

# Review of: "God's characteristics as reported by near-death experiencers"

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**Potential competing interests:** I have no potential competing interests to declare.

This is an important study that contributes to our understanding of how near-death experiencers perceive God, carried out by researchers who are well-read in the literature of NDEs. It has broad implications for psychology, spirituality, religion, and philosophy.

However, the authors should avoid assuming that near-death experiencers' interpretations of their experiences reflect objective reality. While their findings are indicative of how NDErs experience the divine, they do not address whether the NDErs actually did encounter divine beings. The authors should note this distinction. For example, their inclusion criteria included "a direct experience of meeting God or/and Jesus," but perhaps should be reworded as "a direct experience that they interpreted as meeting God or/and Jesus."

It is not sufficient to note, as they did in their Discussion, that experiencers declared that their NDEs were experienced as more real than daily life, as that still does not address objective reality beyond the NDErs' subjective sense of the reality of what they experienced. In the Conclusion of this paper, it is misleading to write that these findings are relevant to the question of whether God exists or of his characteristics; they are relevant only to our interpretation of our perceptions of God and his characteristics.

It is also not clear why the authors excluded such descriptions as "although I did not see God, I knew he was with me," and "God held me in his arms and told me three times to go back," and "I am certain I was before God." Why are these not narratives not interpreted as perceptions of encountering God?

The authors wrote that they did not carry out inferential statistical tests on their findings because it was only an exploratory study using qualitative data. But they still could have done nonparametric statistics on the data, and probably should.

For example, rather than lumping together descriptions of God and of Jesus, it might be instructive to perform a statistical comparison of experiencers' descriptions of God and their descriptions of Jesus.

It might also be instructive to contrast Christians' descriptions of God with those of non-Christians, and to contrast Fundamentalists' descriptions of God with those of Liberals and Moderates.

It might also be helpful to look at the correlations between different characteristics attributed to the divine, e.g., is Love significantly associated with Nonjudgmental?

In summary, this is an enlightening study that should stimulate other scholars to follow up with additional research, but I suggest that the authors should be more circumspect about the wording of their findings.