

Revisiting the Homogeneous Unit Principle

The Homophilous Unit Paradox: Church Planting Movements Within and Beyond the Oikos

by Warrick Farah

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At a fundamental level, the discipline of frontier missiology is based on “crossing difference:” dissimilarities between peoples are significant enough to require an intentional apostolic effort to engage such peoples. By contrast, much of contemporary missiology is based on “uniting difference:” distinctions between peoples are harmful to the unity of Church and a pastoral response requires the ministry of reconciliation. In this regard, Donald McGavran’s infamous Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) serves as an inflection point between frontier missiology and contemporary missiology. The apparent contradiction lies between an apostolic function and a pastoral function, both of which are needed, but at different times and in different ways. Phenomenologically, church planting movements (CPMs) highlight this tension. In this lecture, after presenting three short case studies introducing CPM’s intersection with the HUP, I’ll share what I’ve discovered specifically as it relates to the nature of church multiplication within networked *oikos* churches. Along the way, I’ll make two proposals: 1) that “homophilous” is a more appropriate term than “homogeneous,” and 2) the HUP is better understood as a “paradox” and not a “principle.”

Vignette 1: The Hararghe Oromo in Ethiopia and People Blindness

Our first story comes from Ethiopia. I interviewed an Ethiopian missiologist who researched the Hararghe Oromo people a number of years ago. This is a least-reached Muslim people group of more than seven million people with their own language and customs. Evangelical Amharic-speaking churches were geographically prevalent among the Oromo. However, only 300 believers from the Hararghe Oromo attended these Amharic churches. To join the church, they had to change their dress, language, and culture in order to assimilate. As a result of this research, ministries were launched to specifically engage the Hararghe Oromo and encourage their own expression of Church. Today, there are several streams of movements and several organizations working within the

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Hararghe Oromo, but this movement only started *after* the Amharic churches and organizations became aware of them. As has been said, *you cannot reach what you do not see*.

A similar case exists in Lebanon. Lebanese Sunni Arabs represent a population of around 1.5 million. After 150 years of evangelical ministry, there are only a few hundred known believers from a Lebanese Sunni background. There are probably hundreds of other cases like this across the world, an example of what Ralph Winter famously called “people blindness” and why frontier missiology involves crossing difference. This vignette also illustrates the axiom: *Every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it is getting*.

Vignette 2: Former Drug Dealers as “Units” Reaching Islands in Southeast Asia

Wimba was a college student who was arrested for selling drugs in order to pay for his studies. A local movement catalyst met him during his prison ministry, and their mentoring relationship lasted around three months. When they met, they discussed heart transformation, inner healing, and studied the Bible. On the third week, Wimba came to faith in Christ, and he was able to form a group in the jail to discuss what he was learning. After studying Acts 13, Wimba and the catalyst began to talk about how to reach other islands. Wimba went back to his island after getting out of prison, but unfortunately, Wimba and the catalyst lost contact with each other for about one year.

When they had reestablished contact, the catalyst learned that Wimba had been busy ministering to other drug dealers with whom he had previously worked. He didn’t have any other mentors, so he just used what had been modeled to him by the catalyst. Wimba went to prisons and began to find other drug dealers; he also studied inner healing and heart transformation with them while encouraging those who came to faith to start new groups. In his first three months, Wimba led twelve people to the Lord and began to disciple them. Out of the twelve, eight became fruitful and were able to form between three to five groups each. At the time of the case study, there were five new islands with discipleship groups on them.

After reflecting on this story, the catalyst, who was himself a Southeast Asian with a missiological degree, said:

When we start a movement, we need to stay with people from the same profession. In this case, former drug dealers, but in other cases, people from the same families or the

same people groups. These people make better groups that can reproduce, and then, we still have many islands who can be reached if we are committed to moving across boundaries.

Vignette 3: The Listening Movement and Inter-caste Communion in India

Our final vignette is from a mission partnership between the Walkers, an American couple, and Sanjay, an Indian movement catalyst from a Christian background. They refer to it as “The Listening Movement” because they listen to God speak through the Bible. Starting since 2011, churches have consistently multiplied beyond the fourth generation in many places. In a few locations, it has reached more than twenty generations. It has now spread to six geographical regions, multiple languages, and multiple religious backgrounds. Only a handful of churches use special buildings or rented spaces: nearly all are micro-churches meeting in a home, a courtyard, or under a tree.

