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# Construction of National Identity and National Pride of Germans in the Intercultural Context

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CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL PRIDE OF  
GERMANS IN THE INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT

by

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Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Communication and Theatre Arts

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Communication and Theatre Arts

Thesis Committee:

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April 13, 2006

Ypsilanti, Michigan

## DEDICATION

To my grandparents, who lived through World War II, German division, and reunification and whom I have lost during my journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My endless gratitude to Michael A Tew, my chair, for inspiring me to write this thesis. Your knowledge, guidance, and encouragement have allowed me to come this far and grow a great deal as a student, researcher, and person.

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I cannot end without thanking my family, on whose constant encouragement and love I have relied throughout my time here at Eastern Michigan University. Thanks to my mom, my hero, for loving and supporting me in all that I do no matter how far away; my dad, for always pushing me to be all that I can be and never settle for less; and to my brother Florian, for always helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

## ABSTRACT

National identity and patriotism are very problematic and highly sensitive concepts in contemporary Germany. Many scholars agree that a positive national identity is crucial for a nation's well-being. This research attempts to investigate the process of forming a national identity and the display of national pride in the intercultural communication context. One focus group was conducted to analyze how Germans construct and/or reinvent their national identity when communicating with individuals from other nations.

The results show that German national identity and national pride are strongly intertwined and pose a unique problem for every German. Germans have major difficulties in developing and expressing national pride, which consequently makes it even harder for the country to form a healthy and positive national identity. Thus, for Germany and its people, the connection between national identity and patriotism is a double-edged sword.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

National identity and patriotism are very problematic and highly sensitive concepts in contemporary Germany. Many scholars agree that a positive national identity is crucial for a nation's well-being. Moreover, in terms of the individual, the concept of national identity is of great importance because it is giving a person a sense of security and a feeling of belonging, attachment, and prestige (Druckman, 1994).

The unique history of Germany plays a central role in the construction of national identity and the expression of national pride. Twelve years of Nazism and 45 years of East/West division have left a deep mark and form the essential part of German identity. It is the unavoidable knowledge and awareness of the Nazi past that lingers on the nation and its people and constitutes the cornerstone of German identity. The latest tricky issue concerning German national identity is the recent unification of East and West Germany. Different attitudes, behaviors, and ways of thinking and communicating have developed in both states under the shadow of the ever-present past.

Additionally, most Germans instantly reject patriotic ideas and the expression of national pride. Because of the unforgivable crimes of the Nazi past, they feel they have an obligation to be reserved and never truly proud. Moreover, there remains a fear that expressions of national pride would be perceived as negative, arrogant, and offensive to others.

### Review of Literature

In recent years there has been a considerable interest in the study of identity. Many scholars agree that having a sense of self is an essential part of every individual's



becoming a mature person and a vital participant in society. Identity has been conceptualized as a significant aspect of the self, giving meaning to people and their self-images (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Thus, identity research serves as an instrument for understanding human thought and behavior.

Identities, however, are not merely a matter of the individual. Many scholars agree that identities are created in relation to group histories and through the interplay of social roles (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003). Alcoff and Mendieta added that one's placement in social roles of identity has an enormous impact on an individual's life, ranging from one's own choices in life to the credibility one is given by teachers, friends, neighbors, and so forth.

Two important and similar perspectives that focus on the dynamics of the creation of the self are identity theory and social identity theory. Identity theory suggests that the self is a reflection of society, and thus, should be considered as a multifaceted and organized construct (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Social identity theory centers on social categories (e.g. nationality, political affiliation, etc.) to which individuals belong. The theory argues that each of these memberships give meaning to whom a person is in terms of the defining character of the category (Hogg et al., 1995).

Furthermore, many studies approach the concept of identity in close relationship to the communication process. According to Mead (2003), identity develops within the social process of communication and cannot be understood apart from that process (pp. 32-40). Communication theory of identity also argues that identity is essentially communicative and social. Hence, issues associated with identity are ultimately

communication issues. Identity, therefore, is created in connection to others and also transpires out of communication with others.

Intercultural communication scholars agree with that perspective. Researchers in this field suggest that identity is constructed through social interaction (Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka, 2002). Thus, through the process of intercultural communication, identity is created, reinvented, and transformed. These communicative perspectives on identity explore the close relationship between communication and identity, especially the influences of communication on identity (Jung & Hecht, 2004).

Additionally, the research trend in identity literature has recently been shifted from a more individual standpoint to the site of the collective. Groups, including nations, create their identity and unity through everyday communication and a common image of their past (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). In a globalized world, the study of national identity has become urgent. The concept of national identity in Germany presents some unique issues because of the nation's distinct past. In particular, the Holocaust and the division between East and West have to be taken into consideration when discussing national identity and one of its features, patriotism.

### National Identity

National identity is a feeling of attachment toward a national group as well as an orientation toward a long-term, important group membership (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 2004). The significance of a national identity has been clearly stated by many scholars. Poole (2003) argued that our national identity is the primary

form of identity available to us (pp. 271-280). He added that national identity underlines and informs all of our other identities.

For individuals, national identity reflects important common aspects of belonging and attachment not reducible to mere economic or political national interests (Ezell Seeleib-Kaiser, & Tiryakian, 2003). Hence, national identity gives us a sense of self- and other-consciousness and influences the ways we think, perceive the world, and experience our feelings and emotions. Additionally, Rossteutscher (1997) asserts that social constructions like nations live and flourish through the imaginations of those who believe in them and are transmitted and shaped from generation to generation through the normal processes of socialization and learning. Thus, a nation does not exist if its members do not picture, internalize, and believe in it.

Scholars generally agree that national identity is socially constructed. Some research suggests that a nation is constantly evolving through the processes of people's sharing the past and seeking to construct a future together (Ezell et al., 2003). Additionally, a few scholars argue that the construction of national identity heavily relies on the international image of a country (Rusciano, 2002). Hence, the perceptions of outsiders of the nation to which the members belong influence national identity as well. This analysis suggests that the concept of national identity is highly complex. It is based on current and past perceptions of insiders and of the outside world. The issue of identity formation is complex in Germany because of its distinct history.

## Germany

The circumstances of German national identity are special. Some scholars even argue that it is the lack of a concrete national identity that makes Germany unique (Brockmann, 1994). According to research by Ezell et al. (2003), many Germans are distancing themselves from anything potentially perceived as too particular to their nation. Results also imply that the concept of national identity seems to be of little value to German nationals and is avoided.

Thus, contemporary Germany exemplifies a country that has to reinvent its national identity (Ezell et al., 2003). Like that of any other nation, the national identity of Germany is closely related to the national history of the country (Loew, 2004). Even though history plays a central role in the process of identity formation, this relationship is deeply problematic in Germany. German history is often characterized by the Holocaust and by the division between East and West Germany. Twelve years of Nazi dictatorship and 45 years of German division form the essential part of German identity—if there is one after all.

## World War II

The search for identity in Germany, the home of the Reformation, romanticism, and culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is overshadowed by the past. For many people, the identification of Germany with its Nazi history is impossible to eliminate, and so, much of what Germans do or say is still read through the lens of the Third Reich (Nuechterlein, 2001). This particular time in German history is present in

almost every discourse and has left deep traces in the collective memory of an entire nation (Rossteutscher, 1997).

