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Professor Osgood

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**Reflection**

My understanding of coral bleaching and its broader ecological impact has deepened significantly while working on this paper. Initially, I viewed coral bleaching as a localized event primarily affecting the corals themselves. However, through this research, I have come to see it as a complex chain reaction that disrupts entire marine ecosystems, particularly highlighting the state of reef sharks. Coral bleaching not only degrades the habitats necessary for small fish and invertebrates but also forces predators like reef sharks to adapt, migrate, or face population declines. I also realized how deeply interconnected ecological, economic, and cultural dimensions are in this issue. For example, the domino effects of bleaching reach coastal communities dependent on reefs for their livelihoods and cultural heritage. This expanded perspective has emphasized the urgency of comprehensive conservation efforts, encompassing sustainable fishing practices, pollution control, and climate change mitigation.

As I dove deeper into the topic of coral bleaching and its impact on reef shark ecosystems, I was most surprised by the economic and cultural implications tied to the decline of reef sharks and coral reefs. For instance, the concept that a single live shark could generate significantly more economic value over its lifetime through tourism than if harvested for meat or fins was both surprising and compelling because it shifted my perspective on the importance of conservation from being solely ecological to encompassing economic sustainability.

Over the course of the semester, I did not change my topic area as it was something I found a decent amount of research in and was externally interested and excited about the topic.

Through the process of writing this paper, I discovered that I have a talent for synthesizing complex biological concepts and presenting them in a clear and engaging approach. In the discipline of biology, where topics can often feel dense and data-heavy, I found that my ability to create scientific evidence with compelling narratives helped make the content more accessible and impactful. For instance, connecting coral bleaching and reef shark behavior to broader ecological and socio-economic issues allowed me to highlight the real-world implications of these situations which created a narrative that resonated beyond academic circles.

Additionally, this experience also showed me that I am good at finding a balance between technical detail and its broader significance which are important for clear and impactful communication in the field of biology.