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## Interview with Katie Sherbine

Katie Sherbine

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**Interview with Katie Sherbine**  
**11/19/98**

J: Will you just say your age and where you are originally from and how long you have lived here

K: Katie Sherbine and my age is 29 and where I'm from, I'm originally from Michigan I've lived in Ohio for ten years.

J: Will you tell me some about your family, married, children and their ages

K: okay, married, I have a nine year old from an ex-husband and I have a 5 yr. And a 2 yr. Old from my husband now and his name is Jeff and that's it as far as my kids, we've been married for almost six years.

J: Will you talk some about your employment history, about either job experience you've had or barriers to employment now and what those are that kind of thing?

K: the last job I just had was working for a chiropractor, I was an assistant there and I ran the front desk....(explains what she did) I also took a seminar on being an x-ray tech. I'm a notary public and I was at that job for almost 4 years.

J: What would you say are the barriers to getting a job now, is it because you don't want to take a minimum wage job and that is basically what's out there?

K: that was part of it but since I've gotten out of class I've also change my careers. I have decided, ever since I was 18 I wanted to be a flight attendant and I never did it so I talked it over with my husband, he's okay with it and so now I'm hooded up with an agency and I'm getting, sending my resume out with a cover letter to any airline that exists. And I'm hoping to get an interview to be a flight attendant. So right now I'm just sort of hanging out and not really taking a job because I expect within a couple of months I'm going to have interviews. Yea, but also I was making \$10 at where I was and it's just not offered around here so I thought, I was meeting the bills at \$10 an hour so I can't really afford to go less than that and why not do something that I've always wanted to do anyway.

J: Why do you feel like it is not offered around here, that money?

K: Well, I mean the job I had was here in town but my boss was real nice to me, you know he definitely paid me what I deserved for the work I was doing and I don't think in general that most of the doctor's offices pay that well, from what I've talked to other people about what they're making, I was making more.

J: Will you tell me a little bit about your economic history and maybe how your family grew up and how, since you mentioned this was the first time of you being on public assistance.

K: yea, I grew up in Michigan, my mom and dad were together until I was 13 and then they got a divorce and neither my mom nor dad had ever been on welfare, they both had jobs and we went to school or got sent to a sitter or whatever, and then I moved down here after I was 18 because my mom was living here by then and I was in a bad car accident and couldn't walk or anything so I stayed with her until I was able to get over my injury and then I started working, just starting out as a waitress, and just that kind of stuff right out of high school, but yea, this is the first time I've ever been on welfare and the reason I'm on it now is because I had to quit my job working for the doctor and my husband got injured at work so he's fighting BWC for income and it's a whole mess, so meanwhile our bills are stacking up and neither one of us are working.

J: How do you feel like you make ends meet, like on a daily basis, do you feel like you have to try to make ends meet?

K: oh yea, right now we're both behind in bills because the welfare money that we get simply is

not enough to pay our bills, I mean our mortgage bill alone is \$400 and we're getting \$525 in welfare, now we do get food stamps so fortunately that does cover it, so that is nice that I don't have to worry about that, but you know I have a car payment, we both have credit cards, you know I had a student loan payment, not to mention all the utilities that go with the house and so we're struggling every month to make ends meet, and eventually when I get my airline job I can get off of welfare and the income will be enough that it will be okay, whether he is working or not, but until that happens, it's just really frustrating, it's extremely stressful and it even adds stress to the marriage.

J: Do you feel like you had to alter a lot of things, like the way you lived your life in order to make it?

K: Oh yeah, I've cut back on a lot. I used to take the kids out to lunch all the time or when I was working go out to lunch with my co-workers, or if there was an outfit I wanted or an outfit that I wanted for the kids I could get it, I'm not doing any of that now, you know, and I miss it, so yeah, I think we have really altered our lifestyle for this right now.

J: What do you think the community's view of people on public assistance is?

K: I think they view as losers, low-income, I think that a lot of people in our community judge by looks, appearance and don't take time to find out what's inside a person, you know, I don't think I look like the typical welfare person, you know I bathe everyday and I don't think my house is scummy and trashed and we are trying to do improvements to this house and you know, I'm embarrassed that I'm on it, you know it's not like I go around telling everybody.

J: Do you feel like you try to hide that?