It is an extraordinary burden that rests on the nation and the German people and constitutes the cornerstone of German identity. Rensmann (2004) agreed that Germany's national guilt has deeply affected both collective memory and national identity since the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, he stated that German national identity is blemished by the massive moral failure of Germans during the Nazi era. Germany struggles to reconcile its present identity with its past guilt. It is the nation's consciousness in relation to the past that heavily influences current domestic and foreign policy, debates, and decision making (Gay, 2004).

Additionally, the German people understand that their political and social behavior is scrutinized from abroad with special attention because of the catastrophes of the nation's past. For example, the debate on how and when to justify military engagement (Blech, 1995), immigration policies (Kielinger & Otte, 1993), and criticism of Israel and Jews (Gay, 2004) are heavily affected by Germany's dark history.

### East and West

Another problematic and complex aspect of German national identity is the seemingly overnight merger of the Federal Republic of Germany, a western liberal market-economy state, with the German Democratic Republic, an eastern communist system. Many scholars have found that different attitudes, behavior, and ways of thinking and communicating have developed in East and West Germany (Blech, 1995). Both of the two states had to build on and from the ruins of the Third Reich and create their

political, cultural, and moral identities with constant awareness of the horrific history (Sheehan, 1992).

After the Second World War, West Germany became an upwardly mobile and success-oriented society influenced by Western ideas. Work was basically less important to West Germans than to East Germans; instead, they valued personal fulfillment, recreation, health, and the natural environment (Gedwin, 1995). Home ownership, travel experiences, and leisure activities of all kinds were translated into powerful status symbols. West Germany also became internationally oriented and took on a leading role within the larger European community.

The discourse of national identity in West Germany was divided. On one hand, it was dominated by a negative national identity, often referred to as a “Holocaust identity” (Ezell et al., 2003). As a partner in the NATO alliance and a member of the European community, on the other hand, the Federal Republic made every effort to free itself from the values and traditions of the past (Sheehan, 1992) .

In contrast, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was unquestionably a working-class society. The economy was characterized by a lack of most consumer goods. Also, East Germans were not allowed to travel outside of communist Eastern Europe. The government, however, provided security in the form of guaranteed employment and free education and health care and promoted low rent (Gedwin, 1995). Thus, homelessness, violent crime, drug abuse, and prostitution were almost unknown in the GDR.

In discussing the question of national identity, the East German state tried to distance itself from its national socialist past. National identity was officially defined as

that of being a socialist state and centered on citizenship in an egalitarian, socially buffered work society (Ezell et al., 2003). Moreover, an identity of shared disadvantage and segregation developed in the German Democratic Republic (Oswald, 2004).

Hence, when East and West Germany reunited, these profound differences played a vital role in forming one German national identity.

Stereotypes of *know-it-all Westerners* and *whimpering Easterners* soon began to surface and still exist today. Additionally, lower wages and living standards in the former East contribute to the difficulties of East Germans to identify with the new German nation. Even after more than a decade of political and economic unity, East and West Germans still have significantly different attitudes, and the question of national identity remains as unclear and difficult to answer as before.

### Patriotism

One feature of national identity is that of *patriotism*, also referred to in this review as *national pride*. Both terms will be used interchangeably throughout this analysis. In the light of the deeply problematic and intriguing German history, it is important to draw a distinction between the concepts patriotism and nationalism.

The major question for German people is whether is it possible to be *pro-us* without being *anti-them*? In simplified terms, both patriotism and nationalism involve a positive emotional bond to the nation, but only the word *nationalism* is often used in negative terms through association with the derogation of other nations and their nationals. Research reinforces the previous distinction between the two terms. Scholars suggest that nationalism is associated more with a competitive or militaristic approach to

the world, while patriotism constitutes a more cooperative and peaceful strategy (Druckmann, 1994). Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford (1950) also clarified the importance of not associating a healthy patriotic love for one's country with nationalism that manifests prejudice against out-groups.

Thus, even though taboos against nationalism do not necessarily disallow patriotism, many Germans perceive a strong national and international view against any expression of German patriotism. Most Germans fear that expressions of patriotism would alert neighbors that the country was back to its nationalistic position. Thus, the misuse of patriotic attitudes and propaganda in the Third Reich still affect German patriotism to this day, causing instant rejection and suspicion of patriotic ideas.

A 2001 survey by the European Commission illustrated Germany's lost pride in its nationality. One of four Germans said they were either "not very proud" or "not proud at all" of being German (Ezell et al., 2003). Another international survey of patriotism also showed Germans' uniqueness. Despite being one of Europe's biggest nations and one of the world's greatest economic powers, Germany ranked at the bottom, just ahead of Slovakia (Loew, 2004). Some researchers have also found that Germans prefer to identify with a particular region or German state rather than with the nation as a whole. Many feel uneasy about describing themselves as German, preferring to say, for example, Bavarian or just European (Oswald, 2004).

### Purpose

The previous review of scholarly work demonstrates the uniqueness of German history and its massive impact on German national identity and national pride.



Additionally, the discussion of the concept of identity and its communicative aspects helps to explain the construction of German national identity. It is critical to further analyze German national identity. This research attempted to investigate the process of forming a national identity and the display of national pride in the intercultural communication context. I argue that through the process of intercultural/international discourse, German nationals recreate and reinvent their national identity and develop a sense of national pride.

### Justification and Significance

The issues of German national identity and patriotism have not yet been explored in the intercultural communication context. Moreover, there is little research that discusses individual attempts to construct German national identity. An examination of the interaction with and between Germans could greatly benefit the field of intercultural and international communication. Additionally, analyzing how individuals construct and/or reinvent their national identity when communicating with individuals from other nations could further contribute to the study of identity.

### Research Hypotheses

- H1: Germans create a positive national identity through intercultural/international communication.
- H2: Germans develop a sense of national pride in the intercultural/international communication context.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

To obtain in-depth information, a focus group interview was used as the qualitative research strategy. Focus groups are unstructured interviews carried out with small groups of participants, and members of the group explore issues through shared discussion (Morgan, 1988). In past research, focus groups have been used successfully to gather a wide variety of qualitative information (Quible, 1998). In contrast to the mainly numerical data analysis in quantitative research, qualitative data gathering seeks to access in-depth understanding and detailed information about how individuals make sense of their lives and experiences, as well as how they structure their world. The interactive effect of the group setting permits individuals to explore a wide range of ideas regarding the topic of interest and reveals information that might otherwise be unattainable and would not have emerged with other information-gathering methods (Babbie, 1999; Morgan, 1988).

### Participants

The size of a focus group generally varies. Typically, 7-12 individuals are brought together in a room to engage in a guided discussion. However, a smaller group was utilized in this study because of the limited number of German students at the university as well as the controversial nature of the topics. Many scholars agree that smaller groups are more effective for intense discussions, as they maximize the comfort and participation of the individuals (Morgan, 1988). Moreover, a smaller group seems to be more valuable in obtaining a clear sense of each participant's responses to the discussed topics. According to Krueger (1998), smaller groups are also preferable when participants have a

great deal to share about the topic, are emotionally caught up in the topic, or have had intense or lengthy experiences with and feelings about the topic of discussion.

Upon the approval of the Human Subjects Review Board, participants were recruited through convenience sampling. Email addresses of all of the 20 German students at Eastern Michigan University were obtained from the Office of International Students. An email was sent out to all of the potential participants, informing them about the opportunity to participate in the research. In the email, potential participants were advised that (a) the focus group was being conducted to gain insights into the process of forming a German national identity and the display of German national pride, (b) the focus group would last approximately 1-2 hours, and (c) refreshments and snacks would be served during the meeting. Those who agreed to participate received a reminder email two days before the scheduled focus group interview and directions to the location of the meeting.

