

Track 8: Trends & Implications for Urban Youth Ministry

I. Problem Statement

Social trends and society often affect how we best reach our youth. Programmatically we may need to change. Too often our ministries are addressing the issues of the last decade versus those of the current one.

How do we best reach our young people with the transforming love of Christ in a new economy that requires more education, technology changes that increase both communication and information, and the continued growth of single-parent families as influenced by the mass incarceration of African-American and Latino men in an era of cutting services and global wealth that is disconnected from any local community? How can we re-frame our approach to the issues of the achievement gap and fatherlessness?

II. Outcome Statements

- To gain a better understanding of the issues around the achievement gap and fatherlessness so as to re-frame and better equip our ministries to reach today's youth with the transforming love of Christ.
- To identify the training needs of those in ministry and begin a planning process of implementing a robust training program in New York City.



III. Track Objectives

- To gain a better understanding of the achievement gap and missing fathers.
- To gain a better understanding of how to implement systems theory into our youth ministries.
- Identify models of ministry that are effective in addressing these issues.
- Identify training needs of those in the field and begin to develop a robust training program to address those needs.
- To strengthen the youth ministry system so that New York City will be as known for its youth ministry as it is for finance, fashion, and publishing.

IV. Summary of Findings

Sponsored by Young Life, our track brought more than eighty youth ministry leaders from the church and parachurch sectors to hear from Dr. A.R. Bernard who spoke about the importance of re-framing and how we might re-frame how we communicate with young people by realizing people learn more from what they see than what they hear. Dr. Bernard was followed by five presenters. Dr. Cozette Lyons-Jones and Edward Lawson focused on re-framing our approach to fatherlessness while Jeremy Del Rio and Shawn Dove presented on re-framing our approach to the achievement gap. Rev. Dean Borgman then tied things together by presenting on what systems theory is and how we can implement it into our ministries. These presentations were followed by a lively panel discussion and Q & A session.

We gave each participant a survey to identify the issues they would like to learn more about and what they needed more training on. The top results were as follows:

Issues:

Integrating Systems Theory
Partnering Schools
Strengthening Families
Dealing with Anger
Developing a Theory of Change

Skills/Competency:

Developing & Managing Your Ministry
Program Development
Understanding & Reaching Youth
Fundraising

V. Conclusions

There is a tremendous desire for more information, training, and shared models that effectively impact young people. It's clear that ministry leaders are eager to dialogue and learn more from one another and from those ministry models that effectively impact youth. There is also a desire to have a more systemic approach to ministry that works within the systems that most affect youth. With this desire is the recognition that doing so will require a new set of skills and a re-framing of how things have been done before.

VI. Next Steps

As a result of the track dialogue and surveys our next steps are to:

- Gather NYC youth ministry leaders in the next six months to map out the contours of developing a robust training program in NYC which will help NYC be as known for youth ministry as it is for finance, fashion, and publishing.
- Identify the individuals, institutions, and existing efforts needed to develop such a training effort.
- Hold two forums on other trends and issues affecting youth.
- Conduct further research on best ways to build the youth ministry capacity in NYC.