K: yea, I try to hide it, but I'm not to the point where I'll go out of town (to use food stamps), you know, I always look behind me to see who is in line behind me before I whip them out, and I always kind of whisper to the cashier I have stamps.

J: Are they pretty good about that?

K: Yea, in general the cashiers are just fine with it and they don't have a problem with it and I'm sure they're used to several people with them, but it's embarrassing for me, you know, normally I would shop at Krogers or Big Bear so with the few stamps I've been going more to Neff's, and it's just embarrassing, what if I see somebody I know behind me, who is an upper class person and here I am whipping out food stamps they're going to look at me like "God, you've turned into scum" you know.

J: Do you feel like that role of the welfare recipient is reserved more for women or that the community sees women more on it than they do men?

K: I don't think it's reserved for women. I think the community views more women on it because of parenting, motherhood, single mothers, etc. Mothers who need help throughout their pregnancy, they don't have enough money, they don't have insurance, whatever.

J: Do you think, you yourself, that more women bear the load of that? Some women say what happens a lot is that women get divorced and they have children and the husband takes that income with them. Do you see that happening to many of the women?

K: I don't really know a lot of people who are on it so it's hard for me to judge, but I would think that that probably does happen because in our job program there were some women who were that way, you know, so I would guess that that does happen.

J: Has it been hard to try and get a job with children, have any employers asked about if you have children or anything like that?

K: Um, no, no that hasn't dampened anything....

J: Do you feel like there is a difference in community responses towards welfare recipients? Some people we have talked to said that they feel like the community is really negative towards it and some people have said that since Mt. Vernon is such a blue-collar, hard working town that people look at welfare recipients as lazy and that they don't want to work and some have said that they have received a lot of support from Mt. Vernon?

K: You know, I don't really talk to a lot of people about me being on it, so I'm not really sure what the overall view is, I would guess negativity, that would be my guess, but I'm not sure of it because I'm ashamed of it myself that I'm not gonna go around bragging about it.

J: That is what most people have said. Have you ever felt like employers treat people any differently?

K: Well, I know for the doctor's office that I worked at, we had patients come in that were on welfare, and no, the doctor did not treat them any differently, he felt that just because they didn't have the money they were still, you know, a human being just like the rest of us and their back needed taking care of just like the rest of us..often he would treat people more than their medical card allowed. He was very positive with his patients.

J:Do you feel, in terms of being discriminated against or being looked down upon that its more in terms of being low income than it is a different ethnicity?

K: Yea, I would agree with that, and that's sad, that's really sad because I'm not discriminative at all... I like my children associating with other ethnics because I've seen , you know I grew up in a bigger town in Michigan where we had all different kinds of ethnics, and I've seen locals in Mt. Vernon who were born and raised here and have never left here and they definitely tend to be more discriminative because they haven't been around and I want my kids to be around, to know that not everybodys white, to know that not everybody dresses the way we do and that that's okay. They are still a unique human being just like we are just because they don't look like us.

J: Do you think there is much diversity in Knox county?

K: Not a lot, I don't think there's a lot and I think that's why the local s who were born and raised here, when they see it they're like " ooooh" judging, you know like I know a lot of them, you know, will talk about the Kenyon people and the way they dress or whatever and I think a lot of it is ignorance, it's a liberal arts college, what does that tell you right there, you know what I mean, so I think a lot of it is ignorance on their judgements, you know?

J: Do you feel like it's easier or harder to be low income in Knox county vs. A big city such as Columbus?

K: Easier or harder, hmm?Do you mean easier or harder as far as guidelines to be eligible?

J: No not necessarily eligible, but for example, it's a smaller community so it might be harder to blend in, or, a positive example you wouldn't have gotten the same job search class in Franklin that you did in Knox county, you would not have found as much one-on-one attention.

K:I think if I had my choice I'd rather be on public assistance in Mt. Vernon than Columbus, because I think that in Columbus with it being more populated, you're just going to be a number as to where here we have a better chance a little more than a number, a little more attention.

J: Do you feel like its harder to blend in?

K: Yea, I'd say its harder to blend in.

J:Do you feel like there's difficulties in trying to balance the household and employment?

