When We Lead

An Examination of Conditions That Support Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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Executive Summary

Partner Organization: City Year Inc.

Founded in 1988 by two Harvard law students, City Year is a multi-site, international nonprofit organization that places young people ages 17-25 into underserved schools across the country as tutors and mentors. Part of the AmeriCorps portfolio of organizations, City Year operates in 29 cities across 21 states.

Problem of Practice

City Year has overseen a significant increase in its recruitment of Black women leaders into Senior Vice President roles throughout the organization. However, little is known about the conditions that create an environment in which these senior executives can thrive and be retained.

What is thriving?

Researchers define thriving at work as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of vitality and learning.

Project Design

I surveyed 226 Black women senior nonprofit executives including 14 of City Year's SVPs (who were also interviewed) to understand the degree to which they report thriving using this definition and to examine if certain organizational strategies might increase their reports of thriving.

Essential Questions

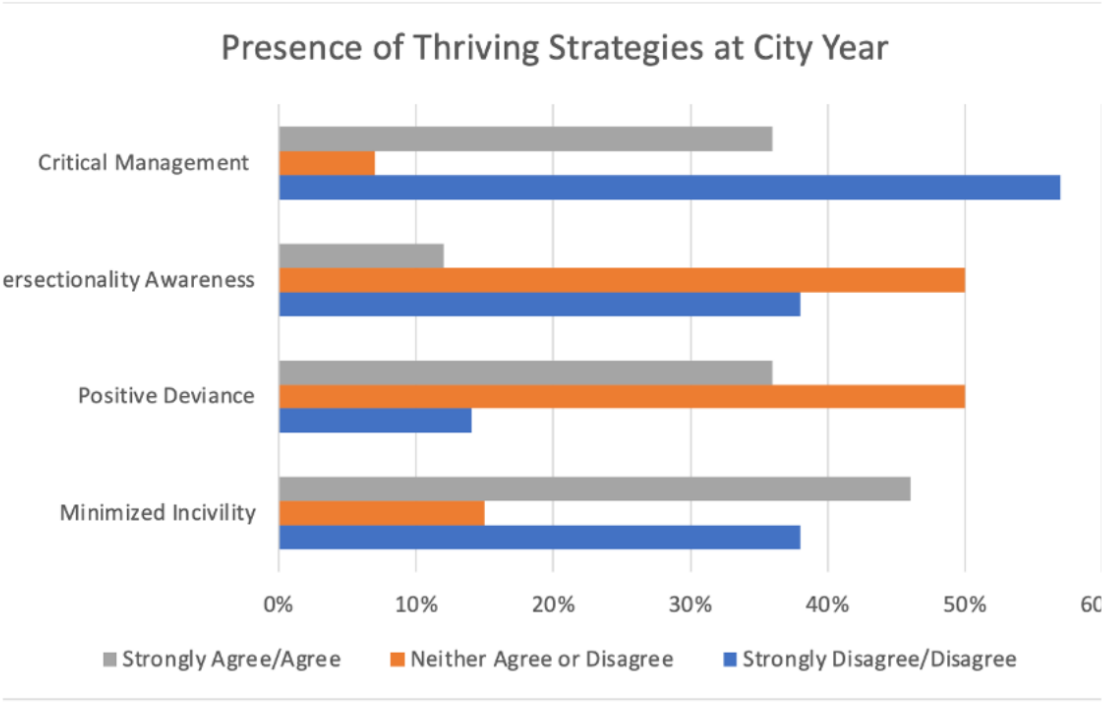
- To what extent do Black women senior executives at City Year report that they are currently thriving within their roles? How does compare to similarly positioned Black women in other nonprofit organizations?

- Has City Year enacted these 4 organizational strategies and to what degree are they associated with Black women senior vice presidents' reports of thriving?

  - **Minimized Incivility**-Decreasing exposure to microaggressions
  - **Critical Management Stance**-Embracing a critical and inclusive approach toward management practices and leader development
  - **Intersectionality Awareness**- Developing an awareness of the role of intersectionality in shaping the work experiences of Black women leaders
  - **Positive Deviance Framework**- Recognizing the essential role leaders of color play in solving problems experienced predominately by communities of color

Key Findings

- 36% of Black women SVPs at City Year surveyed say they are thriving when asked the question, "Are You Thriving?"
- 100% of Black women SVPs at City Year agree that they are learning and experiencing vitality in the work, but report that this does not feel like "thriving" to them.
- 12% of Black women SVPs at City Year agreed that City Year demonstrates an awareness of the specific needs of its Black women leaders
- 36% of Black women SVPs at City Year agreed that City Year has developed strategies to support their leadership growth as Black women



Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Add an affinity group specifically for Black women leaders

“As a senior leader, I can't go into the affinity group and fully be my authentic self.”
-Interviewee

Currently, everyone from corps members to senior executives are lumped into one group based on race or other identity makers such as gender and sexual orientation. The BWSE I interviewed discussed the limitations of this approach noting that because of their level of seniority, they didn’t feel they were able to share openly about any struggles or difficulties they face as Black women leaders.

Recommendation 2: Fully fund identity-centered leadership development programming

An aspect of critical management calls for the rejection of one-size-fits-all approaches to the training and evaluation of managers in favor of identity-forward methods that recognize the unique needs of leaders from diverse groups. BWSE presently report this as an area in which City Year has an opportunity for growth. Erskine (2021) suggests as an action step that organizational leaders “Create safe “identity workspaces” for women’s leadership development, which includes learning, experimentation, and community building”

"They don't see how to develop me as a black woman to think about what it means for me to lead and to help people perceive me as a leader.”

Recommendation 3: Create strategies to address challenges related to racism in nonprofit funding

"That access is limited as you're not always invited to where the conversation after the conversations are had"

Black women ED/SVPs at City Year expressed a strong desire to meet their fundraising goals but acknowledged systemic challenges that often make this task more difficult for them than their white male counterparts. 1) Training site-based advisory boards on the systemic racism inherent in fundraising so that they can be more helpful in removing local impediments 2) Ensure each site creates a legacy document outlining where the key relationships lie and have outgoing executive directors make personal introductions between each site’s incoming executive director and all current major donors.

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About the Author & Dedication

Rai King is an educator, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and non-profit leader. Graduating from Spelman College with a degree in Early Childhood Development and from Arizona State University with a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction, Rai was an elementary school teacher for 16 years. A teacher's teacher, Rai often jokes that she has taught in every way possible to teach-from public, private, parochial, and charter schools, to homeschool, and even international schools.

Rai has served as a non-profit professional for several years including working as an instructional coach for City Year New York and as the founding Equity and Learning Director for the site. She currently works as the Director of Strategic Initiatives, Growth, and External Affairs for Ember Charter Schools in Brooklyn, New York. As an entrepreneur, she and her family own and run businesses in media, education, and coaching services where Rai enjoys combining best industry practices with responsible and emotionally intelligent human development.

Rai is currently the chair of the board of directors for Read718- a Brooklyn-based nonprofit providing reading services to low-income students. She co-hosts the "W.O.C at Work" podcast which provides a safe place for women of color to share their stories of leading in professional workspaces.

Rai resides in New Jersey with her husband, five children, three dogs, and five chickens.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my mother- who, from a very early age, understood who I was, and more importantly, who I could be. She went out of her way to place opportunities in front of me that would propel me to places and spaces that extended beyond what my circumstances

would have ordinarily afforded. Because of her, I have never let anxieties or doubt stop me from pursuing my dreams. She was the first person to believe in me- even when she couldn't afford the activity fees, or take time off to attend the events, or knew she wouldn't have transportation to be there to physically support me, she sent her love, her encouragement, and her prayers ahead of me always. That kind of love and unwavering belief is a foundation every child deserves to have their life built upon. Without her dedication to chasing down every opportunity she could find, and without her doting affection that encouraged me to always be my full self, none of what I've accomplished would be possible.

And to my husband and children. I've earned every degree from undergraduate to this doctorate with you in tow. The pursuit of education has always been a way for me to carve out a little something for myself while also caring for you all. I've tried my best to do both. Thank you for your support and understanding in times when I had to do schoolwork instead of joining the family for a movie or night out. I love you all.

Finally, this paper is dedicated to the Black women who walked alongside me at various points in my journey. To Mrs. Claudette Allen, my high school teacher who once put me out of class for arguing with another student, but then also recommended me for the AVID program where I was assigned a college mentor who helped me to get serious about planning for my future. Mrs. Allen was the first person I told when I was accepted into Spelman. I ran into her class in between periods at Henry Clay High School and showed her my acceptance letter. We both jumped and screamed and cried with excitement! Phyllis Rambsy and Lashawna Johnson, two Spelman College graduates who I serendipitously met my senior year of high school and who proofread my admissions essays and wrote letters of recommendation to accompany my

application to Spelman. And to Ulisa Bowles- an admissions officer at Spelman who I met during a high school college tour. I would not have been admitted to the institution that changed my life without advocacy and strong belief in me. My grades weren't good enough and SAT scores were average. But she took an interest in me and for 2 years before I applied to Spelman, we kept in touch, and she chose me as her "chip" student- the one student she got to advocate for admission even though I didn't really meet the standards. Your belief in me started my strong academic journey.

Four women who have no connection except that they were each instrumental in helping me to envision a future for myself that would have been out of reach without their individual contributions. I was a little Black girl from a single-parent home, in a poor community, who had no idea how to apply to, pay for, or survive in college. I asked for your support, and you gave it. I've never forgotten and have tried to do the same for others. Because of you, I deeply understand the unique sisterhood of Black women and what happens when we see and support each other. Black girl magic is real!

Introduction to City Year

Founding

City Year is a multi-site, international nonprofit organization that places young people ages 17-25 into underserved schools across the country as tutors and mentors. Part of the AmeriCorps portfolio of organizations, City Year operates in 29 cities across 21 states. City Year was founded in 1988 by two Harvard Law students, Michael Brown, and Alan Khazei with the belief that everyone could make a difference in their communities through service (City Year, 2022). Boston hosted the first City Year site with a team of 50 corps members. Though City Year's initial concept consisted of community beautification projects through mural painting, garden planting, and other community support events, it has since become an education enrichment institution that places teams of young people into 350 schools as change agents. Collectively, its sites provide service opportunities to over 2,000 corps members annually.

City Year is headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts with satellite sites in three countries including the United States, South Africa, and the UK. Though it was founded in a majority white city, out of a majority white institution (Harvard), according to its website, City Year has focused its service model on the beauty of diversity and the benefits experienced by communities and corps members when diverse groups of people come together for the purpose of service. As their model centers service within under-resourced schools, most of their work takes place within communities of color.

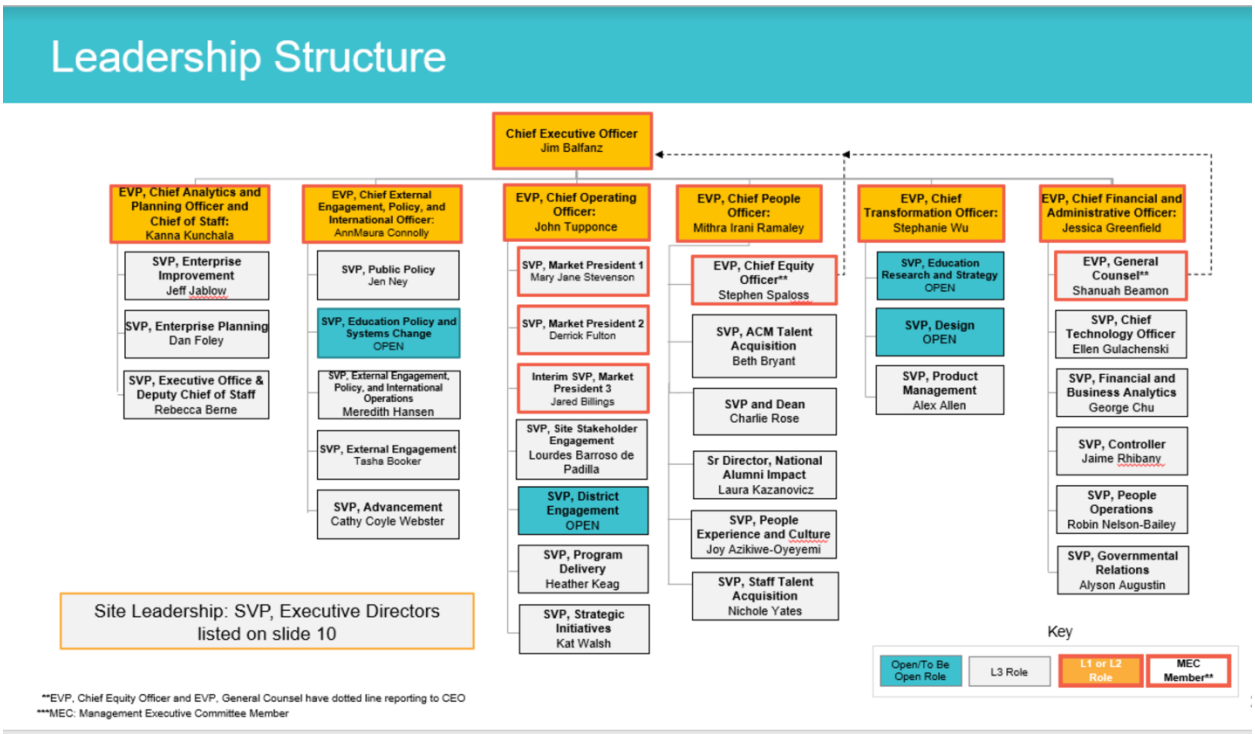
Organizational Structure

Referred to as "Headquarters," City Year Inc. is the governing body that supports and oversees each of the 29 U.S. sites. It is led by a management executive committee (MEC)

consisting of City Year's C-Suite leaders including the CEO, General Counsel, Chief of External Engagement, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, Chief Analytics and Planning Officer, Chief People Officer, Chief Equity Officer, and Chief Operating Officer. Additional members of this team include three market presidents who each oversee one of City Year's three regional markets. Headquarters is further supported by a host of Senior Vice Presidents, Vice Presidents, Directors, Managers, and regular employees all overseeing functions such as talent recruitment, site development, fundraising, research and development, and technology. Figure 1 outlines City Year's management structure.

Figure 1

City Year Management Structure

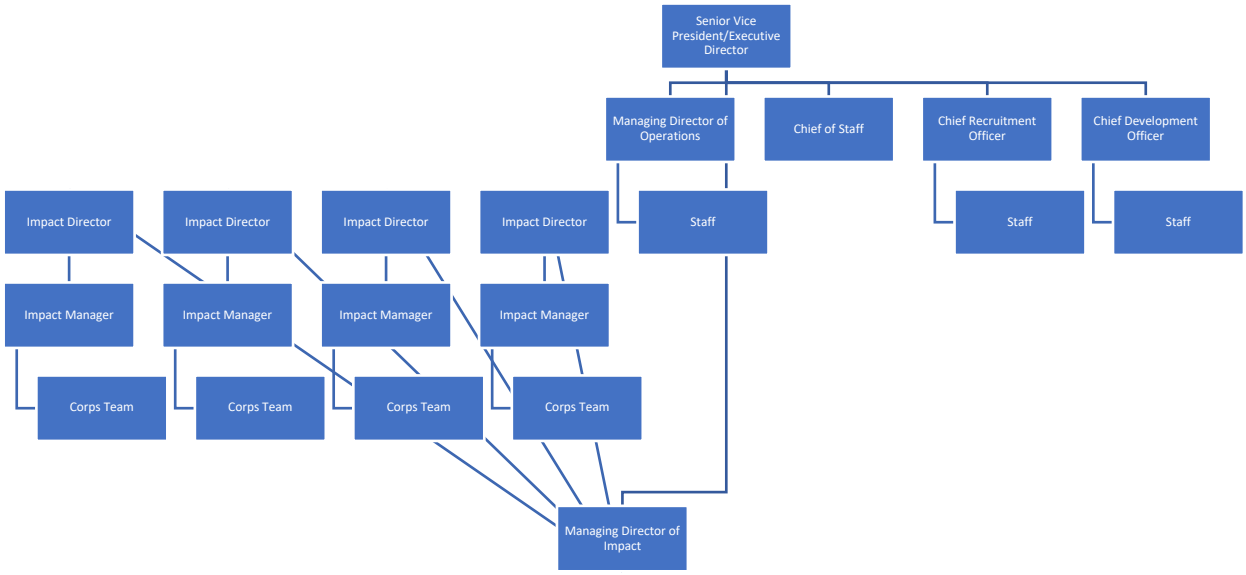


City Year Inc. Organizational Chart

Adopting a complex hierarchical structure, each of City Year's 29 sites is staffed by a Senior Vice President/Executive Director and a leadership team consisting of various fundraising, HR, and management professionals overseeing office-based operations teams and service-based staff. Figure 2 shows a typical site-based structure. Though the exact structure of each site can vary slightly depending on local needs, serving under these senior leaders are generally a team of Community School Directors who oversee a portfolio of local schools, Impact Directors, who are the main points of contact for individual school partnerships, and Impact Managers who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the corps. Most sites are also supported by 1-3 professional boards including an Advisory Board, Alumni board, and an Engagement board.

