



#CapeBreak: Reverse Engineering of the Strong Black Woman Phenomena

Nailah Lee & Christina Dugazon, Dr. Chris Omni, MPH, MLS



Abstract

This Cape Break Project, offers a diverse perspective from four resilient black women aged 34 to 58. The initiative seeks to challenge the stereotype of the "strong black woman", burdened with the expectation to be mentally and physically strong for everyone around them. Through art-based research we delve into intergenerational dynamics, psychological influence of nature, and the emotional well-being of black women. The research will be concluded with a live performance that is art-based, and a published publication. We want to reach a broader audience by displaying the importance of black joy globally and to support black women who feel like they have to abide by the "strong black woman schema".

Introduction

Empowering black women to look inward to create transformative change emotionally, physically, and mentally. Dr. Omni has created a platform where black women can break away from the "strong black woman phenomena", through nature assessment and self reflection (Image by Yetunde Hofmann).



Research Methodologies

LITERATURE REVIEWS



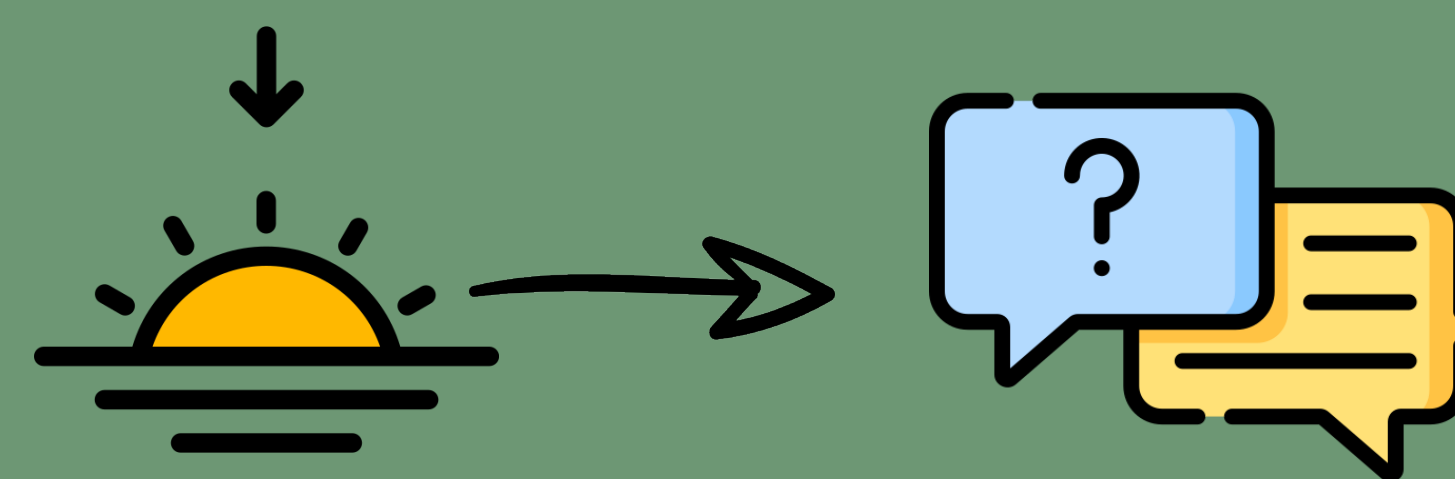
- Collected secondary data and analyzed a variety of academic journals where we examined the information through 3CQ's: comment, compliment, connection, and question to present our findings.

OBSERVATIONS/VIDEO REFLECTIONS



- The 11-minute film, "Soles of Black Women" featuring the participants, was available for us to observe before the interviews. In each segment—invitation, acceptance, and reflection—Dr. Omni requested that we find our own three original words as we watch the film.
- The words vulnerability and stillness were recurring themes, derived from our analysis of their body language while watching the film.

