

Interview & Discussion Guide Development: *A Quality Approach to Achieve Credible Data*

Webinar for

AAPOR

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

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Overview

- ❖ **Section 1:** Why do we even need a guide?
- ❖ **Section 2:** The 4-stage funnel approach
- ❖ **Section 3:** Developing questions & probes
- ❖ **Section 4:** Method & mode considerations

Overview

In-depth Interview Method

❖ **Structured**

❖ **Semi-structured**

❖ **Unstructured**

Focus Group Method

❖ **Dyads, Triads, Mini**

❖ **Standard 8 - 10**

❖ **Large, community**

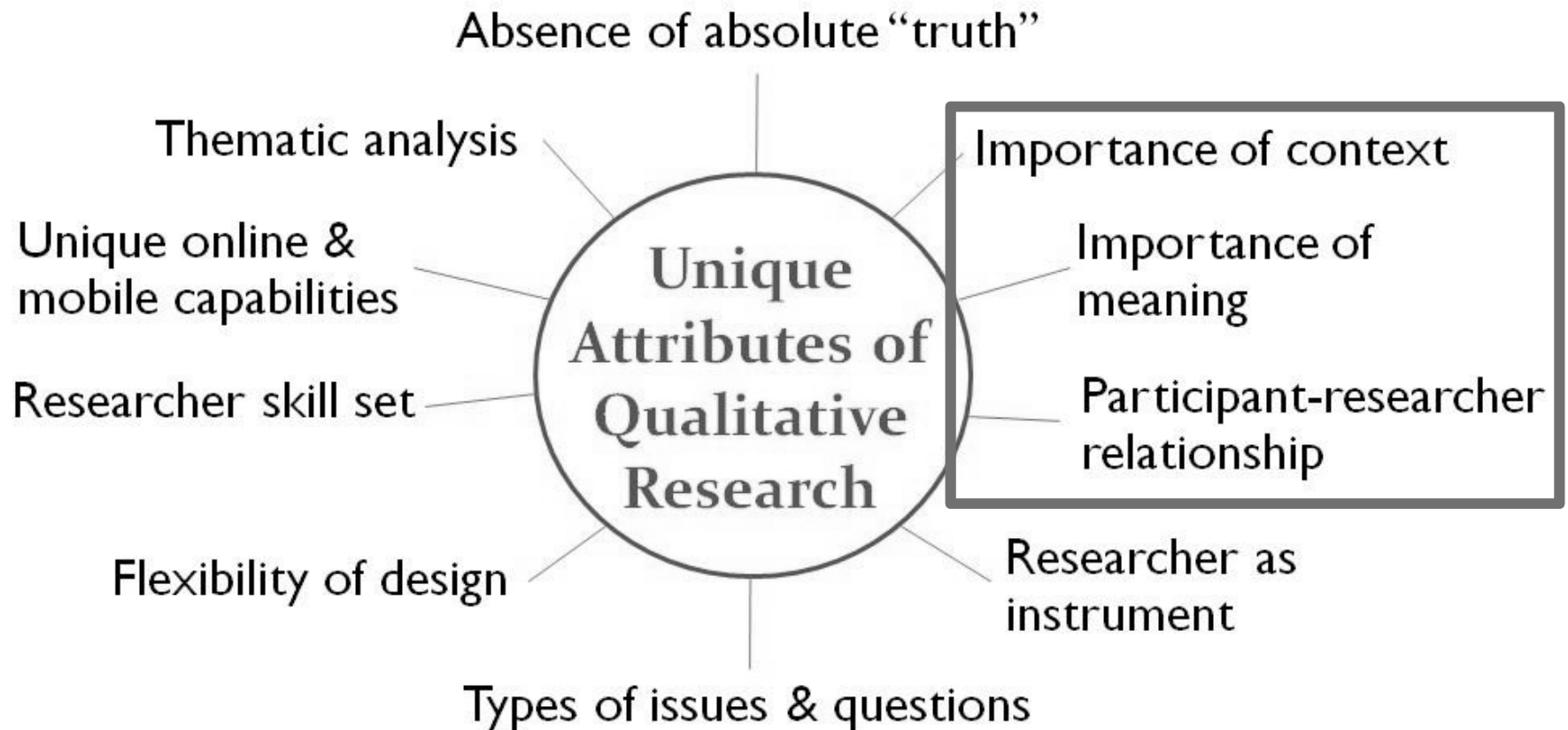
Mode

❖ **Telephone**

❖ **In-person**

❖ **Online**

Overview



Adapted from: *Applied Qualitative Research Design: A Total Quality Framework Approach* (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015. New York: Guilford Press)

Overview

- ❖ What are the **realities of everyday living** within a low-income community that affect healthy eating habits?
- ❖ How do we design more effective **communication materials** for newly diagnosed patients?
- ❖ What are the **emotional barriers** to safety issues & practices in the workplace?
- ❖ What **motivates** people to get vaccinated?

**Section
1**

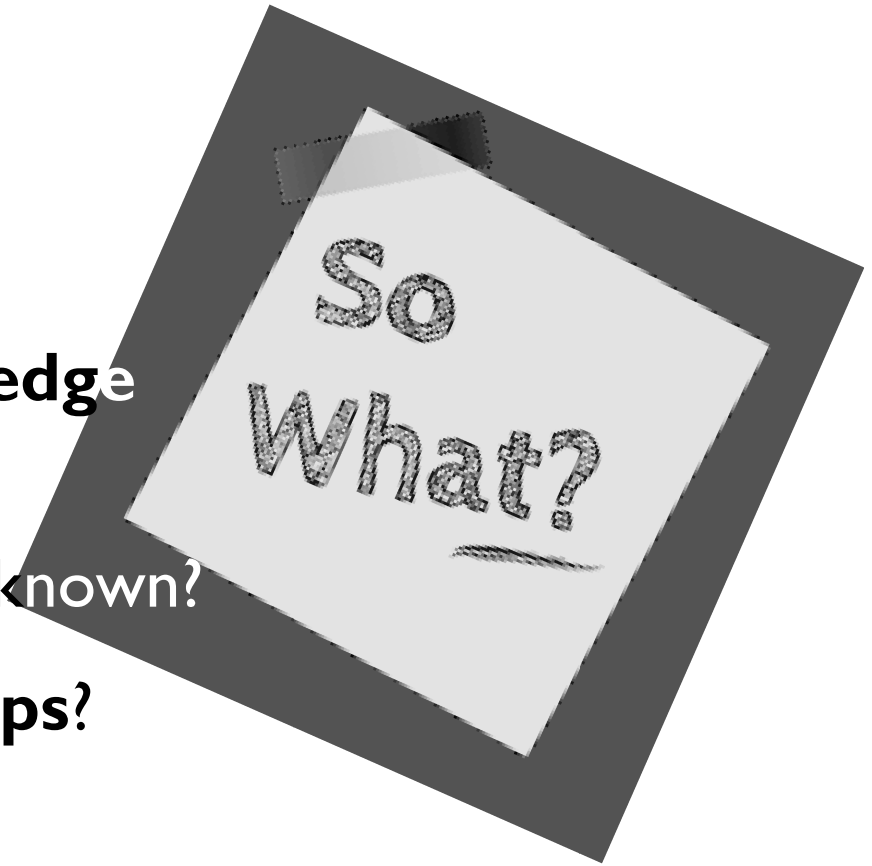
**Why a Guide:
*Mitigating Researcher
Effects & Nonresponse***

Why a Guide

***Qualitative research worth doing
is worth doing well***

Why a Guide

- ❖ Do the outcomes
 - Contribute valuable **knowledge** & **inform strategy**?
 - **Confirm or deny** what is known?
 - Offer **actionable next steps**?