Figure 2

City Year Site-Based Structure



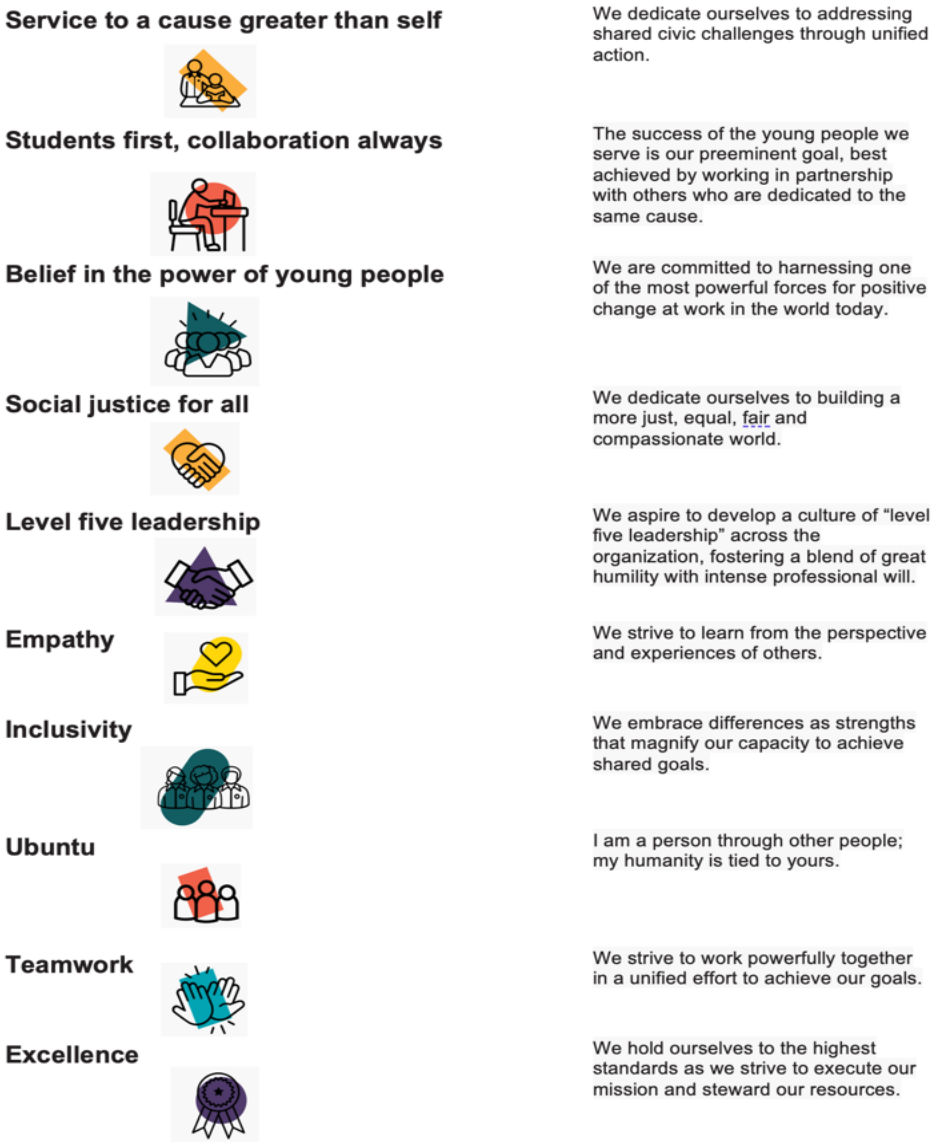
Typical organizational chart for City Year's individual city-based sites

Organizational Core Values

City Year has drafted 10 core values that guide the organization's work. Figure 3 lists these values as well as their corresponding symbols and one-sentence descriptions.

Figure 3

Core Values



City Year's 10 Core Values
Source: City Year Inc. Website

Of these ten cultural values, three are directly tied to the notion of equity and inclusion including Value 4: Social Justice for All, Value 7: Inclusivity, and Value 8: Ubuntu. City Year's website defines 'Social Justice for All' as a recognition of the "unequal access to opportunity" that exists across lines of race, class, gender, and other social classifications within The United States. To affect educational equity, City Year asserts that a commitment to social justice through diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) must exist as a core value. Of its seventh value, the City Year website notes that attending to inclusivity extends beyond "the celebration of diversity" and "means actively embracing differences as vital assets." The organization seeks to attend to inclusivity by engaging young adults within its corps, students within the schools they serve, as well as members of the "public, private, and nonprofit sectors" (City Year Inc. Website). City Year's eighth value, Ubuntu is a South African term meaning "I am a person through other people; My humanity is tied to yours." In this value City Year seeks to illustrate that "the struggles of a few can affect the many" (City Year Inc. Website). To have Ubuntu, then, requires that City Year acknowledge the ways in which the identity-related struggles of its community members, staff, and leaders inform the mission of the organization.

Project Stakeholders

My main point of contact for this inquiry is Charlie Rose, Senior Vice President and Dean. Charlie has been employed by City Year since its inception 34 years ago and has walked closely with the organization through every iteration of its purpose and DEIB journey. In our interviews for this project, Charlie expressed a desire to gain deeper insight into the on-the-ground effects of City Year's deep history of DEIB work. Proud of the organization's roots in this work, but also understanding its lack of perfection in both vision and execution, Charlie welcomed this inquiry

into the lived experiences of City Year's Black women leaders, feeling that any insights gained would only make the organization stronger.

Halfway through this project Charlie left for a year-long sabbatical. He wanted to ensure that I continued to have the access needed to complete the work, so he connected me with Nichole Yates, City Year's Senior Vice President for Talent Acquisition. In addition to serving as my contact for the second half of this project, Nichole was a participant in my research. Stephen Spaloss, Chief Equity Officer at City Year and Mithra Irani, Chief People Officer, were also interviewed for this project.

As a large, hierarchical organization, City Year has many stakeholders who might benefit from any learnings gained through this inquiry including their board of directors, executive leadership team, and site executive directors. My motivation for exploring City Year's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) journey using the experiences of their Black women leaders as a vehicle, is to gain insights that might pave the way for a smoother, more psychologically safe work environment for this demographic of which I was once a part. Globally, other organizations considering embarking on their own DEI journey, or those currently in the throes of this difficult work, might also benefit from a case-specific examination of one organization's path toward a more racially equitable work life for its leaders.

Problem of Practice

A high degree of hierarchical structure creates many opportunities for leadership within City Year Inc. In our interviews, Charlie Rose admitted that much of this leadership has historically been white, male, and economically privileged. Though there is an impressive range of diversity among its 3,000 corps members, like many organizations, for most of its existence,

City Year struggled to spread that diversity throughout each level of its management system. City Year was not unique in this issue of underrepresentation, however. According to a 2020 report by Bridgespan, just 18% or about 1 in 5 nonprofit chief executives or executive directors is a person of color despite making up 30% of the American workforce (Dorsey et al., 2020; Fernandaz & Brown, 2015). This is true even though nonprofits are often tasked with addressing issues that disproportionately impact communities of color including education disparity, criminal justice, healthcare, domestic violence, and environmental justice.

In an effort to fully live out its values, City Year has made several diversity, belonging, inclusion, and equity (DBIE) related operational changes including a complete revamp of its Corps management policies- specifically updating its uniform requirements to reduce the amount of money needed for wardrobe purchases related to service. It has also retooled what Charlie Rose referred to as a "racist" performance management system that prioritized a white-dominant ideal of "professionalism" over genuine youth development. Additionally, City Year Inc. now requires all its senior leaders to undergo diversity training upon hire. In a further effort to align its practices with its espoused values, City Year Inc. recently ended its long-term partnership with its uniform supplier, Aramark, and is sourcing Black and Brown suppliers instead.

Though the organization began with very little racial diversity within its leadership ranks, their Management Executive Committee (MEC) is now minority white with eight of its ten members identifying as a person of color. However, only one of these members, the Chief Counsel, is a Black woman- a point of contention for many of the BWSE interviewed for this project. This is not to say that the organization hasn't made strides in its recruitment of Black

women into executive leadership roles, though. City Year has a total of 52 Senior Vice Presidents. A little more than half of them (27) self-identify as Black and of those, 15 are Black women with many of these hires being made in the last two years.

While this increased representation is a significant advancement in City Year's DEI work, the organization has not investigated the degree to which any specific policies are "working" towards increasing inclusion, equity and belonging for its staff of color- specifically for the large number of Black women it has recently hired. As the Lean In (2020) report makes clear, Black women expend massive amounts of energy climbing the ladder to C-suite positions. However, as the survey also highlights, organizations must give just as much thought to the environments they will encounter once hired as they do to recruiting them to the positions in the first place. Research concerning the work lives of Black women reveals that their ascension into leadership roles can sometimes be nothing more than a revolving door of a hiring/departure cycle where Black women are hired into organizational spaces that are, at worst, hostile, and at best, are simply ignorant of the race-specific challenges they will face and supports they will need as minoritized leaders-leading to short tenures for some newly hired Black executives (Pandy, 2020; Steward, 2020).

While recruitment of leaders from diverse groups is one step toward fostering equitable spaces, retention of these leaders is a different concern. Based on conversations with two of City Year Inc.'s leaders, it appears that the organization may not be tracking its retention of leaders of color. These conversations have also raised questions about the organization's knowledge of and readiness to provide support to help mitigate the identify-specific hurdles some Black women nonprofit leaders face. For instance, Trent (2021) notes that nonprofits lead

by people of color are more likely to encounter depressed fundraising and lack of trust from governing boards and staff. It's not clear the degree to which City Year is tracking their leaders' experiences of these such challenges. Considerations about identity-specific challenges in the workplace are integral to Black women leaders doing more than just surviving the systemic racism adding undo weight to their roles. The purpose of this inquiry is to investigate the degree to which Black women executives at City Year are thriving within their positions and to consider what organizational strategies might aid them in doing so. The hope is that insights gained will spur the organization to expand and further cement its commitment to building a strong, inclusive culture for the new cohort of Black women SVPs they have recently recruited.

Positionality

In 2015, many years before the so-called "racial reckoning" of 2020, City Year's top leaders engaged in a weeks-long set of diversity and equity courses designed and led by racial equity strategist, Harvard graduate, and founder of DEEP-a consulting firm- Darnisa Amante. City Year simultaneously embarked on a journey to instill equity principles throughout their 29 sites through education opportunities, the creation on an equity counsel, reworking of essential documents, and the hiring of a few equity directors in select cities.

It is the hiring of these site-specific equity directors that Mithra Ramaley, Chief People Officer for City Year, acknowledges as a misstep in the organization's equity efforts. Though each of City Year's sites operates under the umbrella of City Year Inc., each site executive director is given a great deal of autonomy and flexibility in their operating and structural decision making. In 2018, the EDs in Boston and New York decided to hire their own versions of diversity directors. Mithra recalls that these hires were made against the advice of

headquarters leadership as many felt City Year Inc. had more work to do in developing its global DEI strategy before having the capacity to support individual site DEI staff. It appears their misgivings were well-founded. Within two years of their hiring, both site equity directors- both Black women- had left the organization. I was one of those women. City Year's relationship with Dr. Darnisa had also ended, and a series of diversity faux pas committed on the stage of their annual gathering set in motion an organization-wide reckoning about what it meant to truly care for such a diverse group of employees serving in Black and Brown communities across the country.

I left City Year to pursue this doctoral degree from Vanderbilt University. I also left because I was disgruntled with the equity director role and disenchanted with diversity work altogether. As a result of my experiences, I had come to believe that the change required to manage DEI initiatives within organizations was too great a task, and that most institutions lacked the will and skill to do the work effectively.

Two and a half years after my departure, and 15 doctoral-level courses in leadership later, I have a different view of City Year's equity work. Through social media sites like LinkedIn and conversations with friends still employed at the New York site, I've been able to keep up with some of their progress and have noticed a steady commitment to the diversity principles that have simply been a passing fad for other institutions. The so-called "racial reckoning" of 2020 is now often referred to by media commentators as the racial-reckoning that wasn't. Yet, from all outward accounts, City Year Inc. has stayed the course.

My position as an insider turned outsider has both benefits and limitations for this project. For one, I come to the work with some pre-conceived notions about City Year's success

around DBIE. From my estimation, the organization is a bright spot for institutions seeking to do this work well. However, the Black women executives participating in this study may have a different perspective. First, because they are each different people with varying world views. Second, because they are leading the within the organization at a level that presents different challenges than ones I faced. I rarely interacted with donors and never had to answer to a board. Each of those layers has the potential to add a level of cultural discontinuity to the SVP/ED experience. On the other hand, my positionality as a former employee helps me to understand the nuances of City Year's organizational culture. City Year is a very intentional organization with practices and beliefs that can be difficult for outsiders to understand and acclimate to. There are stories, chants, uniforms, and general expectations around conduct that are unique to City Year. Knowing this, I'm able to bypass a great deal of the research a complete outsider might have to engage in just to understand the inner workings of the organization

Literature Review

Issues of racism, sexism, and the intersectionality of the two are well-researched areas of study. Feminists and scholars from Sojourner Truth to Kimberle Crenshaw to Moya Bailey have, for many decades, detailed the specific challenge of being both a woman and a very particular kind of woman of color- a *Black* woman of color (Crenshaw, 1989; Bailey, 2018). Because of the witness and scholarship of these women, and many others, we understand that Black women are double minoritized- contending with assumptions, stereotypes and barriers related to both gender and race. Sexism dictates that Black women conform to male-centered ways of being in the workplace or risk ostracization (Kern, 2020). Racism constructs a "black ceiling" that bars entry into coveted seats of organizational power to which white women have

been granted access in steady numbers (though still lagging white men) since the passage of Affirmative Action legislation in the 1970s (Taulton, 2020; Button et al., 2006).

A History of Black Women As Workforce Participants

Black women have always participated in America's workforce in larger numbers than their non-Black counterparts (Cocchiara & Bell, 2006). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), since the 1970s, Black women have comprised a greater share of the workforce than their white counterparts. The same agency reports that Black women are also more likely to maintain fulltime employment (more than 35 hours weekly) than all other groups of women and Black men. The genesis of the working Black woman has its roots in antebellum laws known as "Black Codes" which criminalized so-called "vagrancy" and mandated that Black women be officially employed or risk arrest for "idleness" (Hager, 2018). Forced to sign labor contracts as field hands or house help, the author asserts that Black women were pushed into low-wage occupations in a racist cycle that saw their efforts be so concentrated on contributing to households as wage earners that there was little time for education and advancement past the service roles into which they were tracked.

This legacy of disenfranchisement continued into the Jim Crow era where Black women suffered under the dual constraints of racism and sexism (Frye, 2019). My great grandmother, for instance, was trained as a schoolteacher in a Normal School in Louisville, Kentucky. When she married, she was no longer allowed to teach professionally. Given the depressed wages of Black male workers, most Black households have always relied on the additional contribution of Black wives and mothers. My great grandmother, then, took work in one of the few industries available to Black women during that time- domestic service. Sexism denied her the career

which her education should have afforded her. Racism ensured that the only recourse available to her would be to spend the rest of her life cleaning the house of her employers and then decades later, the houses of their children. My great grandmother's story is unremarkable in its familiarity. Jean-Louis (2019) notes that freedom from slavery, unfortunately, did not equate to freedom from domestic service for the children of the formerly enslaved as millions of Black women contended with new restraints- including limitations on what jobs they could hold.