As in all movements, issues arise that must be addressed. A few years ago, Sanjay discovered that some churches in The Listening Movement were not taking communion in their worship service. The leaders explained, “It is difficult to take the Lord’s Supper across caste lines.” With advice from the Walkers, Sanjay did a series of discovery Bible studies with the leaders about obedience and unity in Christ. Finally, after listening to the Bible together, these leaders came to the conclusion that, “If I am in Jesus, I am no longer a Brahman or whatever caste I was born into. I can either be a Brahman or in Jesus, but I cannot be both. If that’s the option, then I want to be in Jesus.”

After declaring that they wanted to be in Jesus, the leaders did something seldom seen in their context. They apologized in front of each other without attempting to save face or defend themselves. They admitted, “I’m sorry. I was wrong,” both to Sanjay and to their disciples. After apologizing, the leaders intentionally gathered multiple churches with mixed-caste background people, starting the practice of communion together.

The CPM Origin Story

These vignettes point to the interesting relationship between the HUP and CPM today. In addressing this complicated relationship, we’ve already heard a lot in these presentations about the HUP, so let me talk specifically about CPM which appears to be a wide phenomenon in the world today, mostly occurring in Muslim and Hindu contexts among the least reached. I’m happy to point you to *Motus Dei*¹ which is a recent volume of research-based missiology on this subject. CPM is not simply

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an expatriate missionary conversation. Most movements, as much as eighty to ninety percent, are started by other near-culture movements.² CPM is now part of our understanding of the maturation of World Christianity.

Understanding the origin story of CPM will help us see its relationship to the HUP. The story starts in the early twentieth century with Roland Allen. Allen, building off the work of people like Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, and John Nevius, further developed the famous “three-self” formula, emphasizing the indigeneity of local churches. Advancing the conversation, Donald McGavran popularized the understanding of “people movements” and the significance that social ties play in multi-individual conversions. Of course, he built off Waskom Pickett as well.

Then, Ralph Winter at Lausanne ’74 and his work with the *Perspectives* curriculum focused the conversation on the unreached and church multiplication. And so, the ideas of indigeneity, social networks, unreached, and multiplication laid the missiological foundation for CPM. The first time I saw this term CPM used was actually in the book *DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation) 2000* published in the late ’80s.³ When CPM was used, it was connected with the US Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures), although Winter himself noted that he did not like the phrase CPM when he reviewed David Garrison’s book by that title.⁴

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A missiology of church planting movements finds its origins in the twilight of the Church Growth Movement. In the 1990s, David Garrison led two different focus groups with other “strategy coordinators” serving in least-reached peoples. Using multiple whiteboards, they discussed the movements that had been happening, and with the noted commonalities between them, Garrison published a booklet in 1999 entitled *Church Planting Movements (CPM)*. It was so popular that they translated it into more than forty languages. And then five years later, as the numbers of church planting movements continued to grow, it was expanded into a book published by the same title.⁵ So in the early 2000s we begin to see church planting movements become a more widely understood or recognized phenomenon in missions discourse.⁶

Church planting movements were originally defined as a “rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweep through a people group or population segment.”⁷ This is itself a curious phrase seemingly related to the HUP, a “population segment.” Garrison also described ten universals found in all CPMs—from prayer and evangelism all the way to rapid reproduction and healthy churches. The conversation on CPM has continued to evolve, but, regarding the HUP, the baseline idea of a movement happening within a “population segment” seems to have remained.

