



Clarity

By **SUE PATT**
A humble servant



Clarity is a beautiful thing. Humans love order, some more than others. We like to identify one thing as something specific and another thing as something else. Black and white is simple, clean, and easy to read. I notice my appreciation for sight when looking at the footage on my outdoor trail camera. At night I can't see colors, but in the absence of light, it's remarkable just how much activity I am able to see. Shades of grey are enough at night to see an amazing array of animals in my suburban yard, even though I can't see very far.

Contrast seeing at night with seeing in the daytime. Colors explode all around us. There is seemingly infinite gradation of green right outside my window contrasted against blue sky and puffy white clouds. Even with the familiarity of this expansive vista, I am awestruck.

I think People Group Theory is like this. There is beauty and grace in the simplicity of description of humans arranged by language, culture, and affinity. It's like seeing at night. This clarity allows us to observe how one people group is similar or different from another. In its simplicity, it gives us keen exposure to realities of strategic thinking about global evangelization, but seeing at night only goes so far.

Look at People Group Theory in real life and vibrant colors emerge, shaping and contrasting conversations in new and exciting directions. Can we live with polarities of night and day? Can a theory be useful and not enough? Might we in the Western expression of Christianity be unknowingly offensive

in how we talk about "the task" or "the unreached," as if people are a problem to be managed? It's time for respectful dialogue.

How do we talk about the beauty of people arranged in groups who either have access to the good news of Jesus or don't, when the very landscape of migration, internet access, globalization, and urbanization are changing the fabric of how people relate to each other? The sand is shifting underneath our feet. God does not change, but the way good news travels or might travel is changing very quickly. We don't need to be threatened by change. Change is the constant, even as God never changes.

Polarity is like that. Things that seem like black and white opposites are more like shades of vibrant colors when observed through different light. Both are true at the same time, almost as an extension of thought.

So, continue the dialogue with brothers and sisters in your context through the thoughts collected in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*. What are the voices not represented in this issue? Surely, they are even more than the voices represented. Let's listen with curiosity instead of demanding to be heard. MF

Details depend on *when* and *how* we view things.



Same land and camera, night and day views. Photos supplied by author and used with permission.

