To the Editor:

In regard to Ken Vincent's Letter to the Editor in the Winter 2004 issue of the Journal, I share his conviction that the near-death experience (NDE) is a type of mystical experience (indeed, I was arguing for this view as far back as *Heading Toward Omega* [Ring, 1984] more than 20 years ago), and I always made a point of this when I was teaching my course on NDEs. All the same, I do not necessarily agree that it would be good for either the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) or the Journal suddenly to open its arms and pages to accounts of mystical experiences or research in this field, although certainly an occasional worthy article on this subject could be published in the Journal, especially if it made a connection to NDEs.

This was always a problem from the very early days of LANDS: whether to extend the umbrella to cover a variety of what Yvonne Kason (1994; Kason and Degler, 1994) called "spiritually transformative experiences" or to limit LANDS just to NDEs or closely related phenomena. And the dilemma was poignant, too, because many people who could relate to NDEs because they had some other kind of similar experiences came to feel that they did not have the same status or sense of belonging as did NDErs—a valid point. In consequence, there was also the danger of a certain elitism or exclusiveness with IANDS, since it catered to NDErs especially, though it, in principle, welcomed everybody.

Nevertheless, I think LANDS and the Journal were right to emphasize NDEs and near-death research per se, and to give them pride of place. Doing so helped to put NDEs on the map and give them a distinct place in the world of nonordinary experiences, rather than diffusing their identity by lumping them with so many other similar transcendental experiences. But that was then. It is a different story now, and should priorities for inclusion be different? However this question is resolved, I personally would not like to see LANDS become IANDMS. That is a truly bad idea. Just try pronouncing it!
References


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