

Holocaust victimization research paper examples

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Alter “ Al” Wiener, born 1926 in Chrzanów, Poland, endured an incredibly horrifying event when he was a teenager (13 to 16 years of age). Al was only 13 when his father was brutally murdered by the Nazis. Two years later, he was sent to a forced labor camp for Jews in Blechhammer, Germany. He spent nearly three years in five different Nazi concentration camps. He was robbed of all his freedom and experienced daily “ hard labor, starvation, torturous brutality, torture and the threat of annihilation” . In 1945, a Russian army liberated the people where Al was; he was too underweight for his age then. Despite his traumatic experience, this remarkable person found no resentment – only loving kindness – as he shares his life story in his book “ From A Name to A Number: A Holocaust Survivor’s Autobiography.”

Al honestly, touchingly and vividly relates his early happy childhood story and also the subsequent loss of his normal adolescent life when the Nazi Germans viciously annihilated the Jews and anything Jewish. As Al journeys to overcome the past, he willingly shares his awful memories in direct contrast with the freedom that he enjoys for nearly 40 years now in the USA. Through writing (as well as speaking engagements), he is driven by his own compassion to eliminate vengeance and intolerance in the minds of his readers. Al never thinks of his past as a closed chapter in human history; rather, while he and all other people move forward, he continues to fulfill his destiny of imparting his story against any sign of racial, ethnic and individual abuse, disrespect and degradation.

Al learned early in life a lot of invaluable lessons (e. g., love, faith, trust in God) from his father. He narrated a story when the Nazis shot and let his father bleed to death. A Polish passerby, who knew Al’s father, offered him a drink.

However, Al's father graciously declined; instead, utter words of relief in God's hands. Al learned from that incident how faithful his father was to God. If not for Al's father's strong loyalty to God, Al thought of the incommensurate agony and hatred his father would have had then to the Germans and God before his death, that is, if not for a wholehearted trust in God's power, which transcends human understanding.

Although Al has symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of his Final Solution nightmares, there is evidence of the importance of the social contexts in which reconstruction of traumatic narrative and victimization takes place, as well as, the strategies of resistance to mourning during the period of acknowledged victimhood. However, it turns out to be the contrary to a victim such as Al. He has not been an abuser after the atrocious cruelty inflicted on him by the vicious Nazi Germans.

Al's book "From A Name to A Number" share with people the atrocities of his time to reflect and learn from it. He wants people to realize how lucky they are that they are still alive and enjoy the privileges that were stripped off from him during the Final Solution. Young people nowadays engross themselves with too many petty anxieties and then kill themselves intentionally. Rather, they should be thankful for what they have and learn to value life, family, friends – and all the other opportunities they have and are stored for them. If not for the holocaust, Al would have been a more fulfilled man of his generation like his father's forebears – and he still is to these days!

For Al, who is a victim of racial prejudice and hatred, stereotyping is not justifiable. Whenever individuals treat any ethnic groups unduly, it is

disconcerting. Al narrated a story when a brutal German guard knocked out many of his teeth. There was also another instances when a German woman, who works at the same factory where Al works, risked her life for him. Jews, during Hitler's regime, were regarded with total disdain because they were considered "pernicious to the social order and purity of the Arian race". Although the German woman was forbidden to have even an eye contact with Al, she still managed to do so. Each day for 30 days, the noble German woman stealthily left bread with cheese for Al. Because of those incidences, Al bases individual merit on a person's action: the wicked German guard hated the Jews so much whereas the righteous German woman had a feeling of empathy to his fellow human being. Thus, not all Germans had evil hearts. Al does not even believe in collective guilt because for him, it is unjustifiable.

In relation to Al's case as a Nazi victim and his family with that of Wohl & Bavel's research findings, among holocaust descendants, Jewish identification was positively linked with symptoms of PTSD. However, Al's family seem not to be too willing to talk about the cataclysmic event to mediate the association between PTSD symptoms and identification. It may have been that Al carries symptoms of the trauma as a victim, but he has learned throughout his life how to deal with it. Thus, any negative effects specific to Al's trauma symptoms were thus related to the holocaust, but he has not acquired any form of general depression/anxiety.

His adolescent experiences were in direct contrast with his four decades of stay in the land of freedom – the USA. Thus, Wohl & Bavel's study results imply that Al's group identity among the many holocaust victims both

enhance and buffer the impact of victimization on mental health. Al has been resilient of his traumatic experiences because of his positive outlook in life. He only seeks justice and not revenge. He also believes that it is only the murderers who ought to be blamed and not because an individual is from the German lineage.

Al relied not only on his personal experiences as a Holocaust survivor. He even included in his book “ From A Name to A Number” other stories that have relation to his faith. Al mentions how people question God for letting bad things happen to them (even among the innocents). For Al, bible quotes are sources of inspiration, especially, during trying times or darkest hours. He had thus was reconciled with the realization that he will never understand God and His mysterious ways. What Al primarily cherishes is his belief in God’s Word and Supremacy. Nonetheless, he admits how religious fanaticism and heresy caused terrible misunderstandings among people – past and present. Al teaches and inspires people to do otherwise for the sake of tolerance to have peace among their fellow human beings.

Al’s “ From A Name to A Number” book does not simply contain a story just like those of any other holocaust victims. It reveals, more importantly, the many feedbacks that Al got from narrating to many people the horror of extreme prejudice, hatred and false ideology. Al hopes that many of his readers will learn the shameful past and “ festering wound in Nazi Germany’s records” for the “ murder of six million Jews and five million ‘ undesirables’ or a total of 62 million Jews [alone] during World War II”. Still, Al considers the reconciliation between the Jewish people and the Germans as desirable and practical.

As Al continues to shares his lifestory with audiences of various ages in universities, middle/high schools, synagogues, churches, clubs, prisons, and other places, more and more people come to appreciate how important it is to empahitze with the Holocaust victims and how to prevent it from happening again. If people learn to defend the rights of their fellow human beings whom they see suffer from the hands of their oppressors, there will be a better world for everyone. Al's message to people across the world is not to let prejudice, ignorance and hatred consume them, instead learn to exercise the true meaning of tolerance, pluralism, love, reconciliation, justice and equality.

References

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