Interviewee: MAYA Saundrine

Interviewed by: Janina GLAESER

Date: 29/10/2011

Place: West Germany

Duration: 68 min

Author of the analysis: Janina GLAESER

Reasons for migration: not mentioned

Public policies mentioned during the interview: Employment, language.

Note: Saundrine spent one year in Germany as an au pair and therefore benefited from obligations her employers had towards her.

BIOGRAPHY

Saundrine is a 22 years old au pair who has two sisters and two brothers. Her father is 60, her mother 52 years old. The father is a retired fisherman, the mother takes care of the house. She comes from Mauritius and has origins in India. As an au pair, she takes care of a young girl. She migrated one year ago, in 2010, via an au pair visa.

HISTORY OF LANGUAGE DEVICES AND POLICIES

Saundrine uses an au pair visa to get to Germany in 2010. This was facilitated by the au pair arrangement of her sister who was an au pair in the family before. Au pair contracts are only valid for one year in Germany. Therefore, she replaced her sister within the host family after one year with a new contract. English (and French) which she knows already helps her to communicate in Germany. Mauritius was a former colony of Great Britain and France. In the school system of Mauritius English and French (the official language in French, but teaching
is in English) are been taught from the time you enter school and you have the opportunity to learn other optional languages. Saundrine took Hindu as she belongs to a Hindu family. Education in Mauritius schools are free and governmental. In Mauritius she also gets to know Creole (dialect) which is a “mixture of French and English”. In Germany she also takes a German course at a Volkshochschule. Her host family pays these courses. Au pair, to Saundrine, functions as a strategy to travel within Europe. As her contract is ending in a short while she will go back to Mauritius in a couple of months.

**LANGUAGE ISSUES IN GERMANY**

When she came to Germany, she started to talk in English as she did not know much German:

“*Because everybody here asked: Do you speak German? Because here we are in Germany ((laughing)) [...] But here it was like very difficult for me to, if I had to go somewhere, I had to ask in German to be good understand where I had to go. But eh I couldn't do it. Eh so I took help of English, but sometimes I could manage to ask the people, because some people did understand. They do understand English, lots of men. Then I join the Volkshochschule and then I started taking German courses.”*

Learning German seems to be something she had to do, because English (or French) was not enough to communicate adequately. Astonishingly, compared to other cases, the desire to learn German is something others awake within her. It is only when other languages fail to be completely useful and when she was asked by Germans, who expected her to speak German, that she finds an interest to take language courses.

Point: Learning German was nothing she intended to do in the first place. She was used to being able to communicate in English, in French and Indian other languages.