

Carlos S Alvarado

Carlos S Alvarado (1955–2021) was a researcher, author and educator in the field of parapsychology. His writings focused in particular on the history of early psychical research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He also wrote on spontaneous anomalous experiences, notably the out-of-body experience, and explored the relationship between psychology and parapsychological phenomena.

Life and Career

Carlos Salvador Alvarado was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on 9 March 1955. His Puerto Rican father was pursuing a PhD in urban planning at Harvard University, which he never completed because he was called back to the island to take up a government position there. Carlos grew up in Puerto Rico and received his BA in psychology from the University of Puerto Rico in 1978, then returned to the United States mainland. He was awarded an MSc in parapsychology by John F Kennedy University (Pleasant Hill, California) in 1981, an MA in history by Duke University (Durham, North Carolina) in 1989, and a PhD in psychology by the University of Edinburgh in 1997.^[1]

Alvarado contributed significantly towards promoting education in parapsychology, collaborating with his wife [Nancy L Zingrone](#). He wrote extensively on the histories of psychology, psychiatry, and psychical research. Other interests included out-of-body experiences and other anomalous phenomena. His research was funded by the [BIAL Foundation](#), the Perrott-Warrick Fund in Cambridge, the [Society for Psychical Research](#) (SPR) and other organizations.

In addition to his many print publications, Alvarado contributed twenty articles to the *Psi Encyclopedia*.^[2] For information on his professional positions and awards, see the section [Professional Posts and Honours](#), below.

Alvarado was stricken with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer, late in 2020 and died 16 July 2021 at his home in Carrboro, North Carolina, aged 66.

Educational Outreach

Alvarado and Zingrone contributed to education in parapsychology and were involved in online teaching activities related to the field. These activities included a dedicated YouTube channel, *Parapsychology Online*; a virtual research and education institute that hosts online classrooms on the AZIRE Moodle^[3] and other online learning management systems; together with the AZIRE Library and Learning Center in the virtual world Second Life.^[4] Since 2015, *Parapsychology Online* has hosted the ParaMOOC,^[5] a series of high quality online webinars by leading experts in the field of parapsychology (it is free to join and its recordings are freely available).^[6]

Historical Research

Alvarado's interest in writing about the old literature had two aspects: to inform current workers/readers about a forgotten past, giving perspective, and to help generate ideas and hypotheses for research and evaluate phenomena and theoretical issues.^[7]

Alvarado also underlined, in places such as the journal *History of Psychiatry*, the contribution of psychical research to the development of ideas in psychology and psychiatry, such as dissociation and the unconscious mind.^[8]

Théodore Flournoy

With [Everton Maraldi](#), Alvarado reviewed writings in psychical research by Swiss psychologist Théodore Flournoy, in particular his classic investigation of the trance medium Héléne Smith. Their detailed discussion can be found in *History of Psychiatry*.^[9] In addition to mental mediumship, Flournoy investigated physical mediums and analysed the research literature of telepathy and precognition.^[10]

See also Alvarado's [Psi Encyclopedia entry on Flournoy](#).

Eusapia Palladino

Eusapia Palladino, an Italian physical medium, was investigated by reputable scientists in many European countries towards the end of the nineteenth century. She demonstrated a wide repertoire of phenomena under good observing conditions, although her reputation is coloured by a propensity to cheat when opportunity allowed. In a 1993 paper, Alvarado looked beyond Palladino's importance to researchers, presenting her as an exemplar of the way a gifted subject, through her characteristics and behaviours such as acts of fraud, and verbal statements about the nature of the phenomena, shaped public perceptions of mediumship.^[11]

Alvarado reviewed a memoir article penned by Palladino during a visit to New York in 1910, speculating that she hoped it would improve her reputation in a country that had previously demonstrated scepticism. He compared certain of the article's details to the contemporaneous impressions of others, finding agreement in the genuineness of at least some of the phenomena.^[12]

See also Alvarado's [Psi Encyclopedia entry on Palladino](#).

Charles Richet

Alvarado wrote about Charles Richet, a French physiologist and Nobel prizewinner who experimented extensively with mediums and psychics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alvarado's book *Charles Richet: A Nobel Prize Winning Scientist's Exploration of Psychic Phenomena*^[13] described Richet's work and views in detail.

See also Alvarado's [Psi Encyclopedia entry on Richet](#).

Out-of-Body Experiences

Psychological Aspects

In a report published in 1999, Alvarado, Zingrone and Kathy Dalton investigated [out-of-body experiences](#), using psychological data obtained from an artistic population in a [ganzfeld telepathy experiment](#).^[14] OBEs were explored in relation to spontaneous psychic experiences, alteration of consciousness, lucid dreams, openness to experience, and alterations of consciousness during the ganzfeld. Individuals who reported out-of-body experiences also experienced a greater number of parapsychological and dissociative experiences than those in the non-OBE group. The pattern of results supported Blackmore's OBE model, which considers out-of-body experiences to be part of a continuum of more general spontaneous experiences.

