

Onset and Terminal Sensations in Out-of-Body Experiences

CARLOS S. ALVARADO
Department of Psychology
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

ALTHOUGH RESEARCH ON OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES (OBEs) has focused on features of the experience such as seeing the physical body and traveling to distant locations and on descriptions of the perceptual and affective qualities of the experience (Alvarado, 1984; Green, 1968), there is still much to be investigated regarding regularities in OBE features, such as the clustering of particular features during the experience. In the past, researchers such as Hart (1954), Crookall (1964), and Green (1968) have made a variety of claims regarding frequency and combinations of OBE characteristics. The literature on near-death experiences also contains similar claims (Greyson, 1985). Irwin (1985) explored the relationship between onset and terminal sensations. His results led him to conclude that "the presence of onset sensations in a given individual's OBE has no empirical bearing on the subsequent occurrence of terminal sensations" (p. 85). I decided to explore this further with a different set of data.

I reanalyzed 61 previously collected questionnaires about the characteristics of OBEs (Alvarado, 1984). None of the analyses had fewer than 50 cases. I organized the data in 2×2 tables according to the presence and absence of particular features, and I evaluated the data using Fisher's Exact Probability Test.

One of the questions in the study referred to awareness of sensations of leaving and returning to the body. Of 20 individuals with awareness of onset sensations, 75% reported sensations of return, whereas 25% did not ($p = .0009$, two-tailed). Similar analyses of the overlap between onset and termination of OBEs following Crookall's (1964) observations showed significant results at the 1% level or less regarding losing consciousness (80% vs. 20%),

I am grateful to the Parapsychology Foundation and to the Society for Psychical Research for financial support of my OBE Studies.

Address correspondence to Carlos S. Alvarado, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9JZ.

reports of dark tunnels, enclosures, or places (60% vs. 40%), and reports of finding the self in a horizontal position over the physical body (76% vs. 24%).

These results should be replicated with larger samples, because my analyses depended on a small number of OBE reports. However, my results were not consistent with Irwin's analyses, suggesting that there are interrelationships between features of the OBE occurring at different parts of the experience. This research will help us to start mapping the features of the OBE; thus we will be able (a) to obtain a more complete view of the variety of its phenomenology and (b) to develop empirically derived typologies and testable models of the experience.

REFERENCES

- Alvarado, C. S. (1984). Phenomenological aspects of out-of-body experiences: A report of three studies. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 78, 219-240.
- Crookall, R. (1964). *More astral projections*. London: Aquarian Press.
- Green, C. (1968). *Out-of-the-body experiences*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Greyson, B. (1985). A typology of near-death experiences. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 142, 967-969.
- Hart, H. (1954). ESP projection: Spontaneous cases and the experimental method. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 48, 121-146.
- Irwin, H. J. (1985). *Flight of mind: A psychological study of the out-of-body experience*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Received March 16, 1994

NO
rece
pres
defi
Nov
perf
lem:

Copi
part

Onset and Terminal Sensations in Out-of-Body Experiences

CARLOS S. ALVARADO
Department of Psychology
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

ALTHOUGH RESEARCH ON OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES (OBEs) has focused on features of the experience such as seeing the physical body and traveling to distant locations and on descriptions of the perceptual and affective qualities of the experience (Alvarado, 1984; Green, 1968), there is still much to be investigated regarding regularities in OBE features, such as the clustering of particular features during the experience. In the past, researchers such as Hart (1954), Crookall (1964), and Green (1968) have made a variety of claims regarding frequency and combinations of OBE characteristics. The literature on near-death experiences also contains similar claims (Greyson, 1985). Irwin (1985) explored the relationship between onset and terminal sensations. His results led him to conclude that "the presence of onset sensations in a given individual's OBE has no empirical bearing on the subsequent occurrence of terminal sensations" (p. 85). I decided to explore this further with a different set of data.

I reanalyzed 61 previously collected questionnaires about the characteristics of OBEs (Alvarado, 1984). None of the analyses had fewer than 50 cases. I organized the data in 2×2 tables according to the presence and absence of particular features, and I evaluated the data using Fisher's Exact Probability Test.

One of the questions in the study referred to awareness of sensations of leaving and returning to the body. Of 20 individuals with awareness of onset sensations, 75% reported sensations of return, whereas 25% did not ($p = .0009$, two-tailed). Similar analyses of the overlap between onset and termination of OBEs following Crookall's (1964) observations showed significant results at the 1% level or less regarding losing consciousness (80% vs. 20%),

I am grateful to the Parapsychology Foundation and to the Society for Psychical Research for financial support of my OBE Studies.