Why a Guide

Construct Validity

Why a Guide

- ❖ Are we producing valid outcomes?
 - **Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?**

- ❖ Researcher effects
 - Interviewer, moderator **bias & inconsistency**.
 - Importance of **reflexive journal, skills, & training**.

- ❖ Participant effects
 - **Ability & willingness** to provide information.
 - Importance of building **rapport** & interview **question skills**.

**Section
2**

**The 4-stage Funnel
Approach to Guide
Development**

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Example from the Literature

Research objective: Examine how community-level characteristics affect individual dietary behaviors among low-income people; specifically, the barriers to the purchase & consumption of fresh fruits & vegetables

Method: 8 focus groups conducted at community facilities

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Example from the Literature

Focus Group Guide Questions

- 1) Why do you eat fruits and vegetables? Probe: General health, weight management
- 2) Are you able to buy and prepare as many fruits & vegetables as you would like for yourself or your family?
- 3) What makes it harder?
- 4) What would make it easier? Probe: Distance, knowledge of how to prepare foods, cooking equipment

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Example from the Literature

Focus Group Guide Questions (cont.)

- 5) Where do you most often buy fresh fruits and vegetables?
Why do you buy fruits & vegetables at this location?

- 6) What is most important to you when choosing fruits & vegetables? Probe: How important is it that your produce be from North Carolina farms?

- 7) How important is it that your produce be organic or grown without chemicals or pesticides?

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Example from the Literature

Focus Group Guide Questions (cont.)

8) Would you like to see more options in your community for purchasing fresh fruits & vegetables?

9) What types of programs would help you to eat more fruits & vegetables?

10) Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Example from the Literature

