Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms
Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups

by Leonard N. Bartlotti

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Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the Evangelical Missions Quarterly and is reprinted by permission. It was presented at the annual meetings of the ISFM 2020.

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.

> 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.

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 1 below.

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.

Figure 1. Ethnic Identity: Triangular Field of Meaning
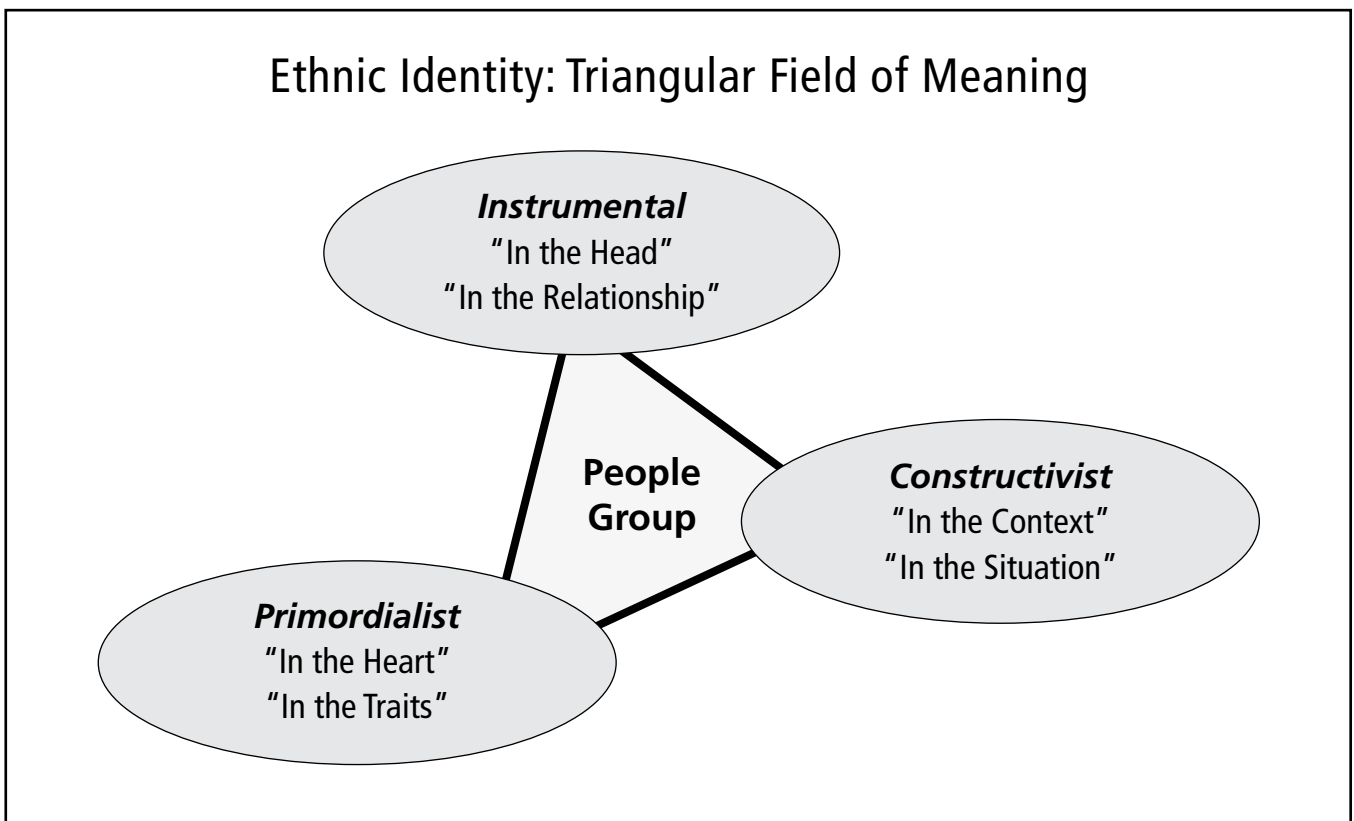
For example, a Kazakh in Turkey preserves Kazakh ethnicity, but constructs a Turkish Kazakh identity. This allows him/her to negotiate more advantageous social connections and a sense of belonging.[21] Migration also fosters a more fluid ethnic identity.

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 2 below. 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 disciplemaking and church planting process.