In 1964, the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, followed by the Equal Opportunity Act of 1972. Together, these laws made it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of "race, color, national origin, sex, and religion" (Legal Information Institute). Along with the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which aimed to abolish wage disparity based on sex, Black women might have expected to see exponentially reduced levels of gender and race discrimination and increased access. Indeed, the words "equal" and "opportunity" are prominent features of the legislation titles. However, equal opportunity laws intended to aid the advancement of all women, has improved the status of Black women less than would be expected considering their high rates of workforce participation and education (Cocchiara & Bell, 2006). Indeed, after the passage of affirmative action legislation in 1972, women experienced immense gains across previously restricted professions. Wise (1998) charts the following advancements:

- *The percentage of women architects increased from 3 % to nearly 19%*
- *The percentage of women doctors more than doubled from 10 % to 22*
- *The percentage of women lawyers grew from 4% to 23 %*
- *The percentage of female engineers went from less than 1% to nearly 9%.*

- *The percentage of female chemists grew from 10% to 30% of all chemists; and,*
- *The percentage of female college faculty went from 28% to 42%.*

The author also notes, though, that the overwhelming majority of this progress was experienced by white women.

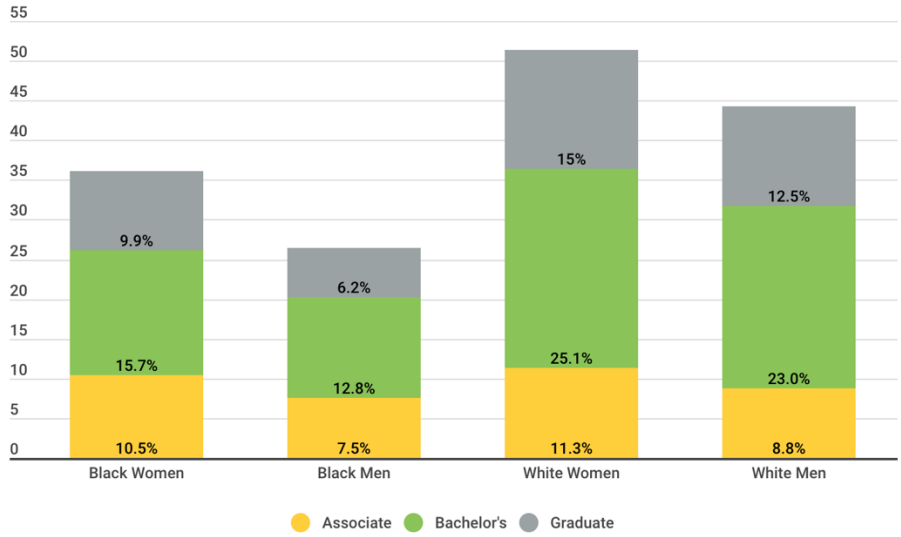
Continued Barriers

Be it the forced domestic labor brought on by The Black Codes, the sexism and racism of the Jim Crow south, or the unequal progress of affirmative action, the intentional repression of Black, female workplace advancement has failed to completely stifle Black women's ambition (Anthony et al., 2021; LeanIn.Org, & McKinsey & Company, 2018). According to a *Women in The Workplace* report (2017) by Lean In.Org and McKinsey & Company, Black women, more than white women, are far more likely to report a desire to advance to executive roles. According to the author, they are also more likely, percentage-wise, to outpace white women, Latinas, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans in the attainment of post-secondary degrees. As illustrated in Figure 4, Black women make up just 7.4% of the US population but earn 9.9% of graduate degrees compared to white women who are 35% of the population yet earn just 15% of graduate degrees (Anthony et al., 2021). Still, Black women hold just 1.6% of VP roles and 1.4% of C-suite positions compared to white women who hold 27% of VP roles and 20% of positions in the C-suite (LeanIn.Org, 2020; Catalyst, 2022). Ironically, the same underrepresentation is present even within non-profit organizations-where missions and activities are more likely to be centered around social problems that disproportionately affect Black communities. Griffin (2021) notes that while 60% of the nation's nonprofits address issues affecting majority people of color, only 17% of nonprofit executive directors are people of

color. Taken together, these stats illustrate that there is no lack of desire for advancement nor preparedness on the part of Black women. Instead, what Black women continue to face is a persistent and profound opportunity gap.

Figure 4

Degree Attainment by Race and Gender



Degree Attainment Among Black Women and Men & White Women and Men (2018)
Source: Anthony et al. (2021)

Greenhaus et al. (1990) further illuminate the way race impacts the career experiences of professional Black organizational leaders. Specifically, the authors note that Black managers are less likely than their white counterparts to feel accepted within their organizations. They are also more likely to experience dissatisfaction with their careers, receive lower performance reviews, and perceive that they have less discretion within their roles. Other issues connected to the Black professional experience include lack of equal pay; tokenism- where Black workers

are the “only” person of their race or gender on a staff or executive team; racial and gender-based stereotyping such as Black women being perceived as aggressive or even lazy, and microagressive behaviors and comments about Black hair and other culturally-specific ways of being that lead to Black women feeling singled-out and subtly discriminated against (Taulton, 2020; Cocchiara & Bell, 2006; Branch, 2012).

Such oppressive practices both intentionally and unintentionally construct what Taulton (2020) describes as a “concrete ceiling” that limits the advancement of would-be Black women leaders within many organizations. Concrete ceilings-generally used to refer to the barriers women of color face- differ from the glass ceilings that have come to exemplify the difficulty all women face in infiltrating male-dominated spaces in that they are seen as being less penetrable, more permanent barriers to advancement. On the other side of the concrete ceiling is the “glass cliff.” This describes a phenomenon in which Black women are positioned as the ”clean up woman” where they are tasked with difficult assignments in struggling organizations or failing teams. While Smith et al. (2018) note that some Black women are taking advantage of these high-risk assignments and using them to increase their visibility within their organizations, others highlight the inequity of the “glass cliff” being one of the few avenues available to Black women seeking promotion. Representing the proverbial “between a rock and a hard place,” Black women seeking to climb the corporate ladder are languishing between a dearth of opportunity on one side and an outsized supply of risky assignments on the other. These challenges combined with a lack of access to effective mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, conspire to keep Black women from occupying seats of power for which their ambition and education would otherwise naturally propel them.

Unfortunately, advancing into these positions is just half the battle. Branch (2012) chronicles the experiences of Black women executives in corporate America and notes that many of the challenges they faced in advancing toward the positions are still present once the executive roles are attained. Indeed, Griffin (2021) notes that BWSE are often hired into roles that become revolving doors of various people of color who enter an organization with optimism towards the work only to find that they completely lack both the senior and ground-level support necessary to ensure they can thrive within the position.

From Surviving to Thriving

For hundreds of years Black women have relied on their social networks, their religious affiliations, sisterhood connections, their ability to shift identities, and their own perceived "strength" to gird against the many slights, disappointments, and overt racism faced in the workplace (Dickens et al., 2019; Dickens & Chavez, 2017; Linnabery et al., 2014). In *Managing Hypervisibility: An Exploration of Theory and Research on Identity Shifting Strategies in the Workplace Among Black Women*, Dickens et al. (2019) highlight several frameworks through which we may understand these coping strategies. One such framework known as Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) notes the importance of group validation in the development of quality relationships. A key tenet of this framework is that a lack of identity affirmation often leads to an individual negotiating (or shifting) their identity to improve the work relationships in which they are engaging. A Black man turning in his basketball workouts for a pair of golf cleats. A Muslim woman forgoing her hijab. A Black woman straightening her hair instead of wearing it in its naturally curly state. These are all examples of ways in which people of color might "shift" their identities to foster positive mainstream work relationships.

While seemingly benign, this cultural shifting is often undertaken at a psychological, and sometimes physical health cost to the shifter. Highlighting the burden Black women carry to manage identity-related stressors in the workplace, Dickens and Chavez (2017) note the guilt and lowered self-efficacy with which Black women often contend when shifting their behavior to conform to dominant-culture standards. One Black woman study participant had this to say about the stress she and other BWSE are experiencing:

> *"We had a small huddle of black women in our organization across levels. And it was startling to me to hear that most of the women on that call were using a night guard at night, including myself. Because of stress. And it became a thing like you're using the night guard? You're using a night guard? I'm using one. That blows my mind. That again, no matter what level you are in the organization, there's this stress that you carry because you have to, you have to show up perfectly or someone's watching for you to make a small mistake and that's tiring. That's difficult."*

For many, the constant shifting and inauthenticity becomes untenable. According to Pandy (2020), Black employees are 30% more likely to report an intention to leave their current positions than their white counterparts.

A new frontier of scholarship is emerging, however, that is focused on Black women doing more than surviving workplace, identity-related challenges. It asks, for the most educated population in the United States, what would it look like to thrive? What if we stopped shifting? What would it look like to feel energized and to not have to settle for the status quo? And further, what is the organization's responsibility in helping us to do so?

This research project is concerned with mining the experiences of Black women who have reached the Managing Director level and above within City Year to understand whether the organization's DBIE (diversity, belonging, inclusion, equity) efforts have created the

conditions for thriving for their Black women leaders. Though Black women leaders have become adept at leveraging their inner fortitude and resilience to persevere in the face of workplace racism and sexism, as Ellen et al. (2003) note, organizations must bear some responsibility in cultivating environments in which diverse groups of people can lead effectively. Bolstering the psychological safety and thriving of Black women workers as a consistent, highly qualified, and ambitious demographic is now an organizational imperative.

Conceptualizing Thriving

Thriving can be defined as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005) where vitality is connected to self-produced energy and learning is associated with forward momentum and continual improvement (Porath et al., 2012). There has been a great deal of scholarship about thriving dating back to Maslow's work on the hierarchy of needs (Porath et al., 2011). While there are other connected constructs including human flourishing, well-being, resilience, and flow, Spreitzer et al. (2005) contend that thriving is a distinct domain in that it is concerned with both hedonic (enjoyment and pleasure) and eudaimonic (meaning and purpose) perspectives in its consideration of vitality and learning as primary inclusions.

In their article on Afro-Diasporic women navigating the Black ceiling, Erskine et al. (2021) further flesh out the accepted understanding of thriving by defining it as "a psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning that they are energized by, feel alive at work, are passionate about what they do, produce their own energy through excitement for their work, believe they are getting better at what they do, and are not satisfied with the status quo" (p. 42). The authors add to the literature on thriving in two

distinct ways: 1) By centering Black women's work experiences within the conversation and 2) By offering strategies organizations can employ to support Black women thriving. This positioning differs from much of the literature on Black women's professional thriving in that it isn't only concerned with the mechanisms Black women employ to "survive" the strain of systemic racism on their jobs. While the authors discuss both relational and individual agentic strategies Black women can undertake to shift from surviving to thriving, the authors also offer organizational strategies designed to specifically cater to the unique needs of Black women.

In their study of workplace climate, Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) undertake a similar investigation, though they work under the construct of "job satisfaction" instead of thriving. The questions raised are similar, however, in that both works seek to highlight the organizational conditions under which Black women workers might experience success. In so doing, the Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) lend support to the notion that the needs of Black women workers may differ from those of white women and that there are specific conditions that are more likely to foster well-being for these workers. Though the authors' study is primarily concerned with the job satisfaction of Black female educators, the findings may lend insight into factors that could form the basis of thriving for Black female workers in other industries- including a desire for strong supervisor support and reduced cultural dissimilarity within the work environment.

Organizational Strategies To Support Thriving

Aspects of the Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) findings are present in the Erskine et al. (2021) discussion of systemic barriers that stifle Black women's advancement to leadership positions. Erskine et al. (2021) highlight a lack of institutional support, exclusion from informal

networks, along with patriarchy and white supremacy as key impediments to Black women's workplace thriving. To combat these and other barriers, the authors suggest four organizational strategies to build a culture of thriving for all employees, but specifically for Black women. These strategies include minimizing workplace incivilities, adopting a positive deviance framework, taking a critical management stance, and increasing awareness of intersectionality and its role in shaping the workplace experiences of diverse groups. Table 1 charts the working definitions for thriving and the Erskine et al. (2021) strategies.

Table 1

Terms Definitions

Term	Working Definition
Thriving	A psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning that they are energized by, feel alive at work, are passionate about what they do, produce their own energy through excitement for their work, believe they are getting better at what they do, and are not satisfied with the status quo.
Workplace Incivility	The prevalence of the exchange of seemingly inconsequential, inconsiderate words and deeds that violate workplace norms or workplace conduct
Positive Deviance Framework	An asset-based, problem-solving approach that recognizes that in every community there are individuals or groups whose uncommon strategies, and proximity to the problems, enable them to find better solutions than their peers
Critical Management Stance	A willingness to hold a deep skepticism of mainstream management theory and its prevailing assumptions manifested within organizations
Intersectionality Awareness	A demonstrated understanding of and willingness to name and interrogate the power dynamics associated with systems of patriarchy and institutionalized racism, and their effects on individuals with multiple marginalized identities within the organization

Definitions for thriving and the four Erskine et al. (2021) constructs

The first strategy Erskine et al. (2021) offer is to minimize the daily incivilities that can produce an inhospitable work environment. A key distinction of workplace incivility is that there is no intention of harm (Cortina et al. (2011). Much like the microaggressions that are a

topic of recent discussions of workplace violence, incivilities are often thought to be benign and are not always apparent to the perpetrator nor organizational leaders (Lewis & Malecha, 2011). Unlike the direct forms of racialized sexism that were a hallmark of pre-Civil Rights era work environments, today's workplace incivilities are likely to be more subtle and may even be enacted by those who would otherwise consider themselves to be progressive or even "woke" (Erskine et al., 2021). The authors posit that workplace incivilities are anything but benign and are a vehicle through which the "black ceiling" flourishes. Acts of incivility can include such behaviors as ignoring someone's ideas, taking credit for their contributions, or using a condescending tone simply because of an unconscious belief in their diminished status as Black women.

The second organizational strategy is related to adopting a positive deviance framework. The study of positive deviance has a long history with many working definitions across several disciplines (Mertens et al., 2015). As a construct for organizational studies, positive deviance has been understood as "intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways"(Mertens, 2015, p. 1290). Erskine et al. (2021) consider positive deviance within the specific context of how organizations leverage the inherent expertise of members of a particular community to help solve problems that are being experienced within that community. As a movement, Positive Deviance seeks to promote asset-based, community-driven solutions within organizations (Positive Deviance Collaborative, 2017). This approach to problem-solving deviates from the traditional behaviors of white-led organizations that offer solutions generated outside of the community while failing to capture

the embedded knowledge of Black women leaders within their organizations who may be able to offer unique insights into the issues the organization is attempting to solve.

Thirdly, Erskine et al. (2021) theorize that organizations that embrace a critical management stance questioning long-accepted positions on leading that center white maleness, are organizations that are more likely to foster thriving for Black women. Instead of traditional, one-size-fits-all approaches to leadership development, the authors highlight the need for organizations to interrogate accepted beliefs about management theory and consider the specific coaching needs of Black women leaders by developing programs that will address their identity-related management concerns.

Finally, the authors lift incorporating an awareness of intersectionality and its effects on the experiences of workers with multiple marginalized identities (such as Black women) as a key factor in fostering an environment for thriving. The term intersectionality, as coined by Crenshaw (1989) refers to the ways in which power collides with intersecting identities to withhold access from certain groups. According to Erskine et al. (2021) an awareness of this phenomenon and how it shapes the individual biases of organizational leaders as well as informs the policies within that organization is key to promoting thriving for Black women.