Consumption of fruits & vegetables

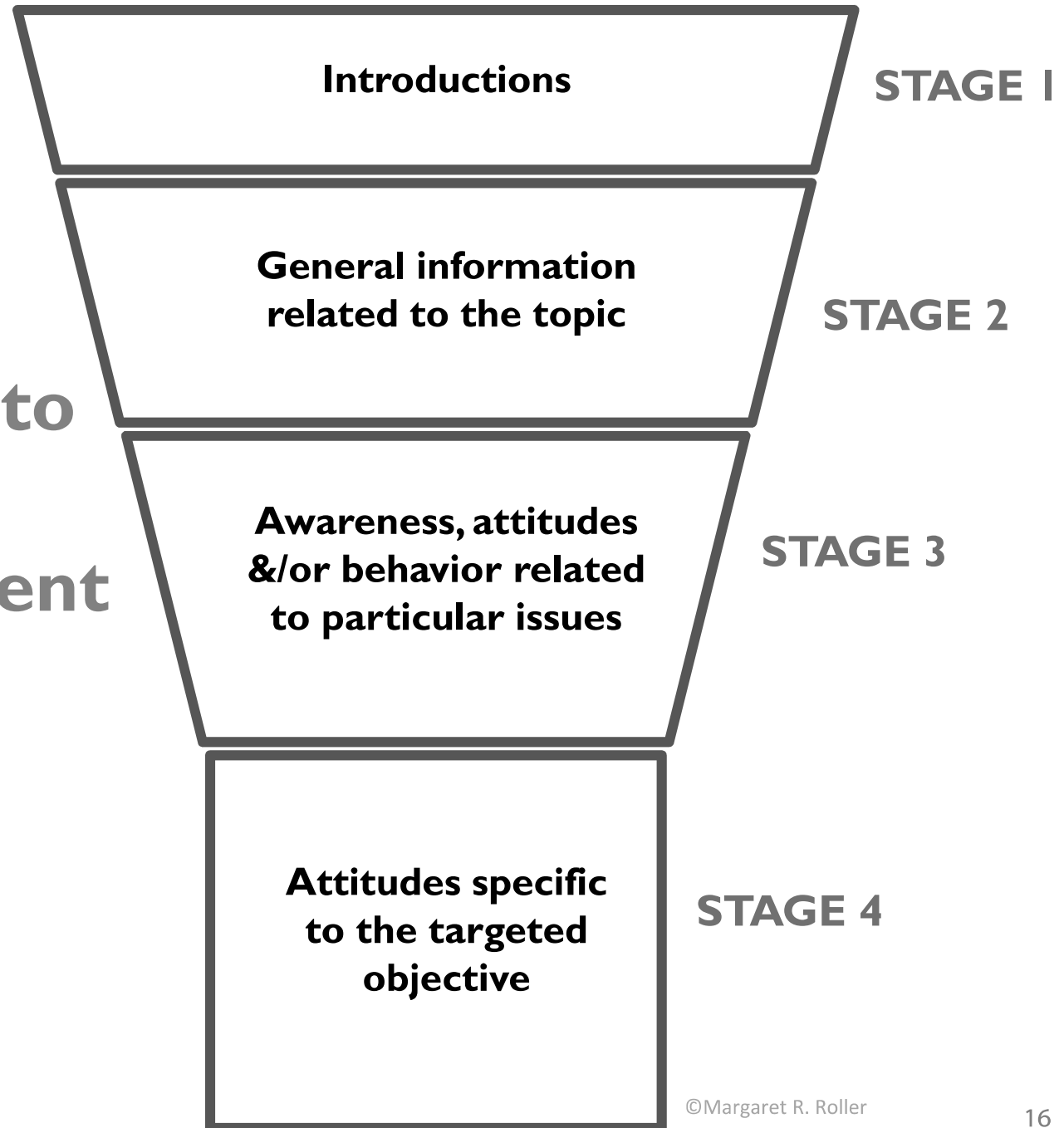


Purchase of fruits & vegetables



Options to increase purchase & consumption of fruits & vegetables

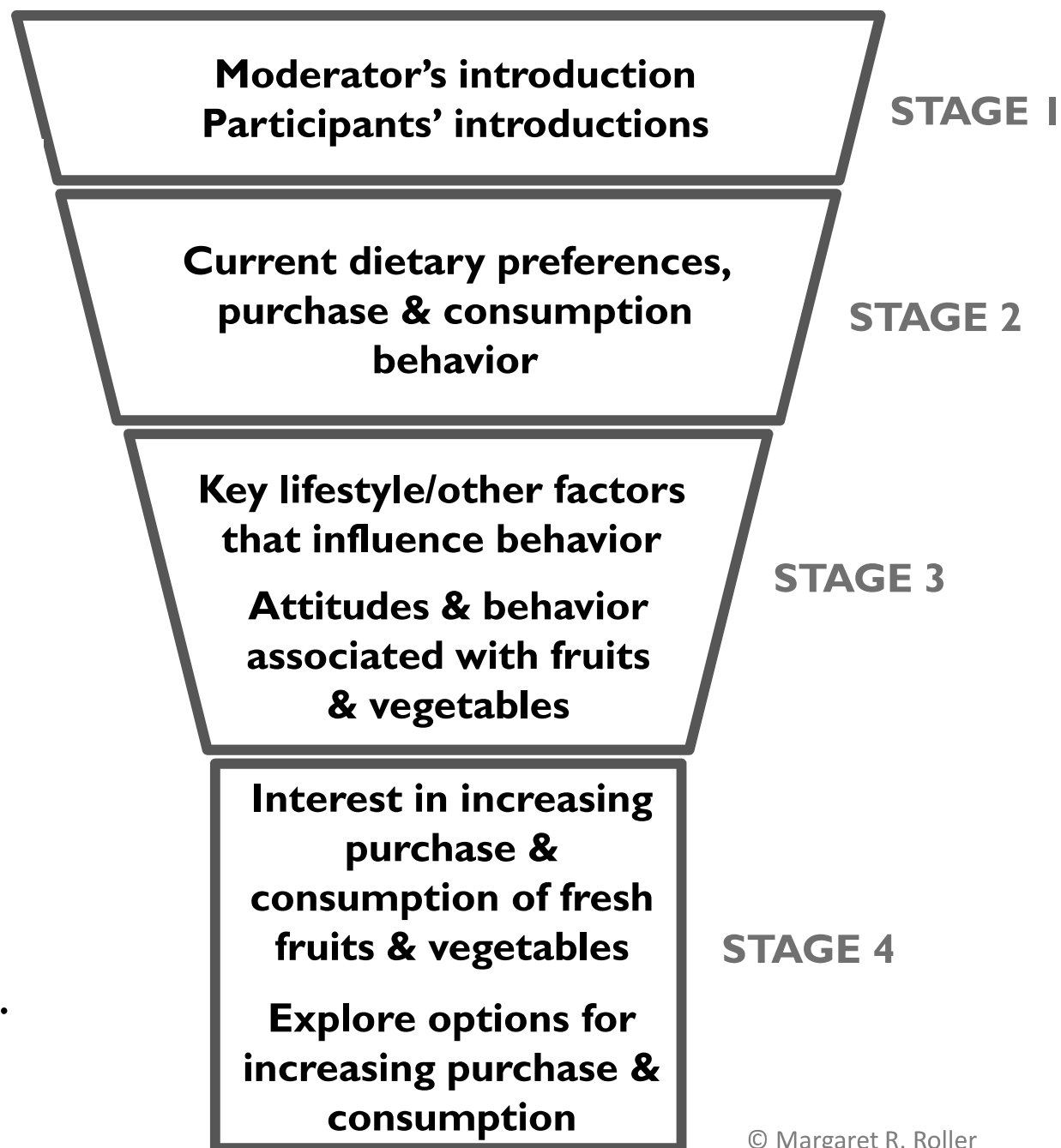
A Funnel Approach to Guide Development



Example from Literature:

Focus groups in a low-income community to explore dietary behavior.

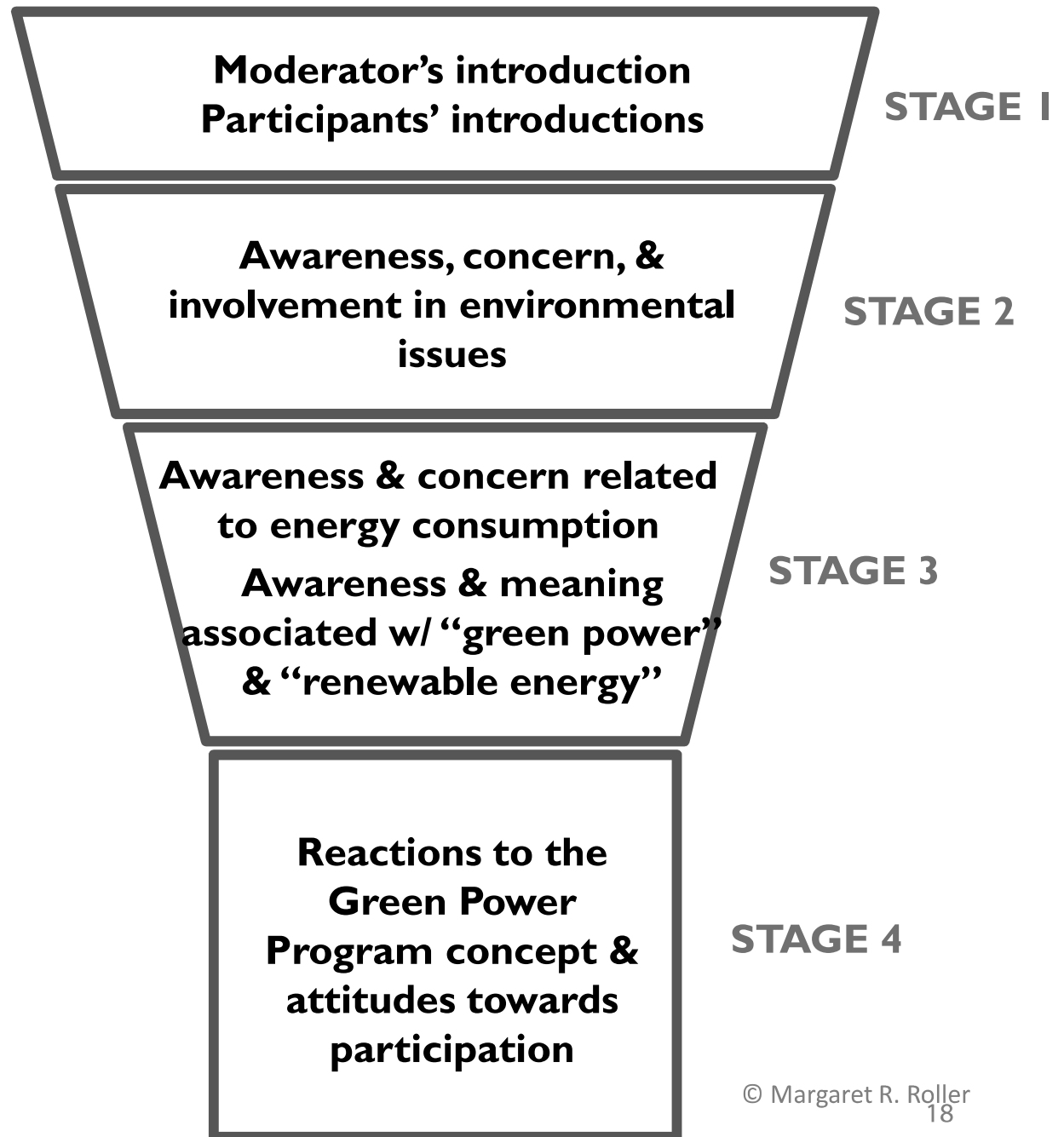
Objective: To identify the barriers to the purchase & consumption of fresh fruits & vegetables, & explore options for reducing these barriers.



Green Power Program:

Focus groups among electric utility customers to gain reactions to a new Green Power Program.

Objective: Examine awareness of & attitudes toward environmental issues & renewable energy, & gauge their reactions to the client's proposed Green Power Program.



Interviewer's/Moderator's Introductory Remarks

Welcome

I want to thank you for taking time to participate in our interview/discussion today. The purpose of this interview/discussion is to _____. I am looking forward to your feedback and I think you will find it interesting.

Candid opinions

Let me emphasize that I am interested in your *candid* opinions about what we talk about today. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers; I'm only interested in your honest input on the topics we discuss today.

Anonymity

Your comments will remain anonymous. I promise you that nothing we say here today will come back to you or be associated with you personally.

Audio recording

With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview/discussion. By recording the interview/discussion I am able to free myself from taking verbatim notes while listening carefully to your comments. At a later date I will listen to the recording which will help me greatly in my analysis of all the interviews/discussions and to write a report. I want to emphasize that the audio recording is solely for my use and will never be used to identify you in any way. [THE INTERVIEWER/MODERATOR NEEDS TO BE PREPARED TO ABANDON THE IDEA OF AUDIO RECORDING IF THE PARTICIPANT OBJECTS.]

Questions or comments

Before we begin, do you have any questions or comments for me?