The focus group included 4 females and 3 males. The average age of the participants was 24.86 years. All of the participants were born in Germany, have German citizenship, and have lived in Germany most of their lives. One of the seven participants was from former East Germany, and the rest of the interviewees were from former West Germany. The number of years each participant had spent in the United States ranged from half a year to seven years.

#### Moderator

The role of the moderator is critical to the success of the focus group process. Spano (2001) suggested that facilitating focus groups can be a challenging task,

especially if the discussion touches on social problems and controversial issues.

Moderators need to possess good interpersonal skills and personal qualities and be good listeners, nonjudgmental, and adaptable (Krueger, 1998). According to Krueger, these qualities will promote the participants' trust in the moderator and increase the likelihood of open, interactive dialogue.

Additionally, during the meeting, moderators need to promote discussion by asking questions as well as probing for details. Moderators also have to ensure that everyone participates and gets a chance to speak. It is also crucial that the moderator avoids giving personal opinions so that participants are not influenced toward any particular position or opinion. Moreover, a person too close to the topic being discussed may not be objective and might lead the discussion in a particular direction. Thus, the researcher did not serve as the facilitator of the focus group interview.

The focus group was conducted by a skilled moderator. The moderator was the same general age as the participants of the focus group. The moderator received specific information on the role of the moderator, on how to conduct the focus group, on how to open and close the session, and how to promote and encourage participation from all persons present. The focus group protocol was also discussed beforehand, providing an opportunity to ask questions and practice facilitating the discussion.

### Focus Group Interview

One focus group interview with seven individuals was conducted by one moderator. The focus group interview took place in a comfortable room. Chairs for the

moderator and participants were arranged in a circle around a table so that all participants could maintain visual contact with one another and to increase the level of comfort.

Prior to the interviews, participants had refreshments and snacks and were able to get to know one another in order to maximize their comfort level. Furthermore, the moderator introduced the focus group interview by explaining the theme of the discussion, reminding the participants that the interview was being audiotaped and that participation was voluntarily. The researcher also specified the approximate length of the interview and assured the participants of confidentiality. Moreover, before the focus group interview was conducted, written consent was obtained, and each participant completed a brief demographic questionnaire.

The focus group interview lasted approximately one and a half hours. The atmosphere of the focus group was very informal, and the tone was conversational. The small size of the focus group encouraged a relaxed group atmosphere and allowed for a variety of experiences and attitudes to be fully explored. The interview was relatively unstructured to allow for a wide range of information to emerge. Participants were asked specific open-ended questions, such as “What do you think being German means?” and “How has your time in this country affected your sense of being German?” (see Appendix A for the complete focus group protocol).

The moderator led the group by asking a few open-ended questions and occasional probe questions that followed up on what was said and that kept the interview flowing. Furthermore, all of the participants were encouraged to speak freely about any additional aspect of the topic that they considered critical. The conversation occurred

almost entirely in English even though participants occasionally employed a few German words and phrases.

The discussion of the focus group interview was audiotaped. The tapes were then transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis. Field notes of the discussion, which identified important points and opinions, were also taken to add insight and support potential themes.

### Data Analysis

The fundamental data of the focus group produced a transcript of the discussion. Therefore, the basic unit for analysis was a text. The researcher analyzed the text thematically, seeking out recurring themes and concepts. Field notes and interview transcripts were scrutinized and read repeatedly to identify possible themes.

A main characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds (Merriam, 2002). Lindlof (1995) additionally emphasized that qualitative data must be considered in the context of theory when they offer explanations about social situations with respect to social communicative processes. Thus, qualitative data from this research were analyzed in the context of symbolic interactionism. According to this theory, individuals can acquire identity only through the processes of social communication and symbolization and through the relation of the self to the mind and others (Anderson & Ross, 2002). Additionally, because an individual's sense of self is created through interaction with others, people can change and grow as they learn more about themselves through this interactive process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Drawing from symbolic interactionism, Merriam (2002) asserted that qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Hence, data from this study were analyzed in terms of how and if participants' social interactions in the intercultural context influenced their construction of national identity and national pride. National identity in this research is defined as an individual's attachment to a national group that is constructed by social interaction. Moreover, the two terms, patriotism and national pride, are used interchangeably in this study. They are defined as an individual's feeling of love and devotion to his/her homeland.

The following concepts grew naturally out of the gathered data. Once themes were identified, the text was read again to look for further examples confirming their importance.

## CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

The focus of the data analysis was to capture participants' construction of national identity and national pride in the intercultural communication context. Investigation of the data yielded to the emergence of four themes. Throughout the discussion, participants struggled with clearly defining German national identity. Findings suggest that participants would rather define themselves in terms of a particular German region and state or in terms of the new Europe.

Moreover, issues of national pride surfaced early on and dominated most of the discussion. This undermines the previous conclusion that the concept of national pride is extremely value laden and difficult to assess in German society. Interestingly, some of the participants mentioned that their closeness to their home country has increased since they have lived in the United States.

### Weak German Identity and Ongoing East–West Differences

The outcomes of the focus group suggest that the participants have an extremely weak national identity. When asked what it meant for them to be German, many pointed out that they hadn't chosen it and it is "just the country that [they were] born in." Most of them just viewed being German as being part of a group of people with a common background. Moreover, all of the participants agreed that former East and West Germany are not forming the new Germany together and stated that there are still "major differences between the East and the West." One of the participants stated,

They are both kind of separated countries. And it is kind of hard when you put two different people together. On the one hand you have Communism and on the



other hand you have the market economy. And now ... two different people should work together. It is kind of hard .... I think that takes time.

Thus, the East–West relationship still plays a major role in the manifestation of a united Germany. The two states that previously defined themselves in total opposition to each other have still not grown together as one nation. Moreover, the concept of *the wall in mind* is still very much present today, as one male participants' comment confirms:

[U]nfortunately, there is also still a kind of frontier in the heads of German people. The reason is that eastern people could think they are living in the poorhouse of Germany because of the high unemployment in the eastern federal states .... During the German Unification, promises to the people were made by politicians, which were impossible to hold. That's why a lot of them are disappointed about West Germany.

There seems also to be a lack of understanding and sympathy for the East Germans among West Germans. One of the participants even stated that “the East didn't bring anything to the new Germany.” Moreover, a male participant agreed that “[w]hen you are in the West, they joke about the East .... It is kind of bad, that there are a lot of jokes about *Ossis* [Easterners].” Additionally, many of the West German participants stated that they believe a lot of the former GDR citizens want Communism back and don't fully appreciate what they have now. A female participant said, “They [East Germans] only want the new system as long as they get the money.”

Thus, participants concurred that the only things that unite former East and West Germany are the language and a common nationality and political system as well as the

same currency. Interestingly, there seems to be no emotional attachment to a united German nation that would constitute national identity.

Results also strongly pointed toward the traumatic history of the country in explaining the weak national identification. One of the male participants even said, “I try not to point out that I am German. I don’t want to be judged for being German.” In the minds of Germans, it seems that the history of their nation only goes back to the world wars. For example, one male participant noted that Germans cannot be proud “because of [their] history, the background.” It has such a deep impact on the German people that they disregard and maybe even forget the great German history before the two world wars. Moreover, the consciousness of the terrible historical events also appears to completely overshadow the rich German musical, artistic, religious, philosophical, and prose traditions.