Due to racist systems that have demanded that Black women be employed outside the home while simultaneously stifling their advancement opportunities, Black women have participated in the workforce at disproportionately high rates for the last 150 years (Cocchiara & Bell, 2006). This high participation, however, has not guaranteed them the workplace leadership positions for which their educational attainment and ambition should qualify (LeanIn.Org, 2020). Griffin (2021) makes clear that even in nonprofit spaces that specifically

address issues affecting Black communities, Black women's representation in leadership has been stifled. For much of the last 150 years, Black women workers have been primarily concerned with merely surviving hostile workplaces and have done so by relying on community networks such as churches and sororities. However, Ellen et al. (2003) put forth that it's not enough for organizations to recruit diverse leadership, they must also pave the way for these leaders to succeed within their roles. Black women scholars have begun to consider what organizational practices could lead to this success by looking at specific constructs such as supervisor support and pay that might contribute to Black women's job satisfaction Farinde-Wu, A., & Fitchett, P. G., 2016). Other scholars are building on earlier conceptions of thriving as a means to support Black women workers. Erskine et al. (2021) offer a set of four organizational strategies that they suggest will support Afro-Diasporic women thriving in workplace.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 To what extent do Black women senior executives at City Year report thriving within their roles?

Research Question 2 How do Black senior executives reports of thriving within City Year compare to similarly positioned Black women outside of the organization?

Research Question 3 To what extent are minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness present within City Year's organizational culture?

Research Question 4 To what degree is the enactment of minimized incivility, positive deviance,

critical management, and intersectionality awareness as organizational strategies connected to Black women senior executives' reports of thriving?

Project Design

City Year Inc. or "Headquarters" is the partner organization for this inquiry. I approached City Year as a potential partner based on my knowledge of its long, sustained history of incorporating diversity as part of its mission, and because of its recent, robust recruitment of Black women leaders into its Executive Director/Senior Vice President roles. As a former insider turned outsider, I began to wonder about the experiences of these new hires as well as other Black women executives within the organization. I wanted to explore the efficacy of City Year's DBIE initiatives through the lens of its BWSE (Black woman senior executives). I suspected that City Year's decades long work in DBIE would produce an environment more conducive to thriving for these leaders than the environments for BWSE within other organizations. To explore this, I also invited BWSE outside of the organization to participate in the project.

To answer the project questions, I designed a mixed methods investigation to capture the experiences of BWSE within City Year Inc. including a 56-item survey and targeted and semi-structured interviews. I invited women outside of City Year to complete the survey but did not interview them.

Participant Sample

As a hierarchical organization with dozens of sites with similar, but unidentical structures, defining who qualified as a senior executive was my first task in choosing

participants. The ten ED/Senior Vice Presidents were the initial targets as their level of seniority within the organization is relatively straightforward. Above and below them, though, lie a web of Black women workers with and without direct reports, with titles that might classify them as "senior" within their respective site, but not within the broader City Year Inc. ecosystem. I eventually landed on inviting only Black women at the Senior Vice President level to participate because this is the level where broad, organization-wide change is most available.

The sample profile was defined as any Black woman working in an organization under a title that they considered to be "Senior" within their org. Black women employed by both for-profit and nonprofit organizations as well as higher education, military, and government roles were eligible to participate. Though women working in any type of organization were invited to take the survey, I eventually narrowed the results to only include those working in nonprofits, education, and government. Narrowing the sample ensured that the two samples were better aligned as City Year is a governmental (AmeriCorps), education nonprofit.

Recruitment and Data Collection

Charlie Rose sent an email was inviting 11 ED/Senior Vice Presidents and four headquarters-level SVPs to participate in the project. I sent several follow-up emails to recruit as many respondents as possible. In total, 14 women completed the survey and 12 agreed to be interviewed.

To recruit participants outside of City Year, I started first with my friends and personal networks and then snowballed out by asking them to forward the survey to other women they knew who fit the profile. I also posted an invitation on LinkedIn and shared with my EdD cohort who reposted it within their networks. Finally, I posted the survey and a brief description of the

project to several online forums to which I belong including a group for Spelman moms, a group for Black women Peloton enthusiasts, as well as sharing with the National Alumni Association of Spelman College lists serve. A total of 248 women outside of City Year completed the survey. After I filtered the responses for race (Black or Bi-racial w/Black), gender (female), education level (undergraduate and up), and organization-type (nonprofit, government, education), there were 111 responses remaining to analyze.

Data Instruments

The 56-item survey was developed by combining existing measures with items created based on relevant literature from the conceptual framework. The first eight questions collect demographic data using the ORARC Tip Sheet for Inclusive Demographic Data Collection from the Office of Regulatory Affairs at Harvard University. Each construct (thriving, workplace incivility, positive deviance, critical management stance, intersectionality awareness) was measured using a set of multiple-choice questions which were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale where Strongly disagree= 1 and Strongly agree= 5. Each domain received a composite score to signify the degree of its presence. The full survey is attached in Appendix A.

Item Rationale

Research Question 1 is concerned with the degree to which Black women senior executives within City Year report experiencing a sense of thriving within their roles. To measure this, I adopted the Porath et al. (2012) survey on thriving to form the first nine questions of the instrument.

Thriving. Thriving as it is currently conceived in the literature, is tightly aligned with white, heteronormative ways of being, and is without consideration of the diverse needs

of those holding marginalized identities- especially those, like Black women, who are at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. To craft a measure that incorporates a broader conceptualization of Black woman thriving, questions were added from the CSS (Career Satisfaction Survey) developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990), and the Work-Family Conflict and Social Supports Scale from Carlson and Perrewe (1999). Additionally, six of the seven questions from the Gartner Inclusion Index (Romansky et al., 2021) were included. Together, these form the first 20 questions of the survey and are designed to measure Black woman senior executive thriving through vitality and learning, with the added layer of additional factors that have been previously tested and found to contribute to Black woman workplace satisfaction including organizational commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, work/life balance, equal pay, and supervisor relationships (Linnaberry et al., 2014; Dickens et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu and Fitchett, 2018). As double-minoritized individuals existing at the intersection of race and gender, Black women don't have the luxury of just considering whether they are learning and experiencing vitality *about* the work. Especially for those working in nonprofit settings, where the motivation is often intrinsic, the question isn't about a deep sense of vitality and connection. As Griffin (2021) notes, a significant portion of Black women leave their jobs when attempting to resolve conflicts stemming from their experiences with microaggressions, tokenization, and racist practices. Thriving for these women, then, must extend beyond basic considerations of learning and vitality, and must consider other factors which have been shown to adversely impact the physical and mental health of Black women workers (Griffin, 2021).

Workplace Incivility. I chose to measure workplace incivility using the Cortina et al. (2001) scale with added questions pulled from the *Lean In State of Black Women in*

Corporate America Report (2020). This report includes questions that ask Black women about their experiences with microaggressions- which, as noted above, is one of the factors that Griffin (2021) found contributes to Black women leaving their positions.

Positive Deviance. There are existing measures for positive deviance (PD) in the workplace, however, it is such a broad construct with various interpretations, that none of the available measures aligned directly with the Erskine et al. (2021) version of PD as a community-centered approach to problem-solving. The same is true for critical management studies. The authors interpret both concepts within the context of supporting environments for Black women thriving. As research in this area is scarce, to generate defensible measures directly related to the phenomenon, questions were designed specifically for this project. An example of a PD question is: (On a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) *My organization demonstrates an understanding of the role of leaders of color in addressing issues in that effect communities of color*. An example of a question to measure critical management is: (On a scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) *My organization provides leadership training that is relevant to my experiences as a Black woman.*

Intersectionality Awareness. Bauer et al. (2021) note that while intersectionality has become a common theoretical framework in qualitative research, its use in quantitative methods is a more recent development. The authors also contend that the understanding and application of "intersectionality" has grown away from its original grounding in Black feminist theory and has come to represent an array of social intersections that aren't all necessarily situated in an examination of power. This project is squarely rooted in power dynamics with its inquiry into Black women senior executives' work experiences. Again, because of its precise

conception, and due to the scarcity of quantitative intersectionality measures, items were crafted specifically for this survey with insights from Healy et al. (2021),Bowleg & Bauer (2016), and Dennissen et al. (2018). An example of a question in the intersectionality component is: *At my organization I perceive that being Black and female is a factor in how my leadership is received.*

Cognitive Interviews

Before the survey was released, cognitive interviews with three Black women senior leaders were undertaken to improve the validity and reliability of the draft survey. Willis and Artino (2013) note that cognitive interviews can aid a researcher in determining if a survey question fulfills the intention for which it was designed. Interview participants were recorded answering each survey question while speaking aloud about their thought processes, questions, and any confusion that arose during completion. As a response to the feedback stemming from this process, I eliminated or reworded several questions. For example….

The participant profile was also changed to exclude women who had found and were leading their own organization because….

Interview Protocol

Only BWSE within City Year were interviewed. The semi-structured interviews began with a review of the participant's survey responses with each elaborating on items answered with "neither agree nor disagree" to provide clarity about their thinking. Often, the conversation would become centered around a particular topic on which the participant would speak extensively, providing context and background information that proved valuable to the scope of the project and overall analysis of the data. Table 2 outlines a basic interview protocol

that served as an initial guide for each interview. Additionally, I interviewed Mithra Irani-Chief People Officer, Charlie Rose- Dean and Senior Vice President, and Stephen Spaloss- Chief Equity Officer. These interviews offered a top-down perspective of City Year's history of DBIE practices, and the future aims of leaders at the highest level for managing the diversity and inclusion objectives of such a large, hierarchical organization.

Table 2

Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been in your current role?
2. Does your level of seniority within the organization offer a higher level of protection from microaggressions/racism?
3. What is City Year doing right when it comes to supporting BWSE?
4. What supports are you lacking that are specific to your identity as Black and woman?
5. Would you describe yourself as "thriving" given the following definition, and if so, are there particular aspects of City Year's culture that are contributing: ***a psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning such that they are energized, feel alive at work, are passionate about what they do, produce their own energy through excitement for their work, believe they are getting better at what they do, and are not satisfied with the status quo***
6. How "civil" is the culture at City Year compared to other places you've worked? Has the level of civility contributed to (or detracted from) your sense of well-being as a leader there? (minimized incivility)
7. How is being Black and female connected to the ways in which your leadership is received at City Year? Is it your perception that this would be different if you were a Black male or a White woman? (intersectionality awareness)
8. Has City Year's robust hiring of Black women into these leadership roles been intentional? What is their intention behind it? (positive deviance)
9. What would it look like for City Year to offer coaching and professional development that was tailored to your needs as a Black woman leader within the organization?

Questions developed for semi- structured interviews of BWSE at City Year

Data Analysis

Interview Data

I uploaded the transcripts of each interview to **Nvivo** and analyzed participant responses using the codebook I developed for this project. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) define codes as " tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information complied during a study" (p. 137). The codes for this project are both theory-driven and data-driven. The theory-driven (or deductive) codes are based on the Erskine et al. (2021) model of organizational strategies that support Black women thriving as well as Farinde-Wu & Fitchett's (2016) description of workplace climates in which Black women report job satisfaction. Additional theory-driven codes are based on the Spreitzer (2005) definition of thriving as a function of vitality and learning. For the data-driven (or inductive) coding, I noted themes that arose during my interviews with the BWSE and created a code for any topic that could be relevant to the project. For instance, more than one BWSE referenced a lack of support from their advisory board. Others spoke about thriving based on their own perceptions of the word. I created a code for each of these along with a definition and example. As I read the interview transcripts, I coded any comment that lent insight into their experience as a BWSE. Table 3 shows an excerpt from the codebook with the number of files in which the code was referenced as well as total number of references for each code. The full codebook can be found in Appendix B.

Table 3

Codebook Excerpt

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
Afraid of Being Racist	Participants refer to CY (org or staff) making decisions (or avoiding them) out of a fear of being perceived as racist	2	2
Barriers to Success	Participant describes barriers to job success specifically related to their identity as Black and/or female	5	9
Board Support	Participant refers to specific supports received (or withheld) from their board of directors	2	3
BWSE Preparedness	Participant discusses their own credentials/preparedness to lead	4	11
City Year in Transition	Participants refer to structural changes at CY that affect their role as BWSE	6	13
City Year Succeeding	Participant describes practices and habits at CY that are successfully promoting DBIE	8	30
Critical Management Stance	Participant refers to policies or procedures enacted, or actions taken to question widely accepted notions of manager training and expectations; coaching specific to Black women; CM needs	7	18
Culturally Specific Lens and Leadership	Participants discuss differences in how they lead, their expectations of staff/the work that are related to their background as Black women	4	19
DBIE Work at City Year	Participant makes direct/indirect or general/specific references to efficacy of CY's DBIE work	7	26
Difficult co-worker interactions or relationships	Participants describe strained or difficult co-worker interactions that stem from cultural differences (organizational culture or race-based)	6	11
Donor Relationships	Participant refers to impediments to fundraising (or advantages) based on their identity as a Black woman	2	3
Glass Cliff Assignments	Participants discuss being setup in positions or with assignments that are extremely	2	3

Excerpt from codebook I developed for interview data analysis

From Codes to Themes

I created 27 codes in all. Once I coded each transcript, I reviewed the codebook report to understand which codes represented themes and which codes, while insightful, were representative of just one person's perspective. I created a rule that for a code to become a theme, it had to appear in at least four of the ten interviews. While I originally considered five references to be a good indication of a "theme" as it would represent a majority, I chose four as the cutoff because most of the data showed codes being referenced either once or twice or

four or more times. This rule took the potential themes from 27 to 18. Lack of board support was among the codes that did not qualify as a theme.

From there, I separated the remaining codes into themes that specifically answered the research questions, and themes that provided context for the work environments, dispositions, and leadership experiences of the Black women senior executives. Finally, I created a memo that listed each research question, the claim I was making to answer that question based on the data, and then wrote a paragraph detailing the supporting evidence for the claim.

Survey Data

Data analysis was conducted using **R Studio**. Descriptive statistics were conducted to summarize variables such as gender, race, education level, job title, and thriving-related questions.

The goal of the analysis is to measure the degree to which BWSE within City Year report thriving based their own self-report as well as based on the theoretical conception of thriving as the presence of a combination of vitality and learning. The Cochran Armitage Test for Trend and Chi-Squared approach were used to compare the results of Black women senior executive (BWSE) responses with those of BWSE outside of the organization. Frequencies and percentages were used to show whether more women describe themselves as "thriving" within their current professional roles.

I also tested for the presence of the four organizational strategies that Erskine et al. (2021) identify as supporting Black women's thriving (minimized incivility, intersectionality awareness, positive deviance framework, and critical management stance). This was done to understand the degree to which they might be connected to BWSE organizational thriving. A

full list of each construct as well as their corresponding set of questions for appears in Appendix C.

To answer RQ1 *To what extent do Black women senior executives report thriving in their roles at City Year?* thriving is conceived as related to experiencing a sense of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Questions for this construct are pulled directly from the Porath et al. (2012) study of thriving in the workplace. Sample questions include: *1) I find myself learning often and 2) I feel alive and vital.* In addition to this examination of thriving based on its theoretical definition, the question (yes or no) "Would you describe yourself as "thriving" within your current professional role?" was examined along with its follow-up question, "My organization is helping me to thrive within my role" (strongly disagree – strongly agree). Together, these questions provided a glimpse into whether or not BWSE perceive that they are thriving apart from the theoretical definition of the word. This is important as the conception of "thriving" can vary widely as its use gains traction in nonacademic spaces. Based on my own personal experience, I had a hunch that BWSE might answer the vitality and learning questions in a way that would signal thriving but may actually self-report a very different sentiment under the "Would you describe yourself as thriving" question. The additional inquiry of "Please explain why or why not" when asked if their organization is helping them to thrive offered specific insights into how BWSE are conceptualizing thriving for themselves.

To answer RQ2, *How do Black senior executives reports of thriving within City Year compare to similarly positioned Black women outside of the organization?* the questions from RQ1 (Are BWSE at City Year thriving) were used: "Would you describe yourself as "thriving" within your current professional role?" as well as the questions related to vitality and learning.

This time the responses of the Black women senior executives within City Year were compared to Black women senior executives working outside of the organization.

To answer RQ3 *To what extent are minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness present within City Year's organizational culture?* descriptive statistics (measures of mean and standard deviation) were used.

To answer RQ4 *To what degree is the enactment of minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness as organizational strategies connected to Black women senior executives' reports of thriving?*
the Independent variable was the question (yes or no) "Would you describe yourself as "thriving" within your current professional role?" while the dependent variables were constructs from RQ3 – perception of organization culture characteristics (minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness).