K: Ummm, yes, because when my husband and I were both working, um, the hard part is that you're making arrangements for when they're in school and not in school and when they're not in school they are with the babysitter, but the hard part is when you both get home, you've both had

a long day at work then here your kids are “Mommy, Daddy” because they have not seen you all day and you’re already burned out, you know what I mean, so its kind of hard balancing the quality and quantity time you spend with your kids and not bringing your own stresses and burned-out and that kind of stuff into to.

J: Do you feel its hard, maybe you want to put the kids first, but you can’t?

K: Yea, that happens at times and at those times I say to them “mommy needs a time out” and they’ll leave, or go upstairs and I will take a bath or whatever.

J: Would you say that in Mt. Vernon or Knox County that it is more difficult for women to find work?

K: There are a lot of factories here and there is a lot of factory work here, and I particularly would never want to work in a factory, and I’m sure there is a lot of other women like me, um, so if we cut out our factories for the women, you know, what else is there, yea there are grocery stores, yea there are doctor’s offices, and then there are a lot of other things in that that are going to require some kind of degree, so your choices are extremely limited if you have no degree and you don’t want to work in a factory.

J: What do you feel your biggest barriers are?

K: Well, its not transportation, its not day care, um, I don’t know its kind of hard for me to say right not because I’m so into getting into this career that I want to do that I’m doing every channel to get in and I have a bit of confidence that I will get in.....

J: What would you say is your idea of the welfare recipient, what comes to mind?

K: What do I picture when I think of a welfare recipient? I’m judgmental as well, unfortunately, I picture extremely low income if not any income, their kids, if they have kids, dirty clothes, dirty faces, dirty hair like they haven’t been bathed properly, like a run down house and then a lot of times it’s almost like the parents don’t care about where the kids are... That’s what I picture, but I also know that it’s not all like that, that there are some like that.

J: Has your idea changed much maybe because of the job search class or anything like that.

K: Yea, I think its changed some because of the class.

J: Do you think there are a lot of people who abuse the system or do you feel like that is played out too much?

K: You know, I really don’t know, I don’t know because without knowing any facts, I know I’m not abusing it, I know I’m on it because I need it and I’m hoping to get off of it as soon as possible. I do know there are people on it and I guess those people over through the doctor’s office, who came in every month with the medical card so you know how long they were on it as long as they had that medical card and those people did not seem to be too eager to work, you know a lot of them had emotional or mental problems and you know whether they’re abusing it or not I don’t know but they were on it for a long time, you know maybe they have some kind of disability that they can’t work and I don’t know about it, so.

J: Would you say that it is more difficult to be a low income woman v. Man?

K: Hmm, no I think it would probably be more difficult for the man actually because in general, I know there are exceptions, but in general most women have their kids, so they’re going to be eligible for more than the man... whereas if it is a single man who doesn’t have his kids, I don’t think he is going to be as eligible for much.

J: What would you say, maybe you’ve answered this, but about the Mt. Vernon community in general, the make-up of it?

K: It really depends on the category they fit into because I’ve met people who to me are your

local yocals and to me they are not an intellectual match per se, so I'm bored with them, then there are some people in Mt.Vernon and some of the work at Kenyon or the Naz and they just think that they are all high and mighty maybe because of the position they hold there and to me that is a big turnoff, you know, you can think you're high and mighty because you're the administrator or director or whatever but what you have inside is what counts,how giving are you, how caring are you really, you know how greedy are you really, to me those things matter more than "oh, I'm the administrator" or "I'm the director" well, so what.

J: Do you like living in a small community?

K: No, no, I'd rather be in a city mostly because I was born and raised in one and I like being around the malls and having stuff to do in the evenings that not everything is shut down...for our kids, this is a good town to raise the kids in, you know the schools are fairly decent, there's probably less drugs around here than what there will be in a bigger city, so for the kids I think this is a safer place, but I think there are also ways to make your children safer if you live in a big city.

J: Do you feel like there sort of exists a community or group of low income people, that depend on each other or support each other?

K: I don't know, I don't know about others, I don't have any sort of network of people that are also on public assistance that I depend on.

J: Do you feel like if you did let people know that you would either meet some people in the same position or just have more support from outside community members because you're letting them know where you stand?

K: Um, I think you would meet some people who were in the same position if you broadcasted it, but I think you would also run into those people who are like "oh, you're just like everyone else on public assistance" you know so I think you could go both ways....

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