

**WARTIME EXPERIENCE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: IMPACT ON LATE-LIFE ALCOHOLISM,  
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION**

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This study examined the impact of the wartime experiences of European immigrants to the United States and Canada on their subsequent experience of alcoholism, anxiety and depression. Participants in the research consisted of Gentile rescuers of Jews during World War II, and bystanders who did not intervene to help threatened Jewish neighbors. While ethnic identity tends to be continued over time in Canada, which has a multiethnic, pluralistic ethic, immigrants to the United States encounter a more assimilative, "melting pot" environment. Thus, European immigrants to Canada tended to cleave more closely to their ethnic kin than did their counterparts who emigrated to the U.S. The new Canadians therefore had more frequent adverse recollections of their personal experiences of the war than did the new Americans. As a consequence, in descending order of occurrence, the percentages of individuals manifesting mental health problems in each of the four study groups were: 83.3% of the Canadian bystanders (alcoholism or depression), 36.8% of the Canadian rescuers (anxiety), 33.3% of the American bystanders (alcoholism), and 11% of the American rescuers (anxiety). Differences between bystanders and rescuers in both countries can be attributed both to the ethnic climates of the two countries, and to personality characteristics (e.g., moral judgment, empathic concern for others) that induced rescue behavior initially in the rescuers and that affected their capacity to form and use social support in late life.