People Movements and Church Planting Movements

Initially, many believed that CPM was simply a continuation of McGavran’s “people movements” concept. However, CPMs are best viewed as a specific type of people movement and the two terms are not interchangeable. For instance, McGavran’s “people movements” focused on the decision-making processes of multi-individual conversions in culturally homogeneous contexts. In contrast, CPM focuses on the end result, which is a multiplication of indigenous churches. Also, McGavran argued for a harvest principle to responsive peoples, but in contrast, CPMs focus on non-Christian contexts regardless of any perceived receptivity. Finally, “people movements” missiology was developed during the incredible expansion of Christianity in the twentieth century, documenting a *conversion to Christianity*, whereas CPMs are more intentional about *discipleship* and seem to be less related to structures and institutions related to Christendom or traditional Christianity.

There are also a number of related missiological conversations over this time frame that should not be confused with the CPM story. For instance, we need to distinguish the mission-al church, insider movements, World Christian revitalization movements, and house church movements. These, of course, have some overlap with CPMs, but they’re substantially different conversations. These other phenomena are not talking about the generational, multiplicative, and movemental aspect of church reproduction that you see in CPM.

The HUP in CPM? Primary and Secondary Sources of Data

Definitionally, the phenomenology of CPM is a moving target: there are movement engagements, emerging movements, growing movements, and established movements. Importantly, CPMs are about generational growth, where the churches reproduce, unlike a “saturation model” or a “cell church” model where there’s a strong centralized institution that establishes individual churches which may or may not reproduce on their own. Instead, CPM’s focus is on reproduction and on

generational growth. The research I did for this article comes from established CPMs where there are consistent fourth-generation churches in multiple streams.

Similar to all discourses, criticism of CPM missiology exists. It has been criticized for theological pragmatism, rejection of cultural Christian traditions, a focus on rapidity, and for a “primitivist” ecclesiology. I believe there are helpful responses to these objections (which sometimes stem from misunderstandings). I refer you to *Motus Dei*, especially to chapter three.⁸ But my concern is not in offering an apologetic for the CPM discourse, but rather an investigation into what is really happening at the ground level of these movements regarding the HUP. Good qualitative research asks, “What is going on behind what is going on?” I aim to follow the data where it leads.

For this article, I conducted seventeen interviews and e-mail exchanges with movement practitioners. I visited four movements in two countries in South Asia and performed numerous focus groups on this subject. I also read more than forty contemporary case studies of CPMs in different contexts.

Since CPM is a such a large phenomenon, I must reiterate that I’m not a spokesperson for these movements. I’m also not an apologist for CPM or disciple making movements (DMMs). My bias would tend to be pro-movement (and I am not really *anti-* other approaches!), but I’m also critical of certain popular level presentations of movements missiology. As a researcher looking at this issue phenomenologically, I am committed to a “hermeneutic of suspicion.” This value reflects one of the reasons we established the Motus Dei Network for the missiological study of global movements to Christ.⁹

Against a (Mis)Understanding of the HUP?

Let’s get to the data. When I asked movement practitioners and missiologists about the HUP, one of the first things I discovered was confusion about the concept itself. It would seem that there’s still some significant misunderstanding concerning the HUP, even as some people reported that they were against it. For example, one interviewee said this:

The fact that we now have large movements in 35 ethnic groups and movement starts in another 35 ethnic groups would argue that the homogeneous unit principle does not hold in movements.

In theory, the HUP states that movements tend to propagate within people groups. This quote might make sense if he had said “we have *one* movement that has united or transcended

thirty-five ethnic groups,” but that’s not what he said. Instead, there were multiple movements in these people groups.

Let’s look at this apparent misunderstanding of the HUP in a second salient quote:

Movements are not looking to HUP. The target people group on which disciple-makers normally focus is a huge group like an ethnolinguistic group or even larger, i.e. the Horn of Africa. The vision includes everyone in that larger group. People do naturally reach the people they know and hang out with, but in many cases, the movements also spread to those who are quite different.

This interviewee conceptualizes the HUP into a narrow definition. But notice how he does also speak about ethnolinguistic groups, and “the people they know and hang out with,” which is still within the basic idea of the HUP. My point from these two quotes is to note the difficulty people have understanding the HUP. This definitional confusion adds an important layer of nuance and might explain either the support for the HUP or the opposition to it with movement thinkers when asked about it directly.

