

Department of Psychology's  
**Brian Harder Honors Day Conference**

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

Keynote Speaker

**We Were, We Are, Will We Be?**

**Collective Angst and the Desire to Protect the  
Ingroup from Possible Extinction**

Dr. Michael Wohl

Carleton University

BS P226 at 9:00 am

Oral Presentations

Third-Year Honors Students

BS P226 at 10:15 am

Poster Presentations

Fourth-Year Honors Students

BS Main Foyer at 12:00

**All are welcome to attend!**

## We Were, We Are, Will We Be?

### Collective Angst and the Desire to Protect the Ingroup from Possible Extinction

Michael J. A. Wohl

Carleton University

Group membership provides a person with existential security. Although individual group members will eventually perish, the group is generally thought to have temporal persistence. In as much as group members believe that their group's future is secure, membership provides a solid existential ground on which to stand. When that ground is thought to be fragile and may one day give way, then existential concerns are likely to surface. The research presented in this talk will focus on the antecedents and consequences of *collective angst* - an aversive group-based emotion that stems from perceived threats to the ingroup's future vitality. Attention will be drawn to ways that group members attempt to stave off this unwanted future. Specifically, although certain responses might be constructive in so much as they fortify ingroup values and traditions, destructive responses such as support for policy and action that harm other social groups might also surface. The role collective angst plays in both intra- and intergroup relations is discussed.

#### Biography

Dr. Michael Wohl (PhD, Alberta, 2003) is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa. His research focuses on the causes and consequences of harming at both the interpersonal (one person transgressing against another) and intergroup level (historical and contemporary harm experienced by members of one group at the hands of another group). This research examines, among other things, the emotional reaction that stems from harming or being harmed (e.g., anxiety, guilt) and their effects on psychological and physical health. Ultimately, Wohl's work is oriented toward seeking means for forgiveness and reconciliation. Wohl's research has also focused on the factors that contribute to addiction (smoking, gambling) and refusal to seek treatment. The majority of this work has focused on stress and coping responses, erroneous cognitions, and craving as predictors of continued gambling behaviour. Funding for his research has come from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre, and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.