involves renouncing one's family or ethnic identity. Instead of being divorced from family and culture, it is possible for disciples to continue with their people. Sincere followers repudiate sinful ways and learn lifestyles of obedient love, bringing changes to their behavior, and often to their culture. In this way the risen Christ has been redemptively changing diverse cultures without imposing something like a universal kingdom culture.

Communities of disciples are to be formed in "all the peoples (*panta ta ethne*)" (28:19). The word for "peoples," *ethnos*, can sometimes refer to non-Jewish individuals. But in this grammatical construct in plural form (*panta ta ethne*) refers to collective entities with generational depth, such as ethnicities, languages, or sometimes countries.[3]

Affirmed by the Apostles: One People of Many Peoples

In the first movement of Christ followers a few tensions arose amidst the different cultures and familial loyalties of the re-gathered diaspora in Jerusalem. But we see those difficulties resolved by acknowledgement of the ethnic differences (Acts 6:1–5). As the movement expanded to other places and cultural spheres (11:19–20) we see indications that the blend of Jews and Greeks took on a generalized non-ethnic identity as "Christians" (11:26). Their leaders came from different backgrounds that matched the diversity of the movement (13:1).

At the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 leaders came to recognize and affirm the magnitude of what God was doing to form one people that would include all peoples.

What about the Gentiles who had recently been turning to God in Christ? Some were insisting that proselyte conversion was essential for these non-Jews: "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses" (15:5). Others, including Peter, asserted that God "made no distinction (*diakrino*, to discriminate) between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (15:9). Peter was referring to a circumcision of the heart since circumcision was considered a ritual of cleansing. The Spirit that fell upon them was "Holy," thus demonstrating them to be clean. Peter had already heard from heaven, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (10:15, 11:9).

James then declared that God had begun to accomplish the long-promised greater exodus that would bring about the expected pilgrimage of all peoples to God. "God first concerned Himself about taking from among the peoples (*ethne*) a people (*laos*) for His name" (15:14). Here James was quoting well-known texts in which God had said that He was so "concerned" about the plight of His people in Egypt (Exodus 3:16, 4:31), that He was determined to "take you to Myself for My people (*laos* in the LXX)" (6:7).

The allusion to the exodus, in which multiple tribes served God together as one people was clear. But James also quoted a medley of different prophetic promises (Acts 15:15–18).[4] This proved decisive: Men and women from many peoples (*ethne*) were being received as worshippers of God and wearing His name. They were becoming one global covenant people (*laos*, a covenant people). What Gentile followers had in common with Jewish believers was the life and Lordship of Jesus: "… We [Jews] are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are" (15:11).

Gentiles were becoming covenant worshippers of the living God in Christ, but were not becoming Jews or expected to adopt Jewish culture.[5] They were retaining, not renouncing, their family and ethnic identity.

The Glory of the Peoples

In our day, ethnic identities are not static. Surges of migrants, a globalized economy, urban complexities and ever-changing technologies are constantly shifting and hybridizing ethnic identities. It would seem that attempting to reach the world one people group at a time is an archaic, bygone idea. But now, more than ever, ethnic group identities matter.

Some leaders claim that churches flourish best as multi-ethnic congregations. Others make a case for people-specific gatherings to enhance fruitful evangelism in compartmentalized urban settings or rural and tribal communities. Either way, it matters that mission and church leaders recognize and respect every kind of group identity.

I have argued that people groups are important in mission primarily because of the value of each people group to the living God. The blood of the Lamb was shed to purchase men, women and children so that He would receive whole-life, culturally-enriched worship from every people.

At the first exodus God called forth a covenant people consisting of multiple tribes. This pre-figured a later, greater exodus, initiated in Christ, in which a global people is now being formed from every people. In some larger celebrations we enjoy diverse ways of worship. But our church gatherings only foreshadow the great multitude. Only on the final day will we behold one covenant people consisting of some from every one of the peoples.

> Behold, the tabernacle of God is among people (*anthropon*), and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His peoples (*laos* plural)[6] and God Himself will be among them. (Revelation 21:3)

As we finally come home together, the heaven-on-earth city will shine with "the glory of God" (21:11). But there will be other glories:

> The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it … and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations (*ethne*) into it. (Revelation 21:24, 26)

The glory of the peoples includes the distinctive music and literature, the diverse artistry, the various inventions and industries, all of the gorgeous and soul-stirring creations of culture – they will have been purged and redeemed by the Lamb. We labor in hope of beholding God's joy as He is loved extravagantly by the peoples.

Steve Hawthorne serves as a mission and prayer mobilizer, building vision and practical passion for Christ's glory among all peoples. He co-edited, with Ralph D. Winter, the course and book called *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. He works to support *Perspectives* study programs that are growing in many parts of the world. He holds a PhD in mission theology from Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission.

Notes

1. All Scripture translations are the author's own, unless otherwise cited.

2. The promised coming of many peoples to worship the God of Israel was called "the pilgrimage of the nations" by Joachim Jeremias in *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 57–62. A few of the important texts: 1 Kings 8:41–43, 1 Chronicles 16:23–30, Psalm 22:26–31, 47:1–9, 102:15–22, Isaiah 60:1–12, Jeremiah 3:17, Zephaniah 3:8–13, Haggai 2:7, and Zechariah 8:20–22. See also John Goldingay, *Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 818–833, and Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 478–479.

3. John Piper's careful lexical work shows that in the New Testament the word *ethnos* in singular form always refers to a collective entity, something like an ethnicity, language or country. In plural form the word can refer to ethnicities or it can refer to non-Jewish individuals. But when used in the phrase *panta ta ethne*, in any of the cases, the word *ethne* "virtually never carries the meaning of 'Gentile individuals' but always carries the meaning 'all the nations' in the sense of people groups" (Piper, John, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, Third Edition [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 189). This assessment is supported by over a hundred occurrences of the full phrase, *panta ta ethne* in the Septuagint, which always refer to peoples or nations.

4. In addition to Amos 9:11–12, there are possible allusions to Zechariah 2:11, Jeremiah 12:15, Isaiah 45:21, and Hosea 3:5.

5. The four prohibitions (Acts 15:19–12, 28–29, 21:25) were the only four practices that were forbidden for visiting foreigners while living among the Jewish people (Leviticus 17:8, 17:10–14, 17:15, and 18:6–18). No other part of the Torah was required. The fact that these were mentioned at all supports the idea that Gentile followers of Jesus were considered to be, in a sense, sojourning in the midst of the Jewish people, but remained Gentiles.

6. Metzger, Bruce, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: UBS, 1975), 763. Variant manuscripts contain both singular and plural forms, with the plural having slightly better evidence. The singular matches the oft-repeated covenant formula with three elements: "your God," "My people," "I will dwell among you," making it more likely that the original was plural.

The People Group Approach: A Historical Perspective

David E. Datema and Leonard N. Bartlotti

Confusion reigns among leaders in the world of missions when it comes to assessing the evangelistic responsibility of the church. Every decade or so the wave of a new theory crashes ashore and theoreticians who teach and write books as well as practitioners who lead missions bob about furiously seeking to stem the tide or to ride the wave. The impressive conclaves and private skirmishes seem dominated either by enthusiastic and often uncritical promoters of the new wave or the veterans who scramble to synthesize older, devoutly held verities with the implications of the newly ascendant idea.[1]

In 1983, J. Robertson McQuilkin described the advent of the people group approach as "the current missiological tidal wave." All efforts to stem the tide failed. Most chose to ride the wave. Fifty years later some argue that the wave seems to have spent itself; its remaining impetus rushing backward as if to feed the next surge. Others hold on to people group thinking, seeing nothing on the horizon coming to take its place. In what follows we will attempt to briefly tell the story of the development of the people group approach until 1982, when a consensus on terminology was established.[2]

Precursors to People Groups

In reality, the people group wave of the 1970–1980s was not "new." Missionaries were well aware of humanity's ethnic and linguistic diversity. They were not surprised by the complexity of peoples and ethnicities within single nation states. An uncritical reader of Ralph Winter's "Three Eras"[3] treatment of modern mission history might conclude that it wasn't until missionaries went "inland" from the "coastlands" that they suddenly realized this diversity. Yet even William Carey's *Enquiry* (1792) showed appreciation for human difference and variety. Throughout the nineteenth century great strides were made in understanding human groupings. In 1910 Commission One of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh presented a survey of the non-Christian world that was over two hundred pages in length, used the phrase "unreached" regularly, and was impressively cognizant of ethnic and linguistic difference.[4]

In the twentieth century this research continued, expanding understanding of the diversity and complexity of human groupings. In Central America, W. Cameron Townsend noted the many tribal peoples often bypassed and in need of their own Scriptures. In India, J. Waskom Pickett wrote a signature book on mass movements which formed the basis for Donald McGavran's later work on people movements and church growth principles. Most important among these for our purposes was the homogeneous unit principle, which emphasized the human tendency to prefer association with others of similar affinities. In Africa, David Barrett and Patrick Johnstone began research projects on peoples that eventually became global, Barrett representing a more academic investigation and Johnstone creating resources for prayer. All of these efforts represented attempts to identify human grouping at a level below that of nation-states.

Our point here is simply that the people group paradigm was not primarily a new revelation about the existence of diverse people groups. Rather, it was a unique and culminating phase of its development, "engendering a global *awareness* and concerted *application* of the people group concept that created new *approaches* to the task of world evangelization."[5]

Stimuli That Sparked a Movement

The people group approach of the 1970s was triggered by two different but complementary stimuli. First, there was an awakening to the "shattering truth" that "at least four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of any Christian's E-1 [local] evangelism."[6] This stimulus came about through Ralph Winter's provocative and groundbreaking lecture at Lausanne '74, which exposed the inability of near-neighbor (E-1) evangelism to reach these people groups, and called attention to the need to make cross-cultural evangelism (E-2, E-3) "the highest priority."

The second stimulus helped visualize this reality. The emergence of new computer technology enabled mission leaders to effectively display lists of the "hidden peoples" that made up that non-Christian world. It added specificity by naming and listing people groups instead of referring to them with vague general headings like "unevangelized" or "heathen world." The intent was to overcome "people blindness," the inability to see these smaller entities that made up the human population. Thus, an ethnic *representation* of the unevangelized world was wedded to a more detailed *visualization* of that world.

The convergence of these two forces shifted the picture of the world from nation-states to people groups, especially those labeled "unreached." A previously monochrome world was now polychromatic: Variegated unreached peoples, languages, and groupings, previously "hidden" by (what Winter called) the "high grass" of existing national churches, were now projected before the eyes of missionaries and the global church.[7] This placed new emphasis and urgency on the "pioneering" phase of mission in pursuit of "missiological breakthrough" among each unreached people.

In one sense, the people group paradigm gained traction when it did because computer technology was advanced enough to organize and manipulate already existing data. The *Ethnologue* listing of the world's languages was first computerized in 1971.[8] Across the

mission world, computer technology now allowed for faster retrieval, arrangement and analysis of data than ever before.[9] It was a technological innovation that allowed for the construction and maintenance of people group lists, enhancing Winter's cognitive insight with graphic display. While the insight itself was powerful, when coupled with the lists it proved to be irresistible. Now, individuals could not only hear about unreached peoples, but see them more clearly than ever before. In missions, seeing is believing.

The Primary Thought Leaders

Although many were involved in people group research, including David Barrett (*World Christian Encyclopedia*) and Patrick Johnstone (*Operation World*), the people group approach as a full-orbed concept and mission strategy was the product of three main spheres of influence, all emanating from southern California: Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission (SWM); the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC) of World Vision; and the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM). MARC was established in 1966 as a joint venture of World Vision International and Fuller.[10] Together they had a large influence during the '70s and '80s on unreached peoples research.

Each of these institutions was led by missiological luminaries. C. Peter Wagner, Professor at Fuller's SWM, served as Chairman of the Strategy Working Group (SWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE).[11] Working closely with Wagner was Ed Dayton, Director of MARC. Dayton was a Fuller graduate and had studied under SWM professors. This collegiality and the close proximity (9 miles) between Fuller Seminary (Pasadena) and the then-headquarters of World Vision (Monrovia) facilitated synergy. According to Wagner and Dayton:

> Since its founding in 1966, … MARC *centered its philosophy of world evangelization around the people group*. The analysis that was done jointly by Donald McGavran and Ed Dayton, at the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, *indicated that the country-by-country approach to mission was no longer viable* … McGavran and Dayton worked through an analysis of needed world evangelization, based on McGavran's earlier insight gained from *people movements … As the analysis continued, it was obvious that the basic unit of evangelization was not a country, nor the individual, but a vast variety of subgroups*.[12]
>
> (Emphasis added)

Note the interconnecting concepts: world evangelization; people group vs. country approach; people movements; vast variety of subgroups. The driving concerns were both biblical and strategic: World evangelization could be strategically advanced by fostering Christ-ward people movements among all the identifiable subgroups of the world. (See Alan Johnson's "Foundations of Frontier Missiology" in this *EMQ* issue).

In 1976 Ralph D. Winter reluctantly left his professorial role at Fuller's SWM to found the USCWM (just three miles away in Pasadena) as a cooperative mission center "think tank," research university, and platform to mobilize the church to reach the world's "hidden" peoples. Originally proposed to be a part of Fuller, Winter's ideas and approach were too radical and "out of the box" to fit in a normal educational structure. In faith, he launched an enterprise that became the leading promoter of the UPG concept and movement globally.

There were now three organizations in close proximity, each connected to Fuller's SWM but with unique yet parallel and complimentary purposes. This created a rich environment for robust dialogue and debate among several missiological thought leaders.

Wagner and Dayton

In conjunction with SWM Professors at Fuller, MARC put together the first *Unreached Peoples Directory* for the 1974 Lausanne Congress. The *Directory* was an attractive booklet that introduced Congress-goers to the world of unreached peoples. For most, it was surely the first time they had ever seen a list of unreached peoples. It defined a people group as a homogeneous unit. Based on a questionnaire sent to 2,200 people, it presented a list of 413 unreached people groups, based on the criterion of "less than 20%" professing Christians. The list used the criterion of 20% professing Christians as a way to delineate "reached" status.[13] Three years after the Congress, the Strategy Working Group (SWG) was founded. Wagner worked closely together with Dayton and MARC and they jointly produced the *Unreached Peoples* book series from 1979 to 1984. These books continued the original work that had been presented in 1974, and each volume included an updated list of unreached peoples, the number of which increased each year.

The biggest change made during these years involved the criteria for "reachedness" – an issue that today remains central and contested. Without such a criterion there was no way of determining whether or not a people group was reached or unreached. First, "professing Christians" was changed to "practicing Christians" as the measuring criterion. (Some critics wryly suggested that in doing so all people groups were now unreached!) More important, there was also continuing debate about the appropriate percentage of Christians to represent the "reached" tipping point. It was finally agreed that an unreached people group be defined as "a group that is less than 20 percent practicing Christian."[14]

Winter

Ralph Winter was the antagonist in this debate. He didn't like the word "unreached" because of its general connotation as a reference to anyone who was not a Christian. He was also suspicious of quantitative criterion like a percentage. Winter put forth the alternative concept of "hidden peoples":

> Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities), which cannot be won by E-1 methods and drawn into an existing fellowship is a Hidden People.[15]

A few years later a simple, refined definition for hidden peoples emerged: "Those cultural and linguistic sub-groups, urban or rural, for whom there is as yet no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize their own people."[16] For Winter, it wasn't about how many Christians or missionaries there were among a people. It was about the quality of the Christian community – the presence or absence of a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement – not its quantity.

The issue of affinity or sub-grouping was another particular concern of Winter, and it remains to this day the most confusing aspect of people group theory. How far can people groupings be divided into "segments"? What level of affinity (kinship, like-mindedness, attraction) was considered relevant to people group identity? Were "nurses in St. Louis" or "professional hockey players" (these were in the early lists!) distinct people groups? For Winter, this concept of segmentation was of ultimate importance because it was just here where people groups could be "hidden" from view, perhaps existing within a more obvious group. Winter developed four segments to

portray these realities. He used the terms Megasphere, Macrosphere, Minisphere, and Microsphere in order to identify the sub-groupings that exist as layers or strata within a people group. Segmentation was needed "whenever we discover that a people group is internally too diverse for a single breakthrough to be sufficient."[17]

The 1982 Chicago Consensus

By 1980, the year of the Lausanne Congress in Pattaya and the USCWM-backed meeting in Edinburgh, there were two definitions – one for "unreached peoples" and another for "hidden peoples." There was a pressing need to agree on terminology, in part because these same entities were also trying to figure out how to match churches with agencies in order to "reach," "adopt" or "love" unreached peoples. Note that *mobilization* concerns – how to present field realities and concepts to sending churches – began to take on increased significance.[18]

In the fall of 1981, Wade Coggins, on behalf of LCWE/North America and Ed Dayton called for a meeting to agree on terminology and discuss how such a matching program might work. First dubbed the "Unreached Peoples Discussion,"[19] it was eventually referred to as the "Reach-A-People Meeting,[20] and took place in Chicago, March 25–26, 1982. It consisted of nineteen mission leaders, most of whom were mission executives. The following definition emerged for *people group*:

> A people group is a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelistic purposes it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.[21]

The second sentence was added at Winter's behest, in order to emphasize segmentation caused by social/cultural barriers. But the real issue had to do with the nomenclature (unreached or hidden) and definition of those without access to the gospel. An *unreached people* was also defined:

> A people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.[22]

Thus, in the end, Winter agreed to use "unreached peoples," while Dayton agreed to Winter's definition that had no percentages. The focus was on the absence or presence of a viable church.

Remaining Difficulties

There have been no official changes to these definitions since. Yet significant problems remained. First, no percentage was given in the 1982 definitions, so there was no official agreement as to when a group became "reached," resulting in different numbers of unreached people groups (UPGs). Second, the consensus did not answer one of the most pressing and practical questions: which level of segmentation (ethnicity, language, kinship, class, etc.) was the most appropriate one? Differences here also led to different numbers of UPGs. A good example of this uncertainty can be seen in the report of the pre-Congress (1989 Lausanne II Congress in Manila) Statistics Task Force chaired by David Barrett, which gives six categories for peoples: Countries, Macropeoples, Ethnolinguistic peoples, Minipeoples, Micropeoples and Sociopeoples.[23] As a result, different interpretations of exactly what constituted a "people group" led to different lists throughout the 1980s.

It was not until the mid-1990s and the advent of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement that a combined list was attempted that settled on *ethnolinguistic* as the primary category and changed the percentage to *"less than or equal to 2% Evangelical — AND — less than or equal to 5% Christian Adherent*,"[24] which remains in use for the Joshua Project list. Yet even today, people group lists reflect differences in assumptions about what constitutes a cohesive grouping within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. Consensus on these matters has proven elusive.

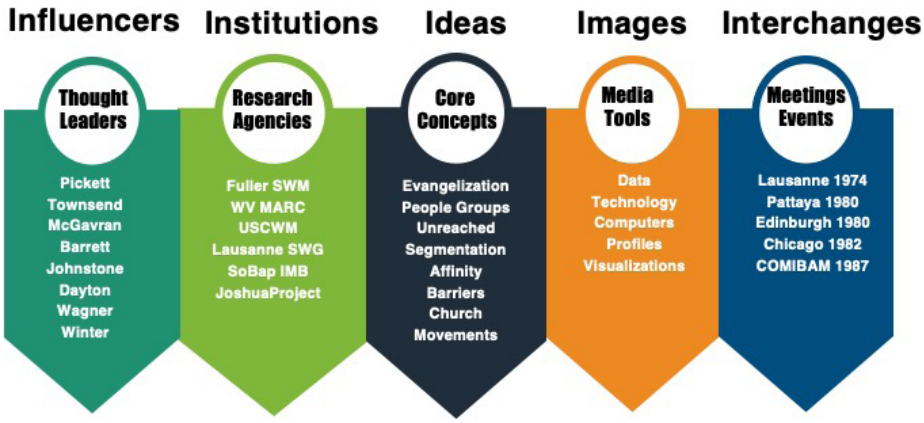
Winter continued to promote his "no people group left behind" approach by unveiling the concept of "unimax peoples," which he considered to be the "mission relevant" group and which he also equated with the minisphere (the second to last of his segmentation levels). Winter was again trying to emphasize smaller groupings. It is clear from Winter's later writings that he felt the 1982 definition was unwisely equated with ethno-linguistic peoples, which were in some cases too large and likely hiding smaller groups. Winter maintained these differences throughout his life, as is evident in the *Perspectives Reader*. In the eyes of most, however, people groups simply referred to ethno-linguistic entities.

Conclusion

This historical overview puts into perspective both positive and negative aspects of this missiological tidal wave. First, a "perfect storm" was created by the coalescence of *ideas* relating people groups to world evangelization; the synergy of *influencers* (thought leaders) and *institutions* (research agencies); the simultaneous juxtaposition of computer technology, data, and media that provided new *images* of the unreached; amplified by the international *interchange* of ideas, people, data and organizations at consultations and events;[25] all of which together helped ignite and sustain a global movement. (See Figure 2.1 for a summary.)

Second, people group rhetoric was always far ahead of people group reality, meaning that even as the paradigm was boldly

Figure 2.1 – The Making of a Movement



promoted on-stage, there was much backstage confusion. The paradigm was always trying to catch up with its bold assertions and to cover conceptual holes, while keen observers, such as *EMQ* editors Jim Reapsome and Gary Corwin, supplied appropriate and significant push-back. Given the mass amounts of confusion that attended the movement, it is surprising that it ever succeeded at all.

Third, the fact that ongoing confusion continues today in terms of segmentation levels, debates about which percentage criterion is best, and the rise of hybrid identities as a foil to the discrete people group model, shows that human complexity remains beyond our grasp to fully comprehend. The people group paradigm humbles all advocates.

The concept of seeing the world as people groups is arguably the most significant thought innovation in twentieth century missiology. Still today, the people group remains the unit of analysis most people think of when contemplating world evangelization. As this issue of *EMQ* shows, things are changing. Whether the paradigm is simply adjusted or replaced altogether, it is likely that the same elements that brought it into existence will be significant in paving the way forward. New awareness of the social realities of the unevangelized world and new abilities to depict that world in ever-increasing clarity will change once more how we think about the Great Commission.

Dave Datema serves as Missiology Catalyst for Frontier Ventures in Pasadena, California. He is also doing doctoral research on African-American missionaries Joseph and Mary Gomer.

Leonard N. (Len) Bartlotti, PhD is an intercultural consultant, strategist, well-known speaker and educator with thirty-five year's experience in cross-cultural ministry and pioneer work in Central Asia.

Notes

1. J. Robertson McQuilkin, "Assessing the Evangelistic Responsibility of the Church," (Unpublished Paper, Used with permission, Ralph D. Winter Research Center and Archive, Pasadena, CA, February 1982). This paper was edited and later published as "Looking at the Task Six Ways," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 19:1 (January 1, 1983).

2. For an overview of the frontier mission movement, see Alan Johnson, "Part I: The Frontier Mission Movement's Understanding of the Modern Mission Era," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:2 (Summer 2001): 81–88, https://www.google.com/search?q=Part+I%3A+The+Frontier+Mission+Movement%92s+Understanding+of+the+Modern+Mission+Era&btnG=Search&domains=www.ijfm.org&sitesearch=www.ijfm.org; Alan Johnson, "Part II: Major Concepts of the Frontier Mission Movement," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:2 (Summer 2001): 89–97, https://www.google.com/search?domains=www.ijfm.org&ei=XHWoXvKDHtO5-wS_tZnYBg&q=Part+II%3A+Major+Concepts+of+the+Frontier+Mission+Movement; Alan Johnson, "Part III: Critical Analysis of the Missiology of the Frontier Mission Movement," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:3 (Fall 2001): 121–127, https://www.google.com/search?domains=www.ijfm.org&ei=mXaoXtWxIJLf-gSAi6mwBw&q=Part+III%3A+Critical+Analysis+of+the+Missiology+of+the+Frontier+Mission+Movement&oq=Part+III%3A+Critical+Analysis+of+the+Missiology+of+the+Frontier+Mission+Movement&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQAzoFCCEQoAFQsN8IWLDfCGCs6whoAnAAeACAAboBiAGUA5IBAzEuMpgBAKABAqABAaoBB2d3cy13aXo&sclient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiV4sDd4IvpAhWSr54KHYBFCnYQ4dUDCAs&uact=5; Alan Johnson, "Part IV: The Core Contributions of Frontier Mission Missiology," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:3 (Fall 2001): 129–131, https://www.google.com/search?domains=www.ijfm.org&ei=K3eoXsnMJIn7-gTU9ZKgBw&q=Part+IV%3A+The+Core+Contributions+of+Frontier+Mission+Missiology&oq=Part+IV%3A+The+Core+Contributions+of+Frontier+Mission+Missiology&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQA1DS0glY0tIJYIjgCWgAcAB4AIABkAGIAZgDkgEDMy4xmAEAoAECoAEBqgEHZ3dzLXdpeg&sclient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiJjpSj4YvpAhWJvZ4KHdS6BHQQ4dUDCAs&uact=5. For more detail on people group definitions, see Dave Datema, "Defining 'Unreached': A Shorty History," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 33:2 (Summer 2016): 45–71, https://www.google.com/search?domains=www.ijfm.org&ei=zHeoXoTSEY7u-gTrpJ3wCg&q=Defining+Unreached%3A+A+Short+History&oq=Defining+Unreached%3A+A+Short+History&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQAzIFCCEQqwIyBQghEKsCOgQIABBHOgUIABCRAjoFCAAQgwE6AggAOgQIABBDOgcIABCDARBDOgkIABBDEEYQ-QE6BwgAEEYQ-QE6BAgAEAo6CAgAEBYQChAeOgYIABAWE-B46CAghEBYQHRAeOgUIIRCgAToHCCEQChCgAVD3mxJY1ssSYKDSEmgAcAN4AIABogGIAbwckgEFMTUuMjCYAQCgAQGqAQdnd3Mtd2l6&sclient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiE6OPv4YvpAhUOt54KHWtSB64Q4dUDCAs&uact=5.

3. Ralph D. Winter, "The Concept of a Third Era in Missions," *EMQ* 17:2 (April, 1981); cf. "Three Men, Three Eras: The Flow of Missions," *Mission Frontiers* 3:2 (Feb, 1981); more fully developed by Winter in a later version, "Four Men, Three Eras," *Mission Frontiers* 19 (Nov 1997).

4. John R. Mott et al, *Report of Commission I: Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World*, World Missionary Conference, (Edinburgh, London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier and New York: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 1910.

5. Len Bartlotti, personal communication, May 28, 2020.

6. Ralph D. Winter, "The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA.: William Carey Library), 353.

7. Ralph D. Winter, Penetrating the Last Frontiers, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978): "The main problem now is that the national church has grown up like high grass which our missionaries can't see beyond." (p. 3). This statement generated heated defensive responses from some denominational mission leaders, who felt their national churches and foreign mission programs (the vast majority of which were not pioneering) were being disparaged.

8. "History of the Ethnologue", Ethnologue: Languages of the World, accessed April 23, 2020, https://www.ethnologue.com/about/history-ethnologue.

9. Samuel Wilson, "SHARE (Systems, Hardware and Research for Evangelization): The Development of a Cooperative Information Network for World Evangelization," (Unpublished paper, Ralph D. Winter Research Center and Archive, Pasadena, CA, 1980).

10. Samuel Wilson, "SHARE."

11. The LCWE was established in January 1975 to implement the ethos and vision of the International Congress on World Evangelization (ICOWE), July 16–25, 1974. It consisted of the international body, seven regional committees, an executive committee and four working groups: theology and education, intercession, communication, and strategy. The first meeting of the Strategy Working Group was in 1977.

12. C. Peter Wagner and Edward Dayton, *Unreached Peoples '81: The Challenge of the Church's Unfinished Business*. (Elgin, IL., David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1981), 24.

13. For a fuller discussion of the rationale and problems associated with "percentage" indicators of reachedness, see Dave Datema, "Defining 'Unreached": A Short History, *IJFM* 33:2, Summer 2016.

14. C. Peter Wagner and Edward R. Dayton, *Unreached Peoples '79: The Challenge of the Church's Unfinished Business* (Elgin, IL.: David C. Cook Publishing Co, 1978), 24.

15. Ralph D. Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978), 42.

16. Ralph D. Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives" in *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh '80*, ed. Allan Starling (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 61.

17. Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives", 63. Winter concedes that "the reality of human diversity is, of course, immeasurably more complex than these four levels imply. One can easily imagine cases where there are far more than four levels."

18. The USCWM's "Adopt-A-Hidden-People" proposal was drafted by Len Bartlotti, then Chairman of the Mobilization Division, published in Mission Frontiers, 2:11 (November 1980), and discussed at the Edinburgh 1980 World Consultation on Frontier Missions. Concurrently, SWG, MARC and Lausanne in Pattaya discussed their "reach" a people concept. The Center's proposal involved a 3-step process: 1) "Validation"; 2) "Agency decision to initiate action"; 3) "Church adoption of the Hidden People." The schema reflects Winter's convictions about both data and mission agency initiative in pioneering, and envisioned marshalling all the resources of the U.S. Center behind mission-church initiatives. The AAP proposal (which evolved into the current Global Adopt a People Campaign [GAAPC] based in Manilla, Philippines) became part of a call for a comprehensive mission renewal movement: "The time has come for church and mission leaders to unite in promoting a cooperative mission renewal movement embracing the entire home base of the Protestant mission movement, and the rebuilding of pioneer mission perspective within it." See Len Bartlotti, "A Call for a Mission Renewal Movement," IJFM 1:1 (1984), 37–56, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/01_1_PDFs/Bartlotti.pdf.

19. "Letter from Wade T. Coggins to Participants," January 13, 1982, Ralph D. Winter Research Center and Archive, Pasadena, CA, USA.

20. "Letter from Ed Dayton and Wade Coggins to Participants," February 26, 1982, Ralph D. Winter Research Center and Archive, Pasadena, CA, USA.

21. Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge", in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th Ed., Ralph D. Winter & Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 536.

22. Ralph D. Winter, "Unreached Peoples: The Development of the Concept", in *Reaching the Unreached: The Old-New Challenge*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984), 36–37.