Pro-HUP

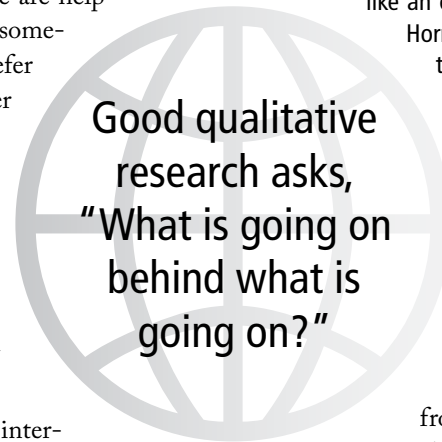
While clear understandings of the HUP were elusive for some, there were many movement practitioners I interviewed who were clearly pro-HUP. This was explicit in some interviews, implicit in the written case studies, and evidenced in the actual movements themselves. For example:

[We see] . . . the spread of a movement within the social or cultural unit, whether that is seen in terms of ethnicity, class or something else. Many movements tend to spread through existing social networks: particularly kinship, friendship groups (which may often be shared interest groups), neighborhood or work contacts, and classmates in an educational setting (being a possible subset of either work or friendship).

This understanding of the HUP correctly assumes that the “homogeneous unit” is an affinity group, not simply an ethnic group. A common theme in other interviews also appears in this salient quote above: “Movements tend to spread through existing social networks.” Kinship and friendship groups often facilitate the dissemination of a moving faith—this is an observable reality.

India and Caste Systems

I did not find evidence of sustained CPMs being intra-caste (different CPMs or other types of missiological movements in India may in fact be intra-caste). Instead, the inter-caste feature is connected to what we observed in Vignette 3 and



the additional case studies I examined in India. By the time churches have reproduced through four generations, movements have typically jumped across caste lines or into adjacent social networks. One Indian movement catalyst said something very interesting on this point:

Buddhism is a strong philosophy, but it did not survive in India because Buddha came to abolish the caste system and ignored it. I think that the caste system is evil, but I'm not here to abolish the caste system. I want Christ to abolish it. So, we don't promote those caste-based churches.

Later in the interview, he theologized that Paul did not try to abolish slavery, but neither did Paul allow the slavery distinction to exist in the church (cf. Gal. 3:28). According to this Indian catalyst, this is how slavery eventually died out and how he similarly hopes a similar process will lead to the eventual eradication of the Hindu caste system. A training mnemonic used in this movement was: *There is only one caste; male and female*. Some movements or approaches to church planting may attempt to preserve Indian caste structures, but, in general, I did not see this evidenced in the CPMs I investigated.

However, I did notice as well that Brahmins (high caste) tended to assume leadership or be thrust into leadership roles much more readily than lower castes (there is also generally less progress among the higher castes). In CPMs, house churches do aim to bring people of different castes together and address casteism. However, this process can be time-consuming and doesn't always yield immediate results. In the movements I looked at in India, most people come to faith through experiences of divine healing and deliverance, which then leads to the formation of a church within their extended family. As one catalyst expressed, "I don't feel content until I've met with the entire family."

A Contextual and Situational Understanding of the Oikos

This leads to the bulk of where the data points, and that is to the oikos—the family. One experienced catalyst offered this insightful quote which was descriptive of many of the case studies I examined:

The importance of the HUP and movements is simply how new believers within a UPG see themselves in their oikos. Initially, it is almost always the communication of their new faith within their intelligible oikos, thus HUP in nature. However, as they grow in discipleship, they must and do invariably see that they are part of a much larger network of all of God's creation. And those from that broad creation who do not know Jesus are in need of the gospel as well.

In other words, though not initially, these disciples of Jesus eventually branch out into other ethnolinguistic groups, valuing the relational and networked nature of all of humanity.