### Regionalism and Europeanism

Even though participants did not strongly identify with the new, united Germany, they repeatedly voiced their strong identification with the state or part of Germany they are from. Two female participants confirmed that they are very proud to be from Bavaria and Saxony but are not proud of being German. However, Huyssen (1992) argued that regionalism is an important layer of national identity and is not opposed to it.

Moreover, one of the male participants defined being German as being “a part of Europe.” Some scholars have already touched the subject of European identity (Huyssen, 1992) with the formation of a new united Europe. In the German context, however, that may be of special significance. Identifying with the larger European community seems to

be a welcoming option for Germans in avoiding the question of German national identity. Moreover, positive identification with a strong, united European community might be more rewarding than an unclear and distressing identification with Germany. Thus, there seems to be a trend toward integration into a larger whole, the new united Europe, in German society.

#### “Absolute Pride” and Constant Fear of Disapproval

Most of the focus group discussion evolved around the concept of national pride and what it means to be proud. Because most of the participants have lived in the United States for quite some time, they explored interesting comparisons of how differently the concept of national pride is defined in the two countries. At the beginning of the dialogue, most of the participants stated that they were not proud to be German. Only one female participant, who has been living in the United States for seven years, stated that she was “very proud of her cultural background.” It was quite apparent throughout the discussion that the concept of pride was defined in rather different ways by the participants.

For Germans, patriotism seems to be an absolute concept. One of the participants “recognized that proud refers to something positive.” However, for Germans, being proud means to be proud of the “whole thing.” Germans can’t separate the positive and the negative aspects of the country and just be proud of the positive. If they can’t be proud of everything German, including the history, they can’t be proud at all. The female participant who has been in the United States for a long time recognized that “there are different meanings of proud [and] people need to be able to separate politics from culture

and lifestyle.” Although she is very proud to be living in the United States with her family even though she doesn’t agree with the politics. She is also very proud of her German cultural background. For her, the concept of pride is far more flexible and is even applicable to more than one nation. It was also mentioned that even though many countries don’t have the perfect history, citizens can still express and celebrate national pride. With this absolute concept of pride, it is not surprising that Germans are reluctant to express patriotic views. For Germans, being patriotic would include an agreement with the Nazi past.

The results also indicated that because of Germany’s being in the heart of Europe, the country is forced to compare itself to all the other countries around it. One of the female participants articulated that “[i]n Europe, it doesn’t matter where you are; you have all these neighbors .... You drive an hour and you are in a different country and ... see different things that may be better.” The central location of Germany in Europe may also have another impact on patriotism in Germany. Many Germans recognize that their political behavior is scrutinized by other countries with special attention. One of the female participants said,

I think ... other people tell us always and always again that we don’t have a reason to be proud .... It is not the Germans who say we want, it is the surrounding countries. They always say, yeah, but what about the war and pick on us again.

## Proximity and Advertising

The following section draws on a number of the participants' comments to illustrate how their time in the United States and away from Germany has affected their sense of being German and their patriotic viewpoints. The results indicate that there is a change in the feelings towards one's own nation depending on the amount of time outside and away from the country. One of the participants said, "I think my time here has affected my sense of being German. I feel it almost every day, and very often I am glad about being German." Another participant mentioned that "you always miss what you don't have anymore."

Being away from Germany, then, helped them recognize more positive aspects about their home country. Besides, all the participants seemed to miss the food and the parties very much; their time in the United States has made them recognize the positive aspects about life in Germany. Many mentioned that they have started to deeply value the German transportation, welfare, health care, and education systems since they have been living in the United States. Also, many of them argued that as a result of growing terrorism in today's world, they feel a lot safer in Germany than here.

Hence, living outside of Germany affected many participants' views about and their feelings toward their own country, as one of the male participant verified,

I feel closer to Germany now because if you have ever lived in a foreign country for a while, you get a more differentiated view on your own country. And you start realizing a lot of things you have never even thought about in the past...

There are a lot of good things in Germany that you don't find in every country.

Moreover, the results indicate that participants' communication about Germany differs depending on who they talk to. One of the male participants said that when talking to fellow Germans, he discusses the negative aspects about Germany. However, when talking to people from other countries, he focuses more on the positive things about Germany. The participants agreed that talking about Germany to other nationals "is like advertising." Thus, it can be concluded that communication with individuals from other countries forces Germans to actively seek out positive aspects and information about their country.

However, when confronted with the sensitive topic of the world wars in a discussion, none of the participants tried to avoid the topic or embellish the past. They said it was an opportunity to "point out just the facts" and give as much background information as possible. Hence, results suggest that Germans are more willing to talk about and discuss the problematic past outside of Germany because dialogue about the topic is not feared or silenced.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This qualitative research involved only a small number of participants. Thus, the findings discussed cannot be directly generalized to the larger population being studied. Moreover, participants were not selected randomly.

Additionally, because the controversial nature of the topics, some of the participants might have expressed themselves in socially desirable ways or in ways they thought the researcher expected them to answer. The focus group method may have discouraged some people from revealing sensitive or personal information and others who are not very articulate and confident from expressing their ideas.

The data might also have been influenced by the moderator who facilitated the focus group. Any number of variables, including the nationality, demeanor, and language used by the moderator may have influenced the quantity and quality of information given by participants. Furthermore, in focus group research, the moderator has less control over the data produced than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing (Morgan, 1988). Thus, the results of focus group research cannot be completely predetermined because the moderator has to allow participants to talk to each other, ask questions, and express their opinions while having extremely little control over the discussion. A lot of the discussion centered on the concept of pride, and many statements about Germany were made in comparison to the United States. The participants paid relatively little attention to exploring and discussing how their communication with people from other countries might have influenced their perceptions of national identity and national pride. However, results indicate a positive relationship between national identity and patriotism and communication.

Additionally, according to Lindlof (1995), validity is also always an issue in qualitative research. In analyzing the data, the researcher's subjective point of view on what was researched might have influenced how the data were summarized into themes and how they represented the intended meanings of the participants.

However, the dynamics of the discussion and the results undoubtedly show that German national identity and national pride are strongly intertwined and pose a unique problem for every German. For Germany and its people, the connection between national identity and patriotism is a double-edged sword. As discussed earlier, national pride is understood as positive feelings towards one's own nation. Moreover, according to Social Identity Theory, people like to think positively about themselves and the groups to which they belong to (Mummendey et al., 2001). Citizens of a particular nation seek to evaluate themselves and be evaluated positively by other nations. Positive in-group identification then leads to a strong national identification. Thus, national pride produces national identity. However, as discussed previously, Germans have major difficulties in developing and expressing national pride, which consequently makes it even harder for the country to form a healthy and positive national identity.

Also, throughout the group discussion, some of the participants slightly altered their points of view about being proud to be German. They moved from not being proud at all to realizing and acknowledging positive aspects of Germany. Because there is a lack of communication about these issues in German society, the focus group discussion might have been the first time the participants directly dealt with and explored these subjects without being silenced. Moreover, the discussion helped them to also acknowledge some positive aspects about their country, not just the negative features



they are usually confronted with. This suggests that there is a need for open dialogue in German society in which these problems can be openly analyzed and discussed. Such a public dialogue might help the country to recover from the past, develop the formation of one common national identity and a healthy national pride, and focus on the future. Germany can't run away from its challenges and continue to orient the German debate toward the past. Politicians and the public will need to formulate, express, and openly discuss the question of the nation.

