## Dirty Dishes and Definitions
### *by Chris Maynard*

You and I can have a conversation and, even if we come from different cultures, we don't consciously think about definitions. When my North American friend announces before the meal that he is going to "wash up" my British mind may wonder why nobody cleaned the dishes after the last meal. But I will probably let it go, and gradually – by context, inference and seeing what actually happens – will learn that he means he is going to wash his hands, not the dishes.

When we begin to number things, definitions gain in importance. If we say there are 5,000 men, does that include women and children? It could make a big difference.

Matthew takes the trouble to make it clear in Matt 14:21. And when we go on to compare numbers, add them together, or process them through a database, then definitions become crucial. We need close agreement. If we don't mean the same thing then (even if they have the same name or code) we cannot safely add them together.



In preparing for this bulletin we encountered three different writings that touch on this subject. Michael Jaffarian has made an eloquent appeal in the article that follows for us to respect the current meaning of "People Group". When a word or phrase has come to mean something specific in widespread use, it can be very damaging to try to change its meaning. This can destroy our shared understanding and damage our existing knowledge base.

The second writing is a document Steve McCord shared with us called "A Comparison of Common Terms found in Global Research [IMB], Joshua Project, and World Christian Database" (which we are making available through this link http://www.globalcmiw.org/resources/ethne_combined_definitions_2015-11-16.pdf). This useful document lives up to its title. Prepared in response to the Ethnê movement's desire clarify priorities for evangelism and church planting, the introduction states, "Knowing how terms are used by these three data stewards is a critical part of understanding the data and information they share publicly". Indeed, and I hope these resources are kept up to date and maybe expanded for us in the future. Steve, in service to the Ethnê Information Strategy Group, says, "the primary source for definitions was found on the respective websites". That is useful in one way because we get it as the originators see it. It might be even more useful to provide an independent assessment of how similar and different the definitions are in practice. I don't think that is easy to know simply from reading the definitions. For instance the three definitions of "Affinity Bloc" are worded in three very different ways, yet my understanding is that the lists of Affinity Blocs in each of the three databases are essentially the same. Maybe not! Nevertheless, the authors are to be commended for what they have provided for us already in the current version.

In any area of data, definitions can cause confusion. For example, Justin Long wants to know whether the number of Christian martyrs is increasing or decreasing and he finds two different answers. Why? As he says, "The disagreement is rooted in definitions." You can see his insightful blog post at http://justinlong.org/2015/11/where-persecution-is-worst/.

## About the Term "People Groups"
### by Michael Jaffarian (emichaeljaffarian@gmail.com)

It was my privilege recently to attend the 50th anniversary conference of the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission/School of Intercultural Studies. They brought together a wonderful line-up of mission scholars to speak, most of them connected to Fuller in some way. One was Dudley Woodberry, a former dean of the school, an outstanding missionary, and a leading scholar of Islamics.

His message was wonderful, but there was one bit I felt uncomfortable with. This is not an exact quote, but a selection from my notes:

> Look at the changing world. Some examples. One shift is of the center of Christianity from North to South and from West to East. The church moved from Jerusalem to Europe. Now, most Christians are in the East and South. Urbanization. There are new types of people groups now – by region, by the type of work, and so on.

For those of us who work in global mission research, "people groups" is a specific and important term. There are some nuances that we discuss constantly, but in general we enjoy an extensive convergence of understanding, application, and research about what "people groups" are and are not.

It's useful, and important, to talk about various segments of society that need the gospel, about the various ways people see themselves belonging to each other, and about how the church should relate to all of that in evangelization and ministry. But in the mission community and in missiological presentations I would encourage us all not to use the word "people groups" for anything other than the ethnolinguistic groups that the major mission research databases are built around. "People groups" has specific meaning in mission research and strategy. Let's protect the use and understanding of this term.

In global mission research we now have clarity on this, though it has been a long and messy process to get us to where we are. For a long time the research community struggled with confusion about "people groups" as marked by occupation, or age, or gender, or location, or ... whatever segment of population some good-hearted Christian worker thought needed more attention.

