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7 November 2019

Ehrenreich Research Methods

Journalist, Barbara Ehrenreich, worked several low-wage jobs. Even though she had a full educational background and many skills, she never revealed them to her employers or co-workers. Ehrenreich worked as a waitress, housecleaner, nursing home aide, and retail worker. In her research she realized that many employees of low-income jobs go without house insurance and struggle to find housing that they can afford.

Ehrenreich has three rules and parameters for her studies. Firstly, in her search for jobs, she can not fall back on any skills that she learned from her education or usual work. Second, she had to take the highest paying job that was offered to her and do everything she could to keep it. Lastly, she had had to take the cheapest accommodations possible without being unsafe and keeping her privacy. Ehrenreich presented herself as a divorced homemaker reentering the work force. She told people that she had three years of college at her real-life alma mater. She had limitations that were, she would always have a car, she would never go homeless, and she would never allow herself to go hungry.

Barbara Ehrenreich took low-income jobs in Florida, Maine, and Minnesota. Her first job was in Florida as a waitress, making \$2.43 an hour plus tips. Two weeks into working that job, she realized that she would need to get a second waitressing job so that she could afford to live. Ehrenreich couldn't work both jobs so she quit the first because the second job was better money. After one month of working there, she gets another job as a

maid in a hotel making \$6.10 an hour. She worked one night of working at the hotel, she decided to quit both of her jobs and leave Florida. Ehrenreich got a job as a housecleaner during the week and a nursing home aid during the weekend. Physically and mentally, she could not keep up with the job. When Ehrenreich tried to get assistance, she thought the people were rude and were unwilling to help. The last place she moved to was Minnesota, where she had the hardest time finding a place to live so eventually she moved into a hotel. She got a job for \$7 an hour at Walmart but realized she was working too hard for the wages she was getting paid. She could not afford to buy cooking essentials so she lived off fast food until she quit.

Ehrenreich came to the conclusion that low waged jobs are demanding, degrading, and have strict rules. Low wage workers usually have little education and transportation problems.