Moreover, it is essential for the country to integrate the East and the West into one single Germany. Besides seeking active participation in the reconstruction of a new Germany, the people have to vigorously try to overcome their differences, stereotypes, and biases. As one of the female participants concluded,

I think when we want to achieve something as one Germany ... we should say we are proud to be German and not just a part of Germany. Because that is exactly what it was, it was West against East. ... I think if Germany wants to do something ... we should say I am proud to be German.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol

The participants and facilitator will sit in a circle or around a table for discussion. The facilitator will begin the meeting by introducing himself and explaining the purpose of the focus group session.

- **Informed Consent: Informed consent form will be distributed and collected prior to focus group**

### *I. Introduction and Ground rules*

Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, the moderator of today's focus group. Thank you for coming. We appreciate you taking some of your time to participate in this focus group.

We would like to talk to you about your experiences and feelings about German national identity and national pride. This discussion is part of a research study undertaken by Nadja Koenig, a German Master's student here at Eastern Michigan University.

This focus group should last approximately 90 minutes to two hours. While I will ask questions to direct the discussion, this is meant to be an informal, open discussion among everyone.

Everything we say in this focus group will be kept strictly confidential. When the discussion is over, please respect the privacy of your fellow group members and do not repeat comments others make during our discussion to anyone outside of this group.

We will be taping all of the valuable information each of us has to share. Does anyone have any objection to this taping?

Only people working on this project will ever hear any of the recordings or read the notes. Your participation is voluntary and confidential, and you may refuse to comment on any question that is asked. Nothing you say will ever be reported in any way that will allow you to be identified.

We want to make sure that everyone has a chance to talk. Also, since the discussion is audiotaped it will be necessary to speak only one at a time so that each word will be clearly audible on tape.

- **Turn on tape recorder and identify the focus group, location, and date.**

## II. *Focus Group Discussion Guide*

The following questions will provide the framework for the focus group discussion. While questions that are not listed here may be asked in order to follow up on participant responses, the focus group will center on these main questions.

### A. Opening

Let's start by going around the room and introducing yourself. Please tell us two things about yourself: (1) your first name, and (2) where in Germany are you originally from?

### Transition Questions:

1. How long you have been in the United States?

### B. Key Questions

1. What do you think "being German" means?
2. Do you think that both former East and West Germans are forming the new Germany together?
3. Do you think there is a common identity that unites former East and West Germans?
4. How proud are you of being German?
5. How close do you feel to your country?
6. Has that changed since you have been living outside of Germany?
7. How has your time in this country affected your sense of "being German"?
8. What role did your communication with US/international students play in you expressing "being German"?

### C. Probe Questions:

1. Would you explain that further?
2. Can you give me an example?
3. Would you say more?
4. Why do you feel that way?
5. Is there anything else?
6. Please describe that for me?

### D. Ending questions

Finally, is there anything I haven't asked you that I should have? Or is there any other information you would like to share?

## III. *Wrap-Up*

I would like to thank you for your participation. I also want to restate that what you have shared today is confidential.

If we have any additional questions or need clarification on any of the points that were made today, may I we contact you?

Would you like to receive a copy of the final report?  
If you would like more information about the study, or if you would like to discuss any of these issues further, please don't hesitate to contact Nadja at [nkoenig@hotmail.com](mailto:nkoenig@hotmail.com).

Thank you again. You are free to go.



## Appendix B: Focus Group Transcript

F: So what I would like to do first is to go around the room and each of you tell us your first name and where in Germany you are originally from:

[Introduction of participants]

F: Also we go around and tell us how long you have been in the states.

- 1 ½ years
- 1 year
- 1years
- 5 ½ months
- 5 ½ months, we all came together
- I moved here 2 years ago and lived in Washington D.C for 3 month. I have been here in Michigan 5 ½ month
- I have been here almost seven years.

F: Oh seven years. The leader in the group. Ok. So, I am going start with the first question and you can go ahead and feel free. I don't mind to a structured go around. Maybe having each person answer. That doesn't have to be the way, I just want to get feedback from everybody. So the first question is "what do you think being German means? (laughter) And again you guys can go ahead and answer when you feel comfortable. That's fine. We can also go around.

- For me being German means like a group of people with a social background. It's like a social system.

F: Ok for you it is like a social group?

- Yeah a group.

F: Ok, who else?

- For me it is like also like a group of people with a common background.

F: Ok, Who else? What does being German mean to you?

- For me. It is like a part of Europe. But we can't show our identity to others countries, because of what happened in the Third Reich (--). So, I think myself, as a part of Europe. (--)

F: Ok, who else?

- I can't say what being German means to me, because I have been her for so long. (--) I was born in Germany, but I have been here for quiet some time. I mean I am proud of my cultural background (--)

F: Could you explain that a little further?

- There is a huge difference between American culture and German culture as most of you probably have noticed.

F: Ok, Who else?

- I think in Germany, there are a lot of people that want to show that they are German, the patriotism. But we just cannot, we cannot because of your history, the background. I think if you say, Oh, I am proud to be German then like (making confused face if someone were to hear that).

F: Ok so why exactly? Have you had personal experience like that?

- I mean when I talk to my roommate, she is Russian, she also makes comments and jokes like oh yeah with your backgrounds and wars. Germany was always the country who started the war. So if you say like oh I am proud to be German, you better should not be proud with that background.

F: Ok, anybody else?

- Yeah, (--) even in school my teacher told us we can't be proud.
- Really, what school did you go to?
- I don't know any teacher that would say that.
- But you can't be proud of something that you didn't do by yourself.
- (---)
- Well, I agree with the wars and everything and it's not like that I am really proud of it or to be German. (--)

F: Alright, well thank you. Well, let's move on to our second question if nobody has anything else to say about that. Do you think that both former East and West Germans are forming the new Germany together? And if so, why?

- I don't think they are. Because in the East they have the system we have in the West. (--) They got everything from the West. They are more concerned with themselves, like getting the same living standard we have in the West. So, but the Western part is more internally oriented. I think.

F: Ok anything else on that?

- I don't think so. I am from the East part and I think it is just because there is no work. So no people go there. I mean we have a lot of Russian people and (--). And I think in the East part, it's true that people don't try that hard get the same standard, but we try to catch up, but most of the young people move to West, because there are the jobs. (---)
- I think they are trying to build the new Germany together, but unfortunately there is also still a kind of frontier in the heads of the German people. The reason is that eastern people could think they are living in the poorhouse of Germany, because of the high unemployment in the eastern federal states. This is a circumstance I regret, but during the German Unification promises to the people in the eastern states were made by politicians which were impossible to hold. That's why a lot of them are disappointed about Western Germany.

F: Ok, any other comments? Is there anything else on that.

- I think, it's because there were both kind of separated countries. And it's kind of when you kind of like put two different people together. One the one hand you have Communism and on the other hand you have the market economy. And now it's different people should work together it is kind of hard. I think it takes time that they get used to like the Western part is more oriented towards the eastern and that they try to work together. I think that takes time,
- I also think they are not forming the new Germany together.

F: Ok. Thank you. Moving on to our next question which is kind of in the same area.

What common identity unites former East and West Germans now?

Is there anything that united them right now?