Optional

[YOU MAY ADD ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING AS APPROPRIATE OR DEEMED NECESSARY. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO OVERWHELM THE PARTICIPANT WITH INFORMATION.]

- ▶ If you haven't already done so, please turn off your cell phone or put it on vibrate.

 - ▶ A few of my colleagues are viewing and/or listening to this interview/discussion by way of [REMOTE MONITOR, ONE-WAY MIRROR, VIDEO STREAMING, VIRTUAL BACKROOM, PHONE CONNECTION]. They are taking notes and are an important resource for me. After our interview/discussion, they will share their notes with me which will be useful in my analysis and when I write a report. Like you and me, they are sworn to confidentiality.

 - ▶ Feel free to excuse yourself for the restroom, which is located _____.

 - ▶ I also want to introduce _____ who is here to assist me by taking notes during our interview.

 - ▶ This interview/discussion will provide valuable input that will be used to make recommendations. At this point I cannot tell you when or if these recommendations will be acted on.
-

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Green Power Program *STAGE I*

A. Pre-Discussion Warm-Up...Answers To Questionnaire Items (Individual Response)

1. In your opinion, how important are environmental issues today compared to five years ago?
2. Which issues or areas of the environment do you think are most important?
3. Do you think that you, personally, can have an impact on the environment or not? Can you make a difference?
4. What, if anything, do you do in your daily life that you feel addresses an environmental problem?
 - How long have you been doing this?
 - How often do you do this (daily, weekly, monthly)?
 - What impact do you think your behavior has on the environment (either locally or globally)?
5. What, if anything, prevents you from doing more or being more involved in environmental causes?
6. Are you a member of any environmental organization?

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Green Power Program *STAGE 2*

B. Impetus For Environmental Concerns

1. Before we move on, I am curious how you became environmentally conscious or concerned about the environment. What was the event or person that got you involved? **[MODERATOR PROBES FOR SPECIFICS]**

C. Most Important Issues & Consumer/Corporate Responsibility

1. Let's talk some more about the environmental issues you consider to be most important. As we went around the table I heard **[MODERATOR MAKES A LIST ON THE EASEL OF ISSUES MENTIONED IN SECTION A]**? Is this an exhaustive list? Are there issues missing from this list that are important to you? How would you prioritize this list? What issues do you consider to be more important than others? What makes you say that? On what basis do you prioritize these issues? What are the things you consider?
2. I also heard as we went around the table various ways you are dealing with these issues. Some of the things you are doing include **[MODERATOR MAKES A LIST ON THE EASEL OF ISSUES MENTIONED IN SECTION A]**. What am I missing? What are other things you are doing or buying or involved with related to environmental issues? How do these activities positively impact the environment?
3. Do you think you are doing all you can related to these environmental issues? What more would you like to do? What is stopping you from doing more? What would help you do more?
4. Do you think commercial and industrial companies are doing everything they can to deal with environmental issues? Explain. Which companies are doing to the most in this area? What are they doing? Which companies could be doing more? How so?

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Green Power Program *STAGE 3*

D. Energy Company & Energy Consumer Involvement [AS APPROPRIATE BASED ON EARLIER DISCUSSION]

1. Let's focus now on energy companies. When you think of environmentally-conscious energy companies, what names come to mind? **[FOR EACH COMPANY MENTIONED...]**
 - What has this company done to better the environment?
 - How do you know this? How has this been communicated to you?
 - Is this company doing everything it can? What more should this company do?
2. How much of the 'burden' regarding these environmental issues should be shared by the energy company and the consumer? Should the energy company assume the entire burden, or how much is the responsibility of the consumer?
3. What, specifically, do you do related to your energy consumption to help the environment?
 - Are you aware of how much electricity you use? Do you monitor your use? How so?
 - Would you say your use is more, less, or about the same compared to your neighbors?
 - **[AS TIME PERMITS]** Are you aware of the Home Energy Calculator? Has this/could this be useful in helping reduce energy consumption and save money?
4. Is there any kind of product or service or program that an energy company could offer you that would make you feel you were doing more for the environment?
 - What would that product/service/program look like? Explain the idea.

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Green Power Program *STAGE 3*

E. Green Power, Renewable Energy, & Green-E [AS APPROPRIATE BASED ON EARLIER DISCUSSION]

1. What, if anything, do you think of when I say “green power”? Give me examples.
 - What does it mean to provide green power? What is your definition?
2. What about “renewable energy”? What is a renewable energy (RE)?
 - Is this the same or different from green power (GP)?
 - What is your definition of renewable energy?
3. What do you think are the most important or viable sources of GP/RE*?
 - What are the greatest sources of GP/RE in the U.S.? What will it be in 5 years?
 - Why are some more viable than others?
 - Are some more expensive than others? How about compared to coal, nuclear, oil, gas?
4. As far as you know, do energy companies rely on green power or renewable energy? How so?
5. Can you opt for green power or renewable energy with any of your energy providers?
 - Does having this option matter to you? Explain.
6. Do you think energy companies should provide you with this choice?
 - How much would you be willing to pay to contribute to GP/RE?
 - How could an energy company motivate you to opt-in for GP/RE?
7. Are you aware of a certification program called Green-e? What is the program/what does it do?
 - Have you seen the Green-e logo? What does it mean/signify?
 - Have you made purchases because of this certification? Give examples.

4-Stage Funnel Approach

Green Power Program *STAGE 4*

F. Green Tariff Concept

1. I want to spend the rest of this evening discussing a new idea. I brought with me a statement I want to read. Immediately after I read this statement I would like you to write down your interest in the idea. **[MODERATOR READS STATEMENT, ALLOWS TIME FOR PARTICIPANTS TO REFLECT, & THEN CONDUCTS OPEN DISCUSSION]**

- What is your interpretation of what I read? Explain to me the idea in your own words.
- What, if anything, did you particularly like about this idea? What don't you like or do you find confusing?
- What would be the primary questions or issues you would have in reaction to this?
- Do you think this would require you to do something differently?

Three primary areas of probing are the:

- Core idea in the program concept
- Calculation of the premium charge – type of RE + the level of participation
- Use of RECs/certificates

2. How much or what percentage of your total energy would you want to contribute to renewable sources?

3. How much more per month would you be willing to pay for this GP/RE?

- Would you be willing to pay more for one type of GP/RE mix vs. another?

4. What, if anything, would you expect to see as a result of participating in this program?

- Documentation certifying that the Company has made the investment?
- Tangible evidence, such as windmills, solar panels?
- News updates or articles on GP/RE? What topics would be of interest?