Each response from strongly agree to strongly disagree was assigned a score. Table 4 outlines the score for each response. I also assigned a composite score for each construct (thriving, positive deviance framework, critical management stance, intersectionality awareness, and minimized incivility) based on its total possible score. For instance, there were eight questions connected to thriving on the survey. Because responses of "strongly agree" are worth a "5," the highest possible composite score for thriving is a 40. The lowest possible is an "8" since responses of "strongly disagree" are scored as ones. If a respondent answered each of those eight questions as a "strongly agree" then their composite score for thriving would be a 40 and they would be said to be "thriving". If a respondent answered each of the eight thriving

questions as a “strongly disagree” then their composite score would be an eight and they would be said to not be thriving. Table 5 outlines the composite score ranges for each construct.

Table 4

Likert Scale Survey Scores

Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neither Agree or Disagree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Description of scoring system for survey responses

Table 5

Composite Scores Outline

	# of questions	Not Present	Neither Agree or Disagree	Present
Thriving	8	8-23	24	25-40
Intersectionality Awareness	3	3-8	9	10-15
Critical Management	3	3-8	9	10-15
Positive Deviance	2	2-5	6	7-10
Minimized Incivility	8	8-20	24	25-40

High, mid, and low composite scores for thriving and the four Erskine et al. (2021) strategies

This project was primarily concerned with exploring the degree to which Black women senior executives at City Year are thriving within their roles- particularly as compared to similarly positioned Black women outside of the organization. The hope is that an answer to this question will aid City Year in mapping out a plan to support and retain its recently-hired cohort of Black women Senior Vice Presidents.

As previously stated, only data from people identifying as Black women working in senior executive level positions were analyzed for this project. Relevant demographic data of participants meeting the criteria (including BWSE from City Year) is listed below.

Table 6

Survey Participant Demographics

Variable	n	%
Race (Self-identified)		
Bi-Racial Black with Other Race	3	2.60
Black or African American	111	97.40
Education Level		
Terminal Degree	33	28.70
Graduate	64	55.70
Undergraduate	18	15.70
Type of organization at which participant is currently employed		
Higher education	22	19.13
K-12	5	4.34
Non-profit corporation	59	51.30
Other (e.g., government)	29	25.21

Demographic data of survey participants

Research Question 1 **To what extent do Black women senior executives report thriving within their roles at City Year?**

Finding 1: Although 100% of BWSE at City Year reported thriving according to the learning and vitality survey questions (scoring at 25 and above composite score), only 36% report thriving in response to a self-report "Would you describe yourself as thriving?" yes/no question

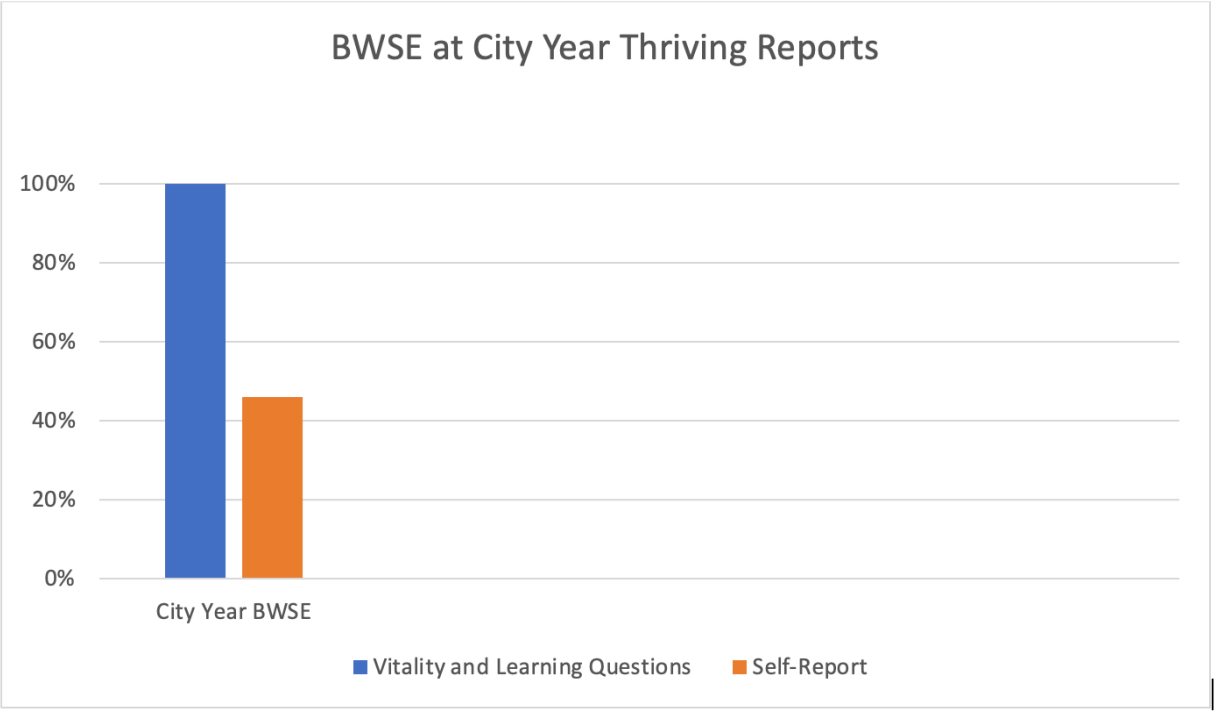
Spreitzer et al. (2005), like much of the psychology literature, define thriving as measured by an individual's experiences of learning and vitality. Porath et al. (2012) add that individuals who are thriving experience growth and feel energized and alive by a sense that they are continually improving in what they do. Erskine et al. (2021) recognize the unique

identity Black women hold as individuals facing societal barriers that often limit their advancement. The authors assert that due to their status as double-minoritized workers, organizations must intentionally employ strategies to support Black women's thriving. They name four strategies including minimizing incivilities, adopting a positive deviance framework, taking a critical management stance, and maintaining an awareness of how the intersectionality of race and gender inform the experiences of their Black women workers.

Erskine et al. (2021) adopt the Spreitzer et al. (2005) and Porath et al. (2021) definition of thriving in their exploration of Black women's work needs. The participants in this project, however, appear to conceptualize thriving in ways that differ from theoretical notions of the term found in much of the psychology literature. For many of the BWSE interviewed, thriving was connected to their sense of how well they were attending to the performance indicators for their roles and how much effort City Year leadership was putting into helping them do so. They discussed stressors connected to issues like recruitment, fundraising, and staff relationships, and were likely to self-report that they were *not* thriving if they were experiencing acute difficulties within these domains.

Figure 5

BWSE Thriving at City Year



Vitality and Learning Questions and "*Would you describe yourself as thriving*?" Self-Report

When asked outright if they are thriving (*Would you describe yourself as thriving?* yes/no), left to interpret the word as they wished, only 46% of Black women senior executives (BWSE) working at City answered "yes" that they *are* thriving. However, the same women *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with all the questions measuring vitality and learning- indicating that they are thriving by that conception of the term. Additionally, when provided with the full Erskine et al. (2021) description of thriving, all City Year BWSE interviewed reported that by that definition, they are indeed thriving.

Respondent 1: *"Oh. If that's what thriving is, then 100%. Um, I feel like I am thriving."*

Respondent 2: *"Yes, yes, yes. <laugh>, [I am thriving based on that definition] but left to our own definition, I'm like, no."*

What is clear is that while the Spreitzer et al. (2005) definition of thriving as workers experiencing a sense of vitality and learning may encompass some elements of what it means to thrive, for Black women leaders at City Year, it fails to capture the full range of *feelings* of thriving for them in their roles.

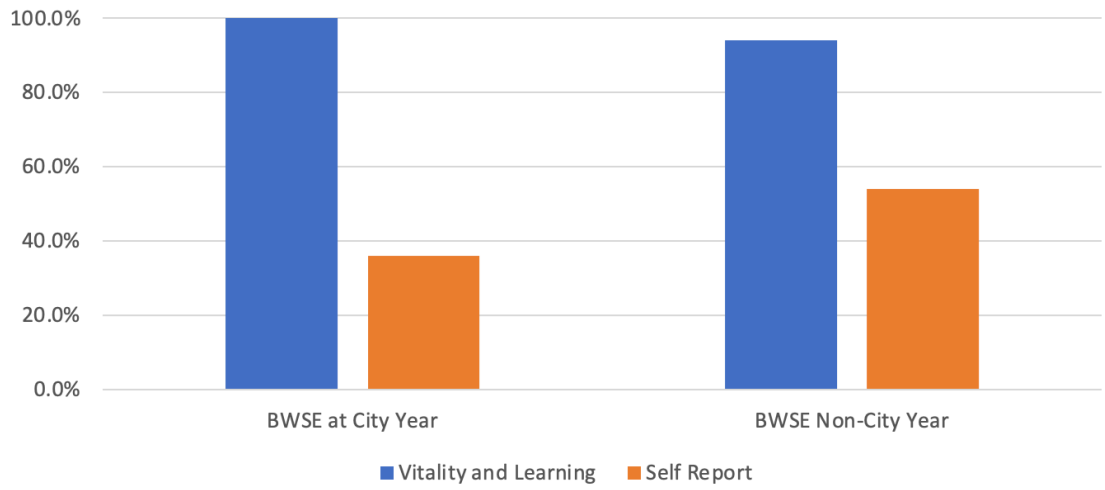
Research Question 2 **How do Black senior executives reports of thriving within City Year compare to similarly positioned Black women outside of the organization?**

Finding 2: When asked *Are you thriving?* (yes/no), Black women senior executives outside of City Year report higher levels of thriving (58%) than those BWSE working within City Year (46%). When responding to survey questions in which thriving is defined as vitality and learning, however, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups (*Mdn*=29)

When stripped of personal notions of thriving, and when instead responding to questions that consider thriving as a combination of vitality and learning only, the two groups answered in ways that were nearly identical. At Figure 6 shows non-City Year BWSE reaching a vitality and learning composite score of "thriving" (thriving= composite score of 21 and above) at 95% compared to City Year's 100%, however Table 5 shows this difference in composite scores to be statistically insignificant as the medians, standard deviations, and means are all statistically similar.

Figure 6

Thriving Comparison



BWSE Thriving at City Year vs. BWSE Thriving Non-City Year

Table 7

Vitality and Learning Questions and "Are You Thriving" Self-Report

Variable	***M***	***SD***	***Mdn***
City Year	28.5	2.37	29
Outside of City Year	28.2	3.08	29

Median, Standard Deviation, and Mean of Thriving as Vitality and Learning for City Year and Non-City Year Survey Respondents

Most of the BWSE inside City Year were interviewed right on the heels of an Executive Director retreat which asked them to discuss how the organization might support them in moving from surviving to thriving. Though there was no single definition offered, the word "thriving" and the consideration of what it means to thrive was fresh on their minds when most of them completed the survey. This could explain some of the difference between how they responded to the "Are you thriving?"(yes/no) question and how BWSE outside of City Year responded. For many of these women, the idea of thriving is personal and the notion that their sense of thriving could be connected to the practices of an organization was new and even uncomfortable. One leader explained it this way:

> *And then we go to executive director retreat and, and different sessions and we're gonna unpack what does it mean to thrive at City Year. Or how do we create conditions for EDs to thrive at City Year? And when I tell you the visceral reaction that I had to that, cause for me work is work home is home. Like my work is not who I am, it's what I do.*

Other BWSE at City Year expressed that thriving for them was connected to how well they were meeting their key performance indicators such as meeting fundraising targets and recruiting corps members. If the BWSE aren't meeting fundraising or recruitment targets, there was a sense that they couldn't be thriving. Because their motivation for the work was intrinsic and connected to their desire to effect change in their communities, there could be no sense of individual thriving without collective betterment. One BWSE commented: "*My personal values and commitment to empowering our young people aligns with my work. My energy comes from a bigger picture perspective, knowing that I'm making a difference in the lives of those we*

serve." About the need to be successful in their work to experience a sense of thriving, another BWSE remarked, *"Given the level of responsibilities and transitions at my site, I am surviving not thriving."*

The ED/SVPs at City Year highlighted challenges with the organization's hierarchical structure as a barrier to their meeting certain performance objectives. For instance, one BWSE described City Year's headquarters-lead recruitment process as being removed from local needs and contexts. She noted, "*The stress from recruitment is severe. Every solution is reactive, and I get the sense they [headquarters] don't feel the same pressure that I do since they're not "on the ground."* Another expressed frustration with the way in which "headquarters" sets fundraising targets for each site without consideration of local barriers- barriers which are often connected to race-based challenges. She explained, "*Lori [pseudonym] is Black. I'm Black, and my managing director of development is Black. Okay. I wholeheartedly believe we have no connection to a stronger fundraising community because of that."*

Research Question 3 **To what extent are minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness present within City Year's organizational culture?**

Finding 3: Reports on the presence of each construct as an organizational strategy within City Year varies with no construct receiving a composite score indicating that a majority of Black women senior executives (BWSE) strongly agreeing/agreeing that it exists within City Year's culture.

Erskine et al. (2021) suggest four strategies to support Black women workplace thriving. These strategies including minimizing the incivilities Black women experience while fulfilling

duties connected to their roles. The authors also suggest that adopting a positive deviance framework that emphasizes the key roe leaders of color play in solving problems faced by communities of color is central to Black women thriving, in addition to taking a critical management stance that prioritizes culturally diverse leader development and developing an awareness of intersectionality.

BWSE report experiences with minimized incivility, intersectionality awareness, positive deviance, and critical management stance at City Year that vary widely. Based on data collected during interviews, the differences in views about the presence of to these phenomena may be related to differences in the women themselves. Factors such as the part of the country in which they work, who their direct supervisor is, the makeup of their board and senior staff, and perhaps most importantly, what their own world-view and approach to the work may contribute to how they perceive their own experiences with each construct.

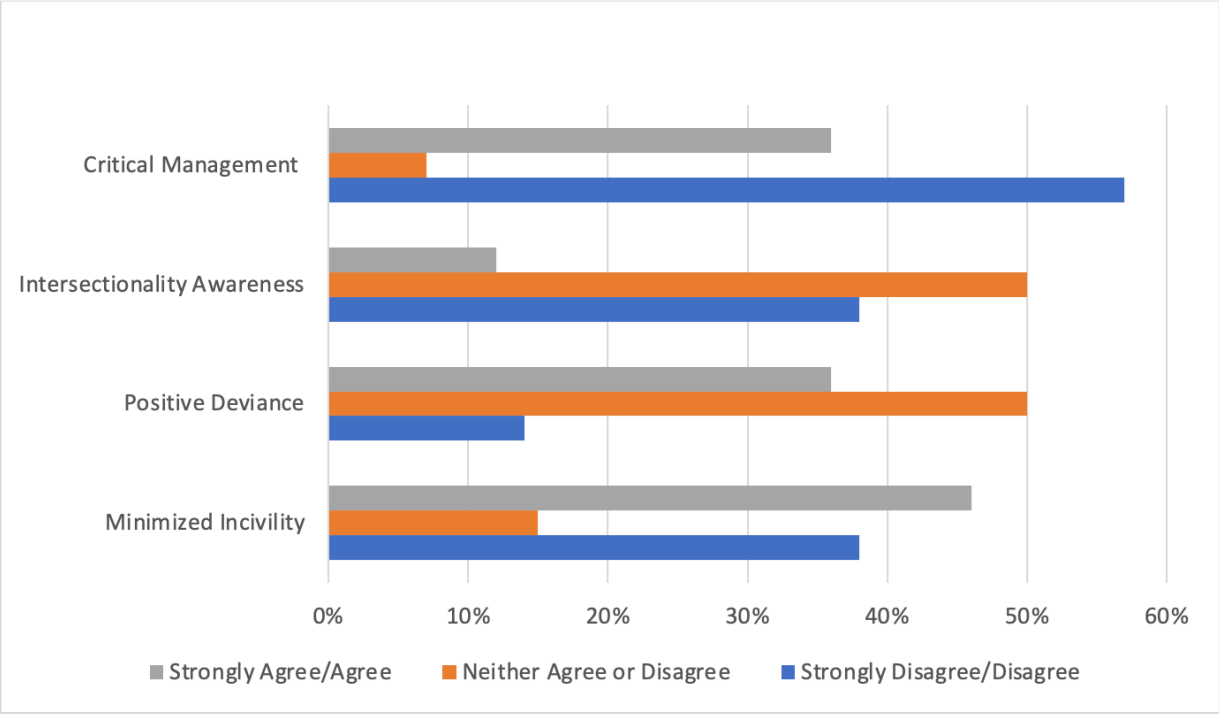
Because of the complexity of exploring issues connected to experiences stemming from identity, researchers have generally relegated analysis of nuanced concepts such as intersectionality to the domain of qualitative study. It is only recently that its uptake in quantitative studies has been considered (Bauer et al., 2021). The level of detail and explanation needed to fully answer Research Question 2 made the insights gained from the interviews more robust than the descriptive data provided by the survey.