- The language,
- Not necessarily.
- (Laughter)

- I mean it's just like if I was speaking Bavarian slang. If we don't want to understand each other we don't have to. (--)

F: Ok, does anybody have anything else on that?

- I think it is also not just between the West part and the East part, it is also between North and South. The people in the North are more cool. (--)

F: Ok, what else? Anything else, you think at this point, that is uniting them? Or even not uniting them as well?

- Well, the same currency.
- Well, you can't really say uniting them. Because, I mean it was basically the West taking over the East. So they are not really united. They just have everything we have now. They have the same political system and everything. In the East they didn't bring anything to the new Germany. (--)
- Well, you can't really say that. They contributed a lot too.
- (--)
- Well, but see who has the power. And I think a lot of people in the East want the wall back.
- No, I don't think so. They might not think that everything is better now, but I don't think they want Communism back.
- Well, not the wall back, but they don't know what they have now. And there is so much unemployment. There were a lot of advantages of East Germany and a lot of advantages of West Germany.
- Well, they want the new system as long as they get the money.
- (--)
- I mean, I was like last year in East Berlin and I actually know some people, especially when they are over the age of fifty, older, they said that they wanted to have the wall back and the Communism. But that's because of the employment, everybody had work, and now they nobody has work. It was better. And they said that it was more united, and now with the market economy everybody just goes cares about themselves.
- (--)
- When you are there (East), there are often comments about. When you are in the West, they joke about the East. They say "Ossis" (Easterners). It is kind of bad, that there are a lot of German jokes about "Ossis".
- The problem is that the people in the East part, they don't have the money and they don't care about their future. And if somebody comes along, they say (who) and let's do this and this, they will do that, because, yeah, somebody is there that tells them what to do. They don't think for themselves. It is usually young people from a small villages or small towns, but people who know what they want they will not do that.

F: Anything else on that, you guys are having a great discussion, I don't want to move on unless. Ok, are we good here? Ok, the next think I want to do is I just want to go ahead and go around. We just start here again and start with you and go around so everyone has a minute to speak. How proud are you of being German?

- I would say I am proud. But I would say I am more proud to be Bavarian than German.
- (Laughter)  
F: Could you elaborate on that a little bit?
- I would say, (--)
- I would say, yeah I am proud to be German. But like she said, she is more proud to be Bavarian. I think that's a problem, I think when we want to achieve something as one Germany, we should not say that, we should say we are proud to be German and not just a part of Germany. Because that's exactly what it was it was Western against Eastern. And that's exactly when you say I am proud to be Bavarian, it's like you are saying it again. I think [if] Germany want to do something and that it is getting better in the East we should say like I am proud to be German.
- Yeah. For me it's like the same. I am not really proud of being a German But I am proud that I am from Saxony. It is really more like in our country that you don't say I am from Germany, you say Saxony, or Baden-Wuerttemberg. And also if Americans ask me if I am German and what part I from, I just say Germany but once they want to know more then I will explain.
- Well, I agree that I am more proud to be from Nord-Rhein-Westfalen. I would not say I am proud of Germany. And if people ask me where in Germany I am from, I try to figure out what they might know and then I would say, near the Black Forest or near Heidelberg. But yeah, I like Germany, the landscape, yeah, I like living there.

F: Ok, good. What about you?

- I am not proud at all. Maybe it's because I am not real German. I am half German and half Iranian. And I don't think, well being German you have advantages and disadvantages. And I like it sometimes, but sometimes I don't like it. What I really like is that Germany didn't join the war on Iraq. But there is nothing to be proud about. Like, the history with the wars, you just can't be proud. There are so many things, and you can't be proud if you are not (--)
- Perfect.
- Yeah, exactly. But you can't be perfect. But I am not really proud.
- I have to agree. I am not proud at all to be German. I mean I like the group, I like living in Germany, the social security, and the education, and I am proud of my part of Germany but I can't say that I am proud to be German. I also like the landscape but I can't connect landscape and nature to one country. I live so close to the border of France, and it is just a beautiful world.
- I mean I can't really say that I am proud to be German. I mean I have been here for so long, I cant really say. I was born there and I have lived there most of my life, but -

F: So if people ask you where are you from?

- Then I would say I am from Michigan, but I was born in Germany. But like he said, I think Germany is beautiful, I go there once or twice a year as much as I can. I love it there. (--)
- I mean, Germany was the one that started the war, which ver one you want to talk about. But, ahm, I am generally proud of the whole culture.

F: Ok, I am going to follow that up and we will go ahead and go this way if you don't mind. How close do you feel to your country?

- I mean as close as I can be. I mean we still do German things at home. The German holidays, cooking. The food I miss so much. The good bread, my mom makes that herself. But I mean, you can't tell, I don't even have that much of an accent anymore. But I guess I still consider myself German.

F: Ok, what about you?

- I guess I am close to Germany but just because I have lived there most of my life. I wouldn't mind changing Germany for something else. I mean Germany is just a community, I take from the community and I give back to the community. I have no problem changing Germany for another community.

F: Ok. Go ahead.

- I am the same. I have lived there most of my life. I don't know why, I guess because I was born there. But I could live anywhere in the world. But I like Germany, because they gave me the education (--)
- I think I feel very close.
- I also feel very close to I have now lived here for 1 year and I have been back two times. I don't know what the future brings, if I am going to stay here. But right now I am very, very close.
- I don't know. I can't really say. When I am in the United States I don't miss Germany. I mean, it is just because I am used to Germany and I have lived there all my life, but If I am here in the United States (--). I thought in the beginning, it would be hard to change, but there is nothing I really miss. Of course, my family, but if my family would move here, I wouldn't miss Germany at all. And when I think about the future, I would rather change the country, moving to another country, even the United States or something. But, because I feel more connected to the people here. In Germany, the people are looking for themselves so much and are egotistic a lot. I think, the people are more open and I think, yeah that.

F: Ok, great. But could you give me an example. And you are saying if your family would move here, you wouldn't miss Germany at all?

- I wouldn't miss it. My friends I would, but I don't miss the people. I mean if people ask me what I think about Germany, the first thing I say is that I think the people are arrogant. They think about themselves. And when I first came here to the United States, the people are Hey how are you. Like in Germany, they don't say that. If you don't know somebody, they just go straight.

F: I see there is some feedback there. Would you like to comment on that?

- The think that you mentioned that everybody says how are you here, it is more like a hello. They don't really mean it. It's more on the surface. It is kind of fake. I don't like it.
- Yeah, But in Germany, they would just look at you stupid and say nothing to you.
- I mean, I would also say, even if they ask you the question. Maybe you take it too literally. They don't really mean it. And I would say that here it takes a longer time to make real friends. (--) I think you will find more real friends in Germany, than you would find here.
- What I would say is that this is part of the whole system. If you are unfriendly in Germany you won't get fired from a job, but here, if you are unfriendly you get

fired right away. Here you have to smile so you don't get fired, no matter in what mood you are in. (--)

- (--)
- But I mean, people here are more willing to help you. For example, the other day I went to the grocery store and I was packed with a lot of bags and since I don't have a car yet. I was walking, and there was a police car that stopped and drove me home. I mean in Germany, they wouldn't do that.
- I think that has another reason. (Laughter) If you were a guy, they won't.

F: Ok, let's go back to the question:

- I agree that Americans they just say this. I think it is more a hello. I think Germans think that they [the Americans] really want to know it. But I really think it is more a hello.

