The editors explore why understanding the role of culture can help prevent suicide.

The increasing domination of biological approaches in suicide research and prevention, at the expense of social and cultural understanding, is severely harming our ability to stop people dying; so run the clearly set out arguments and evidence in this lucid book by leading social scientists and suicide researchers.

In the first part of this book, instead of simply comparing suicide in different countries, the authors review and examine the fundamental issues of why culture is of vital importance in understanding and preventing suicidal behavior, what the “cultural meaning” of suicide is, and where current research and theory are leading us.

The second part of the book then presents (and, importantly, also critiques) exemplary recent research, including a quantitative and qualitative study on the meaning of suicide in Australia, India, and Italy, which is reported in detail, as well as other studies on correlates of suicidal behavior in Kuwait and the US, on a culturally specific form of suicide (sati), and on the role of cultural conflict in South Korea.

In the concluding section, the editors highlight both the necessity and the challenges of conducting good culturally sensitive studies, as well as suggesting solutions to these challenges. This volume is thus essential reading for anyone involved in suicide research and prevention.