

2005 AWARD WINNERS



EDWIN B. NEWMAN AWARD

The Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award is given jointly by Psi Chi and APA.

Members of the 2004 Edwin B. Newman Award Committee were Christopher Koch, PhD (Chair); Richard A. Kasschau, PhD; Cathy Epkins, PhD; and Thomas D. Oakland, PhD.

PSI CHI/APA EDWIN B. NEWMAN GRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD

The Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award is sponsored jointly by Psi Chi, the national honor society in psychology, and the APA. The award is presented annually to the psychology graduate student who submits the best research paper that was published or presented at a national, regional, or state psychological association conference during the past calendar year.

The Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award was established in 1979. The award was established to recognize young researchers at the beginning of their professional lives and to commemorate both the 50th anniversary of Psi Chi and the 100th anniversary of psychology as a science (dating from the founding of Wundt's laboratory). It was named for Dr. Edwin B. Newman, the first national president of Psi Chi (1929) and one of its founders. He was a prolific researcher and a long-time chair of the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. Newman was a member of APA's Board of Directors, served as recording secretary of the board from 1962 to 1967, and was parliamentarian for the APA Council of Representatives for many years. He served both Psi Chi and APA in a distinguished manner for half a century.

1979 Michael S. Fanselow	1992 Daniel E. Shapiro
Natalie P. Porter	1993 Julie Anderson
1980 Rowland S. Miller	1994 Agnes Chan
1981 Peter David Blanck	1995 Prahlad Gupta
1982 Morton Ann Gernsbacher	1996 Sterling Charles Johnson
1983 Katheryn Perez Riley	1997 Jack B. Nitschke
1984 Mark E. Johnson	1998 Holly Hazlett-Stevens
1985 Jeremy Shapiro	1999 Allison M. Ryan
1986 Ruth A. Weber	2000 Laura M. Mackner
1987 James A. Shepperd	2001 Su Yeong Kim
1988 Brad J. Bushman	2002 Micheal E. Shafer
David A. Smith	2003 Rose Mary Webb
1989 Denise M. Driscoll	2004 Cortney S. Warren
1990 Catherine L. Reed	2005 George M. Slavich
1991 Sung-II Kim	



Photo by Jack Liu

George M. Slavich

Psi Chi/APA Edwin B. Newman Graduate
Research Award

Citation

“For an outstanding research paper whose findings demonstrate how severe life stress may turn on a ‘fight or flight’ response that is still evident months later in individuals who become depressed. George M. Slavich’s paper, *Physiological Correlates of Severe Life Stress in Clinical Depression*, presented at the 19th Annual Meeting of the Society for Research in Psychopathology on October 7, 2004, received honorable mention for the 2004 Society for Research in Psychopathology Smadar Levin Award and was the basis for Slavich’s selection as the 2004–2005 Psi Chi/APA Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award recipient. Scott M. Monroe, PhD, served as research advisor.”

Biography

George M. Slavich was born and raised in Santa Clara, California, as the only child of Slavenka Kirigin, who emigrated from Croatia, and George Slavich, whose parents emigrated from Croatia. He grew up working in his father’s hardware store, assisting customers and operating a cash register, which he could reach only with the help of a red step stool that read, “Sit to be small, stand to be tall.” Later on he learned to mix paint, cut glass, thread pipe, and be self-efficacious, the last of which has since proved most helpful.

Slavich was influenced notably during his early years by his parents’ unparalleled work ethic, as well as by the hypersocialization that accompanies meeting so many different people at such a young age. Aside from being a virtual playground for a curious kid, the hardware store was a great place to appreciate human diversity (along all dimensions) and to continually contemplate how people think and behave. These experiences set the stage for what he thought would be a career in business.

Slavich’s entrance into psychology instead of business resulted largely from coincidence. He aimed to remain in the San Francisco Bay Area for college and was debating between Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley, until he was rejected from the latter. His hopes to pursue business while at Stanford were dashed when he discovered that no such major was offered there, and his excitement for economics—which he imagined as the next best thing—diminished while enrolled in an economics course. Slavich was persuaded to take an introductory psychology course during the same quarter, and thanks to a series of captivating lectures by John Gabrieli, he realized it was the social component of business that excited him, not its fiscal underpinnings.

The fortuitous events that got Slavich initially engaged in psychology were followed by the pursuit of many rich opportunities while at Stanford. Early in his sophomore year, Slavich joined the Stanford Mood and Anxiety Disorders Lab, directed by Ian Gotlib, and it was largely under Gotlib’s guidance that his academic interests took shape. Slavich became particularly interested in how (at least some) depressed individuals exhibit preferential biases in attention and memory for depressotypic information, and he soon found himself involved in projects centered on examining the functional role of cognitive biases in the onset, maintenance, and recurrence of depression.

Slavich spent much of his sophomore and junior years helping to pilot a battery of information-processing measures that would eventually become a cornerstone of a National Institute of Mental Health grant awarded to Gotlib. Through this work he learned how to conduct diagnostic interviews, as well as how to develop and administer a series of novel computer-based tasks designed to examine cognitive correlates of the depressive experience. Although tremendously interesting in its own right, the cognitive component of the grant project was soon joined by a psychophysiological component (led by James Gross), a brain-imaging component (led by John Gabrieli), and a life stress component (led by Scott Monroe). Together, these measures combined to permit a remarkably comprehensive look into how depression develops and is maintained.

