



**Matthew K. Nock**

**Award for Distinguished Scientific Early Career Contributions to Psychology**

**Citation**

“For deepening our understanding of suicide and self-injury in the broader context of human dysfunction. Matthew K. Nock’s findings have overturned accepted notions about antecedents of suicide and have revealed critical functions served by nonsuicidal self-injury, underscoring the relevance of basic psychological principles. His methods show remarkable range, combining epidemiology, rigorous laboratory experiments, measurement of implicit cognitions, and real-time, real-world biological and psychological assessments. He has produced gold-standard methods of prediction and a rich and growing explanatory model answering the basic question of why people hurt themselves. A master teacher and dedicated mentor, he inspires others to excellence in clinical science.”

**Biography**

Matthew Kelley Nock was born in Edison, New Jersey, in 1973, the third of four children of Frank and Eileen Nock. Nock’s parents, an auto mechanic and homemaker, did not have the opportunity to attend college themselves but impressed on their children the importance of education and hard work from a very early age. Nock’s father worked multiple jobs in order to be able to send each of his children to Catholic school to receive the best education possible. Nock and his siblings are incredibly grateful for the sacrifices and the example their parents provided.

After graduating from Roselle Catholic High School, where he ran cross-country and was captain of the wrestling team, Nock attended Boston University. He initially was very excited to be a straight B student, floating between classes in biology and philosophy. Late in his freshman year, two events significantly changed Nock’s life course. First, he met Keesha Jograj, a political science major who was way out of his league but who he convinced to date him anyway (and ultimately to marry him). She is an amazing source of inspiration, support, and happiness in his life. Second, he discovered the field of psychology. Shocked to learn that he could actually spend his life studying human behavior, he was instantly hooked and started reading all the psychology texts and papers he could get his hands on. During a semester abroad in London his junior year, Nock was assigned to an academic externship placement in the locked unit of Springfield Psychiatric Hospital, where the most violent and self-injurious patients were treated. Nock asked whether anything a little safer was available and was told that since he was the only male in the clinical psychology track that semester, he had to take the placement because they did not want any of the female students getting assaulted. Either they did not care if Nock was assaulted, or they somehow had heard that he knew some pretty awesome wrestling moves. Regardless, this experience ended up being enormously influential on Nock’s career. He became captivated by the question of why people engage in behaviors that are intentionally harmful to themselves and others, such as suicide, substance use, and violence, and he was motivated by the limited effectiveness of the assessment, prediction, and treatment methods available. Nock became inspired by the idea of using psychological science to advance knowledge and practice in this area, and this has been the primary focus of his work ever since.

After graduating from Boston University in 1995, Nock moved to New York City to pursue his newfound career plans. Unfortunately, he could not find work in psychology given his complete lack of research experience, and so he spent several more years as a cook while pursuing various volunteer positions (e.g., runaway shelter, hotline, psychiatric research assistant). Nock was fortunate that two psychiatrists generously took a chance on a kid whose only references touted his cooking skills: Herbert Hendin hired Nock as a part-time research coordinator at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), and shortly thereafter Peter Marzuk hired him as a part-time research assistant at Cornell University Medical Center (CUMC). Hendin (and many others) at AFSP provided Nock with an invaluable education not only about suicide but about how research is guided, funded, and used to make a real difference in people’s lives. Marzuk (as well as Andy Leon, Ken Tardiff, and many others at CUMC) taught Nock how to generate and test interesting and important scientific questions using rigorous scientific methods. Marzuk, a consum-

mate scientist, teacher, clinician, and mentor, has been an especially powerful influence and role model for Nock.

