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ANIMATION SCRIPT

QUANTITATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE WITH DR ALITA NANDI AND NICOLE D. JAMES – HOW ONE MASSIVE STUDY IS UNCOVERING THE SECRETS OF UK SOCIETY

TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF THIS SCRIPT, YOU COULD:

• Stick it in your book as a record of watching Alita and Nicole's animation

• Pause the animation and make notes as you go

• Add your own illustrations to the sheet

• Create your own animation to accompany it

• Add notes from classroom discussions

• Make notes of areas you will investigate further

• Make notes of key words and definitions

• Add questions you would like answered – you can message Alita and Nicole through the comment box at the bottom of their article:

futurumcareers.com/how-one-massive-study-is-uncovering-the-secrets-of-uk-society

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SCRIPT:

What do you do for a living? Did you go to university? Do you exercise regularly? Are you happy?

These are some of the questions asked by the Understanding Society project, led by the University of Essex in the UK.

Set up by the Economic and Social Research Council in 2009, the project regularly interviews members of 40,000 UK households from different walks of life.

This longitudinal study looks at how participants – and their lives – change over time. This enables researchers to track societal trends, and what they mean for well-being, equality and other issues.

Quantitative social scientists, Dr Alita Nandi and Nicole D. James are two members of the large Understanding Society team.

Alita leads the Outreach team which helps researchers understand how to use the data collected.

Alita and the team consulted with researchers, policy makers, voluntary organisations, survey methodologists and the general public to find out what questions they wanted to ask and how.

The team formats the data so they can be used by researchers for analysis. This analysis can lend important insights into how global events, like COVID-19, affect society.

For example, data showed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds would be less willing to take a COVID-19 vaccine. This was presented to the government and a campaign was launched to encourage ethnic minorities to take the vaccine.

Alita is also a researcher. She has used the data in her own work to examine ethnic minorities' experiences of racism. Alita found that around one in ten people from ethnic minorities in England experienced a racially-motivated physical or verbal attack in the previous year. With this finding and other statistics, there is added incentive for policy makers to act.

Nicole is a PhD student and Survey Data Officer. One of her roles involves checking that the data are consistent, and ensuring any errors are investigated. She has automated parts of these processes to make them more efficient.

Nicole also works on the family matrix element of the project.

As households change, the relationship data changes. The family matrix project involves creating another dataset to examine these relationships over time. This is very useful for researchers, such as those studying separated families and same-sex families.

Nicole's PhD research focuses on non-response and panel attrition. Panel attrition is when respondents drop out of the survey. The Understanding Society survey aims to represent the whole of the UK population, so if fewer people participate, it can become less representative and the findings less accurate.

Nicole and Alita work hard to ensure the Understanding Society data are accurate and useful.

What would you study as a quantitative social scientist? How could your studies impact people's lives?