Figure 7 displays the responses of City Year Black women senior executives to questions ascertaining the presence of the four constructs in its organizational culture and reveals that few of the questions reach at or above a 50% consensus. Half of Black women senior executives at City Year answered neither agree nor disagree (50%) on the questions related to the

presence of a positive deviance approach within their organizations. Positive deviance in this project is conceived as a belief in the unique positionality of people of color to lead on solving problems primarily affecting people of color. The primary question to measure positive deviance in the survey asked, on a scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, *"My organization demonstrates an understanding that leaders of color may be uniquely positioned to lead on issues affecting communities of color."* On this, and other questions related to positive deviance, the Black women leaders at City Year were neutral. A majority of BWSE from City Year also answered neither agree/disagree concerning the degree to which City Year has adopted a critical management stance as well as to if City Year displayed an awareness of issues connected to intersectionality. Figure 7 charts the percentage of City Year BWSE that answered strongly agree/agree, neither agree nor disagree, and strongly disagree/disagree to the presence of each construct as an active organizational strategy.

Figure 7

Presence of Thriving Strategies



BWSE Reports of Presence of Thriving Strategies within City Year

Critical Management Stance Analysis

36% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly agree/agree that City Year's culture is characterized by the adoption of practices that indicate the taking of a critical management stance

7% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of neither agree nor disagree

57% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly disagree/disagree

Given the variance in survey responses across these constructs, I turned to the interview data to gain a better understanding of the women's positions on the presence of these constructs within City Year. The interviews with the Black women leaders lend specific and deeper insights into their experiences with minimized incivility, intersectionality awareness, positive deviance, and critical management. Excerpts from the interviews are included for analysis as well.

The following quote speaks to City Year's lack of a critical management stance when it comes to differentiating its training supports for the Black women leaders within the organization. Several SVPs revealed in their interviews that City Year lacks any robust leader professional development program, and when they have had opportunities to meet with coaches through the organization, they gained little from the interaction due to cultural mismatches that made it difficult to connect and build trust. Because of this, a few BWSE expressed searching outside of the organization to meet their development needs.

> *Like, there are things that I want to learn to show up in other ways in this new role to not only to be my most authentic self, but also to realize there's some gaps that I have that I need help with. And the organization doesn't see that, right? They don't see how to develop me as a black woman to think about what it means to lead and help people perceive me as a leader*.

This need for a culturally-specific approach to leadership development was a theme throughout my conversations with BWSE at City Year.

Intersectionality Awareness Analysis

12% of BWSE at City agreed or strongly agreed that City Year's culture is characterized by an awareness of issues connected to intersectionality

50% of City Year BWSE composite scores aligned with a response of neither agree nor

disagree

38% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly disagree/disagree

The primary survey questions to measure the presence of intersectionality awareness as an organizational strategy were *"At my organization, Black women's advancement is prioritized"* and *"At my organization, issues affecting Black women are a specific focus of DEI efforts."* As mentioned before, I approached City Year as a potential partner organization because I noticed, by following them on LinkedIn, that they were hiring many Black women into the ED/SVP position. My initial assumption was that this was an intentional organizational strategy to increase its diversity within that leadership position. However, seeing the low number of BWSE within the organization that answered the intersectionality awareness questions affirmatively, caused me to be curious about their perspective on City Year's understanding of the issues these women face in the identities they hold. One BWSE spoke about the specific challenge of garnering trust and respect from subordinates while leading at the intersectionality of Blackness and womanhood. She discussed the difference between how she is received when compared to her white male counterpart in noting:

> *When I give a directive, they're like, oh, okay, we'll think about that. All he had to do is open his mouth and say, do this and it's done. And City Year just don't get that. He doesn't understand what I have to go through to get people's respect. And that is, that is a symptom of our organization. Like, they just don't get that.*

Another BWSE described how her experiences within the organization differ from a white woman holding the same position:

> *I think when I look at some of my white women colleagues that are EDs, they don't*

have the funding stream struggle with their board chairs who across City Year are predominantly white males.

Positive Deviance Analysis

36% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly agree/agree that City Year's culture is characterized by an awareness of positive deviance

50% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of neither agree nor disagree

14% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly disagree/disagree

Concerning City Year's commitment to adopting a positive deviance stance in which the organization recognizes the importance of role leaders of color can play in solving issues the organization is addressing in communities of color. Many of the BWSE interviewed expressed that rather than this being an organizational belief, that there are individuals in seats of power who have adopted a positive deviance stance and are committed to placing leaders of color in positions of leadership for the benefit of the communities City Year serves. one BWSE remarked,

I don't feel like…like it's an organization push. It feels like there are people who care and they're in a position to make that change. Like Nichole, like me who, where I've been very intentional about the hiring of my staff. Yeah. Um, but I don't, it doesn't feel like it's an organizational initiative as much as like people's personal mission, um, to diversify the organization.

Minimized Incivility Analysis

46% of City Year BWSE received a composite score aligned with a response of strongly agree/agree that City Year's culture is characterized by minimized incivility.

15% received a composite score that aligned with neither agree nor disagree responses

38% received a composite score that aligned with strongly disagree/disagree that the culture is characterized by minimized incivility

Black women senior executives' thoughts about City Year and minimized incivility are interesting as all agreed that City Year is a place full of nice people with one BWSE referring to City Year employees as "Midwest nice." One BWSE expressed her surprise at the importance the organization places on knowing people. When entering a room with leader she was meeting for the first time:

> *I mean, it, it is still pretty outstanding to me. I walked in and I've never met any of those people, but they all knew me by name. And they know that "Dr. xxx" is what I like. That's what I go by.*

On the other hand, some expressed frustration with City Year's "culture of niceness" as they felt it inhibited difficult conversations- especially necessary coaching conversations where corps members needed to be held accountable for not meeting expectations. They expressed that difficult conversations across race were also not always handled well because of moments of white fragility with white women resorting to tears when questioned about their work products. For Black women who tend to lead from a place of open communication, even about difficult topics, this cultural value that xxx describes as a "right to comfort" held by many white workers, results in a culture clash between Black leaders and their subordinates.

"I think that's part of that civility. Um, I call it like all of City Year is Midwest nice, right? And something is wrong with you if you're not Midwest. Nice. Right?...We have the founding story about the beloved community, but we don't actually understand what a beloved community is because a beloved community is one in which there is healthy conflict, right?...and that conflict will challenge us to be the best version of ourselves, right? And so we take kindness as the absence of conflict."

Finally, the variance in composite scores for minimized incivility could be related to differences in individual experiences with where in the country each BWSE serves, what the composition of their staff and boards are, and their experiences with donors in their cities.

Research Question 4 To what degree is the enactment of minimized incivility, positive deviance, critical management, and intersectionality awareness as organizational strategies connected to Black women senior executives' reports of thriving?

Finding 4: There is a correlation between all the Erskine et al. (2021) strategies and BWSE reports of thriving when thriving is conceived as vitality and learning and when both samples (City Year and non-City Year) are considered together. This correlation suggests that there is likely some validity to the framework.

The left side of the graph in Figure 8, labeled FALSE, displays the correlation between thriving and the responses of non-City Year BWSE to the questions about minimized incivility. The direction of the blue line (the line of best fit) shows that as reports of incidences of incivility decrease, the BWSE reports of thriving increase. The right side of the graph, labeled TRUE, displays the correlation between thriving and the responses of BWSE at City Year to questions about minimized incivility as a strategy at City Year. Though the line of best fit trends in the same direction as the correlation graph for non-City Year BWSE, the dark gray area around the line is wider, indicating less of a correlation. The graphs for positive deviance, intersectionality awareness, and critical management stance show similar trends. Looking at these graphs, it would appear that there is no correlation between the Erskine et al. (2021) constructs and BWSE reports of thriving. Table 6 shows this in table form by displaying the p-values for each construct. All the values for BWSE inside of City Year are greater than .05, meaning no statistically significant correlation exists between minimized incivility, intersectionality awareness, positive deviance, and critical management stance and thriving.

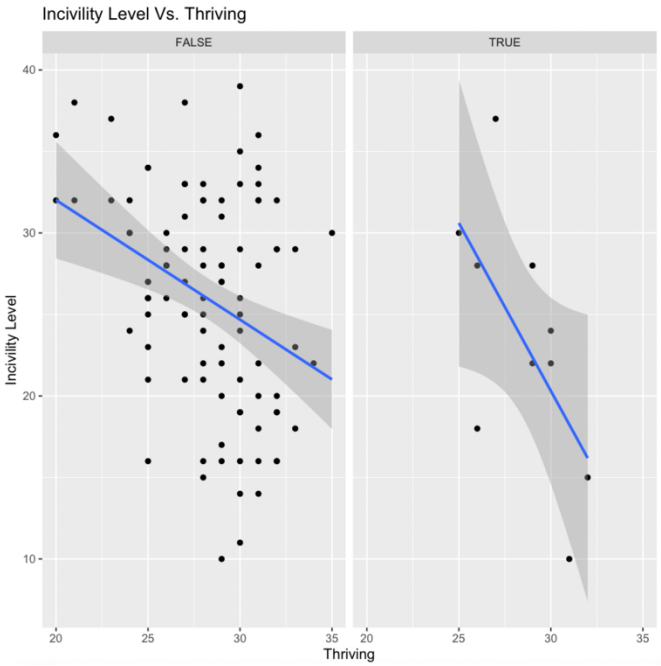


Figure 8: Incivility/Thriving Correlation

However, when all responses are taken together (non-City Year and City Year) the data reveals that there is a statistically significant correlation between the Erskine et al. (2021) strategies (minimized incivility, positive deviance framework, intersectionality awareness,

critical management stance) and the theoretical conception of thriving. Table 6 shows the examination of correlations between the Erskine et al. (2021) constructs and Thriving. All of the p-values under the third column where composite scores for City Year and Non-City Year respondents were considered together, are less than .05, indicating a statistically significant correlation. The sample of BWSE from City Year is exponentially smaller (n=14) than the sample from outside of the organization (n=101). This difference in sample size may explain why a correlation doesn't appear to exist when responses for City Year BWSE are considered alone.

Table 8

P-Values for Thriving and Erskine Correlations

	City Year	Non-City Year	City Year and Non-City Year Combined
Minimized Incivility and Thriving	p=.31	p=.000491	p=.000221
Intersectionality Awareness and Thriving	p=.205	p=.000941	p=.000434
Positive Deviance and Thriving	p=.626	p=.0000704	p= .000753
Critical Management Stance and Thriving	p=.609	p=4.134e-05	p= 4.25e-05

P-values for each construct demonstrating the correlation between each construct and thriving. Where p=<.05 there is a correlation.

Recommendations

City Year Inc. has shown a strong commitment to inclusion and belonging throughout its 35-year history and this investigation has made it clear that those commitments are bearing some fruit in the experience of some BWSEs. Chief People Officer, Mithra Irani, acknowledges that the organization's road towards equity has had missteps and bumps along the way. However, according to Chief Equity Officer, Stephen Spaloss, what sets City Year apart from so

many other institutions is its willingness to constantly take stock of where it is on this journey and to make adjustments as needed. It is my hope that the following recommendations will support the earnest and important work that City Year is already doing to ensure every member of its diverse workforce experiences belonging, especially BWSE?.

Recommendation 1: **Add an affinity group specifically for Black Senior Vice Presidents**

I asked to what extent Black women senior executives (BWSE) at City Year report thriving within their roles. I found that when asked outright in the survey "Would you describe yourself as thriving?" (yes/no), 46% of BWSE working at City Year answered "yes." This response is less than the 58% of BWSE outside of the organization who answered "yes" to the same question. As previously stated, the difference in reports of thriving between the two groups could be due to some type of anchoring bias because of how fresh the idea of thriving was in the minds of the City Year executives given their discussion of the topic at a recent retreat. When asked to expound further on the idea during interviews, the BWSE discussed thriving as being connected to their sense of how well they were meeting their work goals. They also highlighted the importance of feeling connected to other Black women leaders within the organization. A desire for this specific type of connection aligns with Welbourne et al.'s (2017) assertion that employees within organizations possess a natural inclination to form communities with those "like themselves" (p. 1816), and as such, the establishment of Employee Resource Groups, or Affinity Groups, has become a popular organizational practice.

One BWSE interviewed remarked how heartening it was to walk into the room at a recent executive director retreat and see "*so many people who looked like me.*" She noted that

the presence of so many other Black leaders in that space afforded her a sense of psychological safety, allowing her to, in her own words, "*express views and opinions that I might not have otherwise.*" Though an informal network of Black women senior vice presidents is emerging, formal opportunities to connect are limited and primarily consist of a weekly Executive Director call that is generalized and open to everyone. Far from being a space of shared identity where they feel free to openly discuss issues related to their own experiences connected to race and gender, the BWSE noted that they are often called upon in these settings to field questions and concerns from their white counterparts about how to address race-based issues at their own sites- forcing the BWSE to shoulder a familiar burden of knowledge and care that is rarely returned in kind.

According to Welbourne et al. (2017), employee resource groups represent a valuable addition to diverse organizations. City Year has implemented affinity groups across its entire 29-site and headquarters ecosystem. These groups are facilitated by City Year staff members who receive a stiped for their time and effort. However, everyone from corps members to senior executives are lumped into one group based on race or other identity makers such as gender and sexual orientation. The BWSE I interviewed discussed the limitations of this approach noting that because of their level of seniority, they didn't feel they were able to share openly about any struggles or difficulties they face as Black women leaders. One BWSE expressed *"I can't go into, you know, as a senior leader, I can't go into, the affinity group and fully be my authentic self*." Another remarked,

> *"My position requires me to show up in a certain way as executive director first, rather than just as a black woman who's also trying to figure out her own career advancement*

opportunities, maybe frustrations that I have with the organization that I'm probably not going to share and present with core members."

City Year currently employs 23 Black senior vice presidents. An affinity group designed for Black leaders at this level and above, or of just Black women (14) at the senior vice president level and above might increase a sense of connectedness which may increase future reports of thriving among this group.

Recommendation 2: Take a Critical Management stance by 1) Continuing to explore the ways in which City Year's organizational practices still adhere to white dominant cultural values and 2) Creating or fully funding identity-centered leadership development programming

One aim of this project was to explore the degree to which City Year has adopted a critical management stance as an organizational strategy. According to Erskine et al. (2021), taking a critical management stance involves displaying a willingness to be critical of prevailing notions of management and organizational leadership. It is to question the degree to which widely held beliefs about leadership are morally defensible and sustainable for increasingly diverse workplaces (Erskine et al. 2021). The authors note that critical management can help explain how coaching and leadership development programming often reinforce oppressive gender and ethnic relations, suppressing "democratic dialogue about the appropriateness of underlying ideologies…" (p. 45). While by most BWSE interviewed expressed that City Year functions as a space where they can dialogue openly and with a sense of psychological safety about their values, when answering survey questions about the degree to which City Year embraces a critical management stance, only 46% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed

that such a strategy is currently implemented, with one leader remarking that City Year "*is still very much a white, male organization.*" Based on my conversations with BWSE during this project, I believe that the idea that Western society's expectations of our behaviors are dominated by white cultural values, would not be news to most of the organization's top leaders, what is now needed is for City Year to continue to examine how what values the organization holds that are rooted in white dominant cultural norms and how they might conflict with the beliefs and practices of its diverse cohort of new leaders.