Local believers have their own agency to define, however they see fit, what constitutes someone as "other." This was a continuing theme: movements start within a contextually situated oikos, but *as movements* they don't stay there. There is often a strong impulse to multiply and to share Christ with those in their immediate circles and beyond. One Indian CPM catalyst told me that his "mantra" in training new disciples was this: *First, reach your family. Then, disciple all the nations.*

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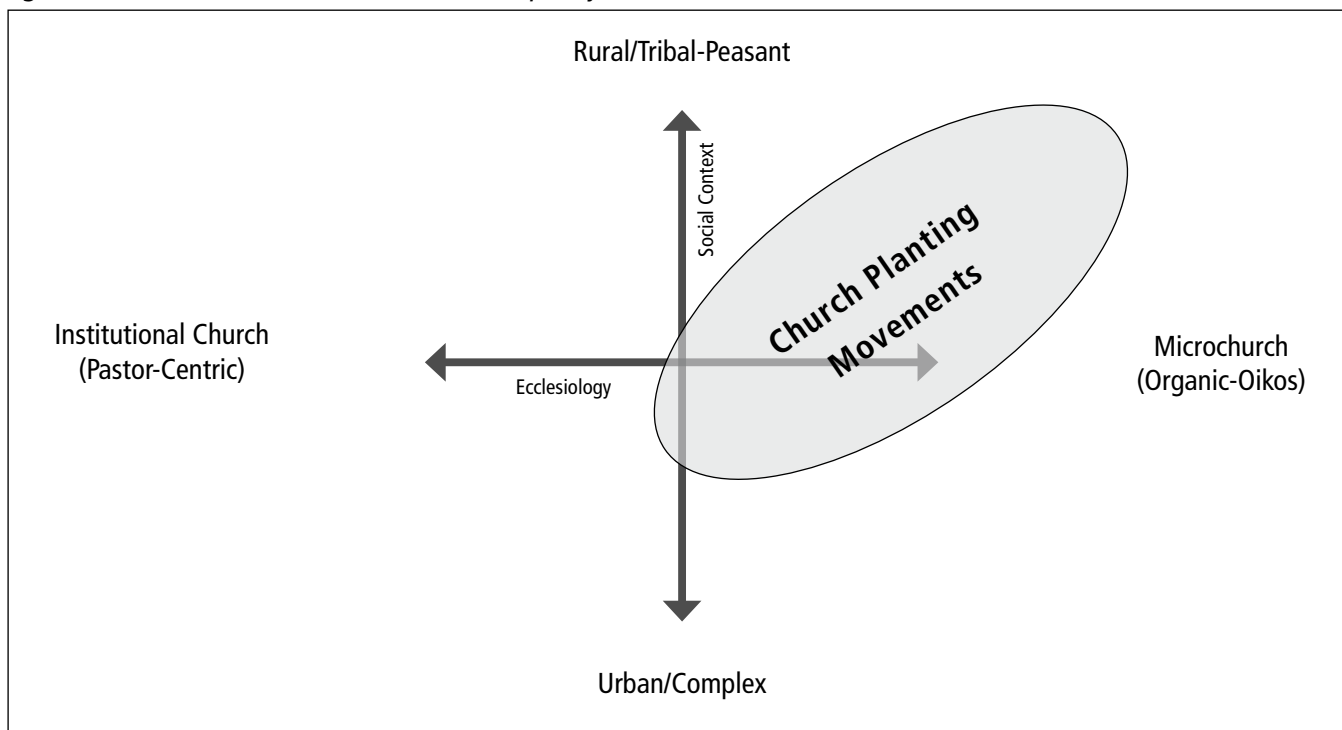
The Urban-Rural Nuance

I also heard significant insights regarding how the HUP interacts with movements, particularly when comparing urban and rural settings. The majority of CPMs happening today are in rural contexts, in what Paul Heibert referred to a "peasant" worldview¹⁰ and more often involve microchurches. CPMs tend to be constrained by two factors: complex societies and institutional or "high church" ecclesiologies (see figure 1 on page 74). Regarding the latter, I'm talking about the pastor-centric model, "the buildings, bodies, budgets" or spectator model of church.

Although movements are not as frequent in urban contexts, they are indeed occurring in cities.¹¹ Urban movements are more within towns or enclaves, and not throughout large metropolitan cities. But in cities where they are still happening, the oikos or affinity group tends to be with those who are younger and more educated (and individualistic), and so the oikos is much more ethnically diverse and the boundaries of the oikos are even less defined or discrete.