We are still working on this. It still happens, often, that someone will get a burden for some segment of society, however defined or labelled, and will declare it to be a "people group," or an "unreached people group," when it is not – at least not according to our common understanding and proper use of the term in mission research. We cringe and wince when we see things like the article, "Cultural Elites: The Next Unreached People Group" (Eric Metaxas, Anthology – the Missio Nexus annual journal – Vol. 2, No. 1, April 2014). Maybe cultural elites are a segment of society that needs the gospel, but they are not a "people group" and certainly not an "unreached people group." Another example: a mission mobilizer who is a friend of mine said at a public meeting that women in the Muslim world represented the world's largest "unreached people group." Certainly there are millions of Muslim women who need Christ and have yet to hear the gospel, but they are not a "people group." They are in thousands of people groups, in many countries.

So let's all be careful how we use the term "people group," and please join me in enforcing the integrity of this important, significant, strategic term.

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### See You There

Will you be attending the third MANI Continental Consultation: MANI 2016 Consultation on African National Initiatives, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; March 7-12, 2016? The theme is "Hearing and Obeying God in Times like These."

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If so, please drop us a note at [CMIW@worksmail.net](mailto:CMIW@worksmail.net) and we'll try to make some personal connections.

Our community is strengthened when we can spend a bit of time with one another.

Lord willing, we'll "See You There"!

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## Save these Dates:  August 23-25, 2016

**What:**  Mission Information User's Conference
**Where:**  Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas USA
**For Whom:**  Power users who manage and make possible systems in their organization that provide information for decision making in missions today.

**Why:**  The purpose of the gathering is to bring together missions information workers for a series of presentations emphasizing interaction and exchange of information within the missions community.
The specific goals are:
1.  To bring together mission information workers so that we can share about the missions information we are providing and how we are providing it.
2.  To explore new opportunities for providing mission information to the missions community.
3.  To address "issues/challenges" in providing missions information to the missions community.

More details to follow.

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## Who's Who in Missions Information
### *Special Profile:  Suraja Raman*

1. [CMIW] **Please tell us about yourself and your family.**
[SR]  I am a convert from Hinduism and have served as a missionary with Asia Evangelical Fellowship in Asia since 1976. I was sent and commissioned by my home church, Fairfield Methodist in Singapore.  I am one of seven children (four sisters, two brothers).

2. [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?**  [SR] I have been teaching in Kenya since 1997 at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), now known as Africa International University.  I also serve as adjunct faculty with the Alpha Omega International College and the Malaysia Evangelical College (West and East Malaysia).  I try to divide my time equally between teaching and research.

3. [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?**   [SR] First of all, I have to thank God for having used me to bring salvation to members of my family and to friends.  In addition, I have been pleased to participate in the training of leaders for the local church in Christian Education, Spiritual Formation, and Missions.  I myself received solid theological training at Asbury Theological Seminary and Trinity International University (a Master of Religious Education in 1982 and a PhD in Educational Studies in 1993 respectively), and I seek to train leaders to become faithful servants in their respective churches, missions organizations, and as directors in their own settings.  Most of my research has led to the publication of materials to enhance Christian education, evangelism, the reaching of children, spiritual development, and an understanding of conversion and ethnicity.

4. [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?**  [SR]  I hope to update my research writing for publication.  I want also to prepare younger leaders toward participation more in

theological education. It is my intention to train church leaders for the development of the local church.

5. [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?** [SR] Yes, I am glad to if I am able. I would be most pleased if my research and writing (distributed through sources such as Tell Asia Today, Tribalism and Ethnicity, the Lausanne 2004 Forum, Lausanneworldpulse.com, Armour Publishing (Singapore) and Graceworks Publishing (Singapore) could be of use to the missions information community.

## Information from the Word

Having spoken light into being with his words, God creates a separation and distinction between light and darkness. Immediately he chooses to name them as "day" and "night" (Genesis 1:5). Here we have the first **definition** in the Bible. God called the light "day" and he called the darkness "night". Such separations, distinctions and definitions are crucial to any useful numbering. How careful are we to define and document the phenomena we observe and quantify?

**Final Details:**
- This bulletin is produced by the Community of Mission Information Workers Task Force comprised of Larry Kraft, Stephanie Kraft and Chris Maynard. Please send any suggestions of issues to discuss or any other ideas to *"cmiw@worksmail.net"*.
- Back issues can be found at: *www.globalcmiw.org*.
- Editorial team: Stephanie and Chris; layout and distribution: Larry.