

Week 5 Presentation: The Island of the Colorblind

The Island of the Colorblind

Introduction:

This presentation explores Oliver Sacks' journey to Pingelap and Pohnpei, where congenital total color blindness (achromatopsia) is common, offering a unique window into the neural construction of color and the culture that emerges around shared perception.

Brainstorming Questions:

1. **The Black and White TV World:** Imagine living in a movie from the 1920s. Explain, as if you were talking to, a child what it would be like to pick out a red apple from a green tree if everything looked grey. Use the analogy of a black-and-white TV to explain “monochromatic” vision.
2. **The Night Vision Secret:** People with complete color blindness often see better in the dark but are blinded by sunlight. Explain, as if you were talking to, your grandma why they are like “owls” who prefer the night, using the idea that their “daytime sensors” (cones) are broken but their “nighttime sensors” (rods) work too well.
3. **Culture of Color:** In a place where everyone is colorblind, does “color” exist? Explain, as if you were talking to, your uncle how a society might describe things by texture or pattern instead of color, just like a chef describes food by taste and smell, not just how it looks.

Recommended Readings:

- Sacks, O. (1997). *The Island of the Colorblind*. Knopf.