Figure 2. Like molecules, members of a people group bond with others in different ways, depending on the context.
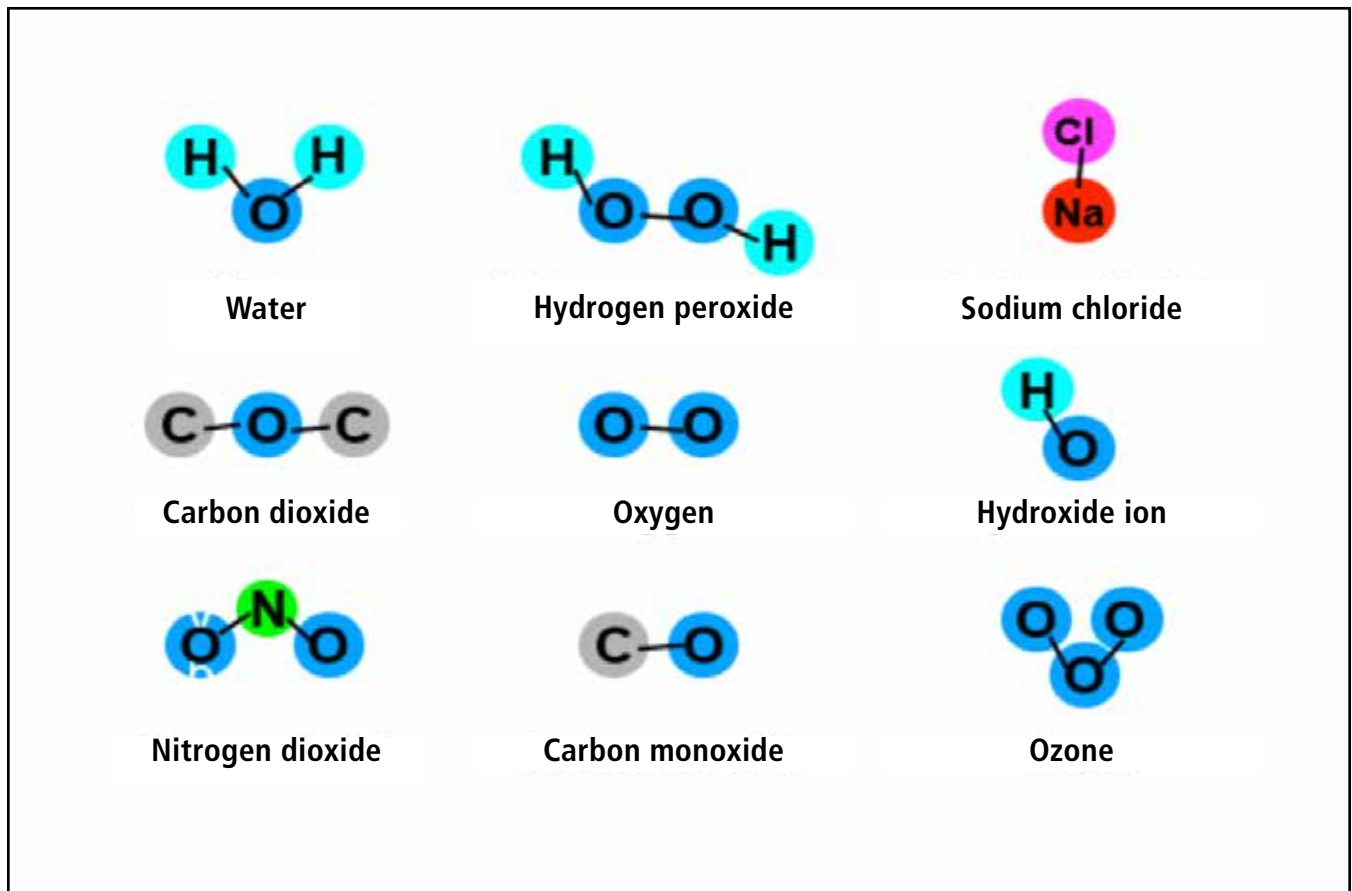
Note that this dynamism assumes the importance of "place," sensitivity to context, and the relational and situational character of ethnicity. In some contexts, communal structures are tight. In urban and diaspora settings, people often negotiate relational worlds with feelings of multiple belonging or "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, ethnicity, 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.

> For both spiritual and practical reasons, I would rather talk about the presence of a church allowing people to be *incorporated,* or the absence of a church leaving people *unincorporable* instead of *unreached.*

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 frontier missions and 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 group (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. **IJFM**

Endnotes

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 lesser "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 subset 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 misguided 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 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 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 Ph.D. 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 mechanisms 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.