My Sensory Issue

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My Sensory Issue
Occupational Folklore – Running Joke

Informant:
Brooke D is a 28-year-old woman who loves working with children. She holds the following degrees: Bachelor’s of Science with a Psychology Major and a Pure Mathematics Minor and Masters of Occupational Therapy. Brooke has worked with people with disabilities since 2005 in a multitude of settings. She is passionate about making a difference in people's lives and feels strongly that her first focus should be on building rapport and getting to know the goals of the people with whom she works. Since 2015, she has worked as an Occupational Therapist (OT) in a public school in Illinois and provides home health therapy services for children ages 0-3. Prior to that, she worked for two years as an OT in a pediatric outpatient hospital setting.

Brooke lives in Illinois with her dog and fiancé. She enjoys spending time outdoors. During the summer, most of her weekends are spent fishing and staying at a lake house in central Wisconsin. During the winter, she enjoys shooting on an archery league with her fiancé and curled up inside with a warm drink and a book. Brooke is close to her family and feels it is a priority to maintain good family relationships.

Context:
I interviewed Brooke over the computer using a program called Zoom in order to record the interview. She was at her home in Illinois at the time and I was at home in Logan in my living room. I chose to talk to Brooke because of her involvement with the disability community. This because I am currently enrolled in a social justice course so when it came time to collect folklore I decided I would turn to the disability community for my content.

Brooke talked about working with children who have different needs around sensory processing and gave the examples of picky eating, particularity to different textures of different clothes, clumsiness, or getting car sick very easily. She talked about how almost everyone has something in particular that bothers them and how she uses what she hates as an example to parents to explain their child’s feeling about their sensory particularity. She and her fellow therapists will joke with one another about their own sensory issues with one another if it comes up naturally. Brooke highlighted that sensory needs are only a problem if they impede your daily life and said that these preferences occur when interacting with your senses like sight, taste and hearing, but also during interactions with the vestibular and proprioceptive systems.

In her daily life she talked gave examples of a colleague who hates running their hands through rice because of the powdery film that is left on his hands afterward really bothers him. I mentioned that I dislike running my hands through flour and touching cotton, and she said that those would be considered my sensory issues. She said the joke is almost always self-directed and people will identify their own sensory issue, laugh, say they need OT because of it, and then move on. Though the joke can occur between two people if the relationship is close.
Text:
There’s totally a running joke like every OT has some sensory issue. Uh like, like “What’s yours?” Um so, that’s kind of like you know somebody will do something like “Ah, I just I have sensory issues.” And it’s not meant mean it’s just like…you know I hate touching shaving cream like that’s one of the things we do with therapy sometimes is we practice pre-writing in shaving cream. I hate it hate it hate it. (Laughing) I hate it!

Texture:
Brooke described herself and her colleagues as protective of the people that they work with and said that they are conscious of the terms and phrases that they use around the kids and parents they work with. In the case of joking about sensory issues she says it is viewed as a way that the OT’s identify with the children. They realize that they have sensory preferences just like the kids they interact with day to day.