It was around this time that Slavich began going to weekly meetings of the personality study area at Stanford. The meetings, which were regularly attended by Albert Bandura, Laura Carstensen, Ian Gotlib, James Gross, Leo-

nard Horowitz, and Jeanne Tsai, produced an effect akin to taking academic supplements: They immediately boosted one's intellectual curiosity and drive to discover. Together, these individuals provided many invaluable examples of how the passionate pursuit of answers by means of elegant empirical research may lead to the development of refreshingly new and complex theories of human cognition and behavior. Ultimately, it was within this context, pervaded by this ethos, that he developed intellectually as a clinical scientist interested in depressive disorders.

Slavich's research interests came into sharper focus during his senior year, after reading a series of papers by Aaron Beck. He was intrigued by Beck's argument that early adversity may contribute to the formation of negative cognitive schemas that remain latent until activated later in life by severe stress, at which point depression may develop. Although theoretically well developed, it seemed as though this diathesis-stress model of depression had received relatively few valid tests. As it turned out, one of Gotlib's collaborators, Scott Monroe at the University of Oregon, thought the same and was awarded a National Institute of Mental Health grant to study the topic.

Slavich spent the next year under the close mentorship of Gotlib and Monroe. He learned how to administer the Life Events and Difficulties Schedule, conducted about 50 such interviews, and subsequently developed an honors thesis that detailed how severe life stress occurring prior to depression onset may activate attentional and memory biases for negatively valenced stimuli among depressed adults. His honors thesis was written during the summer after his junior year while he was a member of the prestigious Stanford University Honors College. Slavich subsequently graduated with honors from Stanford in June 2000 with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Stanford University, Slavich realized, is an ideal place to think and live, with its entrepreneurial spirit, intellectual freedom, and idyllic placement between California's rolling foothills and beautiful bay. It was a place he could not leave so soon, so he remained there for an additional year to pursue master's degrees in psychology and communication. It proved worthwhile.

During this last year at Stanford, Slavich served as a teaching assistant for a handful of classes, including Philip Zimbardo's introduction to psychology course. At his first meeting with his teaching assistants, Zimbardo said that he would rather students get excited about psychology than learn anything from the course. Zimbardo's lectures managed to do both, though, and provided a truly unique model for teaching psychology. Zimbardo became Slavich's unofficial teaching mentor from then on, and with his encouragement, Slavich subsequently founded the Stanford Undergraduate Psychology Conference, a nationally publicized forum that attracted more than 220 attendees from 36 schools, 6 states, and 4 countries in its inaugural year. For

his service to the department, Slavich received the Department of Psychology Outstanding Service Award before graduating with master's degrees in communication and in psychology in June 2001.

Slavich aimed to remain on the west coast for graduate school and was debating between the University of Oregon and the University of California at Berkeley, until he was rejected from the latter. Fate had again done its part, directing him toward Scott Monroe—an affable man and brilliant thinker. During the next three years, Slavich worked closely with Monroe and Anne Simons at Oregon, earning a master's degree in clinical psychology and producing a paper that detailed how severe stress occurring prior to depression onset is uniquely associated with elevated dysfunctional attitudes during depression. For that research, Slavich won the 2004 Robert L. Solso Graduate Student Research Award, the 2004 Western Psychological Association/Multivariate Software Outstanding Research Award, and the first ever Psi Chi/American Psychological Society Albert Bandura Graduate Research Award. During this time, Slavich was also voted Graduate Teaching Fellow of the Year at the University of Oregon by readers of the *Oregon Daily Emerald*.

Subsequent research projects proved to be equally exciting. In late 2004, Slavich began working with Corrie Doyle and Jonathan Rottenberg on a collaborative project that demonstrated how severe life stress may turn on a fight-or-flight response that is still evident months later in individuals who become depressed. This research, for which he won the Psi Chi/Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award, also received honorable mention for the 2004 Society for Research in Psychopathology Smadar Levin Award.

Currently, Slavich is a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at the University of Oregon, whose career plans include obtaining a faculty position at a university devoted to excellence in teaching and research. He is on the Western Psychological Association (WPA) board of directors and is also founder and chair of the WPA Student Council. In addition to receiving the Psi Chi/Edwin B. Newman Graduate Research Award in 2005, Slavich was awarded the McKeachie Graduate Student Teaching Excellence Award by the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division 2 of the American Psychological Association).

None of these professional pursuits would have been possible without the generous support of his advisors, friends, and family. He is particularly indebted to his primary advisors, Ian Gotlib and Scott Monroe, for their intellectual mentorship; to his teaching mentor, Philip Zimbardo, for his personal and professional companionship; to his longtime best friend, Elizabeth Zeratsky, for her ongoing love and loyalty; and to his deeply devoted parents, George and Slavenka, for their many invaluable lessons. The most important of these lessons has simply been that, when the efficacy force is with you, virtually nothing is impossible . . . except, perhaps, getting into Berkeley.

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