Related to this also is the fact that there are very few movements happening today in the thirty-four Western industrialized democracies of the world. CPM was an innovation in the 1990s intended for least-reached contexts in the Global South, so we are not surprised to see them more frequently in those settings. It would seem then that much missiological translation needs to occur for movements to be catalyzed in the Global North, although there is still much to be researched on this topic.¹²

Figure 1. The Common Environments for Contemporary CPMs



Greater Diversity at Higher Levels of Leadership

Within the organizational structures of movements, leaders usually oversee a network of small churches. Key leaders are involved with multiple networks, and their ecclesiology is relationally networked together. While the oikos might be more or less “homogeneous” since families are involved, higher levels of movement leadership reflect more diversity. This ethnic diversity of leaders is similar to what we see in Acts 13. In this passage, which speaks of unity in diversity, the Gentile church was born out of the diaspora Jews (not those from Jerusalem), who were sharing the gospel with Gentiles. Acts 11:20 points out that unnamed Jewish disciples, “men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also.” Acts 13:1 refers to the leadership of the network of house churches at Antioch: it was comprised of a significant diaspora population. These “third culture” people are usually more adept at integration. They are more proficient in living with multiple identities and their relational networks are broader. Therefore, the boundaries of their oikos are more fluid and less discrete.

Rediscovering the Oikos

In a post-industrialized society, we tend to think of ecclesiology as a “voluntary society.” But when we force the New Testament into our member-spectator-institutional model of church, then we commit both eisegesis and an anachronistic fallacy. Even when we envision large groups of Christians at Rome or Antioch, we must envision a network of oikos churches.¹³ The oikos is the basic unit of New Testament ecclesiology.

Therefore, the social context for catalyzing CPMs is better understood using the local understanding of the oikos rather than retaining sociocultural homogeneity. McGavran’s often repeated quote, “one by one against the family,” was a critique of the extractionist, mission station approach to church. In that sense, the HUP helps guard against Western individualistic ecclesiologies. However, movements aim to reach the oikos within their context. Successful movement catalysts who effectively engage with whole families emphasize a direct relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. This immediacy with Christ empowers “ordinary” believers for ministry and leadership, and as a result, CPM missiology places significant emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. This is not just in theory, but in practice.

The “Person of Peace” and Homophilous Networks

As previously stated, CPM approaches attempt to avoid extracting people from their oikos. When a group comes together, there is a natural inclination for them to want to expand into other groups. Some of these groups are socially adjacent, within their own extended families, but other adjacent groups might not be the same ethnically. In this sense, a subdiscipline within sociology called *Network Science* has made similar observations. But instead of “homogeneity,” the word used is “homophily.” In social networks, homophily (lit. *love of the same*) simply means that people with “like characteristics tend to be connected” and that “connected

people tend to have an effect on one another.”¹⁴ When “homogeneous units” can be ethnically heterogeneous, then confusion abounds. A better sociological word for this concept is homophily and not homogeneity. Homophily transcends ethnicity and includes interests, values, hobbies, etc.

The “person of peace” principle seems to match this key dimension of social network theory, where social entrepreneurs meet brokers, like evangelists who meet people of peace, who then act as bridges that fill structural holes between networks.¹⁵ When brokers step into gaps between social networks, they’re creating change and movement.¹⁶ As “bridge people,” they connect people together to facilitate the diffusion of new ideas into new networks. While the “person of peace” may or may not be a biblical principle (Matt. 10; Luke 10), it is still an observable phenomenon in movement dynamics. It’s not wrong to invest time in these types of bridge-building people.

Unfortunately, the way that the “person of peace” has been discussed in movement literature has tended to be formulaic. Instead, we need a deeper look at the key biblical passages—they are not just a golden key. These passages portray gospel messengers as interdependent on the host community and that mission is not just a one-way street of “proclamation.” In the sending of the disciples in Matthew 10 and Luke 10, they’re to be relational. There is reciprocity.¹⁷ They experiment and fail and move on. Properly understood, the person of peace concept is vital for seeing how and why movements spread using a relational, networked ecclesiology within homophilous units and beyond the oikos.