Address correspondence to Carlos S. Alvarado, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9JZ.

reports of dark tunnels, enclosures, or places (60% vs. 40%), and reports of finding the self in a horizontal position over the physical body (76% vs. 24%).

These results should be replicated with larger samples, because my analyses depended on a small number of OBE reports. However, my results were not consistent with Irwin's analyses, suggesting that there are interrelationships between features of the OBE occurring at different parts of the experience. This research will help us to start mapping the features of the OBE; thus we will be able (a) to obtain a more complete view of the variety of its phenomenology and (b) to develop empirically derived typologies and testable models of the experience.

REFERENCES

- Alvarado, C. S. (1984). Phenomenological aspects of out-of-body experiences: A report of three studies. *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*, 78, 219-240.
- Crookall, R. (1964). *More astral projections*. London: Aquarian Press.
- Green, C. (1968). *Out-of-the-body experiences*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Greyson, B. (1985). A typology of near-death experiences. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 142, 967-969.
- Hart, H. (1954). ESP projection: Spontaneous cases and the experimental method. *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*, 48, 121-146.
- Irwin, H. J. (1985). *Flight of mind: A psychological study of the out-of-body experience*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Received March 16, 1994

NO
rece
pres
defi
Nov
perf
lem:

Copi
part

Onset and Terminal Sensations in Out-of-Body Experiences

CARLOS S. ALVARADO
Department of Psychology
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

ALTHOUGH RESEARCH ON OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES (OBEs) has focused on features of the experience such as seeing the physical body and traveling to distant locations and on descriptions of the perceptual and affective qualities of the experience (Alvarado, 1984; Green, 1968), there is still much to be investigated regarding regularities in OBE features, such as the clustering of particular features during the experience. In the past, researchers such as Hart (1954), Crookall (1964), and Green (1968) have made a variety of claims regarding frequency and combinations of OBE characteristics. The literature on near-death experiences also contains similar claims (Greyson, 1985). Irwin (1985) explored the relationship between onset and terminal sensations. His results led him to conclude that "the presence of onset sensations in a given individual's OBE has no empirical bearing on the subsequent occurrence of terminal sensations" (p. 85). I decided to explore this further with a different set of data.

I reanalyzed 61 previously collected questionnaires about the characteristics of OBEs (Alvarado, 1984). None of the analyses had fewer than 50 cases. I organized the data in 2×2 tables according to the presence and absence of particular features, and I evaluated the data using Fisher's Exact Probability Test.

One of the questions in the study referred to awareness of sensations of leaving and returning to the body. Of 20 individuals with awareness of onset sensations, 75% reported sensations of return, whereas 25% did not ($p = .0009$, two-tailed). Similar analyses of the overlap between onset and termination of OBEs following Crookall's (1964) observations showed significant results at the 1% level or less regarding losing consciousness (80% vs. 20%),

I am grateful to the Parapsychology Foundation and to the Society for Psychical Research for financial support of my OBE Studies.

Address correspondence to Carlos S. Alvarado, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, Scotland EH8 9JZ.

reports of dark tunnels, enclosures, or places (60% vs. 40%), and reports of finding the self in a horizontal position over the physical body (76% vs. 24%).

These results should be replicated with larger samples, because my analyses depended on a small number of OBE reports. However, my results were not consistent with Irwin's analyses, suggesting that there are interrelationships between features of the OBE occurring at different parts of the experience. This research will help us to start mapping the features of the OBE; thus we will be able (a) to obtain a more complete view of the variety of its phenomenology and (b) to develop empirically derived typologies and testable models of the experience.

REFERENCES

- Alvarado, C. S. (1984). Phenomenological aspects of out-of-body experiences: A report of three studies. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 78, 219-240.
- Crookall, R. (1964). *More astral projections*. London: Aquarian Press.
- Green, C. (1968). *Out-of-the-body experiences*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Greyson, B. (1985). A typology of near-death experiences. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 142, 967-969.
- Hart, H. (1954). ESP projection: Spontaneous cases and the experimental method. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 48, 121-146.
- Irwin, H. J. (1985). *Flight of mind: A psychological study of the out-of-body experience*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Received March 16, 1994

NOV
rece
press
defic
Now
perf
lems
Cop
partn