23. Patrick Johnstone, "People Groups: How Many Unreached?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 7:2 (April 1992).

24. "Why Include Adherents when Defining Unreached?", joshuaproject.net, accessed April 20, 2015, http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/why_include_adherents_when_defining_unreached. A Christian Adherent is simply anyone who self-identifies as a Christian of any kind.

25. Ralph Winter consistently promoted the historical significance of international consultations. These events were venues for the strategic interchange of ideas, people and organizations focused on world evangelization and the "every people by the year 2000" goal. See e.g. *Mission Frontiers*, January 1988, where he calls COMIBAM '87 (Congreso Misionero Iberoamericano-'87 in Brazil), a gathering of 3000 third-world leaders, "the meeting of the century." He writes, "The great hew and cry here at COMIBAM '87 is to transform mission *fields* into mission *forces*. And I do not believe the world will ever be the same again. COMIBAM is one unmistakable, indelible evidence of a movement that is gaining strength around the world.... the definitive, final public announcement of the coming of age" of third world missions. In particular, COMIBAM gave "significant attention to the unique instrument of global evangelization—namely, the missionary and the mission society." Accessed July 2, 2020 http://www.missionfrontiers.org/oldsite/1988/01/j883.htm.

Foundations of Frontier Missiology: Core Understandings and Interrelated Concepts

Alan R. Johnson

Frontier Missiology involves a complex of perspectives on the Bible, mission, history, culture, and the status of the Christian faith that together focus on the *telos* or end goal of God's mission in the world: A church among every tribe, language, people and nation. This view of God's global purpose led to new understandings of "people groups" and the mission task. In this article, I explore some of the foundational ideas and core concepts put forward by one of the movement's primary spokesmen, Ralph D. Winter (1924-2009), founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Venture Center). Winter's original insights about people groups are part of a set of interconnected ideas that laid the foundation for what we now call "frontier missions."

Missiological Foundations

Winter's ten-year working relationship (1966–1976) with Donald McGavran at the School of World Mission (SWM) at Fuller Seminary exposed him to ideas that laid the groundwork for his key insights. He singles out four things that he calls pure McGavran church growth thinking: (1) the sociological observation that in terms of evangelism cultural factors are more important than linguistic ones; (2) that there are settings where a "sphere" of people, such as a caste, can only be penetrated by a new form of the Christian faith; (3) that if in a conglomerate (mixed member) church, a person is present from a people segment that does not have the gospel, they can become a "bridge of God" to take the Good News to their own people; and (4) in this way the gospel can spread quickly among the same people and become a "people movement to Christ."[1]

Two of McGavran's ideas were particularly formative: (1) people need to receive the gospel in a culturally relevant form and (2) persons who have come to faith elsewhere can serve as strategic "bridges of God" to take the gospel to their own people.

The Two Original Insights that Launched Frontier Missiology

Winter extended McGavran's insights by exploring the implications for non-Christians in a *different* people group or segment: What if there is *not* a culturally relevant version of faith available, nor a bridge person to share the gospel with them?

Winter's first big insight had to do with the significance of *barriers*. He "began to realize that if it is true that even minor cultural differences can separate people and keep them from going to the same congregation, etc., then this fact has horrendous implications for the existing mission movement."[2] His teaching on the expansion of the Christian faith showed that non-Christians in one segment of people did not automatically respond positively to the form of the Christian faith they were seeing in *other* people segments. This seemed true even when the two groups shared a common language. Furthermore, the same cultural differences that were a barrier for those "outside" a group to come to faith also hindered the Christians "inside" from "seeing" their non-Christian neighbors as people with whom they should be sharing the gospel.

Mission agencies inadvertently reinforced these barriers. Winter's historical lenses revealed that agencies operated with a faulty premise when it came to church planting: "They do not expect nor seek to have two or more different forms of Christianity; the form that develops in their first major beachhead [in a country] tends to be considered good enough for all the other groups."[3] The assumption that one cultural version of faith will naturally flow outward to other people segments turned out not to be true. Thus, in evangelism and church planting, one cultural or "national" church "version" of the faith decidedly does not fit all.

The second insight grew from Winter's reflection on what happens when there is no bridge person present to carry the gospel to their own people.[4] McGavran felt that strategically the best investment of missionary effort was to work with groups where there were bridge people. Winter asked, "So what about the other groups for which there existed no bridge?"[5] He saw that the lack of a converted person from (or relevant fellowship within) the same cultural group meant there was *no near-neighbor witness* to share the gospel with their own people. Gospel penetration, by definition, would require *cross-cultural* effort.

Putting these two insights together enabled Winter to see a world of peoples needing access to a culturally relevant version of the gospel. He came to the startling conclusion:

> … statistically speaking, … from this perspective a very large proportion of world population is *sealed off*, as it were. … It meant that precisely those hermetically-sealed pockets of people around the world that had *not yet had any kind of a penetration* constituted by themselves *the major remaining frontier of Christian mission* [emphasis added].[6]

It is important to note that this "sealing off" from the gospel is social and cultural. This vision of the reality of the culturally-shaped forms of faith, and the resulting need for gospel access in large "hidden" swaths of humanity, made true cross-cultural pioneer evangelism – not simply the diffusion of existing versions of faith – the "highest priority."

Core Understandings and Interrelated Concepts

The notion of "people groups" who need the gospel, however, cannot be understood in isolation. The people group concept is at the

center of a *constellation of interrelated concepts* and understandings that serve to clarify these original insights. None of these concepts stand alone! They are useful for strategy development and best understood only in relationship to Winter's clear-sighted focus on gospel access.

Why is this important for our current understandings of peoples? Because too often Winter's critical insights have been lost in wrangling over notions of "peoples," "groupness," and "reached/unreached," and the various lists that attempt to document them. These concepts and understandings are human constructs that serve the larger vision of gospel access.

What follows here is a brief look at the core understandings and concepts in frontier missiology and how they serve Winter's central point.

ACCESS: Christian World Mission is About Gospel Access

Winter's two original insights shifted the focus of missionary work from "individuals" who were not Christians to "peoples" without an indigenous Christian tradition among them. His preferred term to describe such groups was "hidden peoples," demarcated by "the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable*. . . ."[7] If a culturally relevant church tradition was present allowing people to be *incorporated* into those churches, then near-neighbor, ordinary evangelism would do the job. For Winter, gospel access was more than just hearing, but the opportunity to become part of – incorporate into, a living fellowship. The kind of ecclesial embodiment he had in mind not only provided stability and durability but developed culturally appropriate forms that makes people feel they "fit." In the absence of such a church movement, these peoples would not hear the gospel unless cross-cultural workers brought it to them. What set Winter apart was that he not only saw this as a remaining frontier of mission, he conceived of pioneer work as the fundamental missionary task, with the goal of bringing about an initial breakthrough – a "missiological breakthrough" – on which all other cross-cultural work builds.

PEOPLES: Frontier Missions is About Penetrating People Groups

The reality of culturally-shaped forms of the faith means that one size does not fit all when it comes to evangelism. The history of Christian mission confirms that while some people will respond to a particular version of the faith, others will reject it. Frontier missiology takes us beyond a geographic view of mission, reaching individuals, and planting our preferred style of church. Rather, reminiscent of Paul in Romans 15, frontier missions is an "ambition" and call to relentlessly cross boundaries to penetrate segments of people who have no near-neighbor access to the gospel.

It is critical to understand that the concepts of "peopleness" and "groupness" in frontier missiology were developed from the perspective of evangelism, and not anthropology. A "people group" was defined "*for evangelistic purposes*" as the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a (viable, indigenous) church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.[8] Winter was looking for the largest pockets of cohesiveness that could make up a "people segment" and felt free flowing internal communication was the best indicator.[9] To express this idea, he coined the term "unimax people" as a "group **uni**fied in communication and the **max**imum size where gospel communication can proceed without encountering a barrier of acceptance or understanding."[10]

BARRIERS: Encountering Barriers of Understanding or Acceptance Signals the Need to Launch New Pioneer Church Planting Efforts

The unimax concept meant that you could never fully know how many unreached groups there are because you need boots-on-the-ground to encounter the barriers which indicate the need for a new cross-cultural church planting effort. For Winter larger cuts of humanity like cultural blocs, affinity groups, sociopeoples and ethnolinguistic groups were just ways of getting an initial baseline of areas of greatest need for gospel access.[11]

CULTURE: Every Cultural Group Must have a Culturally Relevant Gospel Message and Church Movement

Segments of people require cross-cultural workers to hear the gospel when there is no culturally relevant indigenous church movement among them to bear near-neighbor witness. Winter's E (evangelism) and P (people) scales highlight this need on two dimensions. The E-Scale compares the cultural distances the messenger needs to move in order to communicate the gospel with others, while the P-Scale compares the different cultural distances that potential converts need to move in order to join the nearest church. Scaled from zero to three, E-3 means the evangelists are working in a culture very different than their own, which is a highly complex task. P-3 means the only option for a new convert among this people would be a Christian movement that is vastly different culturally from them. Thus P-3 peoples lack a culturally relevant indigenous Christian tradition among them. The reality of peoples who still lack gospel access means that E-3 work among a P-3 people remains a critical need. This complex labor to "pick the lock," as Winter was fond of saying, of a people segment in order to see a viable indigenous church movement started is not the work of amateurs on forays. It requires long-term, language- and culturally-competent workers.

CHURCH: Breakthrough Involves a Viable, Indigenous Evangelizing Church

Winter saw the initial goal as a "missiological breakthrough," resulting in the creation of a viable indigenous church. For Winter a viable church is where:

> …a true breakthrough has occurred when at least a minimal…yet sufficiently developed indigenous Christian tradition, is established that is considered capable of evangelizing its own people without E2 or E3 help. All it means is that the missiological breakthrough has been made.[12]

Missiological breakthrough represents a robust ecclesiology with the vision of a visible, living fellowship that endures across generations. *Viability* is not about size, but the presence of the spiritual vibrancy that ensures ongoing replication so that the church survives on its own; it is *indigenous* in that it is rooted in local forms and not seen as foreign; and it is *a church planting movement* because it continually produces intentional fellowships that can evangelize the rest of the people group.[13]

MOVEMENTS: Breakthrough Involves a Christ-ward People Movement

For Winter a viable church was just a minimal goal.[14] Like McGavran he envisioned

a flow of whole families embracing Christ not just discrete individuals. Winter was exposed to movements in the thinking of McGavran but came to see them as having greater significance than just propagating the gospel. It is the flow of communication, what McGavran called "intimate social life within the boundaries of their own society," that plays a role in creating and sustaining a sense of "groupness." But it was the power of a culturally relevant gospel flowing through the channels of intimate social relations that allowed for movements. Thus movements, the embedded nature of our versions of faith, and the need for cultural relevance were closely connected for him.

Winter's familiarity with mission history enabled him to recognize that movements often take place beyond, or in spite of, missionary efforts, church/mission constraints and structures, and current Eastern or Western conceptions of what it means to be Christian.[15] He observed near the end of his career that many do not realize that missiological breakthrough "almost always produces a church movement considerably different from what might be expected, just as Paul's work was very difficult to understand for Jewish believers in Christ. … *the rapid growth of our faith across the world is mostly of a movement of new indigenous forms of faith that are substantially different from that of the missionary*" [emphasis added].[16] In his subsequent writings Winter started to unpack the implications of this, showing how movements to Christ are radical, messy and out of the box. Winter saw radical contextualization and the development of novel indigenized forms of "church," as a normal, even necessary, corollary of the God-driven expansion of the Christian movement into new frontiers.[17]

FOCUSED: The Frontier Missions Task is a Narrow Focus that Guides all Expressions of Cross-cultural Ministry

For Winter, planting the church among peoples where it does not exist was at the heart of the world Christian movement. At the same time, he also saw value in the broad cross-cultural activity that grows out of pioneer labor. However, all mission efforts must be aligned with that larger vision and passed on to the new church movement.

A primary focus on developing indigenous church planting movements did not in his view "…imply that any such church anywhere should be considered totally independent of the world family of Christians, nor that it cannot both minister through and profit from continued cross-cultural contacts and expatriate help."[18] For Winter *mission* differs from ordinary *evangelism*: the latter is "monocultural," whereas mission "is an activity involving the special problems of cross-cultural communication and contextualization."[19] Nevertheless, he argued that a laser-like frontier focus does not devalue regular mission work with the existing church. In his view, "the mission that continues in evangelism and *allows and encourages an overseas church movement to become missionary* is doing a very strategic thing" [emphasis added].[20]

For Winter, the four stages of mission activity – pioneer, paternal, partnership and participation – each involved important work.[21] He was adamant that the most strategic thing in reaching the unreached is *not* mass redeployment of existing missionaries – despite accusations to the contrary that continue to this day,[22] but their *mobilization*. He wanted to see:

> … our existing missionaries (as well as those who join them), right where they are – wherever they are – catching a new vision. For what? A new perspective on whatever they are doing, making sure that prayed into and breathed into everything they do is *a new vision for the so-called younger churches to get involved in their own mission sending"* [emphasis added].[23]

Note Winter's insistence that all stages of mission be *imbued* with vision and *impart* a vision for mission. The "continuing post-pioneer part of the picture is bright and shining and a blessed reality" when existing missionaries, anywhere and everywhere – and the churches they establish, teach and serve – "get involved in their own mission sending."[24]

HOPE: Mission to the Unreached is Rooted in the Unchanging Purpose and Promise of God

Planting the church among peoples where there is no church is not some kind of missiological fad or innovation, but a firm hope. Winter's optimism and original insights into the "all peoples" vision were rooted in the heart of the living God as revealed in the Scriptures, as well as the outworking of that purpose in human history.

In 1980 Winter and his wife did a series in *Mission Frontiers* on missions in the Bible. His personal study led to the "radically new idea (to us) that the Great Commission was right there in Genesis 12."[25] This understanding led him "to rearrange my thought patterns to conform to the perspective of the Commissioning of Abraham in Genesis and to the Great Commission itself, which speaks of the discipling of peoples."[26] He saw throughout Scripture, from Genesis 12:1–3 to Revelation 5:9; 7:9, God's purpose to be glorified among all the diversity of humanity. He came to see the Bible not as a "bundle of divergent, unrelated stories as taught in Sunday School," but as a single coherent drama of "the entrance of the Kingdom, the power and the glory of the living God in this enemy-occupied territory" where "we see the gradual but irresistible power of God reconquering and redeeming his fallen creation through the giving of His own Son."[27] Winter's faith, hope, and frontier missiology were grounded on God's "gradual but irresistible power."

Winter's knowledge of mission history made him both optimistic and realistic. His sense of the mission significance of Acts 1:8 was that bearing witness to Jesus necessitates *crossing cultural boundaries* to make disciples among the *ethne* (Matthew 28:18–20). He recognized Divine purpose behind the history of the Christian movement. Nevertheless, God's people have not always responded to His irrepressible call to mission. Our own sluggish generation could be passed by. But Winter saw how the Spirit repeatedly raised up people with vision to take the gospel to places and peoples where Christ was not yet known. The gospel breaks out and breaks through all barriers, even those within the Church. He himself was one of those used by God to call the Church to find and go to those without the saving message.

Conclusion

We are approaching fifty years since Winter's plenary on cross-cultural evangelism at the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization rocked the missions world. He had the same facts in hand as many other people but saw them differently and was able to articulate them in a way that became a call to action for the Church.

Ralph Winter's core insights and the concepts that arose from them generated a quantum shift in the way missions is envisioned. His clarification of the task around reaching peoples without access to the gospel had a prophetic impact on the Church. We now know the places and peoples that have little or no access to the gospel and we cannot be honest with ourselves that we are engaging *God's* mission unless we grapple with how we

will respond to this reality.

Winter's original insights and core understandings and concepts remain relevant and powerful for missionary practice today. His original challenge to cross-cultural evangelism remains critical with 25% of the global population living in peoples who are 0.1% Christian or less. In a globalizing and urbanizing world of people on the move, where "missions" and "missionary" continue to be defined in terms of geography, travel, and activity, the call to cross-cultural outreach and culturally relevant forms of the faith are much needed lenses to ensure all peoples have gospel access.

Alan Johnson has served in Thailand with Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) since 1986. He is a member of AGWM's missiology think-tank and is the secretary on the Missions Commission of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) that seeks to catalyze cross-cultural sending to unreached peoples from the WAGF national churches. He also serves as an adjunct professor for the Intercultural Studies Doctoral program of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

Notes

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2. Winter, "Eleven Frontiers," 78.
3. Winter, "Eleven Frontiers," 77–78.
4. Winter, "Eleven Frontiers," 78.
5. Winter, "Eleven Frontiers," 78.
6. Winter, "Eleven Frontiers," 78.
7. Ralph D. Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978), 40.
8. Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached People Challenge," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 19.
9. Dave Datema, "Defining 'Unreached': A Short History, *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 33 no. 2 (Summer 2016), 55–56.
10. Ralph Winter, "Facing the Frontiers," *Mission Frontiers* (Oct–Nov 1982), 13.
11. Winter and Koch, "Finishing," 17.
12. Ralph Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," in *Seeds of Promise: World Consultation on Frontier Missions, Edinburgh '80*, ed. Allan Starling (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), 65–66.
13. Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch. "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2009), 538.
14. Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 65–66.
15. I am grateful to Len Bartlotti, who worked with Winter at USCWM in the early 1980s, for this insight. Email communication, 15 June 2020.
16. Ralph D. Winter, "I Was Bombed by an Explosive Idea," in *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei*, 158–60. (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2008), 160.
17. Len Bartlotti, email communication, 15 June 2020.
18. Winter, "Frontier Mission Perspectives," 65–66.
19. Ralph D. Winter, "From Mission to Evangelism to Mission," in *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei*, 155–57. (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2005), 155–156.
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21. Ralph D. Winter, "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 253-62 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 256.
22. Cf. Darren Carlson & Elliot Clark, "The 3 Words That Changed Missions Strategy – and Why We Might Be Wrong." The Gospel Coalition, September 11, 2019. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/misleading-words-missions-strategy-unreached-people-groups/. Accessed June 18, 2020.
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24. Ralph D. Winter, "The Role of Western Missions in the 21st Century," in *Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei*, 114-17 (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2005), 114.
25. Winter, Ralph W. "Twelve Frontiers of Perspective." In Frontiers in Mission: Discovering and Surmounting Barriers to the Missio Dei, 28–39, (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2005), 29.
26. Winter, "Facing the Final Frontiers."
27. Ralph D. Winter, "The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 195–213 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 196.

Run with the Vision: The Impact of the Unreached People Groups Concept on Students, Churches and Sending Agencies

Greg Parsons

Prior to the first Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization in 1974, there was little awareness of unreached people groups (UPG). As researchers began to get better information about the status of world evangelization, it became increasingly clear that, despite successes, there were gaps in mission efforts – especially within cultural blocs where the gospel had made little impact. Lausanne sought to address opposing calls for a "mission moratorium" by calling attention to the need to continue reaching out to the world with the gospel.

Ralph D. Winter's plenary challenge at Lausanne '74 was a clarion call to expand mission outreach. God used that presentation and a spirit of change on the hearts of leaders, young and old, to fuel what became a global movement to reach people groups without a viable church. The UPG vision and thinking impacted three groups in particular: students, churches, and mission agencies.

Setting the Stage for a Movement

In the 1970s, new effective ways of digesting and disseminating up-to-date information on the world began to be more accessible. The MARC division of World Vision produced two series of books involving data sets, *Unreached Peoples of the World*, and the *Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*.[1] In 1976, the first edition of Patrick Johnstone's *Operation World* was published, and in 1982 David Barrett made available the *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Later, a group of creative data-focused mission leaders, fueled by a mostly young group of Caltech programmer-types, caught the Unreached vision. Under the mature leadership and experience of Bob Waymire, they started Data Serve (later Global Mapping International) in 1986. The information infrastructure of the UPG movement was growing.

It was becoming clear that there were both successes and blind spots in the spread of the gospel. Leading up to Lausanne '74, Ralph Winter, with Donald McGavran and others, had spent eight years helping to train and learn from about one thousand field-experienced missionaries at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission (now the School of Intercultural Studies). He was also engaged with the burgeoning mission sending from Asia. In 1973, at the All Asia Missions Consultation, with only a few Westerners present, Winter presented the *Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission,2* which explains the now well-known distinction between mission (sodality) and church structures (modality). And, at that same event, Winter *also* urged that many *more* missions be established in Asia.[3] Mission structures, both Western and non-Western, would be essential and strategic in the developing UPG movement.

This fed into Winter's presentation in 1974: *The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism*.[4] In this presentation, as Lausanne recently posted, "Winter shared the concept of *unreached people groups* that significantly influenced evangelical mission energies ever since."[5] "The massive need to take the gospel to unreached people groups, as presented by Winter and illustrated by [Donald] McGavran" *is now recognized as one of* three major emphases of Lausanne 74.[6]

In the fall of 1974, Ralph and his wife Roberta increasingly felt compelled to *do* something about this. In 1976, he left his tenured faculty position at Fuller and together they established of the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM, now called Frontier Ventures). Their clear and compelling vision: reaching the Unreached. In 1979, that vision was distilled in the watchword: *A Church for Every People by the Year 2000*.[7] For the vision of reaching unreached peoples to spread, the USCWM would have to be a "soapbox" galvanized three groups: *Students*, *Churches* and *Mission Agencies*.

Students

In the 1960–1970s, God seemed to be using general unrest among young people, reflected in the Jesus Movement and the burgeoning Charismatic movement, to bring a spirit of change. Young people sought to "make a difference" with their lives.

Ralph Winter saw what was happening with these students and tried to engage them for the Kingdom. He had attended every Urbana from the first in 1949, when he was in seminary. In 1970, only eight percent signed the Decision Card, but at Urbana 1973, twenty-eight percent signed, saying they were willing to become missionaries, should God direct. With that year's record audience of 14,000, that meant almost 4,000 young people had signed the cards![8] Winter got one of his many ideas and bounded into action. He contacted Urbana Director David Howard and convinced him to offer the students an intensive 2-week course to help them go deeper with their commitments. Some six months later in the summer of 1974, students came to a precursor of what later became the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course. Now well over 250,000 have taken the course globally.[9]

There were global gatherings focused on unreached peoples that involved students as well as mission leadership. The USCWM helped organize the World Consultation on Frontier Missions (WCFM) in Edinburgh Scotland in 1980 (E'80).[10] A significant and "novel addition" was a parallel "sister consultation" in Edinburgh, the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions (ISCFM).[11] ISCFM was composed of 170 students from twenty-seven countries, and grappled with the needs of unreached peoples *as well as* the challenge of mobilizing a new generation of student pioneer missionaries to hidden peoples.[12]

There were several outcomes of ISCFM. The students adopted the E'80 watchword "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000" and produced and signed a consensus "pledge." This pledge represented a lifetime commitment to the cause of frontier missions, whether at home or abroad, and to spreading that vision:

> By the grace of God and for His glory, I commit my entire life to obeying His commission of Matthew 28:18–20, wherever and however He leads me, giving priority to the peoples currently beyond the reach of the Gospel (Romans 15:20–21). I will also endeavor to impart this vision to others.

The ISCFM established a mechanism for ongoing "communication" of the frontier mission vision. Under the leadership of Brad Gill, the resulting *International Journal for Frontier Missions,13* launched in 1984, became the official journal of the new International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM). Soon, this was a vibrant network, meeting annually, including younger leaders, scholar-practitioners, mobilizers and field workers. It has facilitated fresh thinking, prayer focused research, theologizing and praxis related to frontier missions.[14]

The challenge of mobilizing students was picked up by new initiatives like Caleb Project, founded by four Penn State University students who took the first extension "Perspectives" course in the early days of the USCWM. These passionate "senders" and "goers" embraced the challenge of mobilizing their generation of students, promoting the Edinburgh '80 ISCFM pledge – renaming it "The Caleb Pledge" – to make Christ known, "giving priority to peoples currently beyond the reach of the gospel," based on Romans 15:20–21.[15]

Many other tools, people and ministries could be included here. In 1980, a student magazine was launched called *Today's Mission* (later renamed *World Christian Magazine*). Teams of students on the way to the field, circulated among college and university campuses with a God-centered missions appeal to challenge students to follow them. Raising up young people with purpose and direction spread vision not only on campuses, but also in churches, and helped redirect the energies of mission organizations to the Unreached.

Churches

Winter knew that local churches were critical as the "home base" of the mission movement. Giving, awareness, prayer, mission education, and sending are grounded in the church. To reach unreached peoples, that home base would need renewing with frontier mission vision and biblical understandings of God's heart and purposes for all peoples. UPG thinking and vision began to impact churches, not only in North America, but in other parts of the world.

Unlike today, the idea and role of a mission "mobilizer" was not well understood. Winter was calling young people who joined him to raise a ministry support team and then *stay* in the United States – in order to encourage *others* to *go* to UPG. The reasoning behind it was simple: Why go *alone* when you can stay back and find others to go with you? One popular way of illustrating this was the notion of "Waking sleeping firemen": If a person sees a burning building, he/she can choose either to get a bucket and try to put it out alone (meaning: go to the field directly), or go and wake up one hundred sleeping firemen for the task (meaning: take others with you to multiply the effort!).

Effective mobilization requires ideas, resources and examples to fuel pray and action. In 1974, Winter helped former Xerox executive Don Hamilton establish a "professional network" for church missions committees called the Association of Church Missions Committees. ACMC was all about "churches helping churches" to plan, prioritize and structure their mission efforts.

In 1979, the publication of *Mission Frontiers* magazine (*MF*) began as a "bull horn" for these ideas. Mission leaders in local churches began to engage with key field issues in a new way. Agencies sought to lead the way while also keep up with the students pushing to reach the unreached.

David Bryant, an effective student mobilizer with InterVarsity Missions called people to gather in serious "concerts of prayer."[16] The USCWM produced the *Daily Prayer Guide* (later renamed the *Global Prayer Digest*). It was modeled after Walk Thru the Bible's monthly resource, but with a prayer focused "walk thru the world." It includes specific unreached people groups for each day of the month. The goal was and is to "invade" people's minds, hearts and devotional lives with prayer for the unreached. The thinking behind it: *only what you do daily will dominate your life*. It has been in continuous production since.[17]

People also needed to pray together in their churches, so the USCWM created the Frontier Fellowship. This would give an outlet for churches to reach specific people groups by encouraging both specific prayer for unreached peoples and collect funds they could send to their denominational mission or preferred mission agency. The Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (now www.frontierfellowship.com) raised millions of dollars from its churches for work among the unreached.

Other programs were designed to equip churches and spread the vision. A *Hidden Peoples Sunday* kit had sample sermon outlines and resources for churches to have a special Sunday emphasis. Other video and study resources for awareness and teaching were later "packaged" together into a "Year of Vision" mission renewal and education emphasis.

In 1980, early USCWM Director of Mobilization, Len Bartlotti, proposed that churches Adopt-A-People to enable churches to partner with agencies in order to "adopt" or focus on a particular people group for ongoing prayer, concern, and potentially, sending. The focus was not on the "adopting" missionaries and workers, but on the specific *unreached people group* – with the long-term goal of a viable, indigenous church planting movement among them. Today, there are entire denominations, especially in Latin America and Asia, which have taken up this challenge, multiplying fervent intercession for specific UPG.[18] In the United States, denominations like the Evangelical Free Church, Foursquare, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God, and others have turned their attention and considerable resources – some quickly, others more slowly – toward UPG and frontier missions.

Mission Agencies

Missiological discussions were already happening all over the world.[19] A number of agencies and denominational missions realized they needed to refocus their efforts on unreached peoples. They knew that the UPG vision would require (1) reaching into new cultures with the gospel, (2) crossing new barriers, and (3) recruiting new global workers. The early days of the UPG movement included a lot of brainstorming and interaction at the USCWM, with conferences and meetings between a variety of people, church, and mission leaders from around the globe.

New sending organizations were started, such as Frontiers and Pioneers, with an exclusive or priority focus on pioneer church planting among Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or Tribal peoples. Other agencies looked to their roots and renewed their historical commitment to frontier work. The associations that brought together mission leaders from denominations and faith missions also turned their attention to UPG.

In 1980, *MF* included an article on the Foursquare denomination's plans "to establish mission coordinators at each local church and seek to reach 100 UPGs."[20] In an

article for *Wherever* magazine, published by TEAM, Winter noted that "All the major mission agencies are aware of the new era. The Sudan Interior Mission has a full-time man investigating new fields. The African Inland Mission is rapidly retooling. TEAM has been constantly reaching out to new fields. So has the Regions Beyond Missionary Union."[21]

In the mid-1980s, in a strategic move into the practical realm, the USCWM hosted summer training modules on reaching out to local Muslims. The Zwemer Institute, founded 1979 and led by Don McCurry, brought together veteran missionaries and scholars for research, study, mobilization, and the training of multitudes of workers going into the Muslim world. After serving in diverse Islamic nations, some of these students are now themselves professors training another generation of young people.[22]

Non-Western sending agencies were also getting involved. The Latin world came on the global scene in 1987 with a gathering called COMIBAM,[23] and with leaders like Luis Bush,[24] along with other international efforts.[25] In the Chinese world, Thomas Wang led the way and in the late '80s, both Wang and Bush helped to launch the AD2000 Movement, which mobilized globally and fulfilled its purpose up to its planned ending in the year 2001.[26] Winter estimated that eighty-five percent of the missionaries worked among groups already reached with the gospel. Only fifteen percent served among the Unreached.[27] So while evangelicals recognized we needed more missionaries, now there was pressure for them to more carefully consider *where* to send them.