From the “Homogeneous Unit Principle” to the “Homophilous Unit Paradox”

Unity within diversity metaphors abound in the New Testament: we’re ingrafted branches (Rom. 11), one body with many members (Rom. 12), living stones of one temple (1 Cor. 3), etc. Theologians and missiologists alike recognize the fundamental tension between unity and diversity, so I’m not claiming that my following proposal is novel.

However, entangled in this whole HUP controversy is the concept of “culture,” which has an inherent duality. By nature, we are cultural beings. Like fish without water, we cannot exist without culture. Culture surrounds us, both as our palace and our prison. We rejoice in it, but we also can’t escape from it. We are in the world, but we’re not of the world (John 17:13–19). As Andrew Walls would say, we’re pilgrims (transcending culture), but we’re also indigenous (belonging to the culture). This duality creates a tension between spiritual unity and cultural plurality.

This leads to my main proposal: as we have seen, the HUP is both correct and misguided, at different times and in different ways. The CPM phenomenon reveals this most clearly. I propose that the classic understanding of the HUP needs two corrections. First, “homophilous” should replace “homogeneous.” Second, to see it as a paradox and not a principle. As a statement, then it could read as follows:

The “Homophilous Unit Paradox” guards against cultural paternalism to promote polyphonic worship from all ethnē and yet can also endorse racism and segregation if left unchallenged.

Is the Homogeneous Unit Principle good or bad? According to the CPM phenomenon, it can be both. Paul wanted the church to move and multiply to where it didn’t yet exist. This desire meant that differences be crossed and could not have entailed a uniform church, for that would wipe out the ability for people to hear the gospel in culturally relevant ways. Frontier missiology is about crossing differences because Yahweh is no mere tribal or national deity: he should be universally worshipped. Attempting to be heterogeneous or non-homophilous *all the time* would definitely exclude people who might otherwise be interested in Jesus. It also ignores the reasons why Paul wanted to become all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:22).

The HUP has at times provided white evangelicals with a theological rationale to reframe their segregated churches as acts of “faithful evangelism.”

However, followers of Christ exist in one unified body in spite of linguistic differences. Our fallen human nature means we all tend to be xenophobic. We will naturally stay within our own caste (people) like in vignette #3 above unless we do something to break out like in vignette #2. So, a pastoral effort is required to emphasize spiritual unity, like in Ephesians 2, while also apostolically respecting cultural plurality as in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. In the United States, the HUP has at times provided white evangelicals with a theological rationale to reframe their segregated churches as acts of “faithful evangelism.”¹⁸ Among Americans in particular, this uncomfortable truth should provide us with great caution when attempting to catalyze movements.

Renaming the Homogeneous Unit Principle to the Homophilous Unit Paradox acknowledges the complexity of these “units,” which can be diverse in ethnicity and culture. The term “paradox” highlights the potential for both positive outcomes, such as encouraging indigenous worship from diverse peoples, and negative consequences, like implicitly

supporting racial discrimination and division. This modification encourages a more nuanced and critical approach to the HUP, fostering a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between homophily and diversity in missiology.

Potential Benefits of Treating the HUP as Paradox

There are at least two potential benefits of seeing the HUP as a paradox. The first is that it encourages humility on both sides of the HUP debate. Proponents and opponents will be discouraged from dogmatic statements, neither embracing HUP as a “golden key” to movements nor denouncing it as Christianized racism that is “abominable to Christian conscience and unity.”¹⁹ Andrew Walls famously said,

The church has seen many heresies come and go, but the earliest of them has been by far the most persistent. The essence of the Judaizing tendency is the insistence on imposing our own religious culture, our own Torah, our own circumcision.²⁰

This critiques both those who say that homogeneous churches are the *only* way to be apostolically fruitful, and those who say multiethnic churches are the *only* way to be pastorally faithful.

The second benefit is that this tension in the HUP will help us see people groups as fuzzy and fluid sets. When we talk about reaching the oikos and then reaching other people groups, we have to remember that both definitions are ambiguous sets with flexible boundaries which depend, paradoxically, on the context. Treating the HUP simply as a principle doesn't seem to allow for the sociological complexity that movements encounter and demonstrate.