As an organization that seeks to attend to culturally responsive ways of being, the Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC) organization (cacgrants.org) define white dominant cultural values as *The explicit to subtle ways that the norms, preferences, and fears of white European descended people overwhelmingly shape how we organize our work and institutions, see ourselves and others, interact with one another and with time, and make decisions.*

Figure 9

White Dominant Culture Norms Table Excerpt

Fear of open conflict Right to comfort. Politeness is valued over honesty. White fragility goes unchecked. Those who bring up discomfort for others are scapegoated. Useful feedback not given in		**Direct and constructive feedback/ Growth and learning** Peers call each other in and continuously learn from each other. Managers are skilled at providing timely,

White Dominant Culture Norms Table Excerpt
Source: Tema Okun

The CAC highlights the work of race equity trainer, Tema Okun, in outlining aspects of white dominant culture and how organizations can examine their beliefs and practices for ways in which alternative, less limiting approaches might be undertaken. Figure 9 shows an excerpt of Okun's table (full table in Appendix D) laying out specific white dominant culture norms on the left side and alternative practices that organizations can adopt on the right. The *Fear of Open Conflict* norm arose as a theme in my interviews with BWSE at City Year as they discussed their experiences with feeling as though their willingness to name problems and openly address them with employees was often viewed as an "aggressive" tactic instead of as a "call in" as Okun suggests.

BWSE interviewed spoke about the ways in which City Year still functions as a white dominant organization and the mismatch between their own culturally-directed leadership style and the expectations of their white subordinates. Though they didn't all use the language, BWSE offered examples of their experiences with co-workers' right to comfort or fear of open conflict. These women often characterized their leadership as being straightforward and serious, while also being caring and mission-driven. Many of the women spoke about how their straightforwardness and high tolerance for healthy conflict rubs against City Year's traditional leadership styles and culture of "niceness." While all agreed that there is a comfort in working for an organization in which the baseline expectation is that everyone "get along," as previously noted, some BWSE also detailed instances in which they were admonished for evoking tears from white, female colleagues. Another recognized that subordinates have reacted with fear when being questioned about work products, time spent on task, or level of expertise with certain work-related concepts. The BWSE simply saw themselves as holding these workers

accountable for agreed upon performance indicators. Whereas the employees with whom they were speaking relayed that they felt "attacked." For these Black women leaders, the issue lay not with their approach, but with the institutional expectation that their leadership style conform in ways that comfort even when the situation calls, instead, for a challenge.

City Year has made significant strides in its hiring of Black ED/SVPs. However, Okun's table detailing white dominant values highlights the propensity for "equity washing" where an organization may hire people of color but not support a culture shift to retain them. It is this norm that City Year must urgently examine to avoid losing the diverse talent they have so diligently worked to recruit. Such an examination might necessitate a revision of its approach to several aspects of its organizational regime including a more culturally aligned approach to its coaching, mentoring, and leadership development programs.

In addition to calling for organizations to scrutinize the ways in which their values serve and uphold divisive patterns and structures, Erskine et al. (2021) also conceptualize critical management stance as the rejection of one-size-fits-all approaches to the training and evaluation of managers in favor of identity-forward methods that recognize the unique needs of leaders from diverse groups. BWSE presently report this as an area in which City Year has an opportunity for growth. The authors suggest as an action step that organizational leaders "Create safe "identity workspaces" for women's leadership development, which includes learning, experimentation, and community building" (p. 45). Based on my interviews with BWSE, I would add that these identity-forward training spaces should be led by racially similar coaches and trainers who can, by virtue of their position within the shared culture, can transcend barriers related to cultural dissimilarity. One BWSE noted how much she has grown

as a leader as a result of working with a Black woman executive coach who deeply understood her positionality. She expressed that their interactions were able to transcend cultural differences with communication and style that have been present in sessions with other trainers as the Black woman coach was deeply connected to the same time and place as the BWSE I spoke with and could offer perspectives and suggestions that were culturally sensitive and relevant.

Two other BWSE leaders shared that they have joined CHIEF- a private network designed to connect and support women executive leaders- and asked City Year to cover the $6000 membership fee. Discussing why she sought this resource one BWSE explained, "*I sought that out because I was like, I got deficits here. Like, there are things that I want to learn to show up in other ways in this new role to not only to be my most authentic self, but also to realize there's some gaps that I have that I need help with.*" While it's great that City Year is covering this cost, their willingness to do so should be a policy that is written and widely shared so that all BWSE can take advantage of coaching and development opportunities that is culturally responsive. In addition to making these external opportunities more widely available, City Year should begin building partnerships with Black women executive training organizations to bolster its own capacity to support these leaders internally.

Recommendation 3: Name and interrogate the barriers faced by people leading at the intersection of multiple identities and create strategies to address challenges such as those related to racism and sexism in nonprofit funding

BWSE at City Year answered the intersectionality awareness questions at a rate of Strongly Agree/Agree lower than any of the other three constructs. Meaning, of the four organizational strategies suggested by Erskine et al. (2021), BWSE at City Year noted intersectionality awareness as being the least enacted strategy. As previously noted, only 41% of Black women senior executives at City Year reported thriving within their role. When asked in a follow-up question (Please explain why or why not) to expound on their answer to the "Are you thriving?" (yes/no) question, many expressed a sense that for them, thriving is connected to their ability to perform at a high level within their position. In response to that question, they noted several barriers to doing so including lack of access to funding networks and strained relationships with existing donors. The Black women ED/SVPs I spoke with expressed a strong desire to meet their fundraising goals but acknowledged systemic challenges that often make this task more difficult for them than their white male counterparts. In speaking about how City Year handled a racially charged experience she had with an outside donor that hindered her from meeting her work goal, one leader explained:

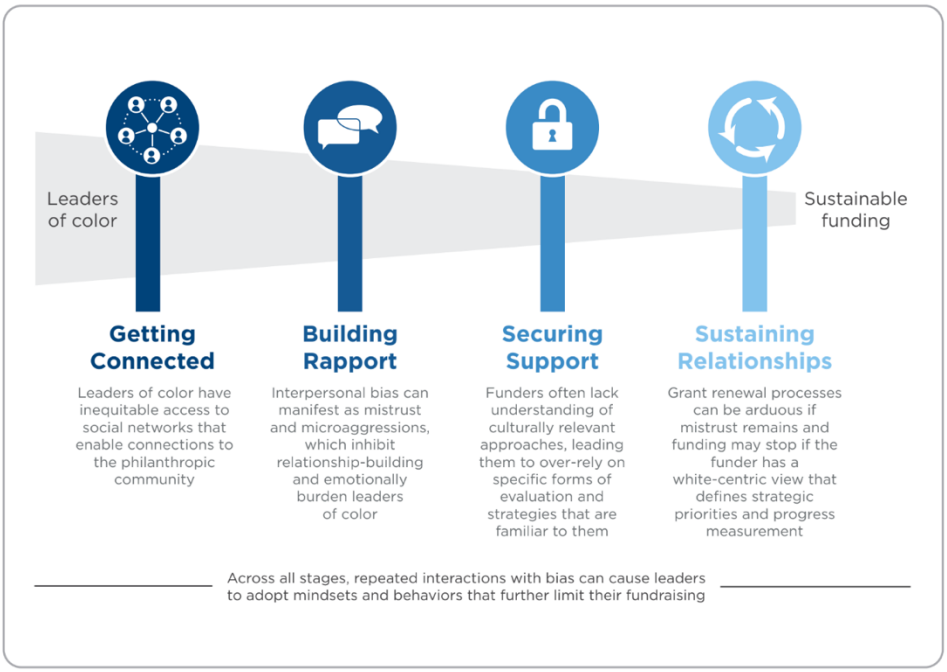
> *"They don't understand that you didn't get it done, not because you weren't capable, but because you have some barriers to break down and to work with. So they, you know, send in somebody else who doesn't look like you, like solved. Like, no, it's not."*

The BWSE at City Year are not alone in experiencing barriers to success in non-profit fundraising. It is an issue with which philanthropic organizations have recently begun to grapple thanks to the work of organizations like The Bridgespan Group and Echoing Green which produced a report in 2020 titled *Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table* (Dorsey et al., 2020). Figure 10 is a graph taken

directly from the report that outlines four major barriers the report identified to Black leaders of nonprofits accessing needed financial supports including getting connected to, building rapport with, securing funding from, and sustaining relationships with high-capacity donors.

Figure 10

Four Key Barriers to Capital Faced by Leaders of Color



Barriers to Funding for Leaders of Color
Source: The Bridgespan Group

Though some aspect of each of the barriers from Figure 10 surfaced in my conversations with the Black women Senior Vice President/EDs at City Year, no recognition of the issue of fundraising barriers specific to leaders of color was evident in my conversations with the most senior members of City Year leadership-members of the management executive committee (MEC). When asked directly if they were aware of the funding struggles of nonprofit leaders of color, one leader stated that hiring so many new Black SVPs had actually been a fundraising

boon for the organization at large- meaning City Year Inc. or "headquarters." As the BWSE explained, City Year, the national organization, fundraises for its own operational expenses. In addition to promoting the City Year brand and overseeing the entire global apparatus of the organization City Year Inc. provides some logistical supports to the individual sites. The individual sites pay City Year Inc. for these services. Each individual site is responsible for meeting their own fundraising targets to support their local work and some of the work of the national structure. So while it's great that City Year Inc. has been rewarded financially for its efforts in DEI (including a 25 million dollar grant from MacKenzie Scott), the BWSE I interviewed expressed that they often experience great difficulty in meeting their nationally-set fundraising targets due to the systemic barriers highlighted by Dorsey et al. (2020) in the Bridgespan report. Speaker 1 remarked: *"I don't have a personal network that I could like rely on to get me introductions to certain people and to get me into certain rooms." Speaker 2 said, "We do a lot of our money raising in these old white spaces. Actually, my only experience of being belittled disrespected straight racism has come at the hands of a funder, a previous funder." Another BWSE at City Year noted: "We tend to live in our community. We live in the, you know, the community sometimes that we were raised, or we don't live necessarily in the most affluent neighborhoods. And so that access does, um, become limited and you're not always invited, uh, to where the conversation after the conversations are had, right?"*

Part of thriving for BWSE at City Year is feeling as though they are meeting their goals. To help achieve this, the organization must recognize and create strategies to mitigate the systemic barriers their Black leaders may face around fundraising. City Year's SVP/ED's offered suggestions for initiating this work including 1) Training site-based advisory boards on the

systemic racism inherent in fundraising so that they can be more helpful in removing local impediments 2) Help site-based advisory boards to become aware of and check their own biases around race and fundraising 3) Ensure each site creates a legacy document outlining where the key donor relationships lie and have outgoing executive directors make personal introductions between each site's incoming executive director and all current major donors. The training of site-based advisory boards would serve to make the "invisible" barriers visible and perhaps allow them to see their role in either perpetuating the difficulty or helping to eliminate it.

Conclusion

I originally approached City Year to be the partner organization for this project because as a former insider-turned-outsider, I saw City Year as a potential bright spot for other organizations seeking to earnestly attend to their equity journey. After collecting data from 14 Black women senior vice presidents within the organization and comparing their survey responses to similarly positioned leaders outside of the organization, I still believe City Year to be a bright spot for other orgs. City Year has been committed to improving its standing as a true equity-centered partner to underserved communities nearly since its inception. Dean and Vice President, Charlie Rose, who has been with the organization for its entire 35-year existence, recounted its evolution from a nonprofit founded by two well-meaning Harvard graduates disconnected from the communities they sought to serve, to an imperfect, but continuously striving organization that has sought advisors, consultants, and listened to their stakeholders to inform their next steps along the way.

Whereas other organizations have undertaken dramatic equity plans, and quickly tire once the difficulties become apparent, or the social justice trends are no longer fashionable, City Year has demonstrated a steady and progressive commitment to allowing data, expertise, and deep care for people guide their decisions toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. When mistakes have been made, they owned them and pivoted. Where they've found success, they've not rested and grown content, but have continued to search for weak spots and ways to improve. This resilience alone is a strong lesson for other organizations seeking to establish equitable practices and environments.

Black women are not a monolith, and their diversity of thought and perspective was reflected in the variance in responses to many of the survey and interview questions. However, this project uncovered meaningful insights into the experiences of Black women senior executives- an underrepresented yet growing group about whose experiences researchers still have much to learn. An important insight is the notion that widely accepted definitions of thriving are not necessarily inclusive of the experiences of Black women leaders. While all of the Black women senior executives at City Year gave answers of strongly agree/agree to the survey questions asking about their sense of vitality and learning, only 36% of them described themselves as thriving in response to the "Are you thriving?" yes/no question. This difference in response indicates that the notion of thriving in the workplace being defined as an experience of vitality and learning is insufficient to describe how it *feels* for these Black women executives to thrive within their roles. For them, thriving in the workplace was much more connected to their beliefs about their performance and the degree to which they had the supports needed to meet their performance objectives. This project also evidences the connection for these

women between their own professional thriving and the availability of opportunities to form supportive relationships with similarly positioned women within the organization.

Erskine et al. (2021) suggested four organizational strategies to support Black women's thriving. This project found a correlation between Black women's answers to the survey questions about vitality and learning and each of the four suggested strategies- suggesting that organizations that focus their attention to decreasing incivilities, adopting a critical management stance, embracing a positive deviance framework, and developing an awareness of the role of intersectionality in shaping leaders' experiences, can increase Black women executives' sense of thriving.

This project noted the advancements City Year has made in its hiring of people of color into positions of leadership at the Senior Vice President level. Where many nonprofit organizations serving under-resourced communities have struggled to recruit diverse talent that reflects those communities into positions of leadership, City Year has placed the right people in the right places to make meaningful hires from diverse groups of people. A major question I had going into this project was if City Year was making the right considerations to retain the talent they have recruited. In other words, had City Year made a collection of diversity hires that looked good on paper but would ultimately go the way so many organizations with a revolving door of Black talent? Or had City Year adopted practices that would successfully cultivate an environment where their new cohort of Black women leaders could experience a sense of belonging and fulfillment that could result in retention of these women?

What's clear from Black women's responses to the survey and interview questions is that City Year is an imperfect organization that has many growth opportunities. However, what is also clear is that the organization has adopted many successful equity practices. Of the 27 codes developed to analyze the interview data from this project, the theme labeled "City Year Succeeding" had the most codes assigned to it as the BWSE interviewed had a plethora of positive sentiments to share about City Year's equity work. Given their track record of earnestly and continuously questioning its standing in this area, I have no doubt that City Year will be responsive to its opportunities to grow and deepen their attention to the work experiences of all its leaders, but especially to their highly recruited cohort of Black women SVPs who are so vital to the work City Year undertakes in Black and Brown communities.

Researchers interested in supporting leaders of color also have an opportunity based on the findings from this project. While vitality and learning may be essential components to considerations of what it means for individuals to thrive in organizations, this project provides evidence that these constructs may be insufficient to capture the needs of diverse groups of leaders whose priorities are less aligned with their own personal fulfillment, and more connected to how well supported they are in affecting substantive change in the communities their organizations serve. This aligns with the LeanIn.Org (2020) finding that Black women, more than any other racial group, report having a positive impact in the world as a motivating factor in pursuing higher level leadership positions. An organization's ability to provide the structural supports necessary to allow Black women executives to experience success in actualizing this desire to have a positive impact by producing strong work products, could be a key consideration in promoting high levels of workplace thriving.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

Welcome to My Survey

This multiple-choice survey has 56 items. The estimated time to complete is 15 minutes.

Any Black woman senior leader is welcome to take this survey. However, Black women who are currently employed at a level that represents a "senior executive" within their organization (e.g. President, Vice President, Executive Director, "Chief" titles, Director) and is NOT the founder of the organization.

Names of participants WILL NOT be published or shared outside of this survey.

Thank you so much for participating! Please feel free to share with other Black women in your circle who meet this criterion!

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

Demographic Data

* 1. What is your name? (will only be used to sort data)

* 2. What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Non-binary/third gender
- ◯ Transgender
- ◯ Agender
- ◯ A gender not listed
- ◯ Prefer not to say

* 3. What is your race?

- ◯ Black or African American
- ◯ White
- ◯ Asian or Asian American
- ◯ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ◯ Bi-Racial: Black with Other Race
- ◯ Bi-Racial: Non-Black
- ◯ Some other race
- ◯ Prefer not to say

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

5. Name of the company at which you are employed

* 6. What is your current job title?