As the UPG movement grew in influence, debates swirled around UPG thinking, theology, missiology and praxis. The USCWM made a point never to push for the "redeployment" of missionaries from established fields to UPG, as some did. They argued that an established missionary working in a reached group was in the *best* position to mobilize that "national" church for work among new UPG.[28] Still, some local churches began to question existing missionaries on long-established fields about their work. Over time, some workers were redeployed by their agency; other ministries shifted or ended. In reaction, some ministries felt existing mission fields were being abandoned. The issues were discussed in several articles in *EMQ* during the 1980s–1990s – and more recently.[29]

Other objections were raised. Even as early as the '74 Lausanne event, there were those who felt the focus on specific people groups created churches divided along ethnic lines. This debate circulates and has been argued from many angles on the pages of *EMQ*,[30] the *IJFM* and other journals. Some argue that the church should be diverse. However, while this may appear ideal, it is hard to find models of "conglomerate" or multi-ethnic churches that are *not* dominated by one group or language – often English, or even Arabic (e.g. among Berbers in North Africa).[31] Other suggest that that scriptures point to the beauty of different cultures expressing God's creativity and glory in new ways, and that "unifying" the church squelched that dimension. Another aspect of the debate over the Unreached, focused on the lost among "reached" nations, arguing that these people should not be overlooked.[32]

In addition to the Lausanne Movement, groups, such as the World Evangelical Alliance,[33] have also furthered the collaboration, networking, and significant discussions on a range of church and mission issues. Non-western founded groups such as the Asian Missions Society[34] (founded in 1975) and the Asian Society of Missiology[35] (founded in 2003) have added their voices to the movement. More recently, a new US-based network called *Alliance for the Unreached* was established in 2015.[36] It is seeking to catalyze a movement that unites churches, organizations and individuals around the cause of reaching every unreached people group on earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ironically, despite the continuing great "imbalance" in mission sending and funding, with the majority going to peoples and places with existing churches, there is still resistance by some to a focus on UPGs. Recently, several organizations have refocused efforts on those UPG with less than 0.1% Christian of any kind and no movements to Jesus. They have been labeled Frontier People Groups and are considered high priority.[37] This suggests that UPG rethinking, discussion and research should continue to help us grow in our understanding and effective field practice.

Conclusion

Growing out of Lausanne '74, a new vision of the unreached has impacted students, churches and agencies right up to the present. The fruit of their labor can be seen in the advancement of new strategies, new sending, and new fellowships among formerly unreached peoples. We press on in prayer and service, seeking to reach those who are not yet reached, that they may be reconciled to God.

Greg Parsons, along with his wife Kathleen, joined the staff of Frontier Ventures (formerly USCWM) in 1982. They have two children and three grandchildren. For the first twenty-seven years Greg worked with Ralph D. Winter, serving from 1990–2010 as General Director. Greg currently serves as Director of Global Connections – learning from and connecting with missions and church leaders globally. Greg writes a regular column in *Mission Frontiers* magazine. He has a ThM from Dallas Seminary and PhD from the University of Wales.

Notes

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"Interdev: Pioneering Partnership," History & Impact, visionSynergy, accessed November 18, 2018, https://visionsynergy.net/history-and-impact/.

1. Unreached Peoples Directory, (1973) MARC, Monrovia. The first published survey of North American missions was in 1953. The Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center or MARC took over the publication of this book in 1973 from John R. Mott established Missionary Research Library. The North American Mission Handbook is now published by MissioNexus.org

2. Winter, R. D. (1974), "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," *Missiology* 2(1): 122-139.

3. Chun, C. (1975), *The All-Asia Mission Consultation. School of World Mission*, Pasadena, Fuller Theological Seminary, MTh Thesis, 399. See pages 7–8.

4. Winter, R. D. (1975), The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice,* J. D. Douglas, Minneapolis, World Wide Publications: 213-241. In my thesis on Ralph Winter, I explain the insightful way the '74 Lausanne Congress sought to engage delegates months *before* the meeting. The consultation provided for a unique, pre-conference global input, in that each plenary speaker submitted their paper six months ahead of time, and then based on that input, revised them for their presentation at Lausanne. Ralph Winter's presentation was completely different than what he first submitted.

5. Accessed on May 4, 2020: https://www.lausanne.org/tbd/lausanne-connecting-point/remembering-dr-ralph-winter

6. In the lead up to the third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010, Lausanne.org summarized three major outcomes from the 1974 meeting. The other two were (1) the "Lausanne Covenant," and (2) "The clear recognition and need for evangelicals to focus on social issues."

7. Editor (1979), "Today's Crisis Tomorrow's Challenge," Mission Frontiers 1(4): 3-7. Much has been written about the value of this goal, what was achieved, and whether it cause a "let down" when it wasn't completed? See www.MissionFrontiers.org after the year 2,000 for some of the follow-up evaluation, as well as *EMQ* and other sources during the early 2,000s.

8. Parsons, G. (2012). Ralph D. Winter : Early Life and Core Missiology, Pasadena, WCIU Press, 225.

9. https://www.perspectives.org/

10. "Edinburgh 1980 Momentum Grows," *Mission Frontiers* 2(4): 3 (1980) and "Edinburgh 1980 Reports," *Mission Frontiers* 2:12 (1980), accessed June 26, 2020.

11. Information on ISCFM was provided by Len Bartlotti, who attended Edinburgh 1980 and participated in both WCFM and ISCFM.

12. The latter goal was inspired in part by the Student Volunteer Movement, launched in 1886, which mobilized university students for the cause of world evangelization.

13. Now the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, https://www.ijfm.org/index.htm

14. Email to the author from Len Bartlotti, June 2, 2020.

15. For background on Caleb Project, see *Mission Frontiers*, August 1988. Caleb Project and its companion ministries (e.g. the Perspectives-like text and course *Encountering the World of Islam*) are now associated with the agency Pioneers.

16. Bryant, D. (1983), "Concerts of Prayer: Waking Up for a New Mission Thrust," Mission Frontiers 5(3 & 4): 6–11.

17. https://www.globalprayerdigest.org Also available via an app. and www.joshuaproject.net

18. See the initial proposal in *Mission Frontiers* 2:11 (1980). AAP program became the Global Adopt A People Campaign (GAAPC), now based in Manilla, Philippines, led by former USCWM staff member Phil Bogosian. https://globaladoptapeoplecampaign.org/

19. The largest known school of missiology at the time, was at the University of South Africa, under David Bosch. Fuller's SWM was probably next in size and larger in influence in North American sending.

20. Editor (1980), "NewsBriefs: Foursquare Plans to Reach 100 Hidden People Groups," *Mission Frontiers* 2(10), 5.

21. Winter, R. D. (1981), "Some Unfinished Business," *Mission Frontiers* 3(5): 1, 4, 6.

22. Editor (1986), "1986 Summer Institutes at the U.S. Center for World Mission," *Mission Frontiers* 8(3): 12–13.

23. See Comibam.org, there are now more than 15,000 missionaries from Latin America serving around the world.

24. Winter, R. D. (1988), "COMIBAM '87 Missions Meeting of the Century," *Mission Frontiers* 10(1): 7-8.

25. Winter, R. D. (1983), "The Explosion of New Missions within the Non-Western World," *Mission Frontiers* 5 (1): 6–7. And, Dougherty, D. (1983), "Getting the Whole Story: Researcher Releases Comprehensive Survey of Third World Missions Today," *Mission Frontiers* 5(2): 8-11. And, Winter, R. H. (1986), "Luis Bush, Latin America, and the End of History," *Mission Frontiers* 8(3): 1, 3, 5.

26. Bridges, E. (1988), "The Meeting of the Century is Announced," *Mission Frontiers* 10(7): 5.

27. The article by Johnson, T. M. and Tieszen, C. L. (2007), "Personal Contact : The *Sine Qua Non* of Twenty-First Century Christian Mission," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43(4): 494–501, pointed out that this is an interesting, though not direct, parallel with their research that 86% of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhist do not personally know a Christian of any kind.

28. Ralph Winter observed a blind spot of field missionaries: They did not establish younger missions on the field. Generally, well-established "mission field churches" were *not* sending out their *own* missionaries. See: Winter, R. D. (1972), The Planting of Younger Missions, *Church/Mission Tensions Today*, C. P. Wagner, Chicago, Moody Press.

29. These critiques continue to be recycled, despite the fact that Winter did not encourage redeployment or abandonment of existing fields. See Darren Carlson & Elliot Clark, "The 3 Words That Changed Missions Strategy—and Why We Might Be Wrong." The Gospel Coalition, September 11, 2019. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/misleading-words-missions-strategy-unreached-people-groups/ and Mathew Newkirk Should Missionaries Focus on Unreached People Groups? Yes https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/missionaries-focus-unreached-people-groups/ and others.

30. Hyatt, E. (2014), "From Homogeneous to Heterogeneous Unit Principle," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 50(2): 226-232.

31. Parsons, G. (2015), "Will the Earth Hear His Voice? Is Ralph D. Winter's Idea Still Valid?" *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 32(1): 5–18. See pages 14–16.

32. Severn, F. M. (1997), "Some Thoughts on the Meaning of "All Nations," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 33(4): 412–419. And, Kendall, G. (1999), "Missions Should Not Target the Unreached," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35(2): 180-185.

33. https://worldea.org/en/ accessed May 5, 2020.

34. http://www.asiamissions.net accessed May 5, 2020.

35. http://www.asiamissions.net/partners/asian-society-of-missiology/ accessed June 17, 2020.

36. https://allianceforthеunreached.org

37. For more information about Frontier People Groups, see https://joshuaproject.net/frontier where you can download a free prayer guide. For a simple animation of this concept, search YouTube for "Frontier People Groups" or go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVmTU13rgo8&t=2s What this sub-group of the Unreached Peoples shows us, it that the core of the remaining task is concentrated in South Asia.

Article

Notes from the Field: Voices of Pioneer Workers on the Challenge of "People Groups"

Various Authors

Over eight hundred field workers among unreached peoples were invited to submit brief case studies on the challenge of "people group" thinking in their context. In particular, they were asked about ways their field experience has led them to "rethink" people group concepts and approaches. The following notes from the field offer a glimpse into ministry among unreached peoples. These voices provide insights that take us from missiological theory to the challenges and ambiguities of frontier mission practice. Many of the issues explored in other articles are illustrated here, including disjunctions between lists, databases, categories and field realities; migration, urbanization and social change; power dynamics; language and ethnic identity; multiethnicity; diaspora and transnational networks; hybrid and multiple identities; and implications for evangelism and church planting. The reports have been edited for clarity and length, and locations veiled for security. Opinions expressed are each author's own (usually a pseudonym) and may not reflect the views of *EMQ* or the *Rethinking People Groups Forum*.

Central Asia

By Anthony Roberts

As our agency's first team in this restrictive Central Asian country, we chose the largest people group listed as unreached, the "Ghairat." This gave us focus and was useful in recruiting a team. However, what seemed simple quickly became complicated. Once on the field we quickly ran into internal and external challenges related to using the people group approach as a church-planting strategy.

To begin with, we faced opposition from foreign co-workers who saw our people group approach as divisive and discriminatory against other ethnicities. In our country context, ethnic identity had been used by warlords to factionalize and discriminate against other groups. Using ethnic identifiers had immediate political implications.

We adapted by avoiding using people group terms, and not giving preference to Ghairat in our local relationships. We did this by learning both official languages even as we moved into a predominantly Ghairat area. We also decided to share Good News and disciple whomever God brought to us. Ironically as I look back, we discipled far more from other ethnicities than from among our adopted people group!

The external challenges to our people group approach came as we interacted with people we thought were Ghairat, but who had a muddled ethnic and linguistic background. They did not fit neatly into the ethnic box we had found so useful in recruiting. They intermarried with other ethnic groups. Traditional Ghairat ways were diluted. They spoke a yet unnumbered variety of dialects (some mutually unintelligible). Others spoke several languages even at home, e.g. the trade language with their mother and Gharati with their father. Many could not speak or read their traditional tongue. Some, though not ethnically Ghairat, had been living so long in their area that they acted just as the majority around them.

Cities were particularly confusing. Higher levels of education, in contrast to rural areas, made ethnic identity less important. Yet even if their practices and values reflected urban lifestyles, Ghairat still claimed to be Ghairat. In some situations, ethnic status still had advantages, e.g. legitimizing an acquired position of power, or appealing to ethnic ties for political or military support. How utterly frustrating it was to try to answer: "Who is a real 'Ghairat' and how much does it matter?"

As I re-read Romans 15:20–21, I saw Paul focused "*where* Christ was not known" – a geographic or "place" indicator not based on ethnicity, religion, social standing, gender, or nationality. Similarly, he did not gather the Church into segments based on ethnic, or socio-economic factors. The simplicity of the Gospel encourages a common sense of identity in Christ. Distinctions of culture were secondary to the unity of the Body.

Why aim for a mono-ethnic church when there was no church of any kind in the area? A local proverb says, "*There are five brothers (fingers/thumb), but not all are the same (equal).*" There is a cultural recognition that everyone is different, yet they can be unified. In a country torn apart by decades of inter-ethnic strife and ethnonationalism, I choose not to tie the gospel to ethnic separatism. I sought to establish urban fellowships based on common identity with Christ, rather than on ethnic/religious factors that reflect the subtle but pernicious divisions around us.

South Asia
By Tom Tonges

A large church in the Midwest, United States, decided they would find an unreached Muslim people group and reach them. They were assisted by a mission organization with a similar focus. They prayed over the list for Bangladesh for one year, and then sent a high-level group to scout out this unreached Muslim people group (MUPG) to make a plan to reach them. The group included the lead pastor, an associate pastor, missions chairman, an elder or two, and a couple of women in leadership. The head of the mission organization had led other such trips and did so for this one also. He knew me from years before and emailed me about this trip telling me that this church had selected the "Ansari Muslims" of Bangladesh. I wrote back telling him that I very much doubted they would find such a group. There were supposedly twenty thousand in my area, but I knew that "Ansari" was a title, not a specific people group. The church leaders came to a city where there were supposed to be over one hundred thousand Ansari Muslims. They managed to locate some kingdom workers there, who told them the same thing I had said. There is no such MUPG in their city or region! The so-called Ansari Muslims are part of the larger Bengali Muslim people group and not a distinct group. Ansari, in the Bangladesh context, is a title, not a group specifier. Very frustrated and sad, the church group left after four days. Happily, that is not the end of the story. My friend called and asked if they could visit us. During that visit, the group fell in love with our people group (which is still not listed!), adopted it, and have seconded a couple to our team.

This example seems to reflect a larger issue affecting UPG lists for South Asia. For example, in the Greater Bengal, there are massive groups of Bengali and Bengali-related speakers both in India and Bangladesh. "Sheikh" is listed as the predominant group. However, "Sheikh" is simply a title and has nothing to do with a group in which the gospel could flow. I cannot even guess how someone listed this as a group with that title. The lists in no way reflect reality on the ground. I have discussed this with those in charge of the lists mostly to fall on deaf ears.

South Asia
By Jack Smith

In obedience we went to the vast South Asia to work among Muslims some years ago. For a few years, we learned language and culture and gained some experience. We were trying to figure out where we fit. Then we received a clear call to a specific region. Initially, I looked on the people group lists, but found that Muslims of South Asia were divided into categories that made no sense to someone on the ground. We made several important discoveries.

First, after two years in the city, I discovered that this region had their own language, which was not the national language. Before moving to this city, my team had all learned the national language well. I had a professional position as a consultant, and the senior staff were cordial to me. They spoke to me in English. The staff, like all educated people, spoke the national language excellently, but to exclude me from their conversation they spoke in their "heart language." I have since learned that this is how people groups with a strong ethnic identity treat outsiders. Speaking someone's heart language makes a huge difference so our team set out to learn it.

Second, in South Asia, the easiest way to define a people group might be by intermarriage: If families normally marry in and out of that group, it is not a distinct people group. In our region, there is a distinct distain for outsiders largely coinciding with language. In addition, a given language is divided into Muslim and Hindu groupings, and there is virtually no intermarriage between them. There are also lesser barriers between the extremely wealthy, the very poor, and middle class. The few Christians in the area largely are not even originally from this region, nor from Muslim backgrounds.

When I think of the "great multitude" before the Throne from "every *ethnos*" (Rev 7:9), I see a gap; an empty place for millions from our previously unengaged, but still unreached Muslim people group. As yet we are nowhere near the full number, so there is lots of space for more.

South Asia – Rohingya
By Harry Wilson

For decades the Rohingya have faced tensions and discrimination at the hands of the Burmese government. In 1982, the Burmese government issued a new citizenship law that recognized 135 "indigenous ethnic groups," but defined citizenship in a way that excluded the Rohingya. For the past forty years, the oppression in Myanmar has led to a steady stream of Rohingya fleeing their homeland. The downward spiral of discrimination and violence culminated in brutal military campaigns; the worst of which in 2017 triggered the exodus of about one million people to neighboring Bangladesh.

What does it mean to be Rohingya? In reality, the definition of Rohingya ethnicity differs widely. Some people define it along religious lines, saying every Rohingya is Muslim. Others consider language the decisive factor, i.e. everyone who speaks the same language is Rohingya, whether Muslim, Buddhist or Christian. Still others define it according to region of origin, i.e. Northern Arakan. The ethnic identity markers are contested.

God first stirred our heart for the Rohingya through the entry in *Operation World* around 1990. When we moved to Myanmar in 1997, we discovered quickly a more complex ethnicity situation than was listed or that we imagined. Numbers, definitions, names and boundaries appear very debatable.

Today Rohingya are spread over more than twenty countries; only 20% of the overall population remain in Myanmar. The diaspora situation over two generations has drastically diversified the identity of the people group. Now we are working in Bangladesh among the refugees which brings additional challenges. While it was easy to differentiate the Rohingya from other groups in Myanmar, in Bangladesh they blend into the host community much more in terms of language, features and religion.

Our approach towards disciple making has evolved according to the context of our ministry and changing dynamics overall. Locally, we are praying and working towards Discovery Bible Study (DBS) groups within the camp, apart from the local host community. At the same time, we are actively involved in an international network which helps coordinate the work among Rohingya worldwide. So we are indirectly helping work among them in many contexts. The unifying factor is work among Rohingya wherever they are found.

India
By Andrew Tolliver

In my early years in India, we had discovered E. Stanley Jones' contextualized approach called the "Satsang" or "fellowship of truth." This is a Hindu cultural tradition of people sitting together to discuss spiritual truth. We started to hold these in our region. I am a professional and quickly became aware that many less educated people in the region did not speak the national language (Hindi), which I had spent years learning. They spoke Bundelkhandi, a non-written language with different grammar and some different vocabulary. I had begun to learn it to manage to talk to some of my clients.

The Satsangs that we held were well attended, mostly because there was nothing else to do! Generally, the children made a lot of noise, and the people did not pay much attention to what was being said. In one village we had a good relationship because our healthcare team went there weekly, so they were open to having a Satsang there. Same story: noisy children and no one paying attention. We happened to have invited a man from a neighboring city to lead it. He was speaking to the people in nice Hindi, as we did in all of the Satsangs to that point. For a moment, however, he mistakenly slipped into his mother tongue Bundelkhandi. That changed everything! The crowd of people told the children to stop throwing dirt and shut up. They threatened to beat them if they did not. They told the speaker to stop speaking Hindi and to speak to them in Bundelkhandi. He did, and the conversation really took off. They even took over our harmonium and sang some of their songs. It became a real fellowship of truth just because we presented it in their heart language. Needless to say, we never did it in Hindi again.

India – Delhi
By Ed Alansky

The "people group" we work with is really a religious-linguistic group – Urdu-speaking Muslims in the Delhi area. We have not felt that we have the luxury of singling out people groups based on other traditional methods of identifying people groups in India (such as caste). This is because most of the Urdu speakers in Delhi are first- or second-generation immigrants to the area, and so all the Urdu-speaking Muslim people groups tend to live on top of each other, while their kinship and ethnic ties tend to be to other parts of India – especially villages. Though they share a language and religion, neighbors will often not interact much or know each other well.

People will rarely bring us into their networks of relationships because the people they trust do not live locally. On the other hand, from our perspective, since Muslims are a minority – even in many "Muslim" neighborhoods – we cannot afford to be too choosey about those with whom we relate.

There are clearly significant cultural differences and a strong sense of identity within and between the groups. For example, one time some Urdu-speaking Muslim men who work at the same company began discussing the differences in how their respective castes relate to their relatives. I was surprised to learn that not only did they have very different norms for relating, but that each man was largely unaware of the practices of the other group.

Has urbanization affected the way people relate to each other and see their identity? Definitely, but the traditional people group "core" still seems to be the dominant reality. Marriages, for example, are still overwhelmingly conducted within caste. I have yet to observe the Gospel moving between people groups via other affinities, such as shared interests. In my limited experience, there is little trust within non-kinship affinity groups. People rarely know each other well and are unwilling to be vulnerable in such groups. Generally, in India occupations are tied up tightly with caste, and therefore do not represent an alternative to people-groups.

In reaction to this situation, we find ourselves forced to work almost exclusively with individual nuclear and extended families within various Urdu-speaking people groups. Admittedly, this feels less effective than focusing on a specific group, were that an option. Because we have yet to see the Gospel move beyond families that live together, it remains an open question as to what degree that movement will occur within traditional people groups versus other affinity groups.

Based on my experience, I would say that urbanization has increased the challenge of starting movements by isolating individuals and nuclear family units from their wider relationships of trust without replacing those relationships with new relationships of trust. Surrounded by more people than ever, people seem to be increasingly alone.

Therefore, it seems plausible that despite our best efforts to adapt and capitalize, urbanization represents, for the present, a net challenge to mission movements regardless of our paradigm of "people group" or identity. Even as we seek to adapt in the face of new challenges, we need to be careful not to hastily blame "people group" paradigms when the challenge might really be social fragmentation itself. Phenomena such as multiple-identities, multi-ethnic churches, and urban networks are, in my view, symptoms of that fragmentation, rather than promising alternatives to people-groups.

We have been pursuing social media outreach for less than a year. So far, we have seen no confirmed success, but believe we have much to learn and that there is much sowing potential in social media. One advantage of social media, in this age of urbanization, is that it allows us to sow across extensive rural areas. Social media may allow us to have the advantage of reaching large populations like those present in cities while avoiding the problem of urban social fragmentation.

Pakistan

By B. M.

Over the past ten years in Pakistan, we have been hoping, praying, and pleading with people to come and help us. Sadly, some potential workers who come with fixed "people group" thinking leave disappointed by realities on the ground. Here are a few of the lessons we have learned.

First, the way outsiders define people groups doesn't always match how local people define themselves. Locals have expressed dislike for our focus on specific ethnic groups. For example, I have met many urbanites, especially so-called "Mohajirs" (Urdu-speaking migrants who settled after the 1947 partition of British India), who define themselves as "Karachiites" or even just "Pakistanis." This is especially true for the younger (second or third) generation, who were born and raised in Karachi. At times, people are very reluctant to share with me what their "people group" is. They still have pride in their ancestry and family traditions, but it is not such an important factor.

In 2011–2013, when ethnic violence and religiously motivated target killings in Karachi were at a height, I met many Karachiites who downplayed their ethnic background. They wanted to focus instead on unity, not differences, of the commonality of all being Pakistanis (or Karachiites).

Second, we need to embrace multilingualism. Traditionally, it has been said you can best reach people if you learn their heart language. Use of other languages was discouraged. Among urban populations, this is no longer true. I know several Pashto and Hindko families. Though their parents and older relatives speak it in the home, the younger generation born and raised in Karachi have minimal comprehension and do not speak either language. Among their own age group (e.g. siblings, cousins) they speak Urdu. Culturally they consider themselves Pashtun, but Urdu is their mother tongue and language of literacy.

An Afghan Hazara friend in her mid-20s speaks Hazargi or Farsi in her home with the family. Her closest friends, however, are from Hunza, Gilgit and Skardu in northern Pakistan. When I visited her home, there were six different language/people groups represented! Most of the time we used Urdu as the common language, occasionally switching into English (used in schools and workplaces). Throughout the evening they switched back and forth between five different languages! Despite their different backgrounds, they appreciated the fact that they could all sit together and be friends. Note: They are all Agha Khani (Ismaili) Muslims, a sect of Shia Islam. This was the defining, common factor, not the language or ethnic background.

Third, over the years I have met a significant number of families who are "mixed" and consider themselves a part of various groups. This mixing through marriage and/or living in close proximity suggests the need for a multi-people group approach. At a recent wedding, I was told that part of the family is Pashtun, part is Punjabi, and part is Mohajir – all through marriage. When asked what people group they considered themselves to be part of, they said all of them. Being part of the same family, rather than identifying with the same people group, seemed more important. Several families I know from the northwest provincial capital of Peshawar (population of 2 million) are mixed Hindko and Pashtun, and speak both languages fluently. In the city of Quetta in Baluchistan, I have several friends where Hazara and Pashtun are married. In Karachi (population of sixteen million), several of my Pashtun friends live in communities that are quite mixed, with a high proportion speaking Balochi and Pashto. A Pashto cleaning lady, with little education spends most of her time with her Balochi neighbours; her Pashtun relatives are married to Balochi.

In all these cases, they have lived together in the same neighbourhoods for decades. All of them originally come from villages very far away; they have a chance to visit their "home" town maybe once or twice in ten years. They all consider Karachi to be more their home, than their original "village." Their deep relational bonds are the most important factor for them.

Eurasia

By Dan Nilsen

Our area is home to at least thirty-four distinct ethnic groups – up to fifty, if you include linguistic sub-groups – in an overall population of about three million. So we've done a lot of thinking and "rethinking" about people groups! When I arrived on the field twenty-five years ago, our team did not have a specific UPG focus. That made sense given the ethnic mix in our growing city of over a million residents. About 40% of the country still lives in rural villages and towns. One of the requirements for launching a new team was to target a particular UPG, so I chose a UPG with few workers whose homeland was in the south. However, I realized there were other factors to consider besides the UPG's "reachedness." First of all, I had to deal with gaining residency and having a viable role. Both of these required an urban platform and fluency in the trade language. Further, in the multi-ethnic world of our city, where relatively few members of that UPG lived, it was clearly unrealistic to focus exclusively on them. Prioritizing fluency in the trade language would not only allow us to communicate with all people groups, but also have implications for the home fellowships we believed would emerge.

A survey by local social scientists revealed that people of this republic have a hybrid and multiple identity. Some of the ethnic groups identify primarily by ethnicity and language. Others place national or district identity first, then their ethnic group. Within the republic, ethnicities compete for access to governmental posts to improve their clan's financial interests and increase its political clout. Outside the country, in another cosmopolitan city or wherever they are a minority, they stick together – whatever their ethnicity – as citizens of their republic. In an ethnically diverse place like our republic, we should allow the UPG focus to be taken up *after* the preliminary steps are accomplished. These include fluency in the bridge language which facilitates a broad range of friendships, a credible vocation, and spiritual conversations.

Disciples, too, must learn the kingdom value of passing on truths with others, whether they are of the same people group or not. It would not make much sense to push language homogeneity in house fellowships unless the members were all of one ethnic clan. This could occur in urban settings but

is likely to be futile. The younger generation growing up in the city often have parents of mixed ethnicity and do not know their parent's heart language well enough. Moreover, even if both parents are of one people group, they tend to use the trade language in the home and do not pass on their heart tongue to the children.

Thus, Bible studies or house fellowships envisioned would include a mix of common and mother tongue language use and rely on scriptures in both languages. Even in rural communities, people prefer to read in the trade language and listen to audio scriptures in their heart language. Invitations to more ethnically homogeneous rural communities would be a next step. So, in an ethnically diverse region like ours, engaging and catalyzing disciple making movements among UPGs is a multi-language, multi-year, multi-stage process.

Eurasia

By Will Kershon

When we arrived in the Republic of "Alpania," I had the multicolored map of neatly numbered blobs emblazoned on my mind (and soon taped to my wall). The over thirty-six peoples of Alpania were cleanly organized as distinct language groups and clustered in their own mountain valleys. Extensive research and surveying undergirded the colorful blobs. They remain a critical organizing tool for educating outsiders and mobilizing prayer. We hoped God might lead us to the smallest groups in the highest mountains.

But how useful would the map be in our ministry on the ground? In the capital city where we live, language and ethnic divisions blur and sometimes go into hiding. In the first place, everyone speaks the dominant "language of wider communication" (LWC). It is the language of government and business. Yet relational networks of the largest language groups, e.g. workers in the bazaar or shop owners on a street, may speak a local language when together. I found at one gas station a cluster of men aged 20 to 70 working – all from a language group numbering in total fewer than seven thousand. Even though they don't all speak their own language, something kept them bound together.

Thus links to the mountains remain strong. Networks of ethnicity, language, and kinship act as conduits of social capital. Yet for the socially ascendant, a mountain identity may register zero or even negative. In the big city the LWC gets the job done. Everyone I have met identifies with an ancestral village, but some have never even been there. In the city, marriages are often mixed between ethnicities; it is unclear to me how families choose which lineage determines primary identity, or if a primary identity even exists.

The following anecdote illustrates these dynamics. A would-be tour guide invited a mixed group of locals and foreigners to his village for the weekend. When I received my invite, my eyes shone: the destination was a remote mountain region home to the "Akhush," an unengaged Muslim sub-group of a large language bloc we'll call "Ukhmar." It's confusing: Some speakers consider Akhush a unique language; others lump it with the Ukhmar. Linguists have shown it as distinct – thus the blob on my map. But what do locals say?

As we approached his home perched atop a precipitous mountain slope, our host's prattle glittered with pride for everything from towers to trees to the tarmac we were driving on. Deep in the valley nearly a stone's throw away lay the village Akhush. So I asked our host about the village and the language. My questions failed to register. He called it all by the larger group name.

That evening to my delight musicians came to play, and I asked if they knew any specifically Akhush songs. I was met with blank stares. The only thing my host said about that village was that it once was the regional capital. Now it has a population of fifty.

What I came to learn over the course of the weekend was instead of how proud he and his family were of their *region* – a federal geographical division not based on ethnicity or language. The republic's former president had hailed from that region and had brought it much honor. He brought in paved roads and rebuilt old towers. He even built a volleyball court on the cusp of a thousand-foot drop in our host's village. A hand-woven carpet picturing this man seated at his desk and surrounded by telephones hung on our host's wall. Such was their sense of pride.

Thus, the ethno-linguistic division attested by the data made little apparent difference for the locals I met. The town bearing the dialect's name was a passing thought and mere blip on the road. Instead, they identified with the honor and wealth of the region. Could it be that this draws direct lines between them "in the sticks" and the power centers of the capital? Most notably to me, the musicians played no local songs.

If I were to draw a preliminary hypothesis, I would hazard that the locals' strongest sense of group connectivity is regional, not centered on a sub-language. This may not be true of other groups whose languages *are* their primary markers. But here, even with a distinct language, the regional identity is foregrounded over the sub-language.

What does this mean for gospel communicators? It may signal that already developed language products (Bibles, disciple making tools, video, audio recordings) – and witness, from a larger language group can connect with sub-groups and thus have an expanded reach. The risk is that those who are mono-lingual could be further marginalized. Workers are still needed among them. We will probably have to figure it out on the ground through relationship. My take-away is that "the research is made for man, not man for the research." That is, let's do all the research we can, but be ready to flow with what the locals tell us is important to them.

Middle East – Refugees

By Scott Pearson

I am a worker in the Middle East who has hung in there for between twenty-five and thirty years. We work in a small city that has undergone radical changes over the last ten years. The population has more than doubled due to the influx of refugees. Perhaps 85% of these refugees are from three large cities in a neighboring country. The vast majority are lower middle-class people with working/trade backgrounds (e.g. construction workers, drivers, government clerks). Most have only a sixth grade education and can only barely read and write.

Many are only nominally Muslim. I sometimes will start to talk about a prophet and they'll say, "Moses who?" Most fast and pray on Fridays; they may observe a couple prayer times during the day, but not all five.

We have focused on the refugee people group around us. I also share a lot with local nationals, although we have seen less fruit there. Due to urbanization, war, and people seeking refuge, there has been a lot of inter-group mixing. That said, marriages are arranged in the traditional way, preferably with a cousin or second cousin, someone from their city of origin, or at least a Sunni Muslim. I know five to seven families where a local man married a woman from the refugee community, but all but one of these women were from an area closest to this country.

While some Muslim background believers have joined local churches, I try to encourage believers to share with others in their networks. We think that groups made up of like-minded, similar-culture, similar-education, similar-age people will stick together better.

How have my views changed? Most of the last nine years I've been in the context described above, focused on one people group. The previous seven years I lived in a larger, more cosmopolitan city in a neighboring country. There our friendship networks spanned Muslims from a variety of backgrounds, both Sunni and Shi'ite. I have been more fruitful in this setting, in part because our current city is smaller, and also because we are more focused on one group.

Horn of Africa – Somali

By Stefan Harth

When God called me to serve the Somali people, I had no idea how complicated that could be. On *peoplegroups.org*, the Somali people are divided into fifteen different "people groups," eight of which are considered unengaged. The Joshua Project listed even more "people groups" for a total of twenty-four, with fourteen designated "frontier peoples." Yet when I ask my Somali friends, they assure me that they are all one!

How did we end up with fifteen to twenty-four different Somali "people groups"? Simple: The logic of our current people group model dictates that we differentiate people *by country*. In other words, the Somali of Ethiopia are a different people group than the Somali of Kenya, just because they live in a different country. Of course there are good reasons to develop separate engagement strategies for different countries, but does that mean we have to sub-divide the people with whom we are engaging, as well?

In the 1980s, significant Somali communities lived in 5 different countries: Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen. Since the civil war in the 1990s, Somali refugees have spread all over the world, apparently creating new "people groups" whenever they cross a border. Today, Somalis communities can be found in many countries, way more than the fifteen or twenty-four listed by the above-mentioned databases. To make matters worse, these communities are not stable, but keep moving around! In the urban center where I live, I can meet Somalis from Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, the United States, Australia, and Europe on any given day! Does that mean I'm effectively engaging half a dozen *unengaged* people groups? Or do they all become "Somalis in Kenya" once they leave the airplane?

Most Somalis belong to one of the many clans that make up Somali society. And most clans have dedicated online groups and forums to mobilize people in times of crisis. These online groups connect clan members across dozens of countries, enabling rapid flow of information and resources across the world. Instead of dividing the Somali people by country of residence, maybe we should divide them into *transnational* clans?

Basically, we need to think of alternatives to the spatially bounded people groups. Many Somali clans have been transnational for a long time, spanning several different countries within the Horn of Africa, connected through social and relational networks beyond borders and across the world. If we define UPGs mainly based on *social pathways that allow for the flow of the gospel*, then it makes more sense to focus on social networks across countries, rather than a composite network made up of a people group in one country.

Horn of Africa – Somali Bantu

By Andreas Wagner

"Why is it that the Somali Bantu refugees I'm talking to are not receiving any help from your NGO?" I was talking to a social worker of a local refugee aid organization. She used the same explanation I had heard from others: "We are advertising our services through the refugee leaders. If the Somali Bantus are not organized, if they don't have a leader, then they might not know about us." This saved NGO resources, and allowed for more community ownership.

Note that the categorization of local "tribal" groups, formerly in the hands of the colonial powers, is now perpetuated by aid organizations! In both cases, the allocation of resources and services is contingent on clearly defined social groups among the beneficiaries. Also, in both cases, people who don't "fit" into the social categories used by those in power are disadvantaged. People without clear community structures don't have access.

The Somali Bantu are a very interesting example of these power dynamics. Up until the early 1990s, they simply did not exist as an ethnic group. The people who now make up the "Somali Bantu" formed small communities scattered across southern Somalia. Some were integrated into Somali clans (usually facing discrimination as second-class members), while others formed their own distinct groups. They did not have a common origin, or a common language. The only thing these people had in common was the racial status forced upon them by Somali society. As members of these racial minorities fled Somalia in the early years of the civil war, UN officials and other aid workers noticed the similarities in their situation and started calling them "Somali Bantu." As a label, it signified vulnerability and oppression, but it was also the only non-derogatory name available for these people, and so it stuck.

Today, there are between 700,000 and 1.5 million Somali Bantu, even though the term itself is contested within the community. They do not fit into the Somali clan system, and the different groupings speak their own distinct dialect of one of the Somali minority languages. The awareness of a common status in Somalia, the shared experience of flight and resettlement, and the pragmatic need to "fit" in a category in order to access resources have created a new ethnic group.

The Somali Bantu have been the focus of a number of academic studies, and the construction of their ethnicity has been marveled at by social scientists. But even these studies portray the Somali Bantus as a unique and clearly defined group – which they are not. Interacting with different members of the Somali Bantu community, I have come to observe social, cultural, and linguistic differences within the community. Clearly, being Somali Bantu comes on a spectrum, with a clear core and a fuzzy periphery. (In my interviews with members from different social categories, they all agree that they are one larger community, and claim to intermarry, while acknowledging internal differences and differing degrees of acceptance of the "Somali Bantu" label.)

The people group list for Somalia is based primarily on linguistic criteria and a secular linguistic study from the 1980s. Consequently, when we arrived on the field, we based our original vision and strategy on linguistic criteria, assuming this would be the most important barrier to the gospel within southern Somalia. But my research in the following years revealed that many social and even family networks cross these linguistic lines. I would now argue that the most significant barrier in Somalia is racial, not linguistic.

While churches and groups in the United States are ministering to their diaspora Somali Bantu neighbors (over fifty thousand), the international mission agencies seem largely oblivious to all these developments. The data on southern Somalia that informed the Registry of Peoples was collected in in the 1980s, before the creation of the Somali Bantu ethnicity. Since then, there have been very few attempts by mission agencies to engage Somali Bantus, partly because this group is hard to identify and access, partly because they don't show up in certain databases. (The Somali Bantu are listed on www.JoshuaProject.com, but not on the IMB's www.peoplegroups.org used by many mission organizations.)

The social worker I mentioned at the beginning of this case study had a simple solution: "They need to organize themselves. They need to appoint leaders and approach us." Within our current paradigm, she is right. People like the Somali Bantu will be systematically overlooked unless they can be fit into a neat "people group" category.

What does this mean for church? As long as you are considered ethnic Somali, you can find your place within the Somali church. But Somali Bantus are not accepted as equals even among believers, and they generally don't fellowship together. Because of this, we see the greatest need for a separate ministry effort within the Somali context among the Somali Bantu. Apparently, nobody will pray for them, recruit workers to send to them, or develop a strategy to serve them, unless we have given them a label and added some nice numbers.

Turkey

By K. M.

After decades of living in Turkish society, we have come to the realization that family or community is the basic core group and the lowest common denominator for disciple making movements. If our thinking is to be transformational, we must look beyond individuals, to the larger family.

Rapid urbanization is a reality of our world in Turkey. When we arrived, the population was 60% rural, 40% urban. Now those numbers are reversed. However, just moving locations does not change the culture of a rural person. The underlying values are still there, now carried into an urban setting. If you scratch a little, you will see there is something else beneath the veneer of modernism. Looks can be deceiving, so a cross cultural worker must be adept at perceiving differences in group identity.

For us identifying a "people group" in the larger sense is merely a place to start. The idea of "groupness" must be refined down to the level of a specific community or larger-extended family network. The beliefs, values and practices of that "mini-people group" will determine how they themselves create boundaries for an independent identity. Their own self-determination of "groupness" must be understood and honored for a gospel movement to take root.

Southeast Asia

By L. A. M.

The "Bridge" people are originally from an island near Java. Today only half of the people group live on the island; the rest have emmigrated to other parts of Indonesia and abroad. They tend to be very religious and proud of their ethnic identity.

We work in a major city where the Bridge people make up about 10% of the population. Since our people group is a minority here, we have chosen to have more of a city focus, so are willing to find and follow up "people of peace" from other UPGs. I still go out of my way to make sure I am with members of this community about 60% of my outreach time. Those I am interacting with are tightly knit with their own people and have only a few close friendships with Javanese or other peoples.

I believe that the classic people group approach is the most appropriate approach to reach the Bridge people here. However, since our context is urban, we have more of a "drag net" approach. We are willing to reach all ethnic people groups (using the DMM model), depending on how the person of peace defines their *oikos* (household/network). We encourage the person of peace to open their oikos to everyone, but to define it in a way that includes their own people. The missing step for teams engaging the Bridge people is that they aren't going deep in their vernacular language and culture.

Transnational – Deobandi Movement

By Louise C. Wood

As we rethink people groups, we need to recognize that there are other important groupings and identities that go beyond location or ethnicity. One example is the transnational Deobandi movement within Islam, with whom I have had contact both in South Asia and Europe.

The Deobandi madrassa movement began in 1866 in north India, and spread rapidly by encouraging graduates to start new madrassas and teach local communities the Deobandi brand of Sunni Islam. Deobandi Islam emphasizes a "back to basics" version of Islam that models Mohammad in everything, including wearing the style of clothes Mohammad wore, and cleaning teeth with a twig as Mohammad did. Deobandis are very cautious of "innovations" or adopting common practices of the wider society (such as watching TV or listening to music), preferring to stay unnoticed and distinct.

What distinguishes Deobandis is their capacity to maintain a distinct identity and this very traditional version of Islam within a larger non-Muslim society. They began in India where Muslims are a minority among a majority Hindu society, and as they establish new mosques and madrassas in the west, they teach others how to maintain Muslim practice in that context. They consider themselves less a distinct movement than as the genuine Muslims among the less pure Islamic community; a Deobandi Muslim would not feel comfortable visiting a non-Deobandi mosque.

The Deobandi movement is distinguished by a standard curriculum in all locations, covered by every leader during their training, although each madrasa may apply the teaching to their specific location. For example, some offer comprehensive lists of acceptable foods among the local cuisine, moon sightings (e.g. for feast days), or how to respond to local holidays. They may teach in the local language rather than the traditional Urdu or Arabic. Just as significantly, a book for women (Heavenly Ornaments) has rules and guidance for family life. Deobandi women are often given this book at their wedding, and throughout their lives will study it deeply. This foundation of religious teaching and common understanding of home and family life as well produces a shared Deobandi identity and view of life.

Deobandi madrasas have advanced what has been called "a revival from below." This "bottom up reform" is largely invisible compared to the top down reforms propagated by the Islamist political groups. There are currently about 100,000 Deobandi madrasas (religious schools) on at least four continents. These madrasas not only train new mosques leaders, but also function as places of spiritual guidance, education, and identity for the local Muslim community.

A significant number of the Sunni population of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Iran identify with Deobandi Islam. Beyond South Asia the movement is growing among Muslim minority populations, particularly in South Africa, UK, Canada, United States, and Trinidad and Tobago. Historically this was associated with the South Asian diaspora. However, current students may identify more with the host (diaspora) country where they were born, than the country their grandparents emigrated from, and new adherents may not have a South Asian background at all.

Globally, Deobandi madrassas are both connected and independent. In some countries they are affiliated with political or extremist groups, but in most locations, they do not engage with wider society except to invite new members to join. They are not the majority in any one country or people group, and often stay unseen from the outside. It is difficult to get a clear number for each country due to the lack of research; in India it is estimated to be about forty million, and in Pakistan a similar number.

What will it take to reach such a group? Approaches must be rooted in local communities while finding ways to influence a highly connected transnational network. The Deobandi represent an identifiable "people group" that transcends boundaries and countries and provides a sense of group identity not based on ethnolinguistic criteria.

Article

Fog in the Pews: Factors Behind the Fading Vision for Unreached Peoples

RW Lewis

Throughout Protestant mission history, a small minority has felt called to prioritize people groups "where Christ has not been named" – variously called "unoccupied fields," "regions beyond," and "unreached people groups." God raises up these people to ensure that His promise to Abraham is fulfilled and all the "families of the earth" partake in the blessing of knowing God through Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, Satan opposes the advance of God's kingdom by sowing confusion, fear and apathy.

For the last two hundred years, the Protestant frontier mission thrust has depended on a clear grasp of the remaining task through data, and on field-informed discussion of various "means" to send witnesses and communicate meaningfully. Fervor for the frontiers fades whenever it appears that the pioneering job is done. Today the global Church's passion and commitment to reach all "unreached people groups" is fading again – although 25% of world population still live in people groups with few if any believers and no viable, indigenous movements to Christ. Why?

This article focuses on two areas: First, factors clouding understanding of the remaining task – confusing terminology, conflicting databases and overwhelming numbers. Second, factors impacting commitment to frontier missions, such as changing global realities and perceived colonial bias of people group terminology, partnership vs. pioneering missions, and the shift toward short-term mission experiences. The huge problems of rising uncertainty about the universal need for Christ, and the power of the gospel, will be largely left for others to unpack.

Reached vs. Unreached: How Confusing Terms Obscure the Task

The terms "reached" and "unreached" have been confusing and often misused from the beginning. In the 1970s some argued that the presence of churches in nearly every country meant the missionary task was over, though much evangelism remained to be done by the local church in those countries. However, Dr. Ralph Winter's research revealed that roughly 17,000 people groups (over 30% of world population) had virtually no access to the gospel – isolated from existing churches by language and cultural identity.

Winter called these overlooked people groups "the final frontier" and sparked new efforts among these "Hidden Peoples." He excluded nominally Christian people groups, with Bibles in their own languages, churches, priests, etc. He reasoned that historically revivals and reforms often happen in such groups without any "outside" or cross-cultural missionary help. He also excluded people groups where indigenous movements to Christ were already underway – not because they no longer needed any help, but because the pioneering frontier mission breakthrough had already been accomplished, making cross-cultural mission work less necessary.

By the 1980s, people groups with successful gospel progress became known as "reached" people groups. Conversely, those groups with no indigenous community of believing Christians were called "unreached people groups" (UPGs). For consistency in gathering data, a threshold of "2% or more evangelical" was agreed on for "reached people groups." And this seemed a reasonable way to measure whether the cross-cultural breakthrough of the gospel had been accomplished. Even if all the missionaries left, 200 evangelicals in a people group of 10,000 (or 20,000 evangelicals in a group of 1 million) should be able to finish reaching the rest of their own group.

The frontier mission goal was to extend cross-cultural outreach into people groups where there was NOT YET a breakthrough of indigenous faith. But the goal subtly shifted when the terms "reached" and "unreached" peoples replaced "hidden peoples."

Problems Arising from "Reached," "Unreached," and the 2% Cut-Off

Two Different Meanings

"Reached" was already in use for individuals who had accepted the gospel and "unreached" for all "unsaved" individuals. At the 2019 Evangelical Missiological Society conference, one plenary speaker urged against focusing on Unreached People Groups, saying that there are unreached people all around us, even in our own churches. The 250+ mission professors seemed to agree, so, even after forty years of discussion about Unreached People Groups, they were still confusing unsaved people (unreached persons the local church can evangelize) with unreached people groups (ethno-linguistic people groups that require pioneering mission effort).

"Reached" Caused Pushback

People resisted calling a people group "reached," even where indigenous movements were strong and self-sustaining, while the vast majority (up to 98%) were still not saved. In response the Joshua Project website published four stages of "reached people groups" – "minimally reached," "superficially reached," "partially reached" and "significantly reached." These categories emphasized the needs remaining among reached groups, inadvertently diluting the focus on "hidden peoples" – where nothing at all was yet started. Forty years later, thirty times as many cross-cultural missionaries still go to "reached people groups" as go to "unreached people groups."

Databases Became All-inclusive and Overwhelming

The databases were pushed to fairly show the needs of all people groups, rather than listing only those people groups beyond the reach of existing missions and churches. And the databases went even further – adding on tiny diaspora or special interest groups like blind or deaf people. The resulting ever-expanding list of "unreached people groups" became overwhelming, and new laborers lacked strategic guidance regarding where to go.

"Unengaged Unreached" (UUPGs) Focused on Effort Rather Than Results

By drawing attention to UPGs with no witnesses,[1] Finishing the Task (FTT) successfully focused on a reduced number of people groups and revitalized a vision for frontier work. However FTT deleted "unengaged" list large people groups with no gospel breakthrough from their once they confirmed even a couple of long-term witnesses were in place – even in a massive people group.[2] In so doing, FTT unwittingly skewed attention toward increasingly tiny people groups. This threshold of no witnesses dropped out too many fields where pioneering work was still needed.

The 2% Evangelical Percentage Cutoff was Too High to Identify Fields that Still Needed Pioneer Work

One veteran church movement planter estimated his large people group no longer needed pioneering missionaries long before it reached 0.5% evangelicals (50 evangelicals in a town of 10,000). Once such a movement starts, the work of outsiders shifts from pioneering to partnership with nationals in evangelism. Many UPGs have achieved strong, "self-sustaining indigenous movements to Christ" long before reaching 2% evangelical. These groups no longer need pioneering work even though they may still be included on UPG lists because of the percentage criteria. Further analysis has revealed that a better cut-off for identifying frontier groups where pioneering work is needed is less than one out of 1000 (0.1%) identifying with Jesus.

The "Evangelical" and "Unreached" Definitions Caused Divergence in the Databases Dissonance resulted in disillusionment as charts, graphs and lists disagreed with each other due to differing interpretations of the criteria. For example, in the fall of 2019, a prayer guide for Latin America was published with a graph showing 550 million "unreached people" (meaning "unsaved people") out of a total population of over 604 million.[3] Yet the same agency's UPG database listed only 7 million people in "Unreached People Groups" in Latin America and the Joshua Project database listed only 700,000. Why was there such disparity using the same "2% evangelical" criteria? It had to do with who was counted as an "evangelical" or "born again."

Some organizations included all believers who studied the Bible and spread their faith as "evangelicals;" including charismatics and other renewal movements in older denominations, such as reformation Protestants with infant baptism. Others did not. Nominal Christians were also in different categories.

Counting "Unsaved" Nominally Christian Groups as "Unreached" Peoples Gave False Impressions and Also Caused a Split Between Databases

Ralph Winter originally did not count nominal Christians as having no access to the gospel because they had had centuries of mission work and Bible exposure. Controversy arose about whether "unsaved" nominal Christians are as "unreached" as Muslims, Hindus, etc. Agreeing with Winter, the Joshua Project excluded people groups as "unreached" with more than 5% self-identifying as Christians. However, the International Mission Board (IMB)[4] decided not to distinguish between nominal Christians and people of other religions or atheists – with significant consequences. Many groups ended up as UPGs on the IMB database but not the Joshua Project database. Unfortunately, churches did not realize how these decisions affected the IMB data representations, so they could have been left with grossly false impressions, such as "Europe is as unreached as India."

Churches Need Simplicity, Clarity, and Hope for Renewed Vision

Most of the confusion involved in the above points cannot be clarified by doubling down on the original definition, because there are inherent problems in the terms and percentages themselves. To help solve this problem, a subset of UPGs that fits the original definition of groups with no indigenous self-sustaining movement to Christ was culled out of the Joshua Project UPG list in 2018. To emphasize the ongoing need for "frontier" or "pioneer" mission work, they were called "Frontier People Groups" (FPG)." This simple act revealed amazing things: huge progress has been made in the last forty years, but also the remaining task is simpler than expected:[5]

- 40% of the UPGs already have self-sustaining movements to Christ underway.
- 60% of the remaining UPGs have no visible progress toward indigenous faith.
- 25% of the entire world's population is in this subset of UPGs called FPGs.
- 55% of these groups are in India; over 75% are in South Asia.
- 48% of FPG population is in just thirty-one people groups. (joshuaproject.net/frontier/5)
- Over 88% of the FPG population is in just 425 groups larger than ½ million – these 425 groups contain 22% of the world's population!

It is encouraging to many, especially in the global south, to understand that focusing on just 425 people groups could impact nearly 90% of the remaining pioneering task.

Globalization vs. People Groups: How a Rising Global Culture Obscures People Group Realities

Monocultural but multi-ethnic megachurches in large cities give the impression that identifying "people groups" is no longer important.

"People group barriers" are sometimes presented as not just a thing of the past, but also as evidence of residual racism and colonial "ethnic" constructs. Increasingly, some church planters are encouraged to disregard and even discourage people group identity, terminology, and loyalties. They do not realize that promoting indigenous churches for all people groups actually celebrates their diversity of language and culture, valuing each people group as unique before God. The danger is that, in "multi-ethnic" churches, the dominant culture frequently eclipses all other languages and cultures, giving a mere illusion of diversity.

For example, Delhi, a city of some 25 million people, has perhaps a dozen multi-ethnic megachurches. Audiences have Asian-looking people from Northeast India, dark-skinned people from South India, and a smattering of North Indian natives. Services are in English, the mother-tongue of none, and worship teams sing Western songs projected on large screens. These churches are frequently lauded for bringing the ethnic

diversity of God's people under one roof.

But the popularity of "melting pot" urban churches among Western-educated "global nomads" obscures the people group loyalties of the vast majority of modern city dwellers. Worshipers in those contexts are often urban transplants without their own local ethnic community. These are essentially churches of immigrants, often from "reached" people groups, who already have movements to Christ in other parts of India or in other countries.

As a result, Delhi's "multi-ethnic" churches have not started movements among the hundreds of sects or ethnicities of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains with roots in North India for centuries, neither in Delhi nor beyond. Nor are they greatly impacting large diaspora communities in Delhi of Nepalis, Bengalis, Afghans, etc., whose ethnic loyalties, languages and culture are zealously preserved.

Similarly, even in the West, most urban churches barely engage successfully with people of their same culture, much less large ethnic groups with different languages and cultures. Occasionally there are people in these churches that come from unreached people groups. However, churches usually need the help of special organizations with expertise in cross-cultural outreach to train these Westernized believers to start gatherings in their own languages, instead of merely the trade language they have grown accustomed to using in worship.

People group lists can't capture the cacophony of cultures in most major cities of the world – nor should they. UPG databases shouldn't aim to most accurately describe all people groups, but to clarify and direct the global church to send witnesses to those without any movements to Christ. People group affinities resemble Venn diagrams more than discrete circles. Such affinities are not static and largely self-defined. Some people align more with religious than ethnic group identity, like the Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers), a swiftly growing one-hundred-year-old Indian Sunni Muslim reform movement which has reached 80 million, spanning one hundred countries and many people groups.

Planting mono-cultural "multi-ethnic" churches is unlikely to significantly advance the gospel into the least-reached people groups. Even in cities we must seek out those highly defined groups who eschew such conglomerate churches. People group lists are therefore still crucial, despite their limitations. Indigenous movements among minorities are still a priority worth highlighting.

Partnership vs. Pioneering: How Success in Pioneering Shifts Emphasis to Partnering

When churches or agencies prioritize partnering with national churches/believers, fields with no believers are inadvertently excluded.

In history, whenever significant progress was made in winning a people group to Christ, the focus shifted to partnering rather than pioneering. It is happening again. However valuable the partnership stage, the continuing needs of remaining pioneering fields should not be obscured.

When pioneers are successful, they tend to remain rather than advance to areas without witness. Recruiting draws workers to where breakthroughs are already happening, rather than to where there are none. Many "final frontiers" peoples in the 1977 list are now in the "reached" category, most notably the Han Chinese. By 1999, 10% of missionaries worked among the Unreached People Groups, up from under 1% in 1977. However, that number has declined again. Today fewer than 4% of global missionaries work among Unreached People Groups, where 60% of the world's non-believers live, including the 1% that work with the 25% of the world's population that is Frontier People Groups.[6]

Popularity for partnering with existing believers is resurgent. We need to avoid bypassing the national workers in reached groups and also in the 40% of remaining UPGs with indigenous movements underway. When evangelism by national believers becomes self-sustaining and widespread, then pioneering work by cross-cultural workers (from other people groups) is no longer necessary. Even before movements begin, if sufficient national believers exist, partnering with them to spark and lead indigenous movements among their own people group is preferable.

However, partnering is impossible if there are no national believers. Sixty percent of remaining UPGs have no sign of gospel progress (FPGs) – 25% of the global population (over 1.9 billion people). Distinct training in pioneering is needed to successfully plant an indigenous movement to Christ in a people group with no known believers. Winning the first few believers to Christ is the most difficult stage of pioneering, followed by effectively training a handful of believers to spark an indigenous movement among their own unreached people group.[7] We must find believers with genuine callings from God for pioneering ministry, and commission them and work and learn humbly alongside them.

Short-term vs. Long-term: How Short-Term Missions Neglect Least-reached People Groups

When churches or agencies prioritize sending short-term teams, fields with no believers are bypassed again.

The recent boom of short-term mission trips – which Barna more accurately labels "service trips" or "adventure trips"[8] – absorbs church and "missions" funds without producing movements in areas with little gospel access and no national believers. Short termers not preparing for long term service inevitably help existing missionaries or partner with national believers because they lack language or cultural knowledge. According to one recent study, of the few who continue to long-term service, 48% return to where they previously served short-term – virtually always a "reached" people group.[9]

Short-term teams rarely go into dangerous areas, or to people groups with no believers, although some have distributed literature in these areas or helped during disasters. Around 2 million Americans go on short-term mission trips each year, many on second or third trips.[10] These droves represent substantial financial, health and leadership costs with little more outcome than positive effects on themselves, and virtually no increase in long-term workers, especially for UPG areas. These trips may also do more harm than good to the receivers. Short-term missions have been portrayed idealistically as "locking hands with our brothers and sisters around the world." Concurrently, however, they put significant burdens on receiving churches, especially poor ones with unpaid leaders and few resources to care for a group of vulnerable foreigners. Meanwhile, efforts to reach unreached people groups are defunded or never even considered. Again, the overall percentage of church planting, disciple-making frontier missionaries among UPG has decreased, not increased, since the year 2000.

Losing Sight of the Frontier Task Because of Loss of Faith in the Gospel

This article has assumed a common goal: taking the blessing of the gospel to "all the families of the nations" (Psalm 22:27; 96:7) – the good news of freedom from sin and death,

and eternal life with God through Jesus. Obviously, vision for unreached peoples is also fading for an even more serious reason than those given above: creeping universalism or secularism impacting every area of Western culture. Additionally, concerns for justice, poverty, and well-being (which have always rightly accompanied mission movements), have, for some, become of singular importance. However, historically, initiatives that do not bring people to Christ evidence little lasting change. Finally, belief in hell has faded and it is assumed that everyone is going to heaven, especially those aborted; death is the end of life and eternal life is an illusion. People who have abandoned hope in Christ will have no life-giving message to share, and no urgency to share it.

Conclusion

Throughout history, God has burdened specific people with a passion to reach those who have no chance of learning about Jesus: the Apostle Paul, St. Patrick, Loyola, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, etc. In every case, they spread their own vision and concern by pleading the cause of peoples without hope and encouraging others to join the effort. The consistent pattern for two thousand years has been to identify peoples and places without the Good News and to send witnesses to live among them and reach them.

The latest such wave has been the forty-five-year push to send witnesses to the Unreached People Groups. It has grown increasingly complicated to figure out where the neglected peoples are, as the gospel spreads to more places and a rising number of "global nomads" obscures ethnic realities. Since 40% of the remaining UPGs now have movements to Christ among them, the fact that 60% still need pioneering work has been overlooked. Short-term visits to believers overseas have replaced the determination to send long-term witnesses to peoples with no believers, and no viable, indigenous church movement.

I believe that SIMPLICITY and CLARITY and bringing HOPE are the keys to revisioning the global church about the world's peoples with no progress of the gospel. It is not necessary to engage every small group or to constantly nuance our people group lists to reach all of these peoples. Movements tend to flow from larger influential groups to smaller. If the global church focuses primarily and urgently on the largest least-reached UPGs, namely the 425 largest "frontier people groups," indigenous movements to Christ could impact vast populations "where Christ has not been named!"

RW Lewis graduated from Caltech in 1977 and immediately began helping her parents, Ralph and Roberta Winter, publicize their findings about unreached people groups, drawing the first "pie chart" for her father called Penetrating the Final Frontiers. After forty years of working with her husband, Tim, in the Muslim context, she is still seeking to kindle global passion for the least-reached frontier peoples.

Notes

1. The global network FTT, now led by Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church (CA), hosts an annual conference for church and mission leaders. See https://www.finishingthetask.com/.
2. Other mission leaders pushed back and called for focus on large groups they considered "under-engaged."
3. See https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Oct19_PrayerPoints_WEB3.pdf.
4. IMB is part of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, and has a significant commitment to frontier mission. https://www.imb.org/.
5. The figures are provided by https://joshuaproject.net/frontier/ and the various maps/charts linked there. For a fuller discussion of Frontier People Groups see Mission Frontiers, Nov–Dec 2018, http://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/MF40-6_Nov-Dec_eBook.pdf.
and https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/35_4_PDFs/IJFM_35_4-Lewis.pdf.
6. https://joshuaproject.net/assets/media/handouts/frontier-peoples-overview.pdf.
7. Some try to skip this stage by sending inexperienced workers to train believers from nearby "reached" people groups to do pioneering cross-cultural witness, which the former have never done on their own. This historically fails due to barriers of mutual prejudice.
8. https://www.barna.com/research/despite-benefits-few-americans-have-experienced-short-term-mission-trips/.
9. https://www.theaquilareport.com/do-short-term-mission-trips-produce-long-term-missionaries/.
10. https://www.barna.com/research/despite-benefits-few-americans-have-experienced-short-term-mission-trips/.

Globalization, Urbanization, Migration, and Rethinking the People Groups Concept

Minh Ha Nguyen

The pile of shoes, mostly sandals, grows at the front door. Rich smells of turmeric, cumin and curry waft from the apartment. Slowly people crowd into the circle on the floor – first six, then ten, then fifteen. An older woman adjusts the flowing scarf that she wears over her long tunic, typical of South Asian dress. Toddlers, bangles dangling from their wrists, weave happily between people willing to entertain them with pens and cell phones. It's time for church. But this isn't South Asia – it's Richmond, Virginia.

Three Megatrends Impacting the Christian Mission

Globalization, the growth of cities, and the global movement of people are interrelated processes that have deeply transformed the contemporary social, economic, cultural, and political landscape as well as the way Christian mission understands peoples and carry out the task among all peoples and places. More than a billion people are on the move with estimates between 85% and 95% ending up in cities.[1] This means one of every seven persons on the planet is a migrant and the phenomenon simultaneously benefits and exacerbates cities and societies around the world. Yet very little research has been done to assess the impact of these megatrends on the people groups concept. This article therefore seeks to show how *globalization*, *urbanization*, and *migration* (hereafter GUM) stretch the understanding of peoples and unreached people groups, and impact Christian mission and frontier missiology.

Megatrends like GUM are not isolated issues. Weaving these processes into one thread is a daunting task to say the least! This article, therefore, will focus only on a few aspects of GUM that directly relate to our understanding of people groups. In dense and diverse urban contexts, core people groups dynamics have increasingly been challenged by postmodern, multicultural, and complex societies. These include the concepts of homogeneity – where people share common characteristics that separate them from other groups, ethnolinguistic consolidation – where language and ethnicity are the determining characteristics of people groups, and intercultural delimitation – where thick boundaries are emphasized between people groups. The migrations of peoples worldwide into cities demand that Christian mission seek new epistemological frameworks for seeing, understanding, and making disciples among all peoples and places.

Peoples on the Move

Migration and urbanization have accelerated to such degree that it has become a *cliché* to mention that more than half (55%) of the world's population now live in cities. More than 2.5 billion will join their ranks by 2050, increasing the world's urban population to over two-thirds (68%).[2] Keep in mind that in 1950, when the people groups concept and homogenous unit principle were being formed, the urban population was less than a third (30%).

There are 272 million living outside of their home country – representing about 3% of the world's population.[3] Some Gallup polls show these numbers could be higher, as more than 750 million worldwide would migrate internationally if they could.[4] Global migration also includes an estimate of 800 million internal migrants moving from the rural areas to cities. India and China account for the largest shares of internal migration, with 325 million and 221 million respectively. Importantly, the data shows that international and internal migrations are connected: Internal migration leads to international migration, and vice-versa.[5] Taken together, there are over 1 billion migrants in the world today.

Globalizing Cultures

Globalization refers to the "widening, deepening and worldwide interconnectedness of all aspects of contemporary social life."[6] Globalization is also simultaneously a political and technological process.[7] While there are anti-globalization trends like nationalism and rejection of Western liberal democracy, the technological globalization has enabled widespread communication, travel, and access to education. The growth of "transnational networks" has exposed limitations of state control. Remittances, relationships, innovation, and entertainment flow through the Internet and cable television across permeable borders. This technological process has led to the emergence of new cultural groupings that span traditional ethnic, linguistic, and geographic boundaries.

Four examples of global cultural groups are worth mentioning. First is the "Davos culture," an elite group of 40 million highly educated people who operate in the rarefied domains of international finance, media, and diplomacy sharing common beliefs about individualism, democracy, and market economics, who follow a lifestyle that is instantly identifiable anywhere in the world, and who feel more comfortable in each other's presence than they do among their less-sophisticated compatriots.[8] Second is the international "faculty club," an international network of academics who share similar values, attitudes, and research goals and who wield tremendous influence through their association with educational institutions worldwide with certain success in promoting feminism, environmentalism, and human rights as global issues.[9]

Third is the non-governmental organizations advocating a view of global culture based not on the "replication of uniformity" but on the "organization of diversity" seeking to preserve cultural traditions in the developing world.[10] A final example is the transnational workers, English-speaking professionals such as software engineers and Internet entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, California who trace their origins to South

Asia but who live and work elsewhere and whose social world includes multiple home bases and a unique network of individuals and opportunities.[11]

These examples point out that, while globalization has sought to homogenize the globe into a single world order and culture, it paradoxically led to a plethora of other highly influential subcultures, networks, and tribes segregating along social, economic, and cultural boundaries. Some of them prioritize education or lifestyle above the ethnic and linguistic identities; their members choose to associate with like-minded others with whom they do not even share the same mother tongue or cultural heritage. They come together to form diverse networks often under the umbrella of a dominant language such as the English language and a dominant culture such as the Western culture. Others morph into multi-lingual and hybrid groups striving to maintain multiple identities in an "in-between" way of life; they are more than the culture they left behind but not quite assimilated to the culture of destination.

One thing is clear that GUM processes open the door to new ways of forming communities, networks, and affinity groups. This does not mean that ethnolinguistic people groups are no longer relevant. It does mean that peoples have more choices to come together. It does also mean that there are more bridges and far-reaching ties for the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

Cities and Peoples

GUM's transformative effect on peoples is magnified in the cities. The influential Danish urban designer Jan Gehl states, "First we shape the cities – then they shape us."[12] While rural areas tend to have a conserving effect on the culture, in the cities, GUM processes radically change who people are and how they see themselves.[13] According to Edward Glaeser, a Harvard professor of economics and urban studies, we cannot understand the demand for cities unless we understand how cities change people's lives.[14] It is therefore important to understand how GUM processes are taking place and to appreciate the transformative effect of cities on peoples and unreached people groups.

A hundred years ago, Émile Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, developed the concept of "social facts" in order to study scientifically the impact of society on the individuals taken as a group living in a geographical location. Durkheim posited that social facts are elements of collective life that exist independently of and can exert an influence on the individual. They are collective, stable, external to the individuals, and coercive to them. They are external and not individual characteristics. Individuals cannot choose whether they have the effect or not. Social facts are coercive, meaning they impact everyone residing in that context. They are collective, meaning they apply to everybody. They are things, meaning they can be measured with empirical data. One of Durkheim key findings was the positive difference of suicide rate between the Protestants and Catholics as well as between soldiers and civilians.[15] Max Weber's "disenchantment" effect of modernity on society is another example of social fact.[16]

If Durkheim and Weber are correct, it is in the city that the dynamics of GUM are most noticeable and have far reaching impact on the people group understanding. People prefer contact with others from the same group, but they also prefer contact with others from different groups than no contact at all.[17] Social facts influence peoples in the city by exposing them to diverse cultures and ways of life, showing weakness in their worldview, and pointing them to the strength in others. Population density of the city provides the critical mass necessary for people to come together and the freedom to do so.

Social Facts of Urban Life

There are at least four examples that illustrate how GUM processes are magnified in urban contexts leading to new groups formation and changing the ways we see and disciple peoples in today's world.

First is the formation of "urban tribes." Urban tribes are emotional or affectual communities defined by shared interests and lifestyles. Like the tribes of the Amazon, these urban tribes band together in the concrete jungles of contemporary megacities to define meaning and share life.[18] Examples include micro-groups of punks, bikers, hipsters, and other sexual orientation types.[19] They are typically between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five. They prefer the urban lifestyle which offers an alternative to traditional family structures.[20] There is a Christian version of urban tribes too called the "Benedict Option," where busy, young, urban professionals come together to create community in a monastic fashion.[21]

A second example of group formation in urban contexts are "global tribes." While urban tribes emphasize the affectual characteristics, global tribes focus on economic, cultural, and ethnic preservation. In his book, *Tribes: How Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy*, the world renown urbanist Joel Kotkin mentions five examples of global tribes: the Chinese, Japanese, British, Indians, and Jews. These groups have in common strong diaspora presence that contributed significantly to the formation and growth of global cities such as London, New York, Singapore, and Hong Kong.[22]

A third example of urban group dynamics is hybridization which is also known as creolization, a phenomenon where languages and cultures collide to give birth to new ones. Cultures are not homogenous islands but often characterized by multiple identities that overlap one another.[23] This is most accentuated in the cities, where cultures become less homogenous and where people would jump over the porous boundaries from one culture to another.[24]

"Ethnoburb" formation is the final example. Ethnoburbs are suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large metropolitan areas. They are multi-ethnic communities, in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration but does not comprise a majority. In ethnoburbs, minority groups are able to maintain their ethnic identity. Ethnoburbs are some of the most dynamic and highly diverse places in gateway cities. It is in these ethnoburbs that transnational connections and relationships are most often formed.[25]

GUM are human, transformative, and coercive realities that the global church needs to learn to manage in order to reach people in the twenty-first century. In urban contexts, ethnicity and languages still play critical roles. However, large cities provide peoples the freedom and critical mass to form new groups along occupation, institutional affiliation, or common interest characteristics. Furthermore, cultural hybridity combined with inter-dependency between the groups lead to new multi-ethnic and inter-ethnic communities. All cases point to a complex system of group formation that require new ways of seeing, understanding, and reaching peoples. Christian mission in urban contexts therefore necessitates multiple models including mono-ethnic,[26] multi-ethnic,[27] or inter-ethnic[28] church planting as well as other strategies that do not follow ethnic nor

linguistic boundaries.

Rethinking People Groups Concept

In rethinking the people groups concept and the impact of GUM on the peoples and unreached people groups understanding, the global church has to take into account the fact that ethnicities and languages are not the only way through which people come together. Global flows connect peoples with multiple and far-reaching ties in a worldwide network that could provide new bridges and shorter paths for the spread of the gospel. Furthermore, cities attract peoples seeking new opportunities to improve their lives; these include members of many unengaged and unreached people groups from restricted places. Finally, cities are bedrocks of ideas and innovations. As disciples are made in the cities, they have the potential to become influential spreaders of the good news in circles different than their own.[29] These are some of the reasons that make the cities centers of frontier missions.

The central aim of this article has been to discuss some of the problems and impacts of GUM on the peoples and unreached people groups understanding, and to suggest a possible solution for the Christian mission. GUM processes have not only created new groupings of people beyond the ethnolinguistic boundaries but also provided new ways for peoples to come together in hybridizations and ethnoburbs. Furthermore, GUM processes highlight the potential for gospel movements among the global communities with significant linkages in the city and around the world.

The solution does not appear to lie in expanding the current people groups database into an ever-increasing listing of hundreds of thousands or even millions of entries. But nor are the answers to be found in abandoning the current listings themselves on the ground that they have lost their shine and are no longer attractive – some things could be right and valuable regardless of the attraction they project.

The suggested way forward is the development of a missiological research framework which provides the new data and models for seeing and understanding peoples, cities, and migration flows. The Shalom City Index™ (SCI) and its databases could provide such a framework.[30] On the one hand, SCI provides the theological and missiological framework that centers on shalom as the comprehensive, cohesive, and complex adaptive system for understanding the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom among all peoples and places. On the other hand, SCI provides two new databases on global cities and diasporas that will supplement the current people groups database. The SCI framework is the author's self-reflection on the seven-year period of inter-ethnic church planting that led to the formation of the International Community Church, a house church network in Richmond, Virginia.

An Example of Inter-Ethnic Church Planting

The South Asian church mentioned in the beginning of this article is one of the thirty house groups that formed the International Community Church (ICC) – a house church network that connects affinities, peoples, and languages groups from Nepal, Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam, Central Asia, Africa, South America, and other places. House groups meet weekly in various locations throughout the city. They all come together once a month for worship celebration, fellowship, and leadership formation. In the homes, the groups gather weekly along their specific boundary, be it linguistic, social, or cultural affinity. Each group decides the language of worship, evangelism and mission strategies that are most effective and contextual to their community. In the monthly gatherings for celebration, groups take turn to conduct the worship service, preach the Word, and lead one another in praying for all other ethnic groups in the city that do not have a church yet.

ICC is a response to the challenges of both mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic church planting models. On the one hand, the mono-ethnic model, while reaching people in the heart language and worldview, offers very little interaction with other groups in the city. Furthermore, the mono-ethnic model runs into difficulty with retaining the second or third generation that do not speak the language of their parents. On the other hand, the multi-ethnic model, while effective in bringing multiple groups together, faces challenges of its own. First, the insistence on using the national language would not only rule out the first generation of immigrants but also project the expectation that to become Christian one must learn the language and adopt the culture of the host country. Second, the dominance of the majority group in leadership and worship would treat the minority groups as second class citizens. Finally, the absence of indigenous leadership and worship would lead to some form of "extractionism." In order to join the multi-ethnic church, each group must give up something in order to prevent the church from breaking apart.

The inter-ethnic model is simple but effective in meeting both the mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic needs. Home groups, as the smallest local church unit found in Scriptures, are easy to start and multiply with the development of lay leaders. ICC is small enough to reach all peoples in Richmond yet large enough to celebrate and multiply reaching the urban tribes, subcultural groups, and global cities networks.

Minh Ha Nguyen (MDiv, ThM) is co-founder and director of Radius Global Cities Network, a think tank dedicated to sound research, thought leadership, and decision-making about cities. He works in Global Research at the International Mission Board (SBC) where he leads in the data collection and delivery efforts that include the management of the www.peoplegroups.org database. In 2009 he started International Community Church, a house-church network that reaches people groups from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East living in Richmond, Virginia. Minh Ha is a PhD candidate at Southeastern Seminary focusing his research on globalization, urbanization, migration and the development of the Shalom City Index™.

Notes

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6. D. Held, A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt, and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 2.
7. Mathias Czaika and Hein de Haas, "The Globalization of Migration: Has the World Become More Migratory?" in *International Migration Review*, 48 no. 2 (2015): 283–323, 284.
8. Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington, eds. *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
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11. A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
12. Jan Gehl, *Cities for People* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010).
13. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*

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16. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religions* (London: Methuen, 1971).

17. Peter Blau, *Crossing Social Circles* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984).

18. Michel Maffesoli, *Le Temps des Tribus* (Paris: Merridiens Klincksieck, 1988).

19. Because urban tribes are groups of people who have similar visual appearances, personal style, and ideals, and because these groups are also very active on social media platforms uploading over 300 million photos a day to Facebook alone, scientists in the fields of AI and machine learning are developing algorithms to capture the features that distinguish each subculture and classify them into an urban tribes database. https://vision.cornell.edu/se3/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/utribes_bmvc13_final.pdf.

20. Ethan Watters, *Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family?*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003).

21. Leah Libresco, *Building the Benedict Option: A Guide to Gathering Two or Three in His Name* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018). The main proponent of the "Benedict Option" is Rod Dreher.

22. Joel Kotkin, *Tribes: How Race, Religion, and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy* (New York: Random House, 1993).

23. Roland Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1969), 11.

24. Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. by Mile Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999).

25. Li, 2012.

26. In the mono-ethnic model, the worship service is conducted in the language most familiar to the ethnic group. For the majority group in the country, the language would be the national language; for all other international groups, however, the language would be the one they speak in their homes. Often, there are very little interaction among them even when they worship within the same city. But the strength of mono-ethnic church is in its homogeneity thus making it difficult or nearly impossible for it to transform.

27. In the multi-ethnic model, the worship service is done in the national language. Those who advocate this model see it as the New Testament pattern that expresses the unity that joins differing ethnic groups together. There is a desire to reach the different ethnic groups in the city and bring them together into one church. Multi-ethnic model's insistence, however, on using the national language, makes it less effective in reaching the first generation immigrants who often are the most responsive to the Gospel. In some cases, the strong dominance of the majority ethnic group in leadership, worship, and outreach preferences prevent assimilation of other minority groups into the church. Another challenge of multi-ethnic church is the use of the national language. This mono-lingual requirement means that to become a Christian, one must first learn the national language and adopt certain culture and customs of the host country. The most significant challenge of multi-ethnic churches, however, is the absence of indigenous worship and leadership. Because it is multi-ethnic, each joining group must give up something in order to prevent the church from breaking apart. The natural tendency and least resistant mode is that people like to be with those who are like them. They like to form enclaves and live in enclaves.

28. See an example of inter-ethnic church planting at the end of the article.

29. Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties" in *American Journal of Sociology* 78 no. 6 (1973): 1360–1380.

30. The limitations of this article prevent the precise and detailed description of the Shalom City Index, but it is a major part of the author's PhD dissertation that is in progress. See the website: www.shalom.city.

Ferment in the Church: Missions in the 4th Era

Alan McMahan

In 1955 Donald McGavran's book, *The Bridges of God*, launched the field of modern missiology and it shook the evangelical world with its conclusions on the validity of people movements occurring in Northern India. Evangelistic fruit was showing up where many were not expecting it. The cognitive dissonance that book engendered led to a whole new way of thinking about the harvest, eventually giving rise to the church growth and the frontier missions movements with its emphasis on reaching unreached peoples. Today, a new set of factors converge to once again shake our understanding of how God is redeeming the lost peoples of the earth.

We live in unprecedented times. Never in the history of the world have we seen so much upheaval and opportunity among the world's peoples that causes us to reconsider our missionary paradigms, definitions, and strategies. In the accounting of the advance of modern missions, we may be at the threshold of the fourth era.[1]

Three Major Trends

Three major sets of factors are manifesting themselves in ways we could have never imagined. They are converging to create a unique opportunity in all of human history that can influence the completion of the task of global evangelization. Those three sets of factors are urbanization, migration, and globalization.

Urbanization

In the 1930s, less than 30% of the world's population lived in cities. By the year 2050, that number will hit 70% in the developing world and 90% in the developed world, doubling the global urban population to a total of 6.4 billion people.[2] That is equivalent to adding a city the size of Los Angeles each week to the world's urban population.[3] In 1997, David Barrett reported that 127,000 non-Christian urban dwellers were being added daily, a number that is no doubt much higher now.[4] Most of these are represented by the urban poor located in the world's mega-cities with minimal Christian impact.

Migration

The peoples of the earth are moving away from their homelands at rates higher than ever seen before. In 2019, more than 272 million people[5] crossed international boundaries in search of a better life.[6] When this number is added to the number of those migrating within their country of origin, the total is close to 1 billion people, or 1/7 of the world's population.[7] They move for many reasons: economic or educational opportunities, war, natural catastrophes, family reunification, governmental initiatives, etc. But they move in hope of a better life. These conditions create new receptivity, and a mixing of the world's peoples that realign traditional beliefs, patterns of living, and social norms.

Globalization

Thanks to dramatic improvements in transportation, communication, and technology, coupled with the exercise of free enterprise, ideas, products, and services are moving at lightning speed across international boundaries. The results are numerous, from a homogenization of ideas and trends, the emergence of never before seen affiliations and innovations, and the rise of a global youth culture in which a young person in Jakarta, Indonesia may have more in common with the youth of Los Angeles than they do with their own parents![8]

The convergence of these three sets of factors in the world's urban contexts interact with and amplify each other to create an environment where the laws of strange physics dominate. Three metaphors of the city will serve to illustrate.

The city functions as a "*black hole*" in that the bigger a city is, the greater is its gravitational attraction as it sucks in everything around it to fuel its need for food, water, and natural resources. And as the pull of the city increases, the density of its population becomes ever greater driving up costs and the competition for scarce resources, distorting even the rules for social engagement and human interaction.

Secondly, the larger the city is, the more intense becomes its sub-cultures that may orbit around a culture of origin, or lifestyle preference, or hobby. Poisonous snake-lovers can form a club because in the city they can find enough others who will join them. People who were rejected by their small-town friends because of their sexual preferences can now align with like-minded others to carry out political or social action initiatives to force change on the larger society. At the same time, the city is characterized by enormous diversity and heterogeneity. Here, in this high-density environment, some find themselves pressed together where they can no longer avoid each other. Cultures that are dramatically different are placed in close proximity. In this way the city functions as a "*super-collider*" where particles of different types are smashed together at high speed and yield strange new elements to those observing it.

Thirdly, the city functions as a "*culture-making engine*" leading many to an exploration of new ideas, re-combinations, and new collaborations (even marriages!) that are not subject to censure by the elders and the former traditions. It is not surprising that most new ideas, trends, fashions, and music emanate from great urban centers which are then transmitted to the rest of the world.

General Implications

The results of these interacting forces generate some interesting findings for reaching UPG's that demand a new toolkit be developed for missionaries today.

First, our understanding of people groups must move beyond static, mono-cultural, geographically and linguistically-based definitions. In the hybridity characteristic of the city, hyphenated sub-cultures are rapidly emerging and the aspirational identity of many urban dwellers center around values and characteristics that differ from their identity of origin. The "glue" that binds urban dwellers together may relate more to age, education, socio-economic status, music, occupation, a hobby, or a common dream of the future than it does to language, religion, or a common homeland. Today, it is frequently true that young people may marry someone outside their cultural or religious group, move to a context foreign to both of them and build their lives together in that third culture environment. What culture will their kids form their identity around? What people group are they a part of now? These hybridized population segments become key bridge people to cross cultural divides and overcome traditional patterns of resistance.

Second, urban environments function to break down societal control as traditionally practiced in the homeland of a people. In the city, one becomes anonymous within a block or two from where they live. Informal controls over deviant behavior, usually manifested in the form of gossip, become ineffective in a world of strangers. Urban migrants, then, find a new freedom to explore beyond the permitted constraints of their worldview. A new receptivity emerges that more freely experiments with new ideas, patterns of living, and affinity groups. This new freedom is simultaneously terrifying and exhilarating and it may lead to either good or bad choices but it is very different than the traditional life in the homeland.

Consider the young Muslim women in Jakarta who live in traditional families but work in the commercial or corporate centers of the city. They depart for work wearing the traditional Muslim clothing expected by the elders that covers them completely but on the bus that is removed to reveal smart, Western business attire underneath. At work they associate with their Chinese-Indonesian colleagues who invite them to a lunch-time worship service at a local Christian fellowship nearby where they hear the gospel and meet more Christian friends. At night they go back home on the bus, putting on the Muslim dress they removed earlier, return to their traditional families, and resume the identity they had before they left. At some point, if they do find Christ, they will be forced to make a choice about which faith they will follow. Perhaps this occurs when they get married or start to raise children, but never before did they have such a direct exposure to this life-changing message of salvation. Such scenarios are not at all uncommon in the city.

Third, ministries that seek to penetrate a UPG by going to the homeland of the people and using highly contextualized forms valued mostly by the older generation are still important and should be continued, but they may face more resistance and see slower results than what might be possible in the city. I have ministry colleagues who have worked in highly contextualized ways for two or three decades in the homeland of a UPG and by God's grace have raised up a few Christian fellowships of Jesus followers. Their commitment and persistence are commendable and inspiring!

But I have also visited mega-churches[9] in nearby urban centers where you would expect to find no such UPG people that, on the contrary, have in some cases hundreds, or even thousands, of converts from UPG's from areas where my other colleagues worked. Even more shocking is that many of these mega-churches used worship forms that were obviously not contextualized as they sang Hillsong music in English accompanied by large jumbo-trons, laser lights, and smoke machines! And these contexts which looked like and sounded like what I would expect to see in Los Angeles or New York were actually effective in bringing a new, younger generation to Christ. In these uncontextualized, Western forms of ministry UPG folk were coming to Christ. As in 1955 when Donald McGavran wrote *The Bridges of God,* his observations indicated fruit was being produced in unexpected places. That's what we are seeing now as well.

Furthermore, these same patterns that I observed in Indonesia were also apparent in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangalore, Chennai, Hong Kong, Manila, London, New York, Los Angeles, and to a much lesser extent in Beijing, and Moscow where I conducted similar research. Indeed, it is predictable that among the urban migrants coming into cities, and the larger the city, the more pronounced are the patterns, we will see members of UPG's from throughout the surrounding regions who are becoming more receptive and have hope for a new life. In some cases, it is possible to find Christian believers who are among members of multiple UPG's living together in the same apartment complex. The population density and geographical proximity to one another increase the likelihood the gospel can "hop" across cultural boundaries that previously would have prevented communication and effective evangelization.

Implications for Missions

The implications for missions are numerous. First, we need to develop the ability of to see pockets of receptivity wherever they occur, even if they don't show up in the expected places. Since urbanites may affiliate with others based on factors other than language, culture, and place of origin we need to become good at "glue-sniffing" to find what actually holds them together, then follow the trail to see where it leads. That may mean we need to develop more sophisticated tools to define and track UPG streams. Maybe the affiliations are forming through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or other. Receptivity may occur in unpredicted spaces and times. Our definitions and anthropological/ministry tools may be good at examining "detailed complexity" (looking at all the cultural patterns and attributes of a people) but fail at understanding "dynamic complexity" to understand how peoples' identities shift and receptivity rises and falls at different phases of migration and in the presence of certain stimuli.

Secondly, better communication and cooperation needs to occur between personnel deployed in the homeland of UPG's and those engaged in ministry in pluralistic migrant destinations. Migration is seldom a one-way flow. More typically, people are engaged in a circular migration pattern as they visit their parents in the homeland bringing with them the rewards purchased by their "high-paying" jobs in the city, only to return to the city again and continue their status-building, wealth generating careers. With these visits, they also bring new ideas, new perspectives, new values, perhaps even their new faith.

To prepare UPG converts in the urban contexts to "take the gospel home" urban churches need to be equipped with the vision and the tools to identify, equip, mobilize, and problem-solve with new UPG-background believers so they can be effective upon their

return home. How many times do the young people return home wearing the "skinny jeans" of the city only to face the scorn of the parents? Sensitivity-training is needed to help the new convert talk about their faith in ways that are loving, and winsome to the skeptics at home. Christian workers also need to be cooperating with each other in the homeland and the city as much as possible to conserve the fruit of these interactions.

Thirdly, it is important to plant multi-ethnic churches in the city where the dominance of the largest ethnic groups within the congregation is diminished and space is created for minority voices.[10] Research on multi-ethnic churches indicates that the hardest minority group to add to the congregation is the second one because it tends to stand in sharp contrast or in polarity to the largest ethnic group. If the "contract" can be negotiated between these two groups, then adding a second or third minority group is much less difficult.

As a church becomes more variegated and diverse adding other minority voices becomes even easier and space is created for even more people that don't fit any of the identified groups to join. Such is the case with congregations in Indonesia that might be dominantly composed of Chinese-background Indonesians. The larger the church becomes and the more diverse it is, the easier it is for members of UPG's to anonymously explore the claims of the faith without being "discovered." Church planting efforts that are multi-ethnic match more accurately the diversity of the city and are therefore more contextualized to that pluralistic context.

Fourthly, we need to consider the possibility that contextualization may not match what we have been trained to see. Many would dismiss Western-style worship services and mega-church models as having anything of value for reaching the UPG's. This doesn't fit our paradigm of frontier missiology. Yet, if it is understood what the rising generations of urban nomads are looking for some of these forms might be worth considering as a first level of engagement. Perhaps, if new Western or K-Pop forms are first adopted by these young urban migrants, there will still need to be serious study on how this is eventually engrafted back to the identity of origin lest it be discarded for being foreign and alien. Perhaps this is a level of self-theologizing with which the indigenous church will need to grapple.

Finally, we need to refine the toolkit for equipping the next generation of missionaries and cross-cultural workers. Our methods of equipping too often assume our workers will work in mono-cultural environments focused on a single UPG. Instead we need to equip some of them to work in environments of high diversity, high density, and rapid change. We need to pay close attention to the people who are shifting between cultures and recognize that they may be able to operate in two environments. These migrants may be the honeybees that will pollinate the flowers of new advancement of the gospel.

Conclusion

Doing missions in the fourth era marked by urbanization, migration, and globalization will require that we recognize the forces that are quickly changing our context of ministry. These forces are re-defining the pathways people follow as they come to Christ, as well as the cultural frame they will prioritize in their choices and values. Will it be their culture of origin or their culture of aspiration that lead to greater receptivity? How will God use these changing conditions to take the gospel to the last UPG? What new toolkit does the next generation of missionaries need to be successful? What strategies will yield the most fruit? These are questions that urgently need to be addressed as we re-think our people group missiology.

Alan McMahan (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is Professor in the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University. He has conducted extensive field research on patterns of urban church growth in Asia, Europe, and the United States for an upcoming book on the subject. This article draws on that knowledge to contribute to the ongoing discussion of people groups.

Notes

1. Winter, Ralph D. "Three Mission Eras: And the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission – 1800–2000."
2. United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, 2007 Revision, (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, March 10, 2010), 1
3. Prince Charles in an address to the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, February 13, 2018.
4. David Barrett, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 21:1 (January 1997): 24–25.
5. World Economic Forum, January 20, 2020. Accessed on August 1, 2020 (https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/iom-global-migration-report-international-migrants-2020/).
6. This is a number higher than the population of Indonesia, the fourth most populated nation on earth.
7. UN DESA – Technical Paper No. 2013/1 – Cross-national comparisons of internal migration: An update on global patterns and trends. Accessed on August 1, 2020: (http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/technical/TP2013-1.pdf).
8. At least this may be true in terms of aspirational identity as opposed to the identity of origin.
9. Some of these mega-churches were running 5,000, or 10,000 or 40,000, or even over 120,000 attendees in weekend services. Though the core constituencies were often made of displaced Christian migrants from other areas or hyphenated peoples such as Chinese-Indonesians, there were, nevertheless many representatives from UPG's in the area.
10. For a more complete explanation of these concepts see the book, *Being the Church in a Multi-ethnic Community*, by Gary L. McIntosh and Alan McMahan, 2012, Wesleyan Publishers.

The Making of Lists

Dan Scribner

Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples were "go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations," which raises at least two questions: "Who are the nations of the world?" and "Which ones have few, if any, disciples?" Since the 1970s various efforts have been made to answer these questions.

A Brief History of Global People Group Lists

Dr. Ralph Winter gave his landmark unreached peoples presentation at Lausanne '74. No comprehensive global people group list existed at the time. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center (MARC) division of World Vision headed by Ed Dayton began publishing annual Unreached Peoples Directories. These were partial lists of unreached ethnolinguistic people groups. *Operation World*, while focused primarily on political countries, also began including some people group information in the editions starting in the 1980s.

The foundation of global ethnolinguistic people groups lists is the excellent language research of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) over the last eighty years presented in the *Ethnologue*,[1] a catalog of the world's languages.

Three comprehensive, global people group lists exist today. These lists have distinct definitions, sources, criteria, audiences and philosophies as outlined in Table 9.1.

The initial effort to produce a comprehensive global people group list was in 1982 with the first edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE), edited by Dr. David Barrett. This list continues to be updated and available through the Center for the Study of Global Christianity's *World Christian Database* (WCD).

A second global people group list, the Integrated Strategic Planning Database (ISPD), later renamed the Church Planting Progress Indicators (CPPI) database, was started in 1991 by the International Mission Board SBC. The purpose was to track IMB church planting activity among people groups. While the ISPD/CPPI had its roots in WCD data, it has been extensively modified by IMB field staff over the last three decades.

A third global people group list, Joshua Project, was birthed in 1995 and owes much of its genesis to Patrick Johnstone. Joshua Project is also indebted to Omid research for South Asia, Asia Harvest research for China and the Buddhist world, IPN research for SE Asia and Indonesia, in addition to numerous other national people group researchers, mission agencies and onsite missionaries.

Why Three Global Peoples Lists?

Different perspectives on the same situation are a healthy thing. Looking at a picture from several angles often yields greater appreciation. Using different definitions and criteria can help clarify a task and highlight areas needing further research. People group database compilers are confronted by questions such as: Is language always the primary definer of a people group? Should caste be considered when defining a people group? Should Christian Adherents be considered when setting the criteria for unreached? Should unreached be defined by exposure or response to the gospel? What are acceptable sources for input and edits? The three global people group lists answer these questions differently and thus provide different, but valuable perspectives.

Segmentation Within People Group Lists

Segmentation can be described as levels of detail or refinement. For example, the animal kingdom is segmented into a hierarchy of phylum, class, order, family, genus

Table 9.1 – A Comparison of the Three Global People Group Lists

	World Christian Database	CPPI (IMB)	Joshua Project
People Definition	Globally ethno-linguistic only	Outside South Asia ethno-linguistic South Asia mixture of language and caste	Outside South Asia ethno-linguistic South Asia by caste, religion and language
Start Date	1982	1991	1995
Unreached Definition	Less than 50% evangelized	Less than 2% Evangelical	Less than 2% Evangelical *and* less than 5% Christian Adherent
Unreached Measures	Exposure	Response	Response
Sources	Census and academic reports* Denominational reports Ethnologue	IMB field staff Ethnologue	Census and academic reports* Regional and national researchers Networks, individuals, other data sets Ethnologue
Audience	Secular media, academia	IMB field staff and leadership	Global missions community
Philosophy	Adds groups when documented in published research	Adds groups once verified by field staff	Assumes worst case, adds all potential groups, removes if verified as not existing or became extinct

* Includes sources such as national government census, UN, CIA database, other state/government generated data.

and species with each level more and more specific. In a similar way, people group lists have traditionally had various levels of segmentation. These segmentation levels create a hierarchy moving from very broad, general classification (level A) to increasing detail and specificity (level E).

Different methods of segmenting people group lists have been suggested. Three of the most common approaches to segmentation are the columns in Table 9.2.

Levels A, B and C would be considered traditional people group categories and lend themselves to global lists. However, levels D and E are not tracked in existing lists. These two levels are not necessarily smaller types of segmentation but rather a reconfiguration with multiple, mixed or hybrid identities.

There is growing interest in greater detail, particularly among on-site workers seeking relevancy for local church planting. The interest in moving to segmentation levels D and E and greater detail does not preclude the importance of people group lists at segmentation levels A, B and C. Levels A, B and C serve as entry points for focusing on people groups. However, this desire for greater detail is pressing the limits of current people group lists.

Granularity and Complexity

Another term for segmentation might be granularity. Granularity is the level of detail and refinement of data. Increasing granularity can be pictured as moving from boulders to large stones to fist-size rocks to pebbles to sand. People group lists generally track groups at the country and language i.e. level C "fist-size rocks." Greater granularity would mean tracking by province or district, subgroup and/or dialect, i.e. level D "pebbles." For example, current lists have an entry "Pashtun of India" while a more granular list might have "Yusafzai Pashtun practicing Barelvi Sunni Islam speaking Urdu in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, India" as a distinct entry. Further refinement by occupation, shared interests, skills, education, networks and/or social status would create lists at level E "sand."

Figure 9.1 illustrates the relationship between people group list granularity and complexity. The graph is divided into the segmentation levels in Table 9.2. Very general uses are suggested for each section. The numbers in parenthesis are counts from the Joshua Project list as of May 2020. Groups to the left of the dotted line would be considered traditional people groups and groups to the right would be considered dynamic groupings. Table 9.3 compares traditional people groups and dynamic groupings.

Consider the Fulani of Central Africa. Moving from left to right across Figure 9.1 the Fulani can be viewed as a single People Cluster[2] (level B "large stones"). This level does not distinguish specific Fulani people groups and combines 40 million individuals into one category. Typically, this is the level of granularity that the secular media and general missions education material use. To protect believers, movements to Jesus among the Fulani are reported at this broader segmentation level. However, a church adopting a people group for prayer and engagement needs greater detail and a smaller size group to focus on. The church would likely adopt a specific Fulani people group such as the Fulani, Pulaar in Senegal[3] (level C "fist-size rocks"). As workers began on-site ministry they might focus on the Toucouleur dialect speaking, millennial age, healthcare professional Pulaar Fulanis living in Matam, Senegal. This would be a hybrid grouping (level E "sand"). The "glue" that holds such a hybrid group together goes beyond ethnicity and language.

Table 9.2 – Comparing People Segmentation Levels

Segmentation Level	Dayton / Wilson (1984)[1]	Winter / Koch (Perspectives)[2]	Johnstone / Joshua Project[3]
A		Major Cultural Blocs – broad categories of people groups, defined by religious-cultural spheres, strategic significance is global overview.	Affinity Bloc – All people groups, who either live in a particular region or have similar cultural roots. Peoples are broadly grouped into blocs with affinities based on language, culture, religion, politics. In nearly every Bloc there are widely dissimilar and unrelated linguistic minorities, but often there is one particular culture that is dominant.
B			People Cluster – Within each Affinity Bloc are a number of more closely related peoples which, for strategic purposes, may be clustered together. These relationships are often based on a common identity of language and name but sometimes on the basis of culture, religion, economy, or dominance of one group over another.
C	Primary – ethnolinguistic preference which defines a person's identity and indicates one's primary loyalty	Ethnolinguistic Peoples – often a cluster of unimax groups, defined by linguistic, ethnic and political boundaries, strategic significance is mobilization and strategy.	People Group – "A significantly large group of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these. For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance." (the 1982 Consensus)
D	Secondary – a sociological grouping which is to some degree subject to personal choice and allows for considerable mobility. Regional and generational groups, caste and class divisions are representative	Unimax Peoples – networks of families with a shared identity, defined by social and cultural prejudices, discovered onsite, strategic significance is church planting.	Subgroups – a segment of a people group that may or may not need a unique church planting effort. In many cases, subgroups will require separate church planting efforts. In other cases, reaching the parent people group may reach the subgroups. In these cases, the gospel will likely flow between subgroups without encountering significant barriers of understanding or acceptance. Determined by onsite workers and research.
E	Tertiary – casual associations of people which are usually temporary and the result of circumstances rather than personal choice such as high-rise dwellers, drug addicts, occupational groupings and professionals.	Socio Peoples – an association of peers, defined by activities or interests, discovered onsite, strategic significance is small group evangelism.	

[1] Dayton and Wilson, Unreached Peoples '84, cited by Dave Datema in "People Group Paradigm in 2020" webinar.

[2] Winter and Koch, Finishing the Task, 20–22, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/19_4_PDFs/winter_koch_task.pdf.

[3] https://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions.

People Group List Challenges

As the Fulani example illustrates, a great deal is being asked of current people group databases. One size does not fit all. In fact, one size may end up confusing all! People group list challenges include a great variety of potential uses, a wide spectrum of audiences and significant security risks.

Variety of Uses

The uses mentioned in Figure 9.1 are very general and simply suggestions. The main point is people group lists are used in numerous ways ranging from challenging new believers to the big picture of the Great Commission to a local church mission committee selecting a specific people group for adoption to onsite workers identifying a strategic focus to maximize the spread of the gospel.

Spectrum of Audiences

Each end user has different interests and needs. Pastors giving an annual missions sermon may be looking for simple, high level summaries. An intercessor might want a descriptive people profile. Mission leaders want detailed data to make deployment decisions. Traditional people profiles and lists have probably proven more useful to mobilizers than to on-site workers. The breadth of potential audiences for people groups lists is problematic. Current lists attempt to serve all audiences but may not be optimized for any of them.

Security Risks

The more information included in a list i.e., the more "pebbles" and "sand" presented, the greater the security risks in sensitive areas. This often prohibits publishing lists. For example, reporting too detailed information on Christ-ward movements among the Fulani below the "large stone" level B could jeopardize growth and endanger lives.

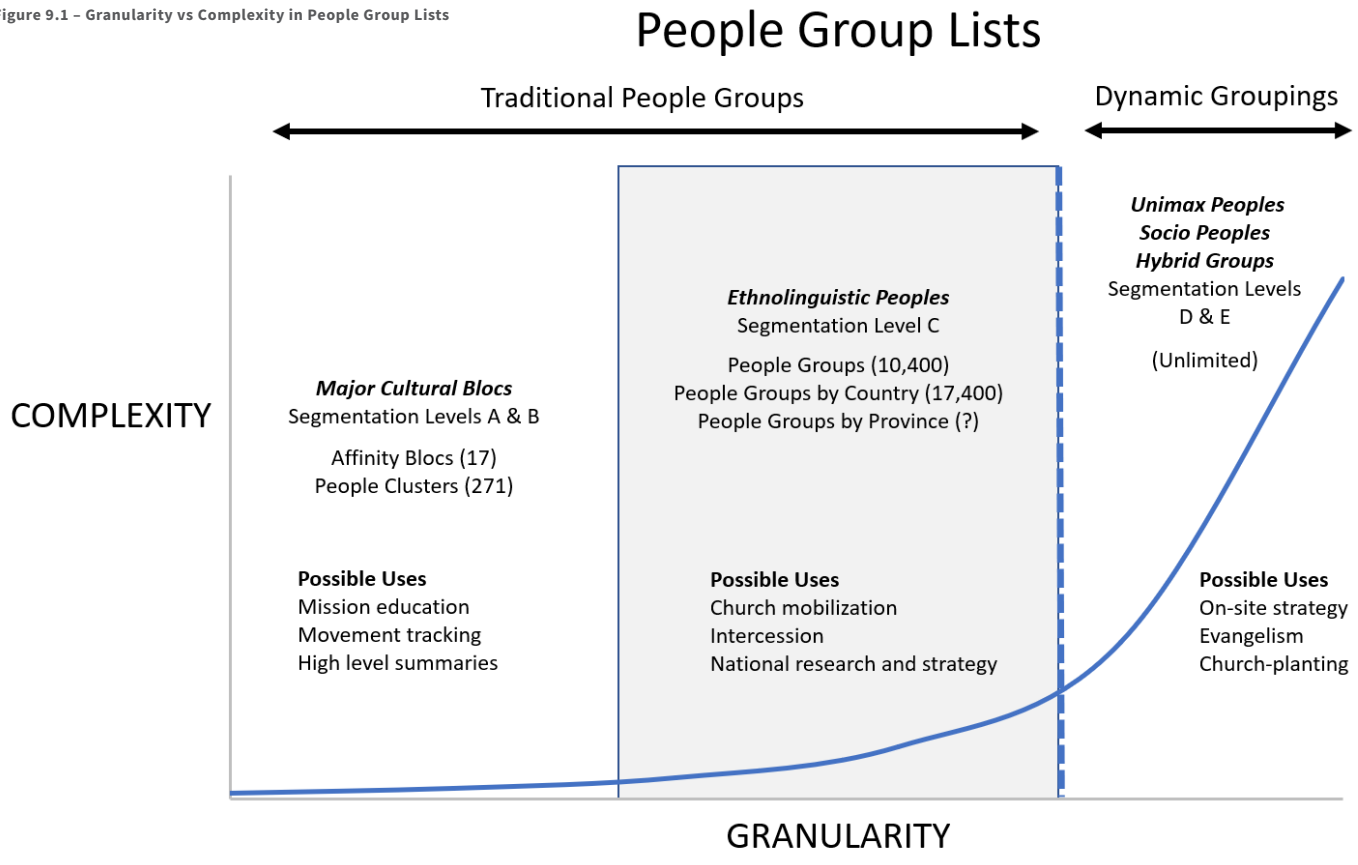
Changing Barriers

From a church planting perspective, people groups boundaries are defined by barriers to the spread of the gospel. Whichever barriers are highest defines the extent of a people group. Changing barriers are causing an expansion from what might be called *traditional* people groups to what might be termed *dynamic* or *hybrid* groupings. Table 9.3 compares these perspectives.

Table 9.3
Comparing Traditional and Dynamic Groupings

Traditional People Groups	Dynamic Groupings
Barriers are based on fairly well defined linguistic, ethnic, political, religious or historical boundaries.	Barriers based on almost any kind of "glue" e.g. occupation, hobbies, interests, social networks, relationships, economic status, affinity groups etc.
Permanent, durable, fixed	Temporary, fluid, changing
Individuals are only in one group and stay in that group for a lifetime	Individuals can be and are most likely in several groups at the same time
Have served segmentation levels A, B and C reasonably well for the last forty plus years.	Not addressed by current people group lists
While imperfect, it is possible to catalog globally as demonstrated by WCD, IMB and Joshua Project people group lists.	Unrealistic and impossible to catalog globally. Lists may be feasible by on-site workers and researchers on a very local level.

Figure 9.1 – Granularity vs Complexity in People Group Lists



Traditional Boundaries Are Changing

The forces of language consolidation, urbanization, globalization and migration are blurring the boundaries of traditional ethnolinguistic people groups. Existing people group identities are being mixed and recombined, and new hybrid identities are being created. For example, language consolidation is reducing the language barrier that traditionally has defined many people groups. Speakers of smaller languages are rapidly learning one or more global languages, usually for education and job opportunities. These are often languages widely used on the internet. New mobile devices are allowing on-the-fly, real time translation. A rise in linguistic nationalism is also occurring which results in people groups being merged together through administrative governmental pressure. At the same time, some people groups are dividing over a desire to preserve language and its cultural contexts. Few boundaries are truly rigid; the edges have fluidity.

Urbanization and migration are reducing ethnicity barriers. Groupings of individuals in cities are being driven increasingly by occupation, shared interests, skills, education, networks, social status and activities rather than by ethnic background. Globalization is reducing the ethnic as well as religious barriers. An inter-connected world allows exposure to and opportunity to explore different worldviews, values and religions. Globalization allows connections and relationships with other likeminded individuals around the world, rather than only those in one's immediate physical area. Efforts like SpaceX's Starlink project to bring internet to rural communities are accelerating globalization.

New Groupings Are Emerging

These forces are changing the barriers to the spread of the gospel and impacting how the *ethne* of the world are defined from a church planting perspective. Growing reports of movements to Jesus crossing traditional people group boundaries demonstrates a shift in how the gospel flows. For example, it has been suggested that Gen-Z youth of Riyadh have more in common with the youth of Chicago than with their own parents. That might be an exaggeration, but it makes a useful point. Youth in many cases aren't identifying as strongly with their traditional people group, based on ethnicity and language, as they are with others in their age group and social experience.

For onsite workers, other ways of grouping are becoming more useful and needed than groupings by ethnicity and language. The closer lists get to social and ethnic realities on the ground, the more needed and useful are other ways of grouping. For example, classifying Saudi Arabian Gen-Z youth in a database using traditional people group definitions could potentially obscure their preferred identity for church planting purposes and limit reaching them with the gospel. Identifying Saudi Gen-Z youth as a unique dynamic grouping might accelerate the flow of the gospel along relational and common interest pathways.

Complementary Perspectives

Traditional people group lists are still important and useful but need periodic "rethinking." Lists help to outline the unfinished task of the Great Commission and provide church leaders and mobilizers with motivating benchmarks. At the same time, new perspectives and dynamics are bringing other groupings into focus. The "glue" that binds these new groupings together may not be language or ethnicity, but occupation, education, shared interests, social networks, generational issues and worldviews. These dynamic groupings will be increasingly strategic and effective pathways for the spread of the gospel. Both the traditional and dynamic perspectives of people groups are useful and should not be viewed as old vs. new, but rather as complementary.

Conclusions

- People group thinking is not going away. Traditional people group lists are still very applicable in parts of South Asia dominated by the formal and informal caste system, in tribal settings, and rural areas. This includes much of Africa and Asia, where the great majority of unreached people groups reside.
- At the same time, the forces of language consolidation, urbanization, globalization and migration are creating new social dynamics, and changing both the barriers and boundaries by which some groups are defined.
- These hybrid, transnational and other groupings must be considered for evangelistic purposes, disciple making and church planting movements.
- Global people group lists, as currently structured, do not support dynamic groupings, i.e. to the right of the dotted line in Figure 9.1.
- Thus, new ways of listing and tracking dynamic groupings on a local level are needed to advance the initiatives of on-site workers.

Dan Scribner has served as the Joshua Project Team Leader since its founding in 1995. Dan and his wife Mary have been Frontier Ventures (formerly U.S. Center for World Mission) staff since 1988. They live in Colorado Springs, CO and have four adult children and two grandchildren.

Notes

1. 2020, 23rd Edition, https://www.ethnologue.com/.
2. See https://joshuaproject.net/clusters/173.
3. https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15622/SG.

A Church for Every People: A Retrospect on Mapping Peoples

Brad Gill

In the '70s when my wife and I had determined we would pursue ministry among Muslims, I remember needing a map. I wasn't lost, really, but I definitely needed some orientation. The mapping of "unreached peoples" had gained some momentum, and we used it to explore the labyrinth of Muslim peoples. I recall highlighting the Muslim Hui of China, the Kurds of the Middle East, and the Berbers of North Africa.

It was then that the watchword "A Church for Every People" arose and gave impetus and force to mission among unreached peoples. After four decades, it appears to have lost its edge in the American evangelical public. Let me bracket the concept of church, setting it aside for now, and focus on the concept of "peoples." As a disclaimer, I admit I was quite invested in this idea of peoples – of unreached peoples. I had studied under Donald McGavran at Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission and had benefited greatly from the anthropology of Paul Hiebert and Charles Kraft. They had effectively hammered at my American evangelical individualism and reshaped my understanding of receptivity among socio-cultural groups. But I had also married into Ralph Winter's family, and his statistical anthropology would map for me a global ethnoscape of peoples. My wife and I had actually sat with McGavran and Winter when the concept of unreached peoples coalesced into this watchword. To say the least, we were a bit entangled in the assumptions and inclinations behind this missiology of people groups.

We would soon find out, as they say, that "the map is not the territory."[1]

The complexities of "a church for every people" would mushroom for a younger generation sent to these fields. The evidence of new movements over the arc of forty years is impressive – even unprecedented – and more often confirms the presence of those "bridges of God" that McGavran claimed would transmit the gospel throughout a people. On the other hand, any rough, superficial mapping of people groups had to gain social and anthropological maturation. The temptation has more recently been to discard such a crude mapping of ethno-linguistic peoples. From my experience, I would contend it provided an excellent orientation for ministry.

Re-Mapping the Territory: A Field Odyssey

I arrived in the North African country of Morocco where quite an auspicious league of anthropologists had already done field research. They included Clifford Geertz and Ernst Gellner, each a theoretical leader in their respective schools of thought. For all the rank atheism of modern anthropology, I am greatly indebted to these men and women who began to map out the territory for me. Early French ethnography had divided Arab and Berber in a colonial effort to control that historic Muslim kingdom. While there was substantial social reality to those ethnic distinctions, the reigning king was attempting to assimilate these peoples in an effort to modernize his country.

My wife and I were the first American family to settle into our Atlas mountain town. In the early 80's there was opportunity to establish a small business that introduced me into the town's commercial life. Historically, that town had been the nexus of a large confederation of tribes. Their powerful chief had led a heroic tribal resistance against French colonization in the early twentieth century. But when his sons later flipped their support to the French, the monarchy of Morocco had to carefully negotiate this wily region when it established its independence from the French. This was a Berber town which was navigating its way into a modernizing Arab world.

The watchword – A Church for *This* People – provided a basic map for our purposes in this small urbanizing peasant town. I recall the day down in the center of that market town when I happened upon an old building with the words *Dyur Shiukh* inscribed on the entry way: "The Houses of the Sheikhs." This originally had been the small parliament of their tribal confederation. Looking around, there was no immediate indication of that sociological reality. This peasant society appeared to be well on the way to developing a more urban, civic government, and the reality of "peoples" or "tribes" seemed to be dissipating. T. E. Lawrence once said that Arabs didn't believe in institutions, only individuals, and I wondered if it was true of these Berbers as well.

The local contours of "peoplehood" – that sense of collective social inclusion – only gradually emerged. I can best describe it through different episodes in my relationship with two men who became my dear friends. Abdurahman (Abbas) and Abdulaziz (Aziz) lived in the same town, spoke the same dialect of Berber from that region, but their lives pointed in two very different directions. Those distinct orientations distinguished them socially, culturally, and territorially. Their lives helped my rudimentary attempts to map Berber culture, and eventually to settle on a social watershed which was potentially relevant for any future turning to Christ.

Admittedly, that town forty years later has yet to see a movement to Christ of any significant form. There are encouraging indications of a turning to Christ in the region, especially with new forms of social media. But one of those who had begun to follow Jesus was my friend Aziz. His life helped me appreciate the texture of Berberness in our region.

Aziz's faith had actually led him out of town, down to the big city where he was able to assimilate into a small but diverse group of Moroccan believers. That's where I first met him, when I was visiting the senior foreigner who was discipling Aziz. I recall this expatriate's blunt response when Aziz introduced himself as a Berber from our mountain town, interjecting, "They're all the same, Arab and Berber." Morocco certainly

gives that impression, but I could tell Aziz had more on his mind. A few months later, he visited us up in his hometown. He became a friend who helped us understand the hidden Berberness of this urbanizing region.

He took us up the road to another town where he had relatives. Sitting on the floor, eating, I watched the sudden transformation of my friend. He became animated and appeared to be experiencing some kind of psychological release. He pulled out the *bendir* (large, round, hand-held drum) and began to lead a round of traditional Berber songs. The whole environment changed. Gone was his formal and stiff social comportment of the city. He was back home. He was where he belonged.

A year or so later, he visited and asked us a dangerous question, one that would not find a sympathetic ear in his fellowship in the big city. "Would it be all right to marry a girl from my Berber town, even though she is not a Christian?" It seems he had chatted on the bus with a nice girl from town on one of his visits. He could tell she had a sweet spirit and might be open to Christ. Hmmm. Aziz was not getting any younger, and he wanted to marry someone from his home, a Berber who spoke his language. Well, his mind was pretty made up, the marriage happened, and it led to her coming to faith, to children, and a wonderful life together. Marriage is so often the bottom line of identity.

I was tempted to feel Aziz's decisions were confirming the validity of ethnic identity for communicating Christ into this bilingual, bicultural mountain region. But towns are complex, which became vividly clear when I introduced Aziz to another younger Berber believer in town. As we sat together that day I was surprised by the social distancing, the formality, the absence of any personal affinity. Christian reality had hit a wall. In the days that followed I learned that I was witnessing a severe socio-economic cleavage. Aziz was from a family who had served as privileged serfs on the great landholdings of aristocracy (the oppressor), while my other friend was from a squatter family struggling to make it on the edge of town (the oppressed). So much for a wonderfully homogenous people. The urban realities of mega-cities were already manifesting in this modest-sized mountain city. An ethnic map is not the actual territory.

This ethnic reality was made even more clear when I got to know yet another friend, Abbas. He was from a small oasis on the other side of the mountains, where the Sahara begins to stretch south into Africa. That's the opposite direction of the big city where Aziz had gone. But Abbas had made good, had attended the big university, and was now an Arabic teacher at the local high school in town.

His Berber dialect, while not the same, was linguistically intelligible to those in town, but his demeanor was very different. I should have noticed it in the way he walked, but I gradually caught it in conversation as he helped me learn the local language. He was a proud man. Affable, fun, but proud. I eventually came to understand that there was a distinct sense of honor emanating from these Saharans. One day I was walking down the main street and Abbas called to me. He was sitting at one of the local cafés with fellow teachers from the high school. Come to find out they were all from different points on the Saharan side of the Atlas. Their territorial affinity even overcame their major linguistic differences, and they were sealed together by the deep cultural estrangement they felt on this side of the mountains. These were Abbas's people.

One local reality explains much of this social division between Abbas and Aziz. This mountain city was known throughout the country for its prostitution. It was a morally dirty town, whose excesses my other friend Aziz could easily rationalize away. But my friend Abbas blushed when admitting this reality to me as a foreigner. The dignity bred in those desert regions resisted the pull from this den of iniquity. This explained his Islamic religiosity: very little participation in public ritual, but a dogmatic personal identity as a "clean" Muslim. He was nothing like the puritanical movements which had emerged out of the desert over the centuries, but he claimed the same desert roots as their religious prophet, Mohammed. There was a clear pride of place.

A local like Aziz might accept Christianity, but Abbas's religious identity would never transit that religious barrier. Christianity was identified with the West, with the colonial oppression of the French. I remember the day Abbas and I were walking across the hillside behind my home and we suddenly found ourselves walking in and out of little pits in the landscape. "What are these holes?" I asked. Abbas was embarrassed. "These were the local grave sites of the French whose caskets were dug up and sent back to France after independence." Abbas was not a violent man, but he nevertheless aligned his religious honor against any oppressive colonial modernity.

There also remained a deep Berberness in Abbas, and I learned it was the key to opening his hardened religious spirit. He would tell me over the years that I should go to see the *maraboutin* (holy ones) who crafted and sold rugs in the mountains. Interesting. These were Catholic sisters in that mountain region who made carpets as a way to employ and support local Berber tribes. I was not sure of his interest in them. But then he offered a story from when he was in high school and boarding in the town where these sisters had a small convent. On one occasion, he was sick and hospitalized at the local clinic where he had befriended a very young Berber girl in the bed next to his. She was waiting for her mommy to come.

Abbas tells how the day came when her mommy arrived, but to his utter surprise this mommy was one of those foreign sisters dressed in mountain Berber attire. She could speak fluent Berber, and she turned to Abbas, and thanked him for caring for her "daughter." Apparently, this woman traveled with and cared for a transnational Berber tribe, and it was this indigenous, authentic expression of Christian love that had bypassed all of Abbas's defenses. He was in awe of these women who followed the Christian way.

The territory was gradually taking shape. Two men, Abbas and Aziz, situated in a single ethno-linguistic identity, classified themselves differently. Their way of constructing sameness, of including and excluding others, was self-evident to them. Their perceptions were what anthropologists might call a "folk classification." These anecdotal experiences with Abbas and Aziz were my way of beginning to discover how group identities were distinguished across this Berber terrain. This was their map, not mine. And that indigenous map shows the territory so vital for the natural diffusion of the gospel.

Some Reflections on Mapping Peoples

But let's get back to *our* maps and, in particular, our own classification of "people groups." From my experience I would want to suggest three things.

The Map of Unreached People Groups is a Reduction, but it is a Useful One

Essentially *all* maps are abstractions and leave out a lot of detail. *All* maps are wrong, but some can be useful.[2] Accuracy is important, but their usefulness is the way they direct our attention and initially guide us. But we can begin to confuse this map of people groups with actual reality.

> For many people, the model creates its *own* reality… We forget that reality is a lot messier. The map isn't the territory.[3]

The ethno-linguistic map of the Berber peoples was a place for me to begin. Remember, thinking about people groups was counterintuitive for me as an American, and this map can reaffirm an essential social reality: people will map themselves in society. This people group sensibility – though quite abstract and reductionist – forced my American eye to see the social realities of Berber peoples.

The Map of Unreached Peoples has Strategic Limitations

> … the first step is to realize that *you do not understand a model, map, or reduction unless you understand and respect its limitations*. We must always be vigilant by stepping back to understand the context in which a map is useful.…[4]

People group thinking has been legitimately criticized for the way it can cause us to ignore the wider context.[5] Admittedly, our modern taxonomic propensity can push us to overreach and invest too much in a simple ethno-linguistic model. Reaching "every tribe, language, nation and people" is certainly our end. It is a biblical promise, a biblical task, and a biblical objective. But it does not warrant a narrow strategic focus on ethnicity, groupness and cultural homogeneity. One must appreciate the entire context God is using, what McGavran used to call the "human matrix."

For example, urbanization as a human system intersects with ethnicity and apparently seems to make inconsequential any folk classification. It's obvious that Abbas' and Aziz's children face a whole new set of conditions. The acceleration of globalization may erode their traditional maps of group identity. Modern processes of social dis-embedding, self-reflexivity, and cultural hybridity, as well as migration, poverty and epidemics may loosen or even dissolve the social categories of their parents. Consequently, they may acquire a more modern structure of consciousness, or they could experience that pervasive homelessness that erodes their once more socially intact background. New freedoms could bring deep disaffection and malaise, and new generations will no doubt entertain options. Any counter-actualization could choose from new ideologies, indigenous art forms or socio-religious associations that champion traditional values. Old maps are re-constructed into new maps that then re-create belonging.

All to say, we must respect the limitations of this map of unreached peoples. Every mission sending base, every training institution and curriculum, must recognize and transcend the way the map may appear more real than the territory. Any effective missiology requires it.

The Map of Unreached Peoples is Based on a Principle

The map is not the main thing. The interactions with Abba and Aziz are not solely for pinning down their homogenous social affinities. The map emerges from the use of a compass, a more basic principle, and McGavran would state it in a sentence: "Men like to turn to Christ without crossing ethnic and linguistic barriers."[6] That principle might be stated a number of ways, but it will always emphasize familiarity as fundamental to the context in which people prefer to turn to Christ.

During my years in Morocco the principle was confirmed across the border in Algeria. We continually heard of an unprecedented movement to Christ – a church – among the Berbers of the Kabyle mountains – a people. I would witness this extensive fellowship when I traveled into France. But that momentum never crossed into our Berber region. The principle, it seemed, was a fairly good compass for our region of the world.

Conclusion

I like to think the Apostle Paul anticipated this entire discussion about mapping unreached peoples. His missiology of peoples appears when he speaks to those Athenians of the diverse peoples (*ethne*) of mankind (Acts 17) and the way God would determine their "allotted times" and the "boundaries to their dwelling places" (17:26–27). His motivation was not the map, but a deeper apostolic compass for reaching all peoples: "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find Him." The map is an afterthought, but a very strategic thought at that. It's all about peoples finding God.

Brad Gill is Senior Editor of the International Journal of Frontier Missiology. After assisting in the founding years of the U. S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, now Frontier Ventures, he served in North Africa for thirteen years. He is currently President of the International Society for Frontier Missiology.

Notes

1. "The Map Is Not the Territory," *Farnam Street*, https://fs.blog/2015/11/map-and-territory/.
2. "The Map," *Farnam Street*, quote from George Box.
3. "The Map," Farnam Street.
4. "The Map," Farnam Street.
5. Brian Howell and Edwin Zehner, ed., *Power and Identity in the Global Church* (William Carey Publishers, 2009).
6. Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 198.

Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups

Len Bartlotti

In the sweeping narrative of Scripture, the focus of God's self-disclosure is the peoples of the world. The biblical image of "the people of God" makes sense only against the background of a tempestuous mix of other "peoples," from which God selects one "holy nation" (Israel) – "you above all peoples" (Deuteronomy 10:15).[1] His ultimate purpose, however, is to dwell among a people from "*all* the families of the nations" (Psalm 22:27; 96:7; Revelation 7:9). "For once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10). From the standpoint of creation, redemption and eternity, a world full of "peoples" reflects God's beauty, creativity, and love.

Rethinking people groups does not mean eliminating the concept but reimagining and re-envisioning it in light of twenty-first century realities. The essence of my discussion here is reflexive, consciously acknowledging our assumptions and preconceptions. It is also corrective, addressed not to critics but to those of us who embrace and advocate UPG missiology. In this article, I explore ways to reimagine people groups through an upgraded understanding of the concept itself and suggest steps to re-envision the UPG approach in order to maximize efforts to reach all peoples.[2]

Understanding "People Groups"

However nuanced in the minds of mission scholars, popularly and in practice, "unreached people groups" are primarily "ethno-linguistic" in nature. Criteria related to ethnicity and language dominate.[3] This is reflected in databases where a "people group" is defined as "an ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members."[4]

The shorthand definition has advantages. It is easily communicated and marketed. "Peoples" as "ethnic groups" can be named, profiled, objectified, enumerated, and portrayed in pictures, videos and media. Another advantage is the appearance of an uncomplicated "this equals that" correspondence with Scripture: viz. every identifiable ethnic people and language today[5] is represented in the eschatological multitude (Revelation 7:9; 5:9). This is highly motivational.

One obvious problem, recognized by Ralph Winter, is that from the beginning, the "people group" concept was intended to include "socio-peoples" – groups formed on the basis of other affinities like "shared interest, activity, or occupation.[6] Can we really envision these "shared interest" groups in the heavenly throng? While this is evangelistically pragmatic, I suggest it is an interpretive leap, and thus an imaginative mandate.

While ethno-linguistic groups provide a helpful baseline, we need to look at the challenge of reimagining "ethnicity," "ethnic groups" and "ethnic identity" in light of more recent thinking. Given the primary UPG orientation toward "ethno-linguistic," that is the focus of this discussion.[7] Historically within the social sciences, understandings of ethnicity can be summarized into three general categories: primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist.

Primordialist

In this view, ethnicity is understood as having a real, tangible foundation, based either on *kinship* and sociobiological factors, or on shared cultural *traits*, practices, and history. We could say that, for the former, ethnicity is "in the heart" or "in the blood," and for the second, ethnicity is "in the cultural stuff" – distinctive "traits" or "surface markers" of identity (language, dress, food, etc.). The "in the heart" or "in the blood" approach is commonly emic, i.e. how peoples see themselves. Ethnic groups are viewed as "quasi-kinship" or "extended kin" groups.[8]

Historically viewed as primordial and fixed, ethnic groups were objectified, documented, and categorized (e.g. "martial races"). Elements of their heritage and culture (including material culture) were institutionalized, sometimes immortalized, in books, journals, ethnographies, histories, memoirs, short stories, movies, and museums.[9]

Instrumentalist

Fredrik Barth's seminal work *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) marked a turning point and "shift from a static to *interactional approaches* to ethnicity."[10] Barth "abandons the notion that cultures are clearly bounded, separated and homogeneous units."[11] The focus is not on cultural traits, but on dynamic interactions, ways people embrace, constrain, act on and experience ethnicity, and "imagine the ethnic community." Individuals choose and change their ethnic identity, particularly at the boundaries between groups.

In this view, ethnicity functions as a *tool*, an aspect of the way people organize themselves depending on social circumstances.[12] Individuals and groups are actors, versus merely passive recipients of "culture" or heritage. They use cultural resources to pursue personal or communal advantage in particular settings and contexts. This focus reveals that "ethnic groups and their features are produced under *particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances; they are highly situational, not primordial.*"[13]

Constructivist

Barth's work led to greater emphasis on the *contextual and situational processes* of ethnic identity. Ethnicity can be mobilized contextually and situationally, "in the contexts of different 'levels' and 'contextual horizons.'"[14] Identities are reconstituted, negotiated and contested in a dynamic process of self-other interaction.

Both the instrumentalist and constructivist approaches reflect a post-modern view of culture. Identities are socially constructed, not fixed but changeable (within certain

constraints).[15] Individuals maintain multiple identities and use ethnicity as a set of "diacritic" or "distinguishing markers" and tools for social engagement.

It is fairly obvious that Christian websites, mission agencies and literature tend to display an unquestioned reliance on the primordialist ("in the blood" and "in the stuff") view of ethnicity, ethnic groups and identity. "People profiles" have become a kind of literary sub-genre![16] Unfortunately, among other problems this static approach too often rests on little or no contemporary ethnographic confirmation.

Mission thought leaders tried to account for complexity (e.g. sociopeoples, unimax, diaspora). But the above considerations are largely absent in the way the UPG movement today organizes data and conceives of peoples. By veiling reality, static categories fail to convey the dynamism and fluidity of UPGs. This sometimes leads to unrefined strategies, engagements and priorities.[17] In an interconnected, urbanized, globalized, mobile and changing world, we need to re-envision our approach.

Re-envisioning Approaches

Brad Gill, President of the International Society for Frontier Missiology, notes the "new conditions that are pressing us to reimagine these frontiers." Gill calls for a move beyond the "subtle 'group think'" of our mission organizations, and the language and categories that may "unintentionally restrict our perception" and "blunt our imagination."[18]

Toward that end, I suggest we need a new *flexible, multi-level model of people groups* that works for multiple contextual horizons. We need to reimagine our understandings of UPGs and re-envision strategies for reaching them. I propose four conceptual steps to help us develop a multi-level model and re-envisioned approach.

Triangular Field of Meaning

First, we need a reshaped model of people groups, one that enables us to understand them over a *"triangular field of meaning"* rather than a single lens.[19] Based on our earlier discussion, we can think of ethno-linguistic people groups and identities from three intersecting perspectives, like three corners of a field. See Figure 11.1.

At one corner of the field, ethnicity is seen "in the heart" or "blood" and "in the traits" or "stuff" of culture. Since, as Geertz reminds us, "cultures are systems of meaning," we need to take these seriously. Communities find symbolic meaning in notions of heritage, land and extended kinship, and elements like language, religion, festivals, food, dress, and music. At another corner, we see "in the head" and "in the relationship," how individuals/groups use aspects of culture as tools for action, instruments to accomplish social ends. Knowing that ethnic identity is also variable "in the context" – constructed, negotiated, contested, self-assumed or ascribed by others – makes us alert to dynamics "in the situation."

In order to have a clearer understanding of UPGs, and to devise more appropriate strategies, we must be able to move subtly and adeptly between these three viewpoints. They are not mutually exclusive. Note, too, that this apparent deconstruction does not eliminate "groupness," but rather reconfigures it more dynamically. To be honest and accurate, ethnicity is also "in the observer's head" (us): We are using "ethnicity" as an analytical tool to make sense of what we see.[20] These etic understandings are appropriate if we are aware of potential biases.

Dynamic Models

Second, we need more dynamic models of people group interaction and social bonding, especially in multi-ethnic, urban and diaspora contexts.

For example, a Kazakh in Turkey preserves Kazakh ethnicity, but constructs a Turkish Kazakh identity. This allows him/her to negotiate more advantageous social connections and a sense of belonging.[21] Migration also fosters a more fluid ethnic identity.

Minority Senegalese (e.g. Seereer) in Dakar adopt vernacular "urban Wolof" as the *lingua franca*. The process of "Wolofization" affects not only language, but also ethnicity. A new "Wolof" identity is constructed, especially among the second generation. As one Pulaar-speaking elementary school teacher reported, "At home I'm Haalpulaar, when I'm in Dakar, I'm Wolof," This suggests "a new urban identity rather than a switch in ethnicity." Depending on the context and interaction, residents may reject an ethno-linguistic identifier and simply say, as did one professor, "I'm from Dakar…that's the new ethnicity now in Senegal, to be from Dakar."[22]

A similar dynamic was observed in Afghanistan. "Kabuli" (people from the capital of Kabul) describes a Persianized urban identity that, while not negating ethnic heritage, influences social relationships and values. Kabulis (Pashtun and Tajik) mix freely and have been more receptive to the gospel than their rural cousins.[23]

Case studies from South Africa, the Netherlands, Mexico, Sweden, the United States, Brazil, Israel, Germany, and Singapore, demonstrate strategies that transnational newcomers and students use to negotiate identity. Some adapt with "situational ethnicity" (hiding or asserting traits situationally). Alternatively, others adopt (or accept an imposed) "hyphenated identity."[24]

In each case, adaptive identities both reflect and affect an ethnic community's interaction with other peoples and the larger society. This has important implications for evangelism and church planting. These dynamics influence a group's sense of belonging, possibilities for bonding with existing fellowships, and/or the need for new movements or compound models of church.

To illustrate this, imagine from high school chemistry how an element like Oxygen can combine with other elements to form molecules (atoms held together by chemical bonds) See Figure 11.2. (The analogy isn't perfect, but similarly, we need to envision people groups in a more "combinable" way. With whom, how, when, and in what contexts members of a community affirm "bonds," develop or reject affinities – these are questions relevant to the disciple making and church planting process.

Figure 11.1 – Ethnic Identity: Triangular Field of Meaning

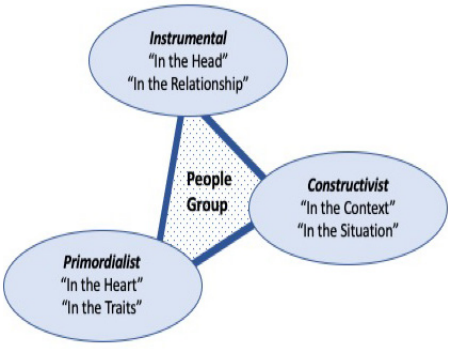
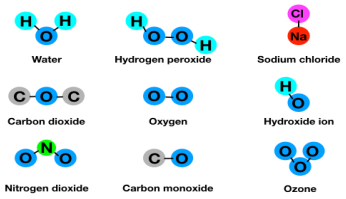


Figure 11.2 – Like molecules, members of a people group bond with others in different ways, depending on the context.



Note that this dynamism assumes the importance of "place," sensitivity to context, and the relational and situational character of ethnicity. In some contexts, communal structures are tight. In urban and diaspora settings, people often negotiate relational worlds with feelings of multiple belonging or "hybridity." Ethnic and faith identities persist, but may or may not be foregrounded.[25]

There are no perfect analogies, but for higher levels of data, we need to deploy new conceptual images and sensibilities. We need to discern peoples, places and populations where the gospel has yet to exert its catalytic force. Pioneer workers must be keen observers and "barefoot ethnographers." As urban missiologist Alan McMahan puts it, we need to be better "glue sniffers" to figure out the types and strengths of "glue" that hold people together in different networks and contexts.[26]

Multiple Tiers of Data

Third, re-envisioning people groups requires "ethnographic imagination"[27] and multiple tiers of data. The shift from a reductionist, segmented model to one that is multi-perspectival, dynamic, and field based should include:

- *processes*, social chemistry and facts on the ground;
- how *commonality* (faith, city, ethnic, nationality) is imagined or sought;
- how *difference* is encountered and dealt with;
- *intercultural* relationships, bridges and barriers between peoples;
- *diaspora* and *transnational* connections;
- styles and modes of *communication*;
- *lessons learned* from historical efforts and previous approaches;
- current *conditions*, socio-political *change* and *crises*;
- *receptivity* of sub-groups (e.g. youth, immigrants) and associations;
- *proximate* cross-cultural witnesses;
- *incorporability* into existing fellowships and churches;
- associational *bridges* (believers with organic, relational connections);
- *media* and evangelistic resources;
- ongoing *assessments* and research;
- *discernment* of what the Holy Spirit is doing.

Obviously, this data is not needed for mobilization. What we know now is sufficient for prayer and obedience!

Greater detail and refinement, what we might call "Second Tier" and "Third Tier" data, take us to a deeper level of understanding and empathy. This is useful for national research, on-site strategy, outreach and church planting. To gather, track, share, and evaluate field-generated knowledge will necessitate data-sharing platforms, secure communications, and greater collaboration in knowledge stewardship. This re-envisioning of information requires a broader range of inputs.[28] For security and practical reasons, we cannot "patch" this Second- and Third-Tier information onto our current segmented databases.

This points to another glaring gap: By and large, field workers feel divorced from the missiological conversation! Many workers complain that "nobody is listening" to them. If we are to move forward, it is essential for field workers to map the context. "Often field-based personnel are in the best position to assess whether a people group is adequately engaged, and their relative access to the Gospel…. These contextual ethnographic realities… provide important indicators for new initiatives."[29] Another way to address the disparity is through "Case Studies" that illuminate the complexities of pioneer church planting and provide "thick descriptions" of a people, event, or issue for analysis, training and application.[30]

A multi-tiered, multi-perspectival database must be functional and flexible; view people groups from multiple contextual horizons; promote communities of learning and practice across organizational lines; and contribute to sandals-on-the-ground fruitfulness. Field accessibility is critical.[31]

Re-envisioning the People of God

Finally, we need to re-envision the church as the "people of God," with a shared consciousness that celebrates yet transcends every local identity. We might revitalize this image in relation to incorporability, multi-ethnicity, and church movements.

A Place to Belong

Christian faith is "embodied" in churches. This is the *telos*, the end and purpose, of frontier missions: viable, indigenous, growing church movements among all peoples.

The gospel cannot be said to be accessible if church is not accessible. The invitation to believe in Christ is an invitation to receive not only "forgiveness of sins," but also "*a place among those* who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17–18). The church is a place for all peoples (Isaiah 56:6–8; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13–16). "A place to belong" is at the heart of the gospel!

Consequently, for mission purposes, the notion of "unreached peoples" is intrinsically linked to a concept Ralph Winter called "*incorporability.*"

> Thus, for both spiritual and practical reasons, I would be much more pleased to talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be *incorporated*, or the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable* instead of *unreached*. I feel it would be better to try to observe, not whether people are "saved" or not or somehow "reached" or not, but first whether an individual has been incorporated in a believing fellowship or not, and secondly, if a person is not incorporated, does he have the opportunity *within his cultural tradition* to be so incorporated.[32]

The "opportunity within his cultural tradition to be so incorporated" refers to the presence, or absence, of a truly viable, truly indigenous church. If people cannot be incorporated, if existing fellowships are not accessible – due to "barriers of understanding or acceptance" – to other peoples, then a new version of church is needed.

Ethnic Realities and Evangelistic Potential

We must re-envision "churches" in relation to the peoples around them. In his book *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from India*, Donald McGavran, father of the Church Growth Movement, categorized Indian churches there into nine "types." He described them based on their *"varying degrees of ethnicity"* as well as their *"evangelistic potential,"*[33] their "different relationships *to* and degrees of acceptance *by* the 'yet to believe.'"[34]

The dual concepts of "degrees of ethnicity" and "evangelistic potential" may be useful to re-envision churches in multiethnic and UPG-proximate settings. In Indonesia, an over 150,000-person multiethnic urban conglomerate with contemporary worship in the *lingua franca* Bahasa Indonesia, includes at least 3,000 Muslim background believers from a UPG![35] But to *maximize* the "evangelistic potential" of these migrant urbanites requires equipping some to *reach out* to their ethnic neighbors, and training others to *reach back* to their ethnic homeland to catalyze vernacular movements.

Church Growth Where There is No Church

We need to re-envision the connection between the frontier missions and the church growth. Amidst the global flow of goods, ideas, and people, mega-, multiethnic, and urban/regional house church networks are thriving from Argentina and Chile, to Nigeria, India, and Indonesia, as well as the West. Despite common roots and exceptions, the two streams are largely disconnected professionally and missionally.[36] Reestablishing synergy and sharing resources would advance an "all peoples" vision.

UPG enthusiasts need to deconstruct categories and recognize that church movements need not be monoethnic to engage and penetrate UPGs. Gospel freedom allows and celebrates, but does not demand, homogeneous ethnic churches. Some church movements involve ethnic blends, with homogeneity in evangelism, and heterogeneity in discipleship. Others facilitate homogeneity in smaller relational circles, and heterogeneity in larger ones. Homogeneity may suit first generation immigrants, but heterogeneity, the children of immigrants (e.g. pan-Asian and pan-Latino churches). Other churches have an ethnically dominant group plus mixed cultural groups (e.g. Persian, Arab). Mobilizing urban conglomerate churches, house church networks, and proximate believers, and purposefully connecting diaspora disciple making with other frontier initiatives, would help revitalize movement toward UPGs.[37]

Conclusion

The concept of people groups takes us to the heart of the biblical narrative. The frontier mission movement must reimagine itself in light of global realities, the persistent needs of the unevangelized, and God's desire for a people from all peoples. We need to upgrade our understandings, envision new dynamic models, and leverage the evangelistic potential of the global church to impact the remaining UPGs.

The frontier mission movement often draws its inspiration from the panorama of radiant worship in Revelation 5:9–10. As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee outlines it, the "new song" acclaims the *means* of his redeeming act ("with your blood"), the *effect* of that sacrifice ("you purchased for God"), the *breadth* of redemption ("members of every tribe and language and people and nation"), its *goal* ("made…to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God…they will reign on the earth"), and God-centered, God-ordained *climax,* "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"[38] We are invited to respond both with *wonder* and adoration, and with faithful *cruciform witness* (Revelation 6:9–11; 19:10) to "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 1:2; 20:4) before all nations.

Leonard N. (Len) Bartlotti (PhD, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies) is a mission strategist, educator, speaker and consultant. After serving many years in Central Asia, Len now helps leaders, organizations, workers and churches maximize their ministry effectiveness.

Notes

1. In the social, cultural and historical context of the Old Testament, each "nation" was distinguished by name, ethnicity, language, territory, kingship, history, and a religious system marked by lessor "gods" (idolatry) and depravity. See A. J. Köstenberger, "Nations," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, electronic ed.), 676. For example, texts from Anatolia (Asia Minor) c. 1700-1200 BC point to a region inhabited by a number of distinct peoples, including the Hittites, Luwians, Palaians, Hurrians, and Hattians. In the Hittite Empire, from the 14th C BCE, "the ethnic and cultural pluralism still increased as the political expansionism added further foreign elements to 'Hittite' culture" (Manfred Hutter, "Religion in Hittite Anatolia: Some Comments on 'Volkert Haas: Geschichte der Hethitischen Religion,'" *Numen* 44, no. 1 (Jan., 1997): 74–90. Each of these nations "had its own pantheon, and individual cult centres had their own names for deities." ("Religions of the Hittites, Hattians, and Hurrians," https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anatolian-religion/Religions-of-the-Hittites-Hattians-and-Hurrians).

2. Portions of this article are based on my paper "Rethinking Ethnicity: Implications for the People Group Approach," presented to the Rethinking People Groups Forum, Dallas, TX, September 11, 2019. I wish to express my appreciation to the participants for their helpful comments and feedback.

3. The first lists were based in part on SIL's *Ethnologue*, a catalog of the world's languages.

4. https://peoplegroups.org/. Cf. https://JoshuaProject.com also based on language and ethnicity, and the geographic distribution of such groups.

5. The question of the historical genesis, assimilation and disappearance of other people groups is left unanswered.

6. Ralph Winter tried but failed to prevent the reduction of "people groups" to ethnolinguistic criteria alone. Dave Datema, "Defining 'Unreached': A Short History," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 55. Discussions of UPGs usually include sociopeoples; due to considerations of space, I concentrate on the category of ethnicity. Winter and Koch see strategic value in working with sociopeoples "for preliminary evangelism" as an "intermediate bridge to long-range church planting goals… giving a focus for ministry among a specific sub-set of the larger society as a first step to full-blown church planting." They consider ethnolinguistic groups primary because of their endurance as endogamous, multi-generational quasi-kinship groups. Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch, "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge", in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th Ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter & Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 535.

7. For a helpful overview of the significant literature and issues, see Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions* (London: Routledge, 1996); cf. Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage Publications, 1997; 2nd edition 2008), "Identity" is one of the most widely researched subjects in every field of the social sciences. I use "identity" here as a social category (referring to a set of distinguishable persons), as well as a personal category (individual actors with self-consciousness). Cf. James D. Fearon, "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?", 1999, https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf.

8. "Ethnicity," what-when-how.com. The assumption that one's identity is "in the blood" is a driver behind commercials for Ancestry.com. Discovering they have DNA from multiple sites in Eastern Europe or Africa, a person says, "I was grateful. I just felt more connected to who I am." The DNA approach actually reinforces the opposite: It's not really "Who I am" even though one may "feel more connected." Based on test results, individuals make conscious choices, creating a symbolic ethnic representation of their reconstructed identity using identity "markers" (dress, food, etc.).

9. Anthropologists and some missiologists today acknowledge the power imbalances that shaped colonial anthropology, the colonialist paradigm of "tribe," and missionary approaches. Power dynamics continue to influence ethnicities e.g. through the nation state (which "names" and objectifies constituent "minorities"), international bodies, and social institutions (e.g. schools, universities).

10. Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, eds., "Introduction," *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), 2 (emph. added).

11. Vermeulen and Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 5.

12. Vermeulen and Cora Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 2 (emph. added), 1–9; cf. Richard E. Blanton's discussion of Barth's in-group and between-group "visual signaling," i.e. ethnic-specific behaviors constitute "a system of signals" to establish a boundary difference between groups, and to confirm belonging and commitment to the value-orientations of the community, in "Theories of ethnicity and the dynamics of ethnic change in multiethnic societies," *PNAS* 112, no. 30 (July 28, 2015): 9177. https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/112/30/9176.full.pdf. Cf. http://www.chuckiii.com/Reports/Sociology/In_what_ways_is_identity_a_social_construct.shtml.

13. Vermeulen and Govers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, 12, emph. added. See Ronald Cohen, "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7 (October 1978): 379–403, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.07.100178.002115.

14. "Ethnicity," what-when-how.com.

15. Since ethnic identity involves ascription, what others acknowledge or recognize, constraints related to heritage and cultural "givens" may apply, e.g. a Punjabi is unlikely to be accepted as Afghan.

16. Buttressed by stereotypic descriptions of shared "traits," some attractive (e.g. "generous hospitality," "colorful dress," "love music and dance"), and others from the "dark side" (e.g. "fierce warriors", deceit, blood feuds, seclusion of women), these caricatures are presumed to be relevant to mobilization, prayer and compassion. In one case, researchers cited Wikipedia as the major source of their information on a people group. A quick check revealed that over 90% of the Wikipedia citations were from newspapers and magazines. Other (readily available) scholarly sources (e.g. peer reviewed articles, books, ethnographies, dissertations and theses, etc.) were neglected.

17. This is not to disparage well-intentioned efforts to describe UPGs that have fostered awareness and global prayer. Some have argued that, however inaccurate or static, "Something is better than nothing! We do not have to pray 'with our understanding' in order to be heard!" The problem is what happens next: bad information—inaccurate, insufficient, un- or misinformed, distorted, stereotypical or promotion-driven—can lead to mis-guided agency decisions, wasted efforts and funding, unwise field initiatives, and unintended consequences among the peoples we aspire to reach.

18. Brad Gill, "Reimagining Frontier Mission," *IJFM* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 111–118; cf. "ISFM 2019 and the "Reimagining of Frontier Mission," *IJFM* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 161–2.

19. This phrase is borrowed from M.A. Seifrid's

explanation of the Pauline phrase "In Christ" as moving within a "triangular field of meaning" between three ideas of locality, instrumentality and modality, in Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid and Gerald F. Hawthorne, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity Press, 1993, e-edition), *loc. cit*.

20. Banks, *Ethnicity*, 185. We should also note here the gradual "in our head" shifts in nomenclature from "race" and "tribe" to "culture" and "ethnic group," and (within missiology) "homogeneous unit" to "people group."

21. Kazakh ethnic identity is preserved through ethnic celebrations, meetings that maintain cultural practices, and speaking Kazakh at home, while constructing a new hybrid identity based on shared religion (Islam) and Turkic roots, and the adoption of new practices, preferences and self-identity. See e.g. Yeniceri, Aslihan, "Hybridization and Kazakh ethnic identity formation" (Graduate Theses and Dissertations, Iowa State University, 2015), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/38939730.pdf.

22. Fiona McLaughlin, "The Ascent of Wolof as an Urban Vernacular and National Lingua Franca in Senegal," in eds. Cécile B. Vigouroux and Salikoko S. Mufwene, *Globalization and Language Vitality: Perspectives from Africa* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, e-book), 142–170, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/J5mvAwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA142&dq=Ethnic+identity+and+linguistic+hybridization+in+Senegal.

23. Internally displaced people and returnees from Iran, Pakistan and elsewhere and have swelled Kabul to over 5 million people; according to reports, ethnicity is a more salient identity among them, and the term Kabuli does not apply.

24. Edmund T Hamann and William England, "Conclusion - Hyphenated Identities as a Challenge to Nation-State School Practice?" (Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, 109, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2011), https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1109&context=teachlearnfacpub. Note the political and power dynamics when a "hyphenated identity" is ascribed by a government or school.

25. "A person can simultaneously hold allegiances to a neighborhood, a city, a region, a country, or a continent, or be a transmigrant in a world city or, yet, a global nomad, an employee of a transnational corporation." See https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/identity-construction. Cf. Jenkins, who notes that globalization does not always dilute ethnic identification: local and ethnic identity "each may (re)assert itself either as a defensive reaction to, or a result of, the increasingly global context of social life" (*Rethinking Ethnicity*, 2nd ed.), 45. For the way pan-Islamist sentiments can "coexist" with local forms of Muslim identity, see Darryl Li, "Taking the Place of Martyrs: Afghans and Arabs Under the Banner of Islam," *Arab Studies Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 12–39, https://ssrn.com/abstract=2262478.

26. Rethinking People Groups Forum, Dallas, TX (September 13, 2019).

27. I borrow this term from Paul Willis, *The Ethnographic Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000).

28. See Scribner, this issue. As Scribner admits, "Global people group lists, as currently conceived and structured, cannot support dynamic groupings."

29. Leonard N. Bartlotti, "Refining Our Strategies for Engaging All Peoples," *IJFM* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 21–26, https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/27_3_PDFs/refining_bartlotti.pdf.

30. Case studies are commonly used in the social sciences, and famously, by the Harvard Business School. They can can be explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, comparative, or instrumental. See e.g. Baxter, Pamela and Susan Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers," *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 (Dec 2008): 544–559, http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf. For a simple introduction to the research concept of "thick description" (promoted by anthropologists Gilbert Ryle and Clifford Geertz) and helpful sources, see Chris Drew, "5 Key Principles of 'Thick Description' in Research" (2020), https://helpfulprofessor.com/thick-description/.

31. After a few years on the field, many workers pursue an M.A. or PhD While this contributes to new knowledge, unfortunately, the knowledge tends to be individualized, constrained within publishing channels, or siloed in academia or individual ministries. There appear to be few mechanism for translating insights into community learning and upgrading of field praxis.

32. For insightful reflections on Winter's notion of incorporability, see Brad Gill, "The Unfortunate Unmarketability of 'Unincorporable,'" from which this quote is taken, http://ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_2_PDFs/IJFM_33_2-EditorialReflections.pdf.

33. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 25, 64–65, emph. added, https://books.google.com/books?id=XCaLJq3ADQgC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

34. Ibid., 2–3.

35. I am indebted to Alan McMahan for this example. It should be noted that this urban conglomerate church did not intentionally evangelize along ethnic lines or leverage ethnicity.

36. Note e.g. that the two representative professional networks (International Society for Frontier Missiology, and the Great Commission Research Network) have separate journals, conferences, and non-overlapping attendees and speakers, despite many shared concepts, principles and practices related to evangelistic growth, movements, accessibility, receptivity, diversity, innovative models, ethnicity and incorporating people into the church.

37. See e.g. GlobalGates focused on UPGs in North America's megacities https://globalgates.info/. Certain "Advocacy Networks" focused around specific UPGs in Central Asia, West Africa and elsewhere, have also shown great promise in facilitating joint ventures in strategy, media, training, and recruiting, and placing workers in diaspora, transnational and homeland engagement points.

38. G. D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 88.

Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society

By Stefan Paas

SCM Press, 2019

384 pages

USD $40.00

Reviewed by **Benjamin Espinoza**, Associate Vice President for Online Education and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology, Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester, New York.