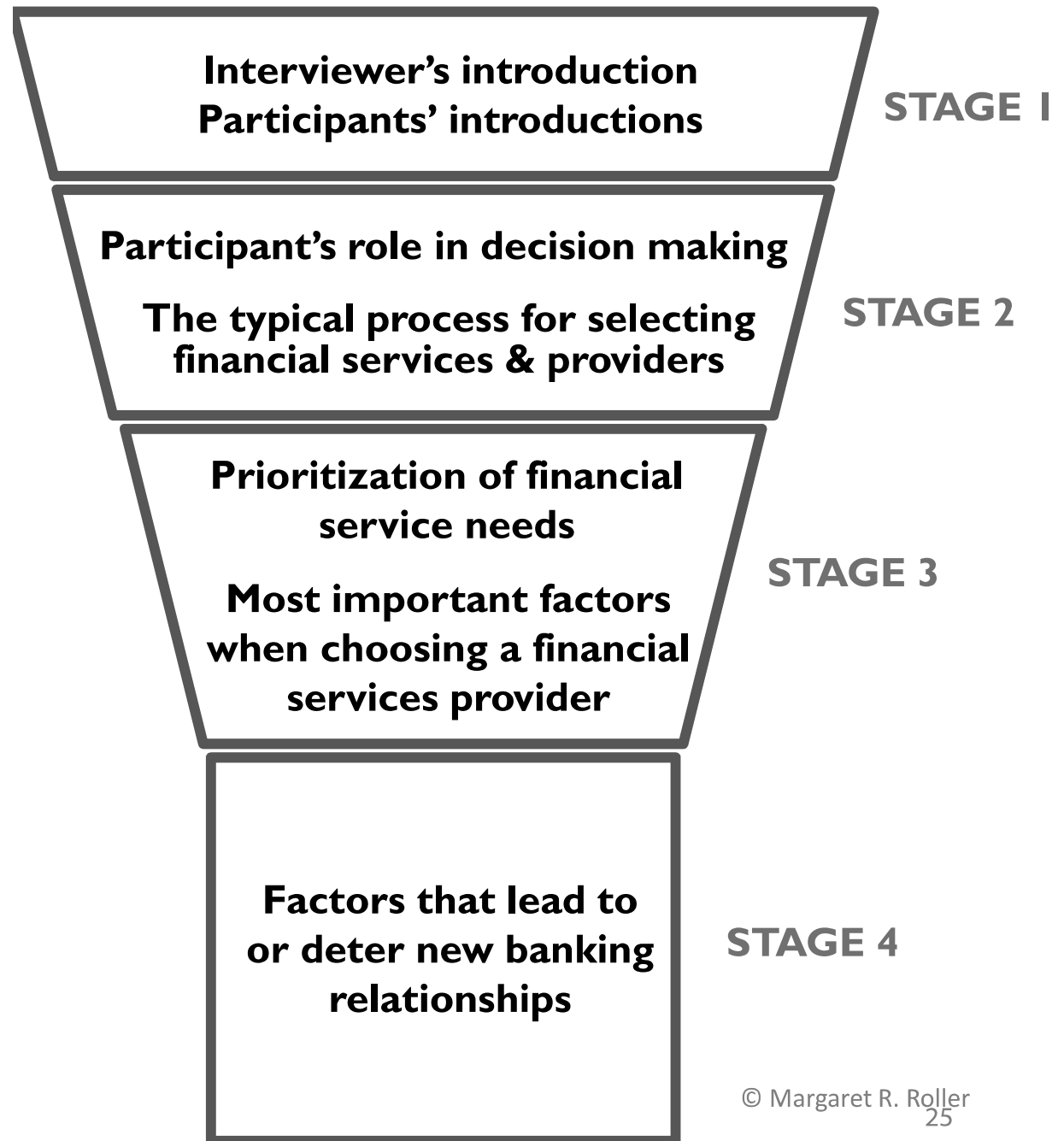
5. How would you prefer to learn about and participate in this program?

- Company representative on the phone? Online? Through the mail?

Senior Living & Healthcare:

An IDI study among financial decision makers in senior living & healthcare.

Objective: To gain an in-depth understanding of the financial decision processes as well as service needs & selection criteria, esp., related to establishing new banking relationships in the senior living & healthcare industry.



**Section
3**

**Developing Questions
& Probes**

Developing Questions & Probes



consistency

Developing Questions & Probes

When consistency matters

Green Power Program Concept Statement

The Green Power Program would enable customers to specify that a percentage of their electrical power be generated from a renewable energy source such as wind, solar, geothermal, or bioenergy. So, for instance, a customer could designate 50% of their electric use to wind energy.

Customers who participate in the program would pay a small cost in addition to their usual monthly charge. The amount of this additional cost would be based on two considerations: 1) the percentage of electric use a customer wants from renewable sources; and, 2) the type of renewable energy a customer wants to support.

Developing Questions & Probes

When consistency matters

Organic Food Bag Concept Statement

A food bag that keeps food fresh, like ordinary plastic food bags, but are made of cellulose, a transparent plant fiber, that degrades faster and is safer than plastic and is completely biodegradable.