INTERVIEWS



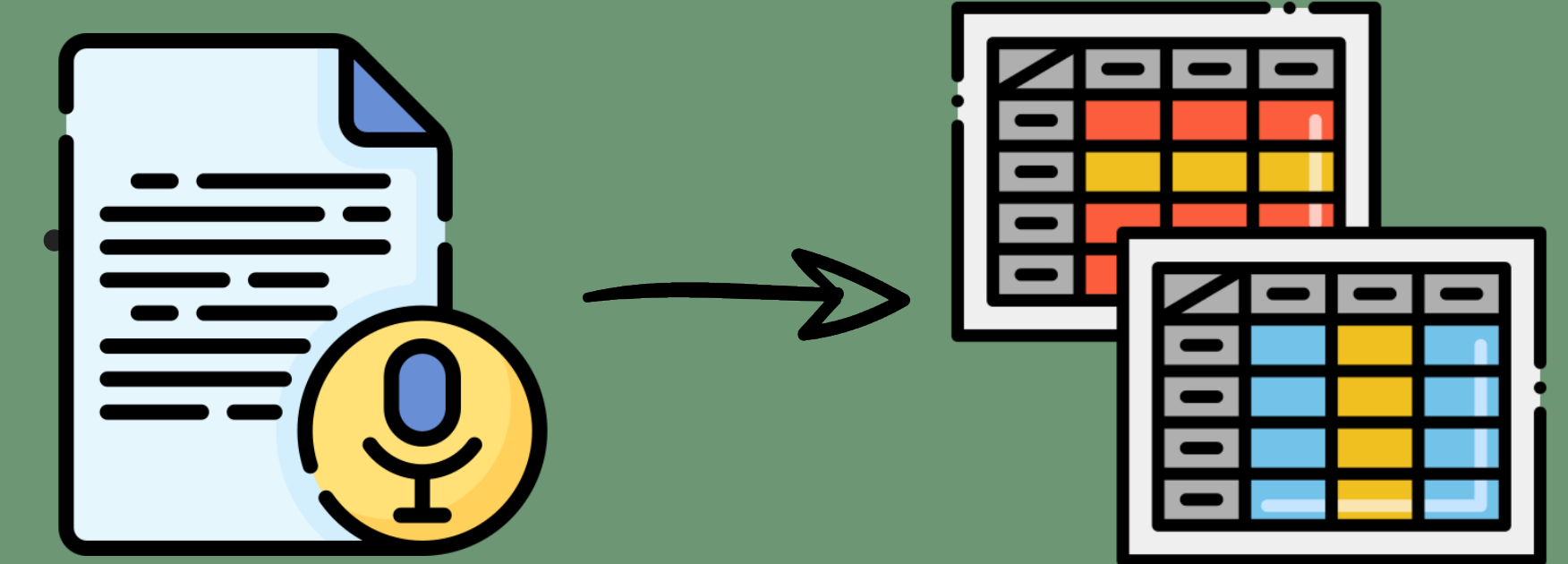
- Interviewed four of the eight Black women who participated in the film, "Soles of Black Women".
- Asked to articulate three words encapsulating their emotions while watching the three segments of the film:
 - I. Walking toward the camera (invitation)
 - II. Watching a sunset (acceptance)
 - III. Staring at the camera (reflection)
- Provided their own personal insights of the 11-minute film featuring all participants.
- Posed a series of base and bonus questions to deepen our understanding.

fidgety finally struggle
 grateful little reflection
 conqueror timid open
 vulnerability truth powerful
 welcoming girl preparation
 beauty away hard warm escaped
 grounding happy contentment
 distracted **release** peace
 serenity playful reflect
 respect sisterhood
 resign peaceful
 resonation relaxed

Words directly from interview participants

Data

- Used transcripts to find common themes in the interviews, which were the phenomenon of strong black women and the significance of location and scenery.
- Excerpts from each transcription are organized in spreadsheet format to compare key experiences and find connections.



Conclusion

We are still analyzing data, but found significant similarities among the four black women. They share similar experiences, while facing individual challenges such as ensuring self-care, learning to embrace stillness, and relinquishing the imaginary weight on their shoulders to feel the need to be strong.

References

Affuso, O., Kinsey, A. W., Whitt-Glover, M. C., Segar, M., & Bowen, P. (2022). Social Environments and Physical Activity Among Active Black Women. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08901171221102139>

Hornsby-Minor, E. (2024). If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again. *Liminalities.net*. <http://liminalities.net/3-3/pray.htm>

Watson-Singleton, N. N. (2017). Strong Black Woman Schema and Psychological Distress: The Mediating Role of Perceived Emotional Support. *Journal of Black Psychology*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0095798417732414>

Acknowledgements: THANK YOU TO THE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (UROP) AND OUR RESEARCH MENTOR; DR. CHRIS OMNI, FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE A RESEARCH MENTEE ON THIS PROJECT.