Nock was admitted to the doctoral program in the Department of Psychology at Yale University in the fall of 1998. His four years in New Haven were the most educational and transformative of his life. He completed two master's degrees and a doctoral degree under the primary mentorship of Alan Kazdin, whose brilliance, vision, and contagious passion for psychological science were invaluable influences in Nock's training. Nock has difficulty expressing in words the impact Kazdin had on his scholarly development (and the profound gratitude he feels in return). During Nock's second year of graduate school, Mitch Prinstein joined the faculty at Yale, becoming another enormous influence on Nock's scientific and professional life. From Prinstein, he learned how to be a better researcher, teacher, and clinician and how to do so many of the things that are vital to succeeding in academia. Kazdin and Prinstein miraculously turned Nock from a research assistant into an independent scholar and have continued to provide valued guidance and support. Life at Yale provided additional opportunities to learn from some of the leading scholars in the field, including Kelly Brownell, Peter Salovey, Jerry Singer, Todd Little, Mark Whisman, Sheila Woody, Joe Mahoney, Andres Martin, and Joan Kaufman, each of whom had a powerful and much appreciated influence on Nock's scholarly and professional development. When not in the classroom, laboratory, or clinic, Nock mixed it up with his classmates at Yale, including Michael Friedman, David Pizarro, Brian Bedell, Jerusha Detweiler, Brian Nosek, Bethany Teachman, Mariann Weierich, Stephanie Jones, Amanda Schweder Guyer, John Perez, Wil Cunningham, James Kaufman, and many others. These friends and future colleagues each made life in New Haven not only educational but incredibly thought provoking and a lot of fun.

After finishing his study in residence in New Haven, Nock completed his clinical internship at the New York University (NYU) Child Study Center and Bellevue Hospital Center. At NYU, Nock studied under some of the most brilliant minds in child psychology/psychiatry research, such as Anne Marie Albano and Xavier Castellanos. At Bellevue, Nock was pushed well out of his comfort zone (Program Director Alan Elliot was the pushiest), learning about things like process group and regression (the non-statistical kind). He is extremely grateful for the training he received at Bellevue, which was truly world class.

Upon graduating from Yale in 2003, Nock joined the faculty of the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. He was promoted to the position of John L. Loeb Associate Professor in 2007 and Professor in 2010. With his student and faculty collaborators, Nock conducts research aimed at advancing the understanding of why people engage in behaviors that are harmful to themselves, with a special emphasis on

suicide, self-injury, and other forms of direct self-harm. His work is multidisciplinary and uses a range of methodological approaches to investigate how these behaviors develop, how to predict their occurrence, and ultimately how to prevent them.

At Harvard, Nock is privileged to be surrounded by uniformly exceptional departmental colleagues who have been wonderful friends, collaborators, supporters, and role models, including Jill Hooley, Rich McNally, John Weisz, Diego Pizzagalli, Christine Hooker, Mahzarin Banaji, Wendy Berry Mendes, Jason Mitchell, Dan Wegner, Stephen Kosslyn, Dan Schacter, Susan Carey, and many others. Nock also has been influenced by collaborations with colleagues from the Harvard Medical School, the Center on the Developing Child, and the Judge Baker Children's Center. Ron Kessler and his team at Harvard Medical School have had a particularly strong impact on Nock's scholarly and professional development. Kessler challenged Nock to think differently about suicidal behavior (and other forms of psychopathology), taught him how to ask more interesting questions and on a much broader scale, and has been an invaluable mentor and collaborator.

Nock's work, thinking, and career also have benefited greatly from interactions with colleagues outside of Harvard, either directly through collaborative work or indirectly through their guidance and generosity, including David Barlow, David Brent, Ron Dahl, Thomas Joiner, Phil Kendall, Tom Ollendick, David Rudd, and David Shaffer, among many others. Nock hopes to be able to provide his students and advisees with a fraction of the support and guidance that he has received. He has been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with an amazing cast of students, including Laura Phillips, Kristen Woodberry, Valerie Photos, Bethany Michel, Irene Janis, Michelle Wedig, Carolyn Rubenstein, Christine Cha, Alex Millner, Julie Gold, Betsy Holmberg, Tara Deliberto, Halina Dour, Charlene Deming, Jeff Glenn, and many others, each of whom has already developed into an excellent young scholar despite Nock's mentorship.

Overall, any success Nock has had is due entirely to the support and guidance of those he has been fortunate to count as his mentors, colleagues, students, and friends. He looks forward to many more fun and productive years. When not in the classroom, laboratory, or clinic, Nock can be found riding his Harley Davidson, watching Woody Allen movies, and spending time with his wife Keesha and their children Matthew and Maya.

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