By 1982, experimental OBE research had become established in parapsychology. Alvarado reviewed thirteen studies, in six of which he found significant evidence of ESP perception (one study contained extremely significant effects ($p = 0.000025$), although it was of suspect quality).^[15] Some of the studies tested psychokinetic effects using sensitive electronic detectors and targets that in one

instance included a pet kitten – approaches that both gave significant evidence of PK. However, despite some striking successes, the evidence surveyed in this report was found to be weak. Alvarado concluded that OBE research needs to focus as much on understanding the experience itself as proving psi.^[16]

In a 2016 paper, Alvarado discussed accounts of out-of-body experiences – both historical and recent – that occurred during everyday activities such as talking, driving vehicles and playing musical instruments (in contrast with those that occur during a state of unconsciousness or relaxation).^[17] Alvarado considered that waking OBEs hold promise in understanding the dissociative state, and encourages further research.

Robert Crookall

Alvarado described the work of geologist Robert Crookall, whose projection model of the out-of-body experience, based on an analysis of published cases, considers that consciousness leaves the body. Alvarado critiqued weak definitions, the low number of cases, and misclassifications. In his own analysis of new cases, unlike Crookall, he failed to find either a core experience or any clear difference between naturally occurring and induced out-of-body experiences.^[18]

Complexity and After-Effects

In an exploratory study by Alvarado and Zingrone of the after-effects of out-of-body-experiences, a relationship was predicted between the complexity of the OBE and the degree of positive effects. This was found in a survey of 88 OBE respondents, as were weaker but still significant correlations between religiosity, OBE frequency and OBEs at will, and the degree of positive after-effects.^[19]

Exceptional Experiences

Hauntings

In a 1995 report, Alvarado and Zingrone analysed 172 haunting cases collected by Alan Gauld and A.D. Cornell in the 1970s. They predicted that hauntings that included the perception of an apparition would reveal more indications of an intelligent agency than those that did not. This prediction was not confirmed; however, a greater frequency of physical phenomena was found in the apparition group, such as strange object movements and unexplained breakages, and such cases were also more detailed.^[20]

Auras

In a 2009 report, Zingrone, Alvarado and Natasha Agee explored the psychological variables associated with aura vision. Aura experiencers reported more visual imagery, fantasy-like experiences and meditation practice than controls. Aura vision is related to visual imagery and fantasy, it was concluded.^[21] In an earlier survey, an association between synaesthesia and seeing auras was found across five studies.^[22]

Synaesthesia was explored in the latter study,^[23] not in the initial one. The latter study also found relationships with psychic experiences and dissociation, including absorption and depersonalization experiences.

Synaesthetic Experiences

With [Christine Simmonds-Moore](#), Alvarado and Zingrone ran a large online survey exploring the relationship between exceptional and synaesthetic experiences and schizotypy (which is

characterized by unusual patterns of thinking that can predispose to schizophrenia). Over half (54.4%) of respondents reported one or more synaesthetic experiences. There was a significant positive relationship between increasing synaesthesia and the number of exceptional experiences.^[24]

Spontaneous ESP

In a 2008 publication, Alvarado and Zingrone discussed research carried out by [Ian Stevenson](#) into spontaneous ESP, whose importance Stevenson continued to assert at a time when experimental research was the dominant force in parapsychology. Stevenson developed a high quality investigative approach that combined face-to-face interviews with independent corroboration of testimonies and data preservation. These methodological advances became more apparent when Stevenson began to focus on reincarnation case studies in the 1960s, Alvarado and Zingrone observe.^[25]

Professional Posts and Honours

Professional Positions

Alvarado was Research Assistant to Stevenson at the University of Virginia from 1982 to 1986 and was Assistant Professor of Research in Psychiatric Medicine at the [Division of Perceptual Studies](#) (DOPS) at the University of Virginia from 2003 to 2015.

Among his many other professional positions and activities, Alvarado taught parapsychology at the Centro Caribeño de Estudios Postgraduados (the Caribbean Center for Advanced Studies, now Albizu University)^[26] in San Juan, Puerto Rico (1996–2000); served on the dissertation committees at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras (1995–99); and was a member of the adjunct research faculty at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) in Palo Alto, California (2004–20).^[27]

Alvarado was the Chairman of Domestic and International Programs at the [Parapsychology Foundation](#) (PF) from 2000 to 2008, volunteering occasionally from 2008 through 2014, and in January 2015 was named the PF's first Research Fellow. He was Scholar in Residence at [Atlantic University](#), Virginia Beach, Virginia, from 2010 to 2013, and a member of the Advisory Board of the [Rhine Research Center](#) Durham, North Carolina, from 2011 to 2014. From 2016 to 2020, he served on the Scientific Board of the [BIAL Foundation](#).^[28]

From 1999 to 2001, Alvarado was an Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Parapsychology*. He has served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Near-Death Studies* (2001–20) and the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (2007–20). He was an associate editor of the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* from 2009 to 2020 and Book Review Editor of the *Journal of Parapsychology* from 2017 to 2020.^[29]

Alvarado was elected to the Board of Directors of the professional [Parapsychological Association](#) (PA) for the periods 1990–95, 1997–99, 2000–1 and 2002–3, and President twice, first in 1995 and the again for the 2002–3 term.^[30]

For a complete list of Alvarado's professional positions and activities, see his [curriculum vitae](#).

Honours and Awards

Alvarado was the recipient of the PA's Outstanding Career Award in 2017, the PA's Outstanding Contribution Award in 2010, and the Harold and Sherry Crasilneck Award for Best First Paper on Hypnosis published in the *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* in 2010.^[31]

Published Works

Alvarado was one of the most prolific writers in parapsychology. A selected list of his publications from 1996 onwards can be found [here](#); a comprehensive list is included in his [curriculum vitae](#). A few representative works are included in the Literature