F: Great I love the feedback. I just need to bring it back for a minute and finish with you. How close do you feel to your country?

- I would say yeah, (--)
- I see myself responsible to Germany. I got my education free in Germany. I feel to give also something in exchange. That doesn't mean I would miss Germany. I think I can live anywhere in the world, but I would support as good as I can Germany wherever I am. I am really thankful for everything I got from Germany.

Tape switched (--)

F: Moving on to the next questions. Do you think that has changed since you have been here. I mean, your closeness to Germany?

- Yes. The feeling has increased, because if you have ever lived in a foreign country for a while, you get a more differentiated view on your own country. And you start realizing a lot of things you have never even thought about in the past, and you see that they are not self-evident. There are a lot of good things in Germany you don't find in every country.
- The first time I went abroad I recognized how organized and what an easy life we have in Germany comparing to other nations. It didn't make me feel close to Germany but sometimes I am really happy if I find German products in a store. Mostly I buy German products when I have a choice even if it is a way more expensive.
- Not much. I don't really like to be called German in Germany nor in the USA. I try not to point out that I am German, I don't want to be judged for being German.
- I think my time has affected my sense of being German. I feel it almost every day, and very often I am glad about being German. Maybe German people have a reputation of being perfectionists and doing things always in best manner. Here in the U.S. a lot of things look rough-and-ready. The main thing is it works. It doesn't matter if it works good or bad as long as it works in any way. The quality of some everyday-products (e.g. household) is sometimes very bad. The American cars are cheap, but they are also very cheap made. Americans don't care that much about quality as Germans do. If something got broken, Americans buy it new

F: Ok, what role has your communication with US/international students played in you expressing “being German”?

- (Laughter)
- Can you repeat the question?

F: What feelings are you having from that communication and your expression of being German?

- Well, I don't know it always depends on the people you talk to. (--) Like I have a friend and she is Jewish, she was really sensitive to the fact that I was German, because of the war also.
- Yeah, I agree. When you talk to Jewish people or so, I really am careful and there is no word at all about being from Germany.
- Yeah, I agree. When I say that I am from Germany, there are special ways in which I act in front of different people. And only when they say, oh yeah, my grand-grand father was from Germany I ask them where in Germany and if they have been there to visit family. And only if they say positive things and that they like it, I will talk about Germany and act in a good way.
- In most cases the conversations with other people are about common things. It doesn't matter if they are US citizens or other foreign students. Nothing really special. Mostly they are interested how it looks like in Germany, if there are a lot of things which are different from them in the US. But mainly I talk about just common things. And very often I got asked if I like it here in the US. I had some controversial discussions with my roommate who is an American guy. It was about politics and relationship between men and women. And I realized that Americans are having a different point of view about many things. So I'm glad being a liberal European guy.
- Well, I think it is very different. When I am talking to another German I more focus on the negative, I focus more on the bad things. But when I talk to other people I think I focus more on the positive things about Germany. It is like advertising where you are from in some ways.
- When I talk to other people, I usually don't tell them that I am from Germany. But they can tell from my heavy accent that I am from Europe.
- (Laughter)
- (--) I mean it is totally different than here. Everybody is like, oh my God I am so proud to be American. But I mean it is like advertising sort of. I don't know.
- Yeah, and with me sometimes, it depends who I talk to. Sometimes, if it is to my favor, I say I am German and sometimes I say I am Iranian. (--)
- (Laughter)

F: So what happens, when you are confronted with the negative things about Germany, would you defend Germany in a sense?

- No, I wouldn't defend Germany. I would say, that there were a lot of bad things that happened, but I mean, I would probably also point out positive things about Germany.
- (--)
- I think right now Germany has a lot more friends than the U.S., with all that is going on with the war in Iraq. (--)

- I also think that Americans are just proud. They don't have a reason for it they are just proud. And in Germany, they need a reason to be proud. It is also in the education. (--). It is not that Germans can't be proud. But Americans are just proud.

- (--)

F: Ok, I want to take a step back here. I don't want to focus on America.

- I have to say something here. I agree with you very much. There is a lot of uneducated people here. And a lot of people are proud and they don't have a freaking clue about what they are proud of.
- (Laughter)
- And it is true there are a lot of uneducated people and a lot of good people in this country . There are a lot of things to be proud of.
- Like what?
- I mean. The whole lifestyle.
- Well, the lifestyle in Germany is good too.
- No, I mean. I would not pick living in Germany. I would not live in Germany.
- (--)
- Living here, I have been here for seven years, is better than in Germany. I mean, I think Germany has a lot of great things to offer, that I wish they would have here, but in my opinion living here is better.
- Why?
- There is so much opportunities in this country. For example with my arts, ahm, (-- there is a lot of educational opportunities in Germany with funding and stuff, but there was never, ahm, I never had a direction. It was all general education piled into me up until I am able to go to the university and then I can go and do whatever. But here there are so many opportunities. There are so many jobs here. You can go wherever you want. There is always a place for you to live. I mean I have been here for a while and I can honestly say this.
- So why are you proud about Germany then?
- So I can't say that I that I am proud of Germany now?
- This is what I am talking about. There are different meanings of proud. She is proud of the whole thing
- Well, but she said that this is better.
- No, it's not about good or bad. It's about being proud and you can be proud of two things. (--)
- This is your opinion and I think it is easy for American to say I am proud. And I think they miss the comparison. In Europe, it doesn't matter where you are you have all these neighbors and you drive one hour and you are in a different country. And you see different things that might be better. So you are forced into this that you have little things to compare to each other. And you can say this is what I am proud about and this is what I am not proud of. Especially, in Germany, we can compare everything with wherever we go.
- Not everybody can.



- Well, but if you go to America. There are just a few people who have the experience, like going to another country and try it out. So there is a difference in the word of being proud.
- Yeah, and I can say that I rather live here but still be proud of my German culture. People need to be able to separate politics from culture and lifestyle, because it just does not fit together sometimes. In this country lifestyle and politics are very different.
- But what are you proud about to be German if you say that it is all better over here? (--)
- I am not saying that it is all better over here, you are making assumptions.
- Well, you say lifestyle is better and politics (--)
- I am not saying politics are great over here, but they are not awesome in Germany either. Transportation is awesome, school is awesome, you know all the things you guys have already said that are awesome about Germany. But I mean I am saying that the standard of living I have right now here, the fact that I can get a job anywhere, a job that I want, and make it on my own have a car.
- (--)

F: Again, I want to bring it back. Asking you, defending - that kind of thing. I want to go back to that. Not everyone had a chance to give feedback there.

- Yeah, in the beginning you said, that no, I am not proud to be German (--)
- No I am not proud to be.
- (-- and now you were just defending it.
- I mean, she is like seven years here, and if she says the lifestyle here is better she probably knows more about it.
- (--)

F: I just need to bring it back for a little bit here. Again, if there is a way you maybe communication, what immediate reaction you would have. What positives feedback you are giving?

- Well, if someone were asking me about Germany and the war. I mean, it really is what it is. But I would probably just give my opinion and give as much background information as I can.
- I would also make my comments just facts. If they would say this and this was wrong and they were right I would say anything positive. But if they were wrong about something I would present the real facts.

F: So maybe it is not so much a positive standing up, it is more like making sure that they are clear in what they are saying.

