A search for cultural definitions of suicide in the cinema found that American film portrayals of suicide de-emphasize psychiatric causes such as major depression while stressing the social causes of suicide, such as relationship breakdown, lover's triangles, death of a loved one, shame, and rape (Stack & Bowman 2012). Only a quarter of American cinematic suicides link suicide to mental disorders, whereas most tie suicide to social and economic strains. It is unknown if the films of other nations neglect the psychiatric causes of suicide. The present work compares the causes of suicide in American films (N=1,377) to those found in British films (N=135). Surprisingly, the distributions of 7 principal causes are not significantly different. The findings support a globalization/historical thesis where the cinema of Western nations present similar social explanations of suicide. Cinematic explanations of suicide have their roots in two millennia of world literature/art.

Steven Stack is the author of 283 articles and two books. Most of his publications concern the risk and protective factors for suicide. These studies have received over 3,200 citations. He received the Dublin Award from the American Association of Suicidology for lifetime contributions to suicide research. His books are (with Barbara Bowman) Suicide Movies, Social Patterns, 1900–2009 (2012) published by Hogrefe, and (with David Lester) Suicide in the Creative Arts (2009) published by Nova Science. His work has been supported by NIMH, the Guggenheim Foundation & the WSU Humanities Center.