7. Are you a member of a Divine 9 Sorority?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

8. If so, which one?

9. Which of the following describes your current level of activity within your sorority?

- ◯ Very Active
- ◯ Somewhat Active
- ◯ Not At All Active

10. Did you attend an HBCU (historically Black college or university)

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

11. If so, which one?

12. Which of the following best describes your level of activity within your HBCU alumnae community?

- ◯ Very Active
- ◯ Somewhat Active
- ◯ Not At All Active

13. Which category below best represents the type of organization at which you're currently employed?

- ◯ Non-profit Corporation
- ◯ For-profit Corporation
- ◯ Higher Ed
- ◯ K-12

>

- ◯ Other (please specify)

14. How long have you been employed by your current organization?

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

15. In my current role, I find myself learning in ways that improve my performance

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

16. In my current role, I have energy and spirit

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

17. My current role is helping me to develop as a person

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

18. I look forward to each new day in my current role

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

19. I feel vital to my current organization

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

20. I am NOT learning in ways that improve my performance

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

21. I continue to improve my performance in my current role

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

22. In my current role, I do not feel very energetic

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

23. My supervisor takes the time to learn about my career goals

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable (explain why)

24. I can take time off when needed without fear of consequences

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

25. My supervisor gives me helpful feedback about my performance

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable (explain why)

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

26. I believe my workplace will take appropriate action in cases of discrimination/bias

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

27. There are senior leaders in my organization who will advocate for me when I'm not present

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

28. Employees at my organization who help the organization achieve its strategic objectives are recognized fairly

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

29. I am fairly compensated for my work compared to others within my organization

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

30. A woman in my organization has the same chance of having her ideas considered as a man in the same role

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

31. I feel welcome to show up as my authentic self

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

32. Communication I receive from my supervisors is honest and transparent

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable (explain why)

33. People in my organization care about my well-being

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

34. Women and people of color are well-represented within the leadership ranks at my organization

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

35. At my organization I perceive that being Black and female is a factor in how my leadership is received

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

36. At my organization, Black women's advancement is prioritized

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

37. At my organization, issues affecting Black women are a specific focus of DEI efforts

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

38. My organization demonstrates an understanding that leaders of color may be uniquely positioned to lead on issues affecting communities of color

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

39. The leaders at my organization encourage me to ensure community members lend insight into the solutions we create for the community

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable (explain why)

40. My organization has developed a program to train/coach leaders (future or current)

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

41. My organization invites me to provide input into its leadership development efforts

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable

42. My organization provides leadership training/coaching that is relevant to my experiences as a Black woman

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not Applicable

43. Senior leaders within my organization demonstrate an awareness of how systemic oppression may limit certain groups from advancing within the organization

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

44. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was mistaken for someone at a much lower position

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

45. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I heard demeaning remarks about myself or people like me

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

46. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which they have expressed surprise at my language skills or other abilities

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

47. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I felt I had to provide more evidence of my competence

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

48. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I had my judgment questioned in my area of expertise

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

49. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was excluded from professional camaraderie (opportunities to connect socially with colleagues)

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

50. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was addressed in unprofessional terms (directly or to someone else about you)

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

51. In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which people were rude to me (however you define rude)

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

52. Would you describe yourself as "thriving" within your current professional role?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

53. My organization is helping me to thrive within my role?

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

>

- ◯ Not applicable

54. Please explain why or why not

55. Is there anything you would like to share with the researcher about your work experiences that might be relevant to the topics discussed in this survey?

56. If you are willing to be contacted for a short interview about this survey or to participate in future research, please leave your email address

Appendix B: Codebook

Black Women Senior Executive Thriving

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
Afraid of Being Racist	Participants make reference to CY (org or staff) making decisions (or avoiding them) out of a fear of being perceived as racist	2	2
Barriers to Success	Participant describes barriers to job success specifically related to their identity as Black and/or female	5	9
Board Support	Participant refers to specific supports received (or withheld) from their board of directors	2	3
BWSE Preparedness	Participant discusses their own credentials/preparedness to lead	4	11
City Year in Transition	Participants refer to structural changes at CY that affect their role as BWSE	6	13
City Year Succeeding	Participant describes practices and habits at CY that are successfully promoting DBIE	8	30
Critical Management Stance	Participant refers to policies or procedures enacted, or actions taken to question widely accepted notions of manager training and expectations; coaching specific to Black women; CM needs	7	18
Culturally Specific Lens and Leadership	Participants discuss differences in how they lead, their expectations of staff/the work that are related to their background as Black women	4	19
DBIE Work at City Year	Participant makes direct/indirect or general/specific references to efficacy of CY's DBIE work	7	26
Difficult co-worker interactions or relationships	Participants describe strained or difficult co-worker interactions that stem from cultural differences (organizational culture or race-based)	6	11
Donor Relationships	Participant refers to impediments to fundraising (or advantages) based on their identity as a Black woman	2	3
Glass Cliff Assignments	Participants discuss being setup in positions or with assignments that are extremely	2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
	difficult and have a high probability of failure		
Hierarchal Challenges	Participants describe issues within CY related to its hierarchal structure. Reference impediments to the work as a result	3	
Implicit Biases	Participant discusses behaviors that may be evidence of racial/gender biases within CY work culture	2	
Intersectionality Awareness	Participants highlight ways in which they are having a different experience in their leadership role than their Black male and white women counterparts	7	
Minimized Incivility	Participants describe strained or difficult co-worker interactions that stem from cultural differences (organizational culture or race-based)	7	
Need for Differentiation	Participants speak to key needs that exist because of their positionality	1	
Needed Improvements	Participants refer to current impediments to the work that must change in order for them to be successful	6	
Positive Deviance Framework	Participant refers to CY's intentional recruitment of Black women/POC into leadership roles within the organization	5	
Preparedness for Diversity	Participant references City Year' hiring of POC into leadership roles without being contending what their voice, positions, unique needs, or feedback would add to the organization	4	
Shifting	Participants refer to actions or attitudes they adopt or are expected to adopt in order to assimilate into organizational expectations rooted in whiteness	5	
Sponsorship	Participants refer to the role of sponsorship in supporting their leadership journey	2	
Stereotypes	Participant refers to being categorized into a stereotypical characterization of Black women	1	
Supervisor Relationship	Participant refers to beneficial or difficult aspects of relationship with Market President and/or MEC members	6	
Support Among BWSE at CY	Participants discuss formal and informal networks of support among BWSE at CY	6	
Thriving (colloquial)	Participant discusses resilience, task commitment, spiritual grounding or other supports to convey a sense of "thriving" unrelated to organizational strategies	6	
Thriving (theoretically)	Participant expresses learning and/or experiencing a sense of vitality in the role	6	

Appendix C: Questions w/Constructs

The survey included questions to measure thriving, minimized incivility, intersectionality awareness, positive deviance, workplace inclusion and career satisfaction. However, questions pertaining to inclusion and career satisfaction weren't analyzed for this project.

Thriving

Question #	
15	In my current role, I find myself learning in ways that improve my performance
16	In my current role, I have energy and spirit
17	My current role is helping me to develop as a person
18	I look forward to each new day in my current role
19	I feel vital to my current organization
20	I am NOT learning in ways that improve my performance
21	I continue to improve my performance in my current role
22	In my current role, I do not feel very energetic

Minimized Incivility

Question #	
44	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was mistaken for someone at a much lower position
45	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I heard demeaning remarks about myself or people like me
46	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which they have expressed surprise at my language skills or other abilities
47	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I felt I had to provide more evidence of my competence
48	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I had my judgment questioned in my area of expertise
49	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was excluded from professional camaraderie (opportunities to connect socially with colleagues)
50	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which I was addressed in unprofessional terms (directly or to someone else about you)
51	In interactions with others in my current role, I have experienced incidences in which people were rude to me (however you define rude)

Intersectionality Awareness

Question #	
35	At my organization I perceive that being Black and female is a factor in how my leadership is received
36	At my organization, Black women's advancement is prioritized
37	At my organization, issues affecting Black women are a specific focus of DEI efforts

Positive Deviance

Question #	
38	My organization demonstrates an understanding that leaders of color may be uniquely positioned to lead on issues affecting communities of color
39	The leaders at my organization encourage me to ensure community members lend insight into the solutions we create for the community

Critical Management Stance

Question #	
40	My organization has developed a program to train/coach leaders (future or current)
41	My organization invites me to provide input into its leadership development efforts
42	My organization provides leadership training/coaching that is relevant to my experiences as a Black woman
43	Senior leaders within my organization demonstrate an awareness of how systemic oppression may limit certain groups from advancing within the organization

Appendix D: Tema Okun's Table of White Dominant Culture Values

What can you personally do to make a change, or pivot, from the left column to the right column? What can your organization do?

'NORM' of White Dominant Culture	PIVOT	SOMETHING DIFFERENT
Either/or thinking Believing people are racist or not racist, good or bad. Seeing incidents of inequity as isolated events.		**Systems and complexity thinking** Understanding context and intersectionality. Seeing patterns, holding contradictory thoughts & feelings simultaneously.
Paternalism No consultation or transparency in decision making. Taking over campaigns, mediating and facilitating others.		**Partnership** Decision making is clear, affected parties are consulted. Evaluations include staff at all levels. Leadership of Frontline communities is respected and nurtured.
Competition Taking unearned credit for wins. Coopting local organizing efforts, or the work of other staff. Treating core campaign issues as more important than issues that other people are working on.		**Collaboration** Taking time to build relationships based on trust. Focus is on 'building a bigger pie' instead of fighting over a slice. Mutual support and promotion of each other's campaigns and issues.
Power hoarding Ideas from less senior people are treated as a threat, information and decision making is confidential. Holding on to resources, scarcity mindset.		**Power sharing** Ideas at all levels are valued for the positional expertise they represent, ideas from others are requested and space is made for them to be heard. Budgets are made available for viewing, providing input on, and resources are shared equitably and appropriately.
Comfort with predominantly white leadership Defaulting to all or mostly white leadership using urgency and lack of available, qualified people of color as justifications for doing so.		**Leadership representative of the communities most affected by inequity** Take time to weave into the fabric of the organization a critical mass of equity-oriented people of color in leadership and on staff at large. Create inclusive culture. With graceful awareness, acknowledge that we're all unconsciously socialized to see physical features that are more white European, including lighter skin, as 'better'. Be mindful of how norms of the white, middle class can easily permeate the main organizational culture.

Individualism & Separateness Focus is on single charismatic leaders, Working in isolation, from each other and from other organizations.	**Community & Collectivism** Working together, working from a movement lens. Understanding that to change everything it takes everyone. Understanding interdependence of all social struggles. Working for all who are impacted by destruction and seizing of land, air, water and climate, especially those hit first and worse.
Fear of open conflict Right to comfort. Politeness is valued over honesty. White fragility goes unchecked. Those who bring up discomfort for others are scapegoated. Useful feedback not given in	**Direct and constructive feedback/ Growth and learning** Peers call each other in and continuously learn from each other. Managers are skilled at providing timely,

timely manner resulting in underperformance, lack of growth and distorted sense of how one is doing. Smaller problems left unattended become bigger ones down the road.		supportive feedback in culturally and individually responsive ways.
Priorities and timelines that perpetuate white supremacy culture Sense of urgency for funder-driven deliverables, but not for community building, capacity building or equity work implementation.		**Priorities and timelines set for sustainability and equity** People have space for what comes up that is important to address in the moment. More realistic timeframes set. Allocating time for the unexpected and based on how long things actually took last time.
Superiority of the nonprofit written word If it's not written down, it is not valued. If it's written down in any way other than "Standard American English", it is seen as incorrect or less intelligent. Superiors "correct", edit and change documents to reflect a particular normalized language for that non-profit.		**All forms of communication valued and taken seriously** Communication is treated simply as communication, stripped of "right" or "wrong", recognizing that an individual's use of language involves culture, power, lived experience and geography. Editing focuses solely on communicating more clearly to a particular audience and done with permission of the writer. Appreciation for how in some communities, info relayed effectively through relationship networks and the spoken word, not just the written word.
Comprehensiveness Continual research and writing that leads nowhere. Creating multiple reports, groups, committees that are working in isolation and don't build on each other's work. Vision, values and goals that no one can remember nor easily refer to in a meeting.		**Clarity & alignment for action** Simple, memorizable and repeatable shared vision, values and goals.
Transactional relationships Detached "professional" communication, for the purpose of completing a transaction and efficiency. Reaching out or acknowledging people only when you need something from them.		**Transformational relationships** Building relationships internally and externally that are based on trust, understanding and shared commitments. Even in the simplest ways, taking time to see, greet and acknowledge each other to sustain caring connections, especially when there's 'no time' to do so. Space to appropriately be in one's majesty, and share in each other's cultural bounty.

Transactional goals Transactional deliverables / quantifiable are ranked above meaningful engagement or qualitative goals. Rushing to achieve numbers.		**Transformational goals** Working towards meaningful engagement with depth, quality; using qualitative goals in addition to whatever deliverables a foundation is asking for. The timeline for the deliverables Includes enough time for quality.
Defensiveness Nowhere to air grievances. Focus placed on protecting power instead of addressing harms, naming intention instead of acknowledging impact.		**Vulnerability** Give and receive feedback non-defensively, have a clear structure to hear and address grievances. Skills are supported in being both self-critical and self-loving.
Progress is bigger, more Focus on quantity; less focus is put on the cost of growth on people, communities and relationships.		**Progress is sustainability and quality** Cost/ benefit analysis includes all costs. Focus is on sustainability.
Over-working as unstated norm Encouraging people to work through weekends and into the night (directly or passively by setting up work plans that are unachievable in a 40 hr week) --- ignoring how Black and Brown people have been historically and systemically requested to take on physically taxing work by white bosses.		**Self Care/ Community Care** Actively encouraging a culture of self-care and community care in which people care about each other's physical and emotional wellbeing, support time boundaries and are considerate of time zone difficulties, parental needs, personal health issues, etc. Work plans include 20% of unscheduled time to enable space for the inevitable unpredictable tasks that emerge.
Perfectionism Mistakes are seen as personal, reflect badly on the person --- the person is seen as a mistake. Little time for learning.		**Appreciation** Mistakes are valued as opportunities for learning. People verbally show their appreciation for one another
Skeptical management As new hires slowly learn their job, it is subtly or directly communicated that they "must prove themselves", setting them up to hide mistakes or face discipline.		**Supportive management** As new hires slowly learn their job they are supported, given freedom to make mistakes and learn from them. Supportive feedback is provided in real-time or soon thereafter.
White mediocrity People of color given extra work, and scrutinized while white staff with more years and/or formal credentials are given a pass, or promoted.		**Fair evaluations and just promotions** Based on a broader range of competencies than what has been historically valued (skills in the left column)

Equity washing Signing on to big lofty values, but not enacting them. Hiring people of color but not supporting a culture shift to retain them, focusing on inclusion internally while the field work perpetuates inequities.	**Real equity** Focus on all dimensions of the organization
Official title outweighs experience Regardless of someone's broad skill and experience base, they are treated as though they only know how to do what is in their job description, and their ideas are valued based on organizational rank. When offering to do more or different, are told to "stay in their lane"	**Holistic view of people** People's experience and skills are understood to likely expand beyond what they have been hired to do, and opportunities to contribute more of who they are, are offered.
Changing the subject away from the role of race Limited understanding of how biases (preferences and dislikes) based on race and culture interplay with all aspects of our lives and systems. Seeing difference as bad. Perception that talking about biases is an attack on white people or that white people can't handle the conversation.	**Compassionate curiosity about how race, cultural differences, racial bias may be at play** With 360-degree compassion, assume there may be unconscious biases at work with respect to race to some extent. Create an environment that celebrates the courage to explore racial bias in all its forms, avoiding 'gotcha' and good person/bad person dynamics and camps. Acknowledge we all carry unconscious bias that is not helpful and each have a role in addressing it. Focus on building stamina and healing for self-reflection; focus on the consciousness and behaviors, not on shaming the person.
Narrow valuation of intelligence / performance Assessing higher value to left column attributes over right column attributes. Verbal/linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences treated as superior	**Broad appreciation of differences** Valuing attributes on the right column. Including spaces for work that needs musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences.