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Introduction to Focus Groups and Other Qualitative Research Methods

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Introduction to Focus Groups and Other Qualitative Research Methods

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SCELC Research Day
February 17, 2015

Qualitative Research Methods

- Able to address research questions “How?” and “Why?”
- Includes Focus Groups, In-Depth Interviews, Participant Observation (Ethnography)

Qualitative vs. Quantitative

- Qualitative:
 - ◆ Small sample sizes
 - ◆ Detailed exploration of topic
- Quantitative:
 - ◆ i.e. survey research
 - ◆ Larger sample sizes
 - ◆ Used to generalize

Focus Groups

- Focus groups: a research approach where a group is selected to discuss together the topic of study.
- Moderated by member of research team
- Interaction between group members a feature of methodology
- Share views and experiences, ask opinions

Focus Group Nuts and Bolts

- Number of questions and participants depends on how structured the conversation
- Example of Focus Group research: Gay-Straight Alliance High School Groups

In-Depth Interviews

- Interviews can be survey-based or open-ended (or both)
- Open ended questions: primary focus
- Interviewer asks participants to share their views or experiences
- Duration of interviews can be hours, days, weeks
- Example of in-depth interviews: current work on LGBT older adults.

Participant observation/ethnography

- Researcher embeds in phenomenon being studied, first-hand observations
- Most common in anthropology and sociology research
- Typically, long term methodology; researcher may/not disclose researcher status
- Example: Young people and hip hop

Questions?
