Editor’s Foreword

Long-time readers of this Journal will notice that with this, the first issue of Volume 33, the cover design has had a death-and-transformation experience. The Journal’s previous cover remained unchanged for over 30 years, during which time design sensibilities evolved. The new design reflects both that evolution and IANDS’s recently updated logo. Although the cover has changed, the contents of the Journal will remain the same, continuing to convey to readers emerging scholarship in the field of near-death studies.

In the two articles of this issue, researchers report on their studies of near-death experiences (NDEs) in previously unexamined or little-examined populations. First, Natasha Tassell-Matamua, Ph.D., lecturer in the School of Psychology, and Mary Murray, Ph.D., senior lecturer in Sociology, both at Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand, report on their unprecedented large-scale study of 209 New Zealanders reporting on their NDEs. In the researchers’ rich analysis of variables associated with NDE circumstances and contents and with experiencers’ demographics, they found that their results generally corresponded with results on those variables in Western studies. However, they reported some intriguing unique findings, such as that NDEs among participants of indigenous Māori descent were deeper—with more and/or more intense features—than those among participants of European descent. By focusing on NDEs in the heretofore neglected population of New Zealand, Tassell-Matamua and Murray have gone a long way toward filling a major gap in the near-death literature.

Similarly, Alinaghi Ghasemiannejad, M.A., a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz in Iran, along with his research team of American Jeffrey Long, M.D., Iranian American Farnoosh Faith Nouri, Ph.D., and Iranian Komeyl Farahnakian, M.A., have made a further contribution to the field with their study of 33 Shiite Muslim NDErs and non-NDErs. Their findings, too, indicated similarity between the NDEs of this non-Western population and those of Westerners. A unique feature of their study was quantitative assessment of dispositional gratitude in life—which they found to be significantly greater among NDErs.
Their research report is enriched by narratives of NDEs and after-effects by three of their NDEr participants.

This issue concludes with three book reviews. In the first, Bryan Stare, M.Ed., doctoral student in the University of North Texas Counseling Program, reviews *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences* by Welsh nurse and researcher Penny Sartori, Ph.D. In the book, Sartori summarized not only results from her large-scale study of NDEs in Wales but also integrated perspectives from other recent research in the field as well as correspondence she had received from NDErs who had learned of her work. As a novice to the field of near-death studies, Stare found Sartori’s book both informative and inspiring.

In the next book review, Michael Grosso, Ph.D., with the University of Virginia’s Division of Perceptual Studies, reports on his impressions of Victor Laszlo’s recent book *The Immortal Mind*. Grosso found that Laszlo presented a good deal of interesting evidence that suggests that the mind survives bodily death—but does not unequivocally prove that it does. He also questions Laszlo’s assumption that widespread belief in immortality would necessarily inspire more positive values and responsible behavior among humans. Despite these reservations, Grosso endorses the book as a good summary of research that bears on the topic of the survival of consciousness.

Finally, J. Timothy Green, Ph.D., reviews the 2012 book, *Brain Wars*, in which neuroscientist Mario Beauregard reviews research on a wide variety of phenomena, including NDEs, that supports the view that mind is more than brain. The “war” to which the title refers is between philosophical materialists who consider the mind to be a product of the brain (and whose view has been dominant for the past century) and dualists who believe mind is closely interactive with brain during physical life but essentially independent of it. Taking issue with only a couple of aspects of the evidence Beauregard discussed, Green found the book to be a convincing presentation of support for a dualistic perspective. I agree; I have adopted the book as one text in my graduate-level “Transpersonal Perspective in Counseling” course at the University of North Texas, and students have found it a fascinating source of challenge and expansion of their worldviews.

It is my hope that, inside a changed *Journal* cover, readers will find the same high quality contents that keep them abreast of advances in the field of near-death studies.

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