Drawing on decades of experience and research, Dutch missiologist Stefan Paas has produced a volume that graciously articulates a missional spirituality for a secular society. Paas is concerned that missiology has been obsessed with finding the most effective missional strategies and structures, but that secularization has demonstrated its ability to become infused into the church and reshape her priorities. At the core of Paas' work is this penetrating question, "how can you keep a positive Christian identity, while knowing at the same time that the majority of the people around you does not share this identity, nor ever will?" (xvi). Paas draws on a number of different disciplines in order to build his argument – "social science, historiography, a bit of systematic theology, quite a lot of biblical theology, and some tentative exercises in practical theology" (xvii). The result is a work that will challenge Christians to rethink their missiological theology and practices.

Paas begins his work by painting a picture of secular life in Western Europe. He is concerned that many church leaders shy away from the deep challenges of secularism in hopes that their missional strategies can "overcome" the trends. Next, Paas provides an overview and robust critique of the dominant missiological models, such as the church growth, revival, and transformation models. In his view, these models are too grounded in Christendom ideology to have true impact in a secular society. For Paas, what Christians must do in secular society is draw hope and inspiration from the Old Testament prophets (the "uprooted and dispersed") and the first Christians (the "scattered and sent") – those who embraced their role as "pilgrims" and "priests" simultaneously. In the last couple of chapters, Paas puts together a vision for what it might look like for congregations to engage in mission in a secular society.

As a missiologist in Western Europe, Paas' perspective is unique. Paas is faced with the reality that secularism is the new normal, which requires the church to continually challenge its existing missional models and develop new ones. Paas notes in an early chapter that to be truly missional in an extremely secular context, one must labor intensively to yield only a handful of new converts who receive baptism – a prospect which will discourage those who embrace church growth models. But Paas does not shy away from the challenges that await missionaries and ministry leaders. Paas' argumentation is careful, and his writing style is accessible for those who value interdisciplinary thinking.

I highly recommend this work to pastors, ministry leaders, and missionaries working in a diverse array of cultural contexts. While Paas is grounded in a Western European context, his theology and vision can apply to contexts where secularism is gaining a foothold and help ministry leaders understand the challenges they will face.

For Further Reading

Paas, Stefan. *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience.* Eerdmans, 2016.
Williams, Paul. *Exiles on Mission: How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World.* Brazos, 2020.

Ministering in Patronage Cultures: Biblical Models and Missional Implications

By Jayson Georges

IVP Academic, 2019

165 pages

USD $25.00

Reviewed by **Lynn Thigpen** who has served twenty-five years in Southeast Asia and is an adjunct professor at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.

According to Jayson Georges, "patronage is the de facto system of social organization" in many societies (113). It took me a decade and a half to begin to understand patronage, but new missionaries, development workers, or NGO staff need not remain in the dark. *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* comes to the rescue as a crucial text for pre-field orientation and a resource worthy of occupying every missionary suitcase.

Ministering in Patronage Cultures begins as such a book should, with stories from the field, then contains sections covering cultural issues, biblical models, and theological concepts. These first sections comprise the majority of the book and lay a foundational understanding. The fourth and final portion turns to missional implications and more stories. My only criticism would be that the ministry section, the "ministering in patronage cultures" portion, spans only forty pages. Readers are left yearning for more stories and practical helps, demonstrating the need for a helpful sequel.

Sharing his own failings and frustrations throughout, Georges honestly explores how to participate in patronage dynamics, "I realized my initial objections to the structures of patronage came from my own pride and ethnocentrism" (125). He then makes a profound statement: "Over time I realized patronage simply uses honor as a form of payment instead of cash" (126)—a concept forever linking this book with his *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*. Along those lines, Georges also highlights the sin of ingratitude as it pertains to God as the true Patron.

Georges' book focuses on a number of vital concepts. He contrasts God-centered patronage and human-centered patronage (71) and offers advice for transforming social patronage to a more biblical or virtuous model (149). Many Western missionaries and national pastors would benefit from this model. Georges also describes what conversion to Christianity means on a social level, something Westerners can fail to remember. Leaving one's family faith might be viewed as disloyal and shameful, abandoning vital "reciprocal relationships" (106). Georges affirms that this conversion and "repentance . . . is the transfer of one's allegiance from false patrons to the true Patron, a change in patronal relationships" (105)—salvation vocabulary that much of the world can grasp.

There are very few books like *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* and few experts to educate us. Georges seeks to help answer the questions "When should I help?" and "When do I form a patronage relationship with someone?" (117) Why? Because some individualistic, non-patronage-aligned minds can be unaware that "patronage is also an enduring commitment. The relationship does not end when you leave the country or a client finds a job. Westerners can quickly forget relational obligations, but the bonds of patronage are not easily unfettered" (118). Devour the models and follow the applications and admonitions in Georges' book. Many a cross-cultural relationship may be preserved, and God may be glorified by taking heed to the insights found in this book.

For Further Reading

Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

Crook, Zeba. *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean.* New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2004.

Ephesiology: A Study of the Ephesian Movement

By Michael T. Cooper

William Carey Publishing, 2020

226 pages

USD $15.99

Reviewed by **Tom Steffen**, Emeritus professor of intercultural studies, Biola University.

While much has been written on church planting movements in the past few decades, a foundational piece was missing – until now. Much like the Church Growth Movement that began without theological underpinnings until Alan Tippett delivered, so *Ephesiology* supplies the same for today's church planting movements (CPMs).

But the author does not stop with theology. Former missionary, outreach pastor, CEO of an international NGO, and present missions executive, Michael Cooper adds to the discussion history, anthropology, strategy, reflection, and creative critique and challenge. *Ephesiology* offers a *missiological perspective* of contemporary CPMs through first-century eyes of what transpired generationally in Ephesus.

Ten chapters comprise *Ephesiology.* Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the book and discuss CPMs in Acts. Chapters 3 through 5 investigate launching a movement. Here Cooper highlights exegesis, reflection, and theology, all from a missiological perspective. Chapter 6 explores how a movement is grounded through missiological theology. Chapters 7 and 8 address leading and multiplying a movement. Cooper concludes the book by probing how movements are sustained (Chapter 9) and providing an anatomy of a movement (Chapter 10). Each chapter ends with a QR (bar code) that directs to related resources. Two appendixes and two indexes follow.

If readers think they have a good grasp of Paul and John's ministry and the church in Ephesus, *Ephesiology* may make them rethink some assumptions. Folloiwng are a few examples of Cooper's interesting ideas and observations. (1) Cooper begins by examining Ephesians, Acts, and Revelation through missiological theology ("God's self-revelation to the nations" [42]), a theology missing in most contemporary commentaries and which stands above other systems of theology (89). (2) Paul is a missiological theologian who connects God's story with the story of people. (3) Ephesians is best outlined with a center surrounded with connecting subtopics rather than the typical linear outline. (4) Reading Ephesians this way results in an indigenous theology which is the result of the hermeneutic community and Church history. (5) John connected with the Ephesians on "philosophical, religious, cultural, and ethnic levels to communicate Jesus' story in a way that it . . . become their story" (88). (6) Ephesians is written to groups of believers, not to individuals. (7) The type of deacons in Acts 6 were different from those described in 1 Timothy 3, which included women. (8) Paul's reason for writing Ephesians was not to produce a systematic theology. (9) Learning through orality was necessary then and remains so for the majority of the world today. (10) Paul's ministry approach did not include contextualization or redemptive analogies. *Ephesiology* is not a commentary on Ephesians, rather it is a "missiological theology of the Bible" (2) focused on Ephesians that will challenge the basic assumptions of many pastors and church multipliers at home and abroad.

For Further Reading

Schattner, Frank. *The Wheel Model: Catalyzing Sustainable Church Multiplication Movements.* William Jessup University, 2014.

Global Arts and Christian Witness: Exegeting Culture, Translating the Message, and Communicating Christ

By Roberta R. King

Baker Academic, 2019

246 pages

USD $26.99

Reviewed by **Brent H. Burdick**, D. Min. Adjunct Professor of Missions, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Director of the Lausanne Global Classroom.

Engaging the arts in Christian worship is an important part of many contemporary churches. Using lighting, drama, live painting on stage, and other media, Christian worshippers are inspired and connected to God in powerful ways. In her insightful book, Global Arts and Christian Witness, Roberta King, explores how the arts can be a significant force for global Christian witness and mission as well.

Drawing on her experience in Africa as an ethnomusicologist and intercultural communication specialist, King explores how global arts, which are simply localized expressions of art found in cultures around the world, can be used to connect cultures and communities more closely to the gospel and to each other. Art is a way of helping people encounter Christ in culturally relevant ways. Global arts bring people together from varied backgrounds and religions, forming a level playing field upon which dialog and peacemaking can begin.

In the early part of the book, King discusses how "witness and the arts require negotiating faith and culture" (25), which lays a theoretical foundation for understanding cultural contexts as global arts are employed in witness for Christ. The middle section examines how the message of Christ can be translated effectively using global arts. The final section presents examples and best practices for engaging missionally with global arts, showing how the arts can be used to build bridges and form relationships to begin interfaith dialog. Some of the vignettes shared are powerful stories of how 'musicking,' poetry, and other global art forms have helped relationships form and opened a door for sharing the gospel.

If there is anything that would have been helpful to add to the book, it would concern ways of reducing the negative influence of commercialized pop art (movies, music, etc.) upon globalized culture today. King describes global arts as tools for gospel witness, but they are also tools that are used to lead people astray and keep them in bondage. Many cultures struggle to make sense of the powerful messages viewed in the media and heard on the airwaves. The powerful influence of art and media on hearts and cultures must be mitigated if Christians hope to gain a hearing among non-believers. Understanding culture and using global arts for gospel witness therefore becomes much more important to counterbalance this effect and offer a relevant alternative to those messages.

King's focus is primarily on using global arts for cross-cultural witness. This book, therefore, is an important addition to the library of anyone thinking about using local or culturally meaningful expressions of art to share the gospel in those settings.

For Further Reading

Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. IVP Books, 2008.
Krabill, James R., et al. *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. William Carey Library, 2013.
Schrag, Brian. *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals*. Edited by James Krabill. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013.

For the Joy: 21 Missionary Mother Stories of Real Life and Faith

Edited by Miriam Chan and Sophia Russell

William Carey Publishing, 2019

182 pages

USD $13.99

Reviewed by **Jessica Duisberg**, Assistant Director, Innovation for Vocation Project, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

"Missionary mothers are reportedly least likely to thrive in the field," write authors Miriam Chan and Sophia Russell (vii). Propelled by her own struggles, Chan recruited Russell to help her describe the stress mothers face on the mission field, their joys, and the need for better support and care. The result is a new book, *For the Joy: 21 Missionary Mother Stories of Real Life and Faith.*

"Real" is the right word for the subtitle. While many missionary stories portray the heroic obedience and sacrifice of missionaries, this book is a testament to the reality of their weakness and worry. These twenty-one 8- to 10-page stories are written by Australian women who share vulnerably about their time as "mums" on the mission field. Many of them learned to be mothers at the same time they learned a new language, navigated new streets, cooked new food, adopted new customs, and forged new friendships. Some were overjoyed, some overwhelmed. Some lost children, and some adopted children. Some faced persecution from those they served. Some faced their own anxiety, guilt, or need for control. They all discovered new depths of God's grace.

Without shortchanging the faith of those who answer God's call to missions, these mums make *God's* faithfulness the centerpiece of their raw experiences of "isolation, heartsick worry, …gnawing guilt…and deep joy" (v). Red remembers leaving Australia with her family: "I try my hardest to fake coping. In the short term, this surprisingly helps" (1). Gabrielle finally accepts that she is not going to live up to her image of a good mom: "I have found sweet release. I am a bad mum.… I could rescue my kids from all the hurt, but I won't. … I put myself in Abraham's shoes. When I cried…, when I trusted and when I doubted, [God] loved. He provided. And I trust Him to do it again" (33–34). Having moved her family across cultures multiple times, Wendy is moved in turn by her grown daughter's letter, "Thank you for being as loving and proactive in your parenting as you are in serving God" (169).

Naomi Reed notes in her introduction, "Shared stories… remind us that we're living a shared life" (v). In this spirit, *For the Joy* is for men and women looking for encouragement in their current mission work. It is for parents anywhere raising children amidst stress and mess. It is for adults and young adults considering missions. (Some stories have a high level of emotional intensity and would be better for young adults or older youth than for children.) Moreover, fitting none of these categories myself, I can affirm that this book is for all those who have struggled through seasons of life wondering if they are really doing what God called them to do.

For Further Reading

Eenigenburg, Sue and Robynn Bliss. *Expectations and Burnout: Women Surviving the Great Commission*. William Carey Library, 2010.
Reed, Naomi. *My Seventh Monsoon: A Himalayan Journey of Faith and Mission.* Ark House Press, 2007.

Listening Between the Lines: Thinking Missiologically about Romanian Culture

By Cameron D. Armstrong

FaithVenture Media, 2018

198 pages

USD $10.00

Reviewed by **Gerald Roe**, professor and chair of the Intercultural Studies Department, North Greenville University.

Since the fall of communism in 1989, Romania has been a focal point for the efforts of Western missions and missionaries. One writer states, "Probably no other former satellite country has experienced such a spiritual awakening with hundreds of new churches formed since the 1989 revolution" (https://www.abwe/romania). Unquestionably, if this assessment is true, Romania's spiritual status can in large part be credited to the last thirty plus years of tireless missionary attention, both short and long term.

To say that all those who have served in Romania were helpful would be both inaccurate and naïve; some were more effective than others. According to author Cameron D. Armstrong, the issue of effectiveness in Romania is one of understanding the importance of "sharing the gospel in culturally appropriate forms, a process missiologists call contextualization …" (Back Cover). For Armstrong, the critical missiological issue in Romania is the building of contextually appropriate, culturally sensitive relationships in all areas of life.

Armstrong brings six years of on-field mission experience in Romania informed by PhD studies in Intercultural Education at the Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, to full effect in this book. His approach to the subject is grounded in extensive qualitative research. The result of this research is seven well informed essays using both academic research and verbal data gathered from personal, face-to-face interviews. Armstrong explains this approach by saying, "My overall hope is to give an 'insider' view of Romanian culture so that Western missionaries like me will actually learn from the source: from Romanians themselves" (v).

Armstrong's purpose is not to, as he explains, "give definitive answers to cultural questions …" (vi). Rather, he wishes to provide a conceptual framework around which Christians – Romanians or non-Romanians – can wrestle with the essential questions regarding the best way forward missiologically, in Romania.

To build this framework, Armstrong utilizes several disciplines related to missiology, namely anthropology, cross-cultural communication, and world religions, specifically looking at Eastern Orthodoxy. Each discipline is used to undergird his argument regarding the vital importance of understanding, creating, and maintaining contextualized relationships to avoid the danger of overlooking the culture into which the missionary – long or short term – is sent.

Armstrong's work is thorough and well written. His use of interview verbatims and case studies gives life to the work's wealth of research data. His passion for Romania is clearly felt, even in working with purely academic material. There are, however, points in the book when connecting the seven essays to one another as a unified whole focused on a single purpose seems rather strained. Still, even at those points, the strength of Armstrong's purpose and argument are enough to keep the book's message convincing and tightly focused.

For anyone interested in mission to Romania, or Eastern Europe generally, this work is well worth reading. Additionally, for those interested to engage in conversation regarding contextualization and sharing the gospel through building culturally appropriate relationships, this book is highly recommended.

Mission after Pentecost: The Witness of the Spirit from Genesis to Revelation

By Amos Yong

Baker Academic, 2019

300 pages

USD $18.49

Reviewed by **Cameron D. Armstrong**, International Mission Board, Bucharest, Romania.

"Yong's readings of biblical texts explode preconceived notions of God's triadic presence and activity in the world." Thus says one of the endorsers of Yong's *Mission after Pentecost.* While I hesitate to use the word "explode," this treatise is indeed a substantive corrective to mission texts on the Holy Spirit.

Mission after Pentecost is at once a work of biblical studies, pneumatology, and missiology. Yong analyzes biblical passages concerning the work of the divine Spirit, showing how they relate to mission in the twenty-first century. Chapters one through four discuss Old Testament occurrences of *ruah*. Proceeding canonically, Yong demonstrates that the Holy Spirit empowers both destructive and renewing acts that simultaneously purify God's people (centripetal) and witness to surrounding nations of the justice and glory of the God of Israel (centrifugal). Chapters five through eight concern New Testament references, although Yong selects only those passages where he views pneumatology intersecting with missiology. As in the Old Testament, the Spirit both refines God's people and empowers witness, while at the same time exalting the incarnated Jesus.

Two significant strengths of the book are noteworthy. First, Yong is to be commended for another prolifically researched study. Conversing with myriad authors on pneumatology and missiology, including several vignettes from Majority World scholars, Yong draws important conclusions for future missionary imagination. Second, Yong calls attention to the Spirit's empowering of socioeconomic and political change. Yong rightly believes that renewal is not simply a spiritual matter but has ramifications for all segments of culture.

Two potential weaknesses ought also to be highlighted. First, evangelical readers might take issue with Yong's acceptance of historical-critical stances, such as Isaiah having three or more authors. Although Yong partially explains his reasoning, he appears to take such stances as established fact. Second, confusion may occur with Yong's decision not to capitalize *holy spirit* or its synonyms, such as *divine breath.* Yong does this an effort to not read post-Nicene trinitarian formulas into the Bible. Yet it is questionable that reading Scripture without Nicene conceptualizations is helpful (or possible), since even New Testament writers viewed the divine breath as the Godhead who ignites and empowers Christian witness.

All told, Yong's *Mission after Pentecost* is a formidable contribution to biblical studies. Any mission-minded Christian, including those outside charismatic circles, ought to consider Yong's careful analyses of the "missionary deity" (14). Focusing on the ways and movements of the divine Spirit, as outlined in Scripture, will bring much-needed correctives to how and to what end missions is empowered.

For Further Reading

Ma, Wonsuk, Karkkainen, Veli-Matti, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity.* Regnum, 2014.
Yong, Amos. *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology.* Baker Academic, 2005.

Missionaries, Mental Health, & Accountability: Support Systems in Churches and Agencies

Edited by Jonathan Bonk, J. Nelson Jennings, Jinbong Kim, and Jae Hoon Lee

Global Mission Leadership Forum

William Carey Publishing, 2019

325 pages

USD $19.99

Reviewed by **Nathaniel (Than) Veltman** who currently serves as Mission Scholar in theology and community development with United World Mission's Theological Education Initiative at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The issue of mental health is a serious global issue and missionaries are not immune. Indeed, the demands of missionary service may even amplify some of the challenges of mental health. These various challenges are the focus of this book. Rooted in a June 2019 conference of the same title hosted by the Korean Global Mission Leaders Forum, the book discusses issues ranging from despair, disillusionment, and anger to neurodevelopmental disorders in children, marital conflict, sexual addiction, and trauma. Attention is also given to member care issues relating to cross-cultural emotional stress and retirement. All of this is bookended by biblical studies of mental health.

Central to this book is the concern that "missionaries need to be valued as people, not tools.… the measure of success needs to be drawing near to God, not how much fruit one bears" (45) and that "missionaries are not end products" (55). Each chapter, which includes a response to the main discussion, presents case studies and analysis of specific areas of concern for mental health and discusses potential tools for both the missionary and member care teams. For example, in discussing trauma, one author weaves together real-life experiences with stories of trauma in the Bible, such as those of Abraham and Esther, and offers concrete suggestions for member care (158–166). The result is a wealth of wisdom and possible ways to respond to and care for missionaries in their journey through trauma into a deeper relationship with God.

Written by both Koreans and westerners, the book focuses primarily on Korean missionaries and agencies with a recognition that mental health extends beyond Korea. Of particular value for the larger mission and missionary-sending enterprise is the insightful framework for cultural reflection and analysis. The cultural dynamics of the missionaries' own culture, such as guilt vs. shame and time vs. event orientation for example, can result in varying mental health challenges that require careful examination to address them adequately (78). In this sense, knowing the missionary's own culture is just as important as understanding the host culture.

By generating and stimulating conversation around mental health issues among missionaries using real stories, this book achieves its goal of drawing attention to the humanity of missionaries and their need for greater member care and support. Some broader engagement with mental health research, particularly with disabilities studies and the conversation between medical and social models of mental health, would add additional nuance in identifying the influence of social groups such as supporters and sending churches on the mental health of missionaries. Nonetheless, the various topics discussed within this book are perceptive and timely. The holistic approach to mental health highlighted throughout will prove useful for both missionaries and mission-sending agencies. Church mission pastors and leaders will also find practical insights and tools for supporting missionaries before, during, and after their time of service.

For Further Reading

Baker, Dwight P., ed. *The Missionary Family: Witness, Concerns, Care*. Evangelical Missiological Society Series, No. 22. William Carey Library, 2014.

Byun, Eddie. *Praying for Your Missionary: How Prayers from Home Can Reach the Nations*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018.

Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches

Edited by Len Tang and Charles E. Cotherman

InterVarsity Press, 2019

294 pages

USD $35.00

Reviewed by **David R. Dunaetz** who was a church planter in France for seventeen years and is currently Associate Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University.

Neither flourishing as a church planter nor starting a church which flourishes is easy. Members of the faculty and advisory board of Fuller Theological Seminary's church planting program have put together a somewhat eclectic collection of chapters discussing what will make it more likely that US church planters and their young churches will flourish. Coming from a broad range of theological backgrounds, the authors fit church planting into a wide *missio dei* framework: Churches should be *missional*, an instrument for bringing the Kingdom of God to US culture, and they should be *a hermeneutic of the gospel*, demonstrating what the gospel means in their context.

Sent to Flourish is divided into four parts, (1) A biblical theology of church planting, (2) spiritual formation and health of the church planter, (3) contextualization of the gospel in multicultural America, and (4) developing a church planting strategy with the goal, interestingly, of planting reproducing churches, and not especially of planting a large church.

Church planting in the United States can be quite different than the pioneer church planting with which many missionaries are familiar. For example, several authors consider local churches to be temporary, present in a community and relevant for a limited period of time, typically less than one hundred years (233, 238). Several authors assume that the church planter will be able to recruit a rather substantial launch team with mature believers who are gifted apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. There is an emphasis on finding the most receptive people to the gospel, in contrast to communicating the gospel to those who have the least access to it (249).

Nevertheless, there are several important principles which are thoroughly developed, and which are quite useful to missionaries in less evangelized parts of the world. There is a strong emphasis on getting regular members involved in ministry and leadership and developing spiritually healthy leaders which are necessary for a spiritually healthy church. This is in contrast to focusing on professionally prepared programs which play upon the consumer mentality in order to attract new members, a strategy often seen in megachurches.

A key theme throughout the book is that church planting is difficult and that the church planter is not likely to flourish without a close relationship to God. The spiritual disciplines of solitude, meditation on Scripture, sabbath keeping, physical fitness, and spiritual direction are all encouraged.

An exceptionally important idea often not seen in the literature concerns the importance of experimentation, evaluation, and rapid change in young churches (232). Based on the principles of Eric Ries' *The Lean Startup*, such experimentation, learning, and quick adaptation provide a framework that will make young churches more likely to flourish.

Although some evangelicals may not appreciate the theological diversity found in some of the authors, *Sent to Flourish* is an excellent introduction to understanding contemporary church planting in the United States and some of its principles are relevant to missionaries doing pioneer church planting.

For Further Reading

Ott, Craig, and Gene Wilson. 2011. *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*. Baker Academic.
Stetzer, Ed, and Daniel Im. 2016. *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches that Multiply*. B & H Academic.

Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying

By Victor John

WIGTake Resources, 2019

244 pages

USD $18.95

Reviewed by **Chris Galanos**, the Founding and Lead Pastor of Experience Life Church in Lubbock, Texas.

Anyone current on missiological thinking and practice in recent decades probably has an opinion about Church Planting Movements – pro, con, skeptical, concerned, curious, or excited. Many of those opinions are based on anecdotes or second-hand (or even third-hand) reports about movements. Few of us have had opportunity to visit a purported Church Planting Movement – to ask questions and see for ourselves what really is (or isn't) happening. The book *Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying* offers such a first-hand description of what has been described as one of the largest and longest-lasting movements currently happening in India, and in the world.

Whether one approaches the book with skepticism, curiosity, or eagerness, most readers will find that this in-depth report confronts some of their stereotypes about Church Planting Movements. Research teams have measured and assessed the movement in 1996, 2000, 2008, and 2016. But the book doesn't set out to claim great numbers. It simply describes the dynamics of this work over the past twenty plus years, through the voice of Victor John and nine other leaders of the movement.

The early chapters provide background information: "Before the Breakthrough," "Breakthrough Beginnings" and "Breakthrough in Caste." Chapter 4 tells about one of the Bhojpuri movement's key access ministries, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), "one of the most successful and effective strategies in facilitating and accelerating this movement" (31). These CLCs offer a variety of services such as anti-drug awareness programs, women empowerment programs, and educational programs. These programs give the CLC leaders a platform to "incarnate Christ's love to people who would otherwise never [have] heard the good news or see it lived out in their context" (33).

Chapters 7–10 describe the impact of the Bhojpuri movement. It has touched not just adults but also children, not just rural areas but also urban, and not just Hindu-background peoples but also Muslim-background peoples as well.

Chapter 12 elucidates one of the principles that guides the movement: a "Culture of Empowerment" (176). This principle helps explain the rapid spread of disciples and churches: Ordinary believers are entrusted to share the good news, make disciples, and form new groups as soon as they become followers of Jesus.

Since much of this story sounds unusual to Western Christians who have not seen such movements, the authors devote Chapter 13 to answering questions readers may have about various aspects of the movement.

The book doesn't try to answer every possible question about this ministry. But it will be informative for missionaries, pastors, and anyone who wants to better understand the dynamics of a Church Planting Movement happening in a very challenging context. Whether one approaches the book as an advocate or a skeptic, it makes a useful contribution to any ongoing discussion about Church Planting Movements.

Emerging Faith: Lessons from Mission History in Asia

Edited by Paul H. De Neui

William Carey Publishing, 2020

232 pages

USD $17.99

Reviewed by **Birgit Herppich**, Affiliate Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies Fuller Theological Seminary, International Membership Department Coordinator WEC International.

The declared desire of this compendium of articles is that we may learn from the lessons and mistakes of the past. It presents multiple perspectives on contemporary missionary engagement in Asian societies.

The first part focuses on key people in Asian mission history, the second part on regional overviews. Each chapter outlines the events and draws lessons and missiological conclusions. These reflections on missionary thought and methodology in Asian history are highly valuable and applicable for not only those interested in the historical and geographical context covered by each chapter, but also for a broad missionary audience.

A surprising first chapter recounts the history of the exponential spread of Buddhism in the third century BCE that any missionary among Buddhist peoples should be aware of. It shows that we can learn from the missionary efforts of other religious movements – in this case, things like the persuasive power of a drastic conversion, living out attractive ethics, respectful treatment of everyone, and engaging in meaningful dialogue with people of other convictions.

There are excellent chapters on the Jesuits' daring contextualization in China and Tibet, "karmic monastic communities" in China, and unintended offenses in missionary communication in Thailand. There are also very helpful overviews and analyses of history of missions in Southeast Asia, China, Tibet, and Cambodia, a fascinating chapter on the effects of the Taiping Uprising (1850–64), and an astute analysis of causes behind the severe persecution of "Kirishitans" in Japan's Edo period (1603–1868). The final chapter contrasts the generally individualistic outlook and dualistic approach in the West with the collective identity and holistic view of reality in Asian Buddhist countries.

Local voices are represented in several chapters directly as most authors are either Asian or have lived and worked in Asia for many years. However, the contributions of indigenous mission agencies would be worthy of greater exploration. One chapter explicitly presents the work of three Thai missionaries, but unfortunately, it does not fully address the issues that indigenous Christian workers may encounter dealing with foreign missions. Many chapters are long on the historical account of events and could have investigated contemporary missiological implications in more depth.

Several common themes surface repeatedly: The complications often brought to Christian missions by geopolitical circumstances, conflicts, and relationships, and the need to understand and study other cultures and religions, their language, writings and thought patterns. Many chapters emphasize the crucial importance of respect towards and an honest, open dialogue with people of other convictions. Finally, especially for Western missionaries in Asia, it is essential to understand the collectivistic culture and identity which is so different from Western individualism and strategic approaches to mission.

Overall, it is greatly encouraging to observe that, despite persecutions, political upheavals, strong competing religious convictions among Christians, and the mistakes and failures of missionaries, God has built his church throughout Asia, a church that is already sending out many missionaries to other parts of the world.

This highly valuable collection gives the readers much food for thought and encourages them to continue exploring lessons from missions in Asia (and elsewhere), in order to more respectfully, insightfully, and sensitively engage with people in Asian Buddhist cultures. By doing this, we will be more successful in introducing people to the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ.

Diaspora in New York Metro

Significantly unreached people group communities and gospel needs of diaspora peoples in the Big Apple.

DIASPORA IN NEW YORK METRO

4,000,000+ UNREACHED PEOPLE IN THE METRO AREA

2,000,000
JEWS IN METRO NEW YORK

1,000,000
MUSLIMS IN METRO NEW YORK

70,000
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND VISITING SCHOLARS

800,000
ETHNIC CHINESE IN METRO NEW YORK

500,000
HINDUS IN NEW YORK CITY

30,000
BUDDHISTS IN NEW YORK CITY

48 SIGNIFICANTLY UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP COMMUNITIES

14	26	2	3	4
JEWISH GROUPS	MUSLIM GROUPS	SIKH GROUPS	HINDU GROUPS	BUDDHIST GROUPS

33% OF THE TOP 100 MOST UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS IN NORTH AMERICA ARE LOCATED IN THE NEW YORK METRO

20% OF RESIDENTS IN NEW YORK METRO ARE UNREACHED

2,000 FOREIGN-BASED BUSINESSES ARE LOCATED IN NEW YORK CITY—MORE THAN ANY OTHER U.S. CITY.

纽约城

48% OF NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS SPEAK A NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THEIR HOMES.

GOSPEL NEEDS:

PRAY FOR UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

SEND CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES

PLANT PEOPLES-SPECIFIC CHURCHES

Find more more info, resources, and ways to engage at: MissioNexus.org/diaspora-new-york-metro/

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