- I don't like the history of Germany. Of course, I don't like the history of Germany. But I would also like to say is there any country who didn't do anything bad. There is no country that has a clear and good past. Like and if someone says something about World War and is always picking on it, then I would say, for example my Russian roomy, I would say, yeah you and your Communism. It was also not the best thing.
- When people ask me about Germany I don't mind to talk about it and I do a kind of advertising for Germany. Germany is a nice country and it is for sure worth to see, but I don't hide the bad side of Germany either.

F: Anybody else? I just want to give everyone the chance to comment on it. Ok.  
Everyone a deep breath here.

- (Laughter)

F: Finally, what I'd like to do, if you just take a minute and think about is there anything I haven't asked you that I should have? Or is there any other information you would like to share? Thinking about the context of the conversation we had. Anything like that?

- Yeah, I would like to say. I think that the Germans have to kind of learn the attitudes of the Americans. Not always look back to the past. Because like doing that, of course we should not forget and repeat that history, but now we talked enough about it and we should now make a line. Forget about it. Of course remember that this should not happen again, but go for the future. That we also can say in the public Ok I am proud to be German and not always going back to the past.
- I think exactly this point is more that other people tell us always and always again yeah we don't have a reason to be proud of being German. And it is not that Germany is always looking back. They are looking forward. It is not the Germans who say we can't, it is also the surrounding countries. They always say, yeah, but what about the war and pick on us again.
- I mean, I think when I was younger the people around me always gave me the feeling that I should be proud. For example, I had five years history about world wars. And everything. It always repeats. And I mean in the United States they also didn't have the best history, but they can say I am proud. But the Germans they always repeat the past. You cannot be proud.

(tape switched)

- I think we can't be proud to be German. But I think we can try to be united and all come together. For example, there is a campaign from a German company to bring the German together. And they also have a lot of foreign people and a lot of Germans. So they want to bring all of them together. We are all together Germans, not just the Germans, with German blood. I think this one is important not being proud to be German but I think we need to be one group and work together.
- (--) I think it is our mentality first to be negative. Nevertheless, we are the country with the most products for exports, and we are making the best cars, for example. But I think it is our mentality to first be negative. The other thing I want to say, about being proud to be German or being not proud, when I get asked where are you from and I say Germany, there was never a time when someone complained or said oh you are the bad guy because of the world war. It is a long time ago and I was born a long time after the world war.
- Yeah.
- And it is not my fault, but we keep repeating our history lessons. We talk about it so that people can't forget it and never happen again.
- Yeah, but like here. They don't repeat the bad things all the time.
- (--)

- And how long you want to repeat it. Even though, we repeat it all the time, who knows it can happen always, all over the world again.
- I really know what you are saying, Americans celebrate change versus drawing on things, and I think that people in Germany should do that. (--) I mean, very, very bad things have happened in this country as well. And I am not saying it is better or worst than what happened in Germany. It is just very, very different. So I think that, I am proud to be German. I am not proud of the past, but you can't. I was born a long time after the war and I am not a Nazi.
- I mean I think there is a big difference to say I am proud about Germany and proud to be German. There is a big difference to be proud about the nation or proud to be German. Germans can just be the people who are Germans, and if you say proud about Germany then it is everybody. I think proud about Germany it would be easier to agree than proud to be German.
- (--)

F; Ok, I am just paraphrasing here, I am trying to clarify what you are saying. To say to be proud about Germany you might be talking about it in the present tense instead of saying proud to be German that is taking in the history.

- Well proud about Germany, that is including everybody. And not just being German, because your blood is German. Germany has a lot of foreign workers, and they then could not be included in that proud to be German. (--)
- Well, not necessarily, because my definition of German would be that everybody who has some connection with Germany can say I am proud to be Germany, because it is my own definition if I feel that I am German, or American or whatever.
- (--)
- But to be German you need to have a German passport.
- Well, but if I have lived there for a long, long time why can't you say that I am German?
- (--)
- But you also have to look like a German. Like you have to have blue eyes, blond hair and light skin. Even with me, they would not think that I am German. (--) Even if you have a German passport, they wouldn't necessarily say you are German, if you don't look like a German. If there is someone from Africa, they wouldn't say he is German. But they might think he is American.
- But, you have to make a difference there. Because in America culture, everything is together. (--) The country was built on that. You can't compare America with Germany.
- Yeah, but the Germans would even accept that person to be really German.
- Yeah, and I think that is part of the problem. It always goes back to the past and it is part of the problem when handling being proud of Germany or to be proud to be German.
- Yeah, but I think that even though a lot of people said that they wouldn't mind staying outside of Germany, or being proud, but I think not a lot of people would give up their passport. I mean like me, I don't care about Germany. If I would live forever in Canada or the United States, I would never give away my passport.

- (--)
- I trust in the German system. If I would have any problems, I think Germany would take better care of me than the United States. And I am asking everybody else, if they would change your German identity and give up your passport.
- Yeah, I would. I would like if I could get the Switzerland passport. And also, I can't really say, because I have only been here for a short time. But if I would stay here longer, and I feel comfortable here, why not.
- Well, with me I am going to get dual citizenship.
- (--)
- I also want to say, that I agree with you on the whole being proud. I think being proud refers to something positive. And If I say I am proud to be a German it refers to all positive aspects of Germany. And that's the same thing with the US. There are many things wrong with the US, and many things wrong with Germany and any other country. If you say, you are proud to be from somewhere, you say you are proud to be from there because of the positive aspects of the country and not the negative. I mean nobody is going to say I am proud of world war, whatever one you want to talk about.
- I mean, I think you can be proud of different things. She can be proud of Germany and she can be proud of the Unites States at the same time. I mean it is not like that you have to be proud of just one country.

F: Ok. So, everyone feeling alright? I just want to make sure there is nothing else. We can wrap up if you guys are feeling ok with that. But again, if there is anything else that you want to add now would definitely be the time and we would appreciate it.

- I think one thing, that I would like to add I think is better in Germany is that I feel more safe in Germany. I think for me that's really important. I have to have the impression that I am safe. And here, everyone says don't walk at night, but in Germany I can walk around at night and still feel safe.
- Not everywhere. (--)
- I would say that feel safer in Germany than here.
- I think also, I would feel safer in Germany now, because all the things with the terrorists. I mean here, the US is at war with the terrorists and stuff. I think it is very good that Germany didn't join the war.
- (--)
- I feel very safe in Germany.
- I feel safer in Germany. I can walk wherever I want alone at night in Munich.
- (--)
- I think it also depends how long you have been in the city.

F; Ok is there anybody else that has additional thoughts? No. Ok, Of course, I, Nadja would like to thank you for being here. We really had a wonderful discussion. I want to restate what I said before. This is all confidential. If we have any additional questions, or need any clarification, is it ok that we contact you? It is alright? That is Ok with everyone. Ok. And my final question, would anyone like a final copy of the report?

- Yeah.
- (Laughter)

F: So thank you again. Thank you for time. We really appreciated you being here.

Appendix C: Human Subjects Approval Form

January 13, 2006

Dear Ms. Koenig :

The CAS-Human Subjects Committee has considered your application, #2210, “Construction of National Identity and National Pride of Germans in the Intercultural Context” and rated the proposal as EXEMPT. An EXEMPT rating means that the proposal does not need further consideration by the University Human Subjects Committee, and you may proceed with your research. Please save a copy of this email for submission to the Graduate School with your thesis.

Good luck with your endeavors, and your career.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Brabec, Chair  
CAS-HSC