Developing Questions & Probes

Verbal Questioning

Direct

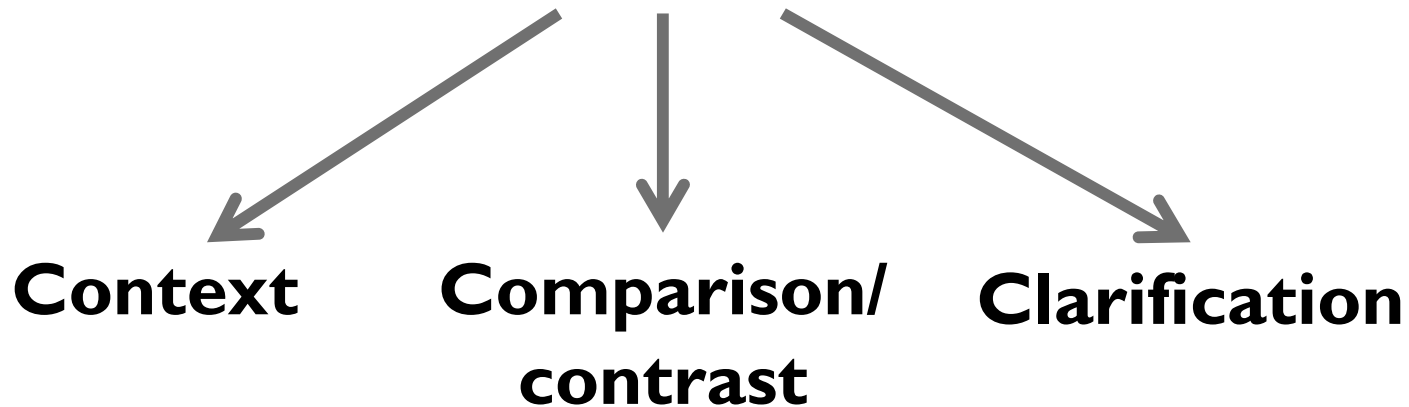
Indirect

Mitigate measurement error

Maximize construct validity

Developing Questions & Probes

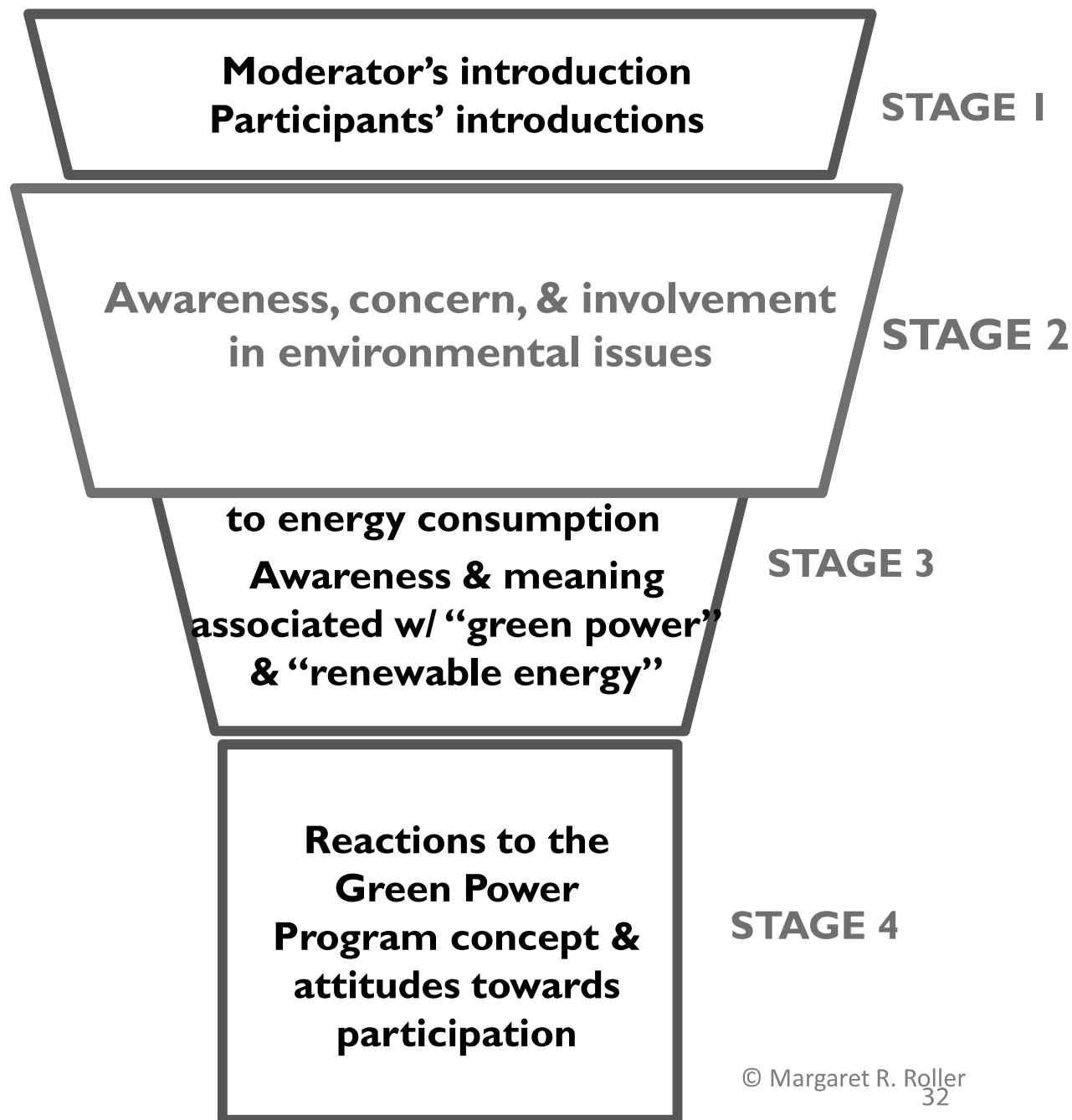
3 C's of Direct Questions



Green Power Program:

Focus groups among electric utility customers to gain reactions to a new Green Power Program.

Objective: Examine awareness of & attitudes toward environmental issues & renewable energy, & gauge their reactions to the client's proposed Green Power Program.



Developing Questions & Probes

Green Power Program *STAGE 2*

❖ Questions that give CONTEXT

What was the event or person that got you involved?

What are other things you are doing or buying or involved with related to environmental issues?

Do you think commercial and industrial companies are doing everything they can to deal with environmental issues?

❖ Questions that give COMPARISON/CONTRAST

What issues do you consider to be more important than others?

On what basis do you prioritize these issues?

❖ Questions that give CLARIFICATION

How do these activities positively impact the environment?

What more would you like to do?

What is stopping you from doing more?

Developing Questions & Probes

Green Power Program *STAGE 2*

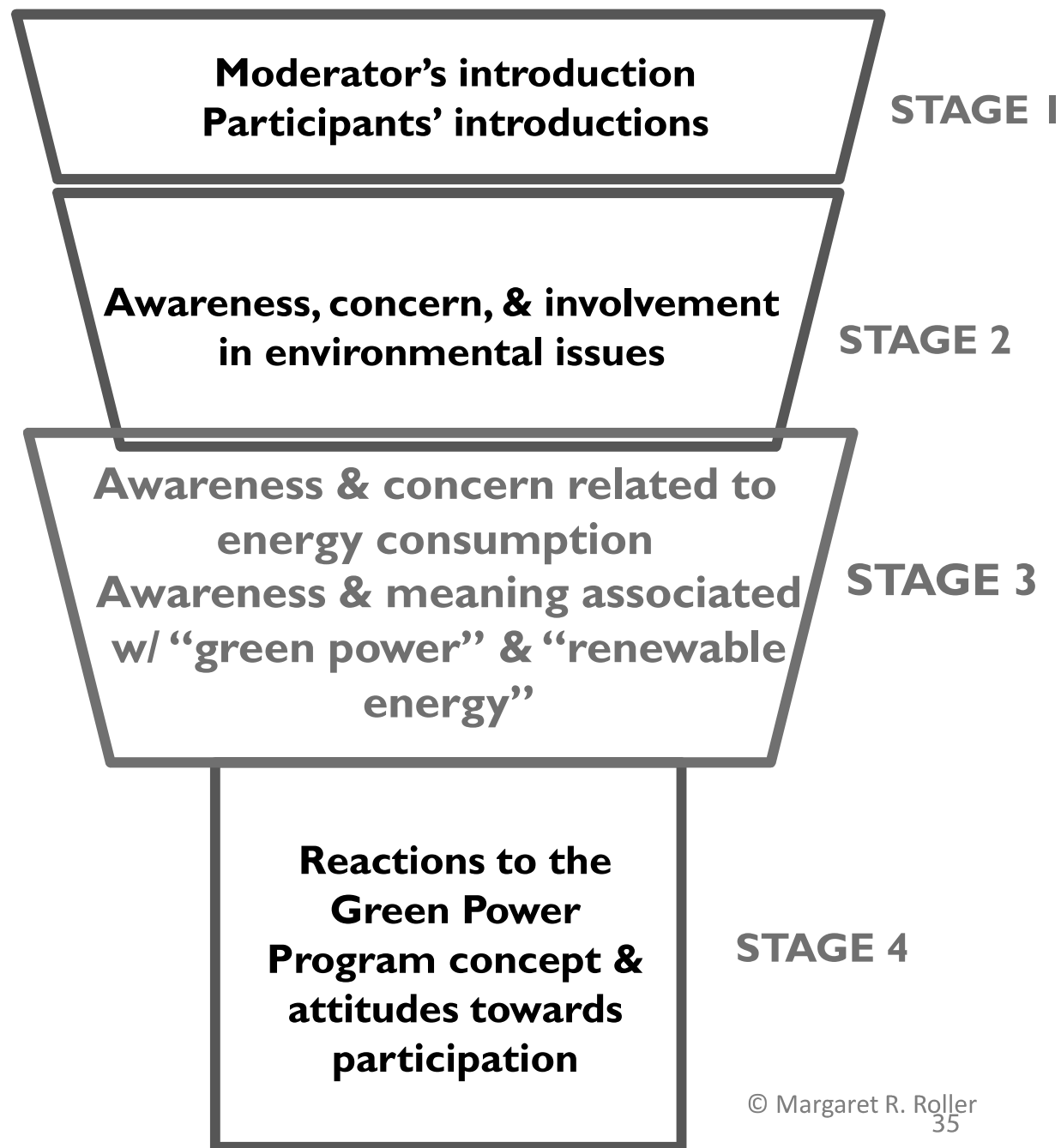
❖ **Questions are designed to mitigate researcher bias by maintaining objectivity**

- **Asking:** *What was the event or person that got you involved?*
- **Not asking:** *I have read that many people got involved in environmental issues after watching An Inconvenient Truth. How about you?*
- **Asking:** *What issues do you consider to be more important than others?*
- **Not asking:** *Global warming, air and water pollution, and overpopulation are typically considered the most important environmental concerns. What do you think?*

Green Power Program:

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Developing Questions & Probes

Green Power Program *STAGE 3*

E. Green Power, Renewable Energy, & Green-E [AS APPROPRIATE BASED ON EARLIER DISCUSSION]

Unaided

1. What, if anything, do you think of when I say “green power”? Give me examples.
 - What does it mean to provide green power? What is your definition?
2. What about “renewable energy”? What is a renewable energy (RE)?
 - Is this the same or different from green power (GP)?
 - What is your definition of renewable energy?
3. What do you think are the most important or viable sources of GP/RE*?
 - What are the greatest sources of GP/RE in the U.S.? What will it be in 5 years?
 - What makes some sources more viable than others?
 - Are some more expensive than others? How about compared to coal, nuclear, oil, gas?

Aided

4. As far as you know, do energy companies rely on green power or renewable energy? How so?
5. Can you opt for green power or renewable energy with any of your energy providers?
 - Does having this option matter to you? Explain.
6. Do you think energy companies should provide you with this choice?
 - How much would you be willing to pay to contribute to GP/RE?
 - How could an energy company motivate you to opt-in for GP/RE?
7. Are you aware of a certification program called Green-e? What is the program/what does it do?
 - Have you seen the Green-e logo? What does it mean/signify?
 - Have you made purchases because of this certification? Give examples.

Developing Questions & Probes

Who When
What
How Where

**Re-consider the
“Why” Question**

Developing Questions & Probes

Example from the Literature

Focus Group Guide Questions

- 1) **Why do you eat fruits and vegetables? Probe: General health, weight management**
- 2) Are you able to buy and prepare as many fruits & vegetables as you would like for yourself or your family?
- 3) What makes it harder?
- 4) What would make it easier? Probe: Distance, knowledge of how to prepare foods, cooking equipment

Developing Questions & Probes

What Makes “Why” Ineffective?

Rationality

Stifled conversations

**Questions that are
ambiguous or
misinterpreted**

**Participant effects that lead
to weak construct validity**

Developing Questions & Probes

Participant

“I am environmentally conscious.”



Researcher

“Why?”



Participant

“Because I want to do my part to save the planet.”



Researcher

“Why is that important?”



Participant

“It is just the right thing to do.”



Dead end

Developing Questions & Probes

Participant

“I am environmentally conscious.”



Researcher

*“What do you mean by
‘environmentally conscious’?”*



Participant

“I recycle all of our plastic, glass, & paper .”



Developing Questions & Probes

“I recycle all of our plastic, glass, & paper.”

“What makes recycling environmentally friendly?”



*“How do you know that?
“Where do you go for this type of information?”*



“What makes one source of information more credible than another?”

How long have you been recycling?



What first motivated you to recycle?



Was there a life event? Tell me about that.



You said that you were motivated by a teacher you had in school. What did this teacher say or do to encourage you to recycle?

Developing Questions & Probes

- ❖ **Probing questions use the participant's language to gain context & clarification.**

“I recycle all of our plastic, glass, & paper.”

- ❖ **Probing questions are designed to mitigate bias.**
 - Asking: *What makes fruits & vegetables a “healthy choice”?*
 - Not asking: *Do fruits & vegetables help you manage your weight?*

Developing Questions & Probes

- ❖ Indirect questioning – **enabling techniques** – effectively probe by modifying direct questions.
 - **Sentence completion**
 - “When I think of the word ‘nutrition,’ I think of _____.”
 - **Word association**
 - What is the first word or words you think of when I say “climate change”?
 - **Storytelling**
 - Tell me a story about the last time you shopped for health insurance.

Developing Questions & Probes

- ❖ **Projective techniques** are an indirect way to explore less conscious, less rational or socially acceptable attitudes.
 - **Psycho-drawing**
 - Draw a depiction of what it would be like to be without your mobile phone.
 - **Personification**
 - Imagine your car as a person & describe this person's lifestyle.
 - **Picture sort or collage**
 - Use online images & Pinterest to answer the question, “How do you feel when you are in a large social gathering with strangers?”

Developing Questions & Probes



Developing Questions & Probes

❖ **WARNING: Construct Validity at Risk!**

- Projective techniques may be *of limited value*.
 - **Short duration** of the research event does not allow sufficient time to explore personal meaning of metaphorical imagery & context.
 - Researcher is **typically not qualified** to make valid interpretations & link them to the research objectives.
 - Can result in a high-degree of **subjectivity** by the researcher.

**Section
4**

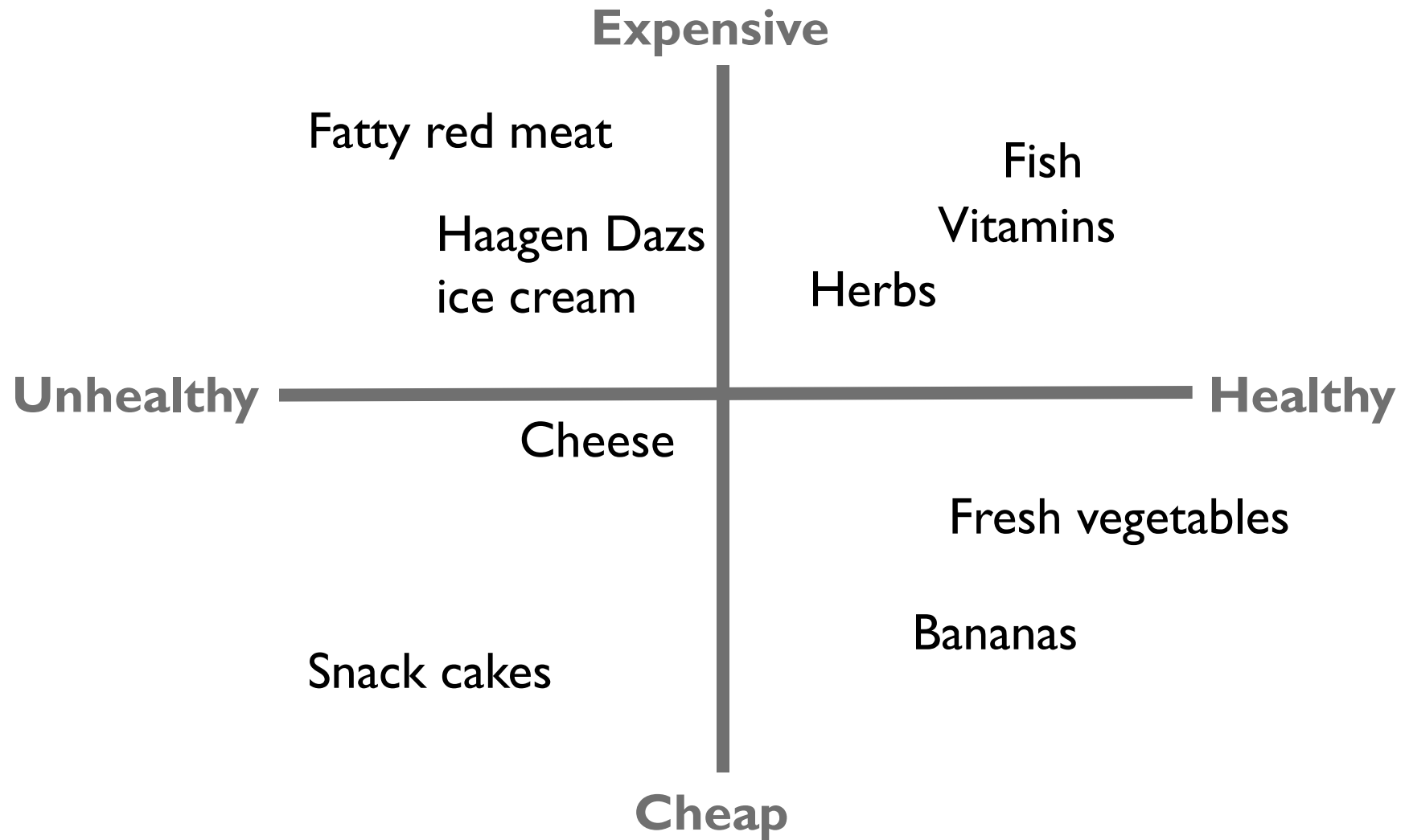
**Method & Mode
Considerations**

Method & Mode Considerations

Method

- ❖ The focus group guide should allow for ways to **engage participants**.
 - Easel/flip chart
 - Group exercises

