Watershed Interview Analysis

Instructions: Read the interview of a student with a researcher. Answer the questions based on the interview.

Student: “Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. I am trying to gather stories about our watershed. There are no right or wrong answers to any questions I ask, so feel free to share what comes to mind. When you hear watershed, what immediately comes to mind?”

Researcher: “Well, I think of an ecological situation that seems equally important and fragile, and as I understand it, watersheds will carry any kinds of pollutants and chemicals that we inject upstream, down. So they are going to suffer from anything that happens upstream.”

Student: “What is one of your fondest memories involving water?”

Researcher: “Growing up, I would spend long days during the summer swimming in lakes in my community in Tennessee.”

Student: “What is one of your fondest memories of the natural world?”

Researcher: “My favorite memory is a couple of days after Christmas. I went on a hike with my dad and several of his brothers and their kids in the Great Smoky Mountains. There was a big snow storm, and a park ranger told us there would be rough conditions. We considered turning back, but we hiked up the mountain. We camped in something similar to a blizzard, where we couldn’t see anything. But the next morning, getting out of our tents, you could see everything covered in snow. This revelation of the natural world was really powerful.”

Student: “Why do you think it’s important to learn about the natural world and our waterways?”

Researcher: “It’s easy to ignore what you are not familiar with. Once you learn about and understand natural systems, it’s really hard not to protect them.”

Student: “Why do you think it is important to protect our waterways?”

Researcher: “Water is fundamental to life, now more than ever it is more important that people learn about and be connected to the natural world and the systems that we are a part of.”

Student: “What do you wish people knew about our community?”

Researcher: “A thing that I wish people understood more is that to be a scientist is to really be concerned and worried about the future. While there are uncertainties, we’re really trying to use the tools we have to make sure we have a sustainable place to live.”

Student: “Is there anything else you would like to share with me?”

Researcher: “I think we need to get more specific about the words that we use, because sometimes we say “watershed”, and people don’t know what we mean when we say “watershed”. Some people confuse lake versus delta versus watershed. Knowing the difference will help people understand how to help. There are also lots of things that we do not fully understand. As best as we can understand, I hope that people use their knowledge to understand and be respectful of the world around them.”

Analysis Questions:

1. How does the researcher initially define or conceptualize a "watershed" when first asked? What two key characteristics do they emphasize?

2. Based on the researcher's response, what is their primary concern regarding the health of a watershed?

3. The researcher shares a fond memory of swimming in lakes in Tennessee. How does this personal experience potentially connect to or inform their professional concern for waterways?

4. The researcher states, "It's easy to ignore what you are not familiar with. Once you learn about and understand natural systems, it's really hard not to protect them." What does this statement reveal about their belief in the power of education regarding environmental protection?

5. According to the researcher, what is the fundamental reason why protecting waterways is important?

6. In their closing remarks, the researcher highlights the importance of being "more specific about the words that we use," specifically mentioning the term "watershed." Why do they believe this clarity in terminology is crucial for public understanding and action?