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Enduring Questions for Movemental Ecclesiology

How soon do new followers of Christ from non-Christian backgrounds in emerging churches need to express the reality of Christological unity with other believers? What does genuine fellowship in Christ look like in practice, especially in a first-generation church within a least-reached people? In frontier mission contexts, how are new believers traditioned into historic Christian orthodoxy without imposing Christendom on them? Conventional church structures derived from historical Christendom are insufficient for the organic growth and culturally specific initiatives of emerging local

communities of believers in least-reached contexts. How can we make sure that these movements feel connected with all Christ-followers from all times and in all places? Perhaps these are questions we will always be wrestling with, and both apostolic and pastoral perspectives are required which shouldn't have to compete with each other, but often do.

Summary and Conclusion

1. Initially, CPMs multiply within an oikos which is contextually defined and fluid. But then they spread to other diverse groups of people, and often the main uniting feature is faith in Christ. As seen through a CPM lens, the classic understanding of HUP holds at first, but not later, as churches multiply and movements expand.
2. Apostolic ministries are required to cross differences between peoples. The Old Testament and New Testament consistently speak of groups of people and God's desire to receive worship from each of them.²¹ Push-back against people group thinking—or the HUP—often wrongly assumes an essentialist, rigid, and artificial understanding of people groups. The reality is that movements often do start within an oikos, in the diverse ways that homophily is implied in that situation.
3. There is no culturally neutral church relevant for all peoples and places, so a plurality of expressions of church is required in God's diverse world. Aspects of the HUP have rightly critiqued American individualistic ecclesiologies, cultural imperialism, and missionary paternalism. “People blindness” is an ongoing problem, even in the Majority World church.
4. Unity in Christ and racial reconciliation is hard work and all too easy to avoid. The “homogeneous” or “homophilous” church is never an end to itself. The church is a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom of Jesus. Insisting that churches remain homogeneous/homophilous can lead to racial discrimination. This points to the paradoxical nature of the HUP and the need for pastoral applications of Christological unity.
5. There are numerous varieties of CPMs as the phenomenon is not monolithic. Just like individual churches, some unite diversity better than others. Painting in broad strokes can lead to many unnecessary problems in missions discourse. As evidence, the decades-long debate over the HUP reveals that we need to do a better job holding competing truths together in tension.
6. Let's all say “amen!” for apostolic initiatives who catalyze new work among new peoples, “amen” for pastoral initiatives who work for unity in the Church, and “amen” to non-partisan missiology and apostolic-pastoral collaboration as we join God in the *motus Dei* to redeem all nations back to himself. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ Farah, *Motus Dei*, 2021a.
- ² Coles and Parks, “Movement Servants Needed!,” 37–41.
- ³ Montgomery, *DAWN 2000: 7 Million Churches to Go*.
- ⁴ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.
- ⁵ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.
- ⁶ Farah, “The Genesis and Evolution of Church Planting Movements Missiology,” 349–61.
- ⁷ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 21.
- ⁸ Coles, “Addressing Theological and Missiological Objections to CPM/DMM,” chapter 3, 37–57.
- ⁹ Farah, “The Motus Dei Network: Fostering Communal Intelligence on Movements,” 39–41.
- ¹⁰ Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 143ff.
- ¹¹ Sherwin, “Observations in Urban Disciple Making Movements,” <https://twofoureight.org/>.
- ¹² Farah, “Movements Today: A Primer from Multiple Perspectives,” 13.
- ¹³ Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, 154.
- ¹⁴ Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, 9.
- ¹⁵ Burt, *Structural Holes*.
- ¹⁶ Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, 66.
- ¹⁷ Robinson, “Revisiting the Person of Peace,” 337–48.
- ¹⁸ Curtis, “White Evangelicals as a ‘People,’” 108–46.
- ¹⁹ Kwiyan, *Multicultural Kingdom*, 213.
- ²⁰ Walls, “Converts or Proselytes?,” 6.
- ²¹ Datema, “The Universal Particularism of Panta Ta Ethne,” 138–51.

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