Method & Mode Considerations



Method & Mode Considerations

Method

- ❖ The focus group guide should allow for ways to **gain individual responses unbiased by others' comments.**

A. Pre-Discussion Warm-Up...Answers To Questionnaire Items (Individual Response)

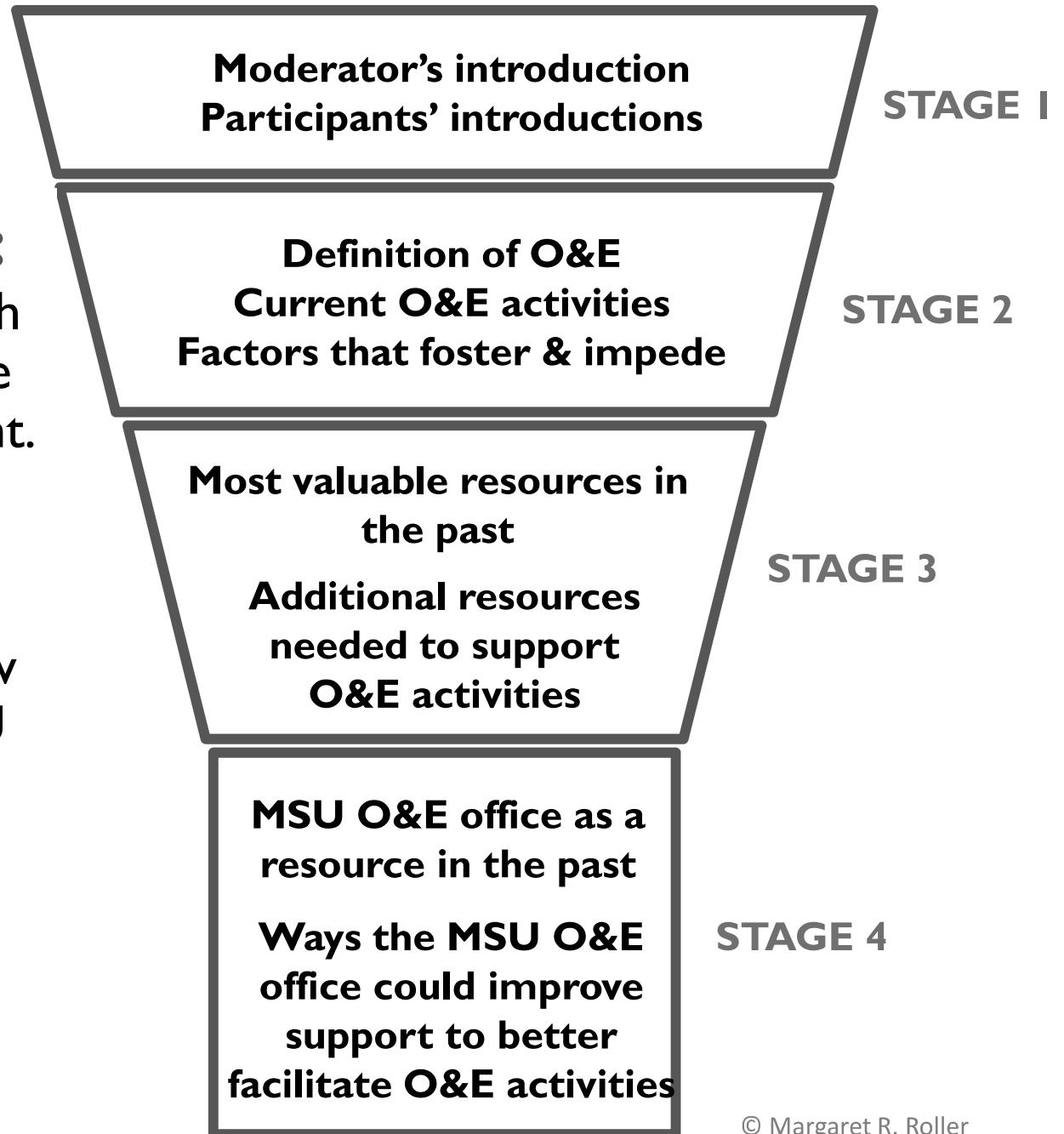
1. In your opinion, how important are environmental issues today compared to five years ago?
2. Which issues or areas of the environment do you think are most important?
3. Do you think that you, personally, can have an impact on the environment or not? Can you make a difference?

Mode

MSU Example:

Online discussions with MSU faculty to explore outreach & engagement.

Objective: To learn of the faculty's current O&E activities and how the O&E office at MSU could better facilitate their efforts.



Method & Mode Considerations

Mode

❖ The online mode is more restrictive.

The screenshot shows a Blackboard discussion guide interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'DASHBOARD (HOME)', 'PROJECTS', 'MY PROFILE', and 'HELP DESK'. On the right, it says 'WELCOME MARGARET - SIGN OUT'. Below this is the course title 'University's Role in Outreach & Engagement' with a link to 'Jump to Another Section' and 'Previous/Next' buttons. A sidebar on the left contains the Michigan State University logo and a list of navigation options: 'DISCUSSION VIEW', 'QUICK VIEW', 'MESSAGE CENTER', 'DISCUSSION GUIDE' (highlighted), 'PROJECT USERS', 'GROUP & TAGS', 'TRANSCRIPT VIEW', 'ANALYSIS TOOLS', and 'MEDIA GALLERY'. A 'Chat with Support' button is at the bottom of the sidebar. The main content area shows a 'Discussion Guide' for 'S3Q1 Text Response' (28 responses) by Margaret Roller. The text reads: 'Good Morning and welcome to Day 2 of our discussion on outreach and engagement at MSU. I would like to turn the discussion now to the university's role in outreach and engagement (O&E). To the extent that you have not already addressed this, • How has the Office of University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) at MSU assisted you and/or your colleagues in facilitating your research, programming, or other creative O&E activities? • How important is the UOE's role in fostering access to MSU resources and how well has it performed this function?'. Below this are two more questions, S3Q2 and S3Q3, each with a 'Text Response' section and a list of bullet points. S3Q2 asks about other units at MSU, and S3Q3 asks about UOE components and support. Each question section has a toolbar with icons for '+', '↑', '↓', and '↻', and buttons for 'Edit', 'Change Response Type', 'Add Attachment', 'Add Whiteboard', 'Copy', and 'Delete'.

Reference: Text



Roller & Lavrakas, 2015. New York: Guilford Press.

<http://bit.ly/TQFbook>

Reference: Blog

Research Design Review

A Discussion of Qualitative & Quantitative Research Design Issues

<http://www.researchdesignreview.com>

<https://researchdesignreview.com/category/qualitative-research/guide-development/>



Thank You!

Please feel free to contact me

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