

FOCUS 3 – INTERVIEWS

Do you have a problem calling yourself German?

Nora (28): In what way a problem? When I was abroad and I said I was German I noticed that people definitely reacted differently to me than other people who said they were Spanish or whatever. I always felt that it's a privilege to be from Germany because Germany is a democratic country, it's a well-developed place, you have lots of opportunities, and you have a state supporting you if you're in trouble.... I don't think I have a problem saying I'm German. I would have had a couple of years ago because of the stereotypes of Germans being cold and distanced, or not being very flexible, and boring. That was something I totally agreed with. But then going abroad and meeting people from other countries and living in other countries made me see it's not true...

Stefan (44): No, not anymore because we're now in the year 2011 and I basically think that whatever problematic times may have taken place in history, more than three generations ago, is a long period of time by historical standards...

Ulrich (78): Yes, because of the history.... I consider the national histories of Europe to be very sad, and that's why I'm always a bit sceptical when I'm asked about the 'germaness'.... Since Napoleon, national wars destroyed Europe (the Second World War in particular). So I'm always sceptical towards nationalist thinking.

Nina (43): I don't think so, no. I'm aware of the problems involved with the word German and being German and the German history, but for me I never had difficulties saying that I am German and that I am from Germany. I'm not ashamed of it...

Juliane (39): Yes, it's definitely a problem. But I think this is just because I was born in the GDR and that country, the one I once identified with, doesn't exist anymore. This is indeed Germany nowadays, but it's still a little strange, it's still a weird feeling...

Anke (43): No. In the past, at the end of my high school time, it was a problem, but nowadays I see the advan-

tages and disadvantages of being German. For me, depending on which country I am in, it's sometimes more of a problem to say that I come from an industrialized country than saying I'm German. In the past it was a problem because I had to develop a stance on the German history. When I think back, as a teenager I felt totally ashamed because of my country. It is still an unpleasant history, but I don't feel directly guilty anymore. Back then when we went through that part of history in class, I felt really guilty, but now it's only a national guilt. My country did those things, I understand it, but I don't feel personally guilty anymore.



Monika Marie (41): No, not at all. To be German is a very complex phenomenon and I can live very well with this complexity of a very mixed past that is filled with various positive and negative, light and dark sides and have no problem with calling myself German. 20 years back maybe it was a little more difficult. Or I would feel more shame maybe or would be more hesitant to say I'm German, but nowadays it's no problem at all.

Christa (60): No I don't. I'm proud of it, because I was born here, I live here, my friends are here, my family is here, my ancestors come from Germany and because I'm used to it. I suppose it doesn't matter where you live. If it's France or Italy, you say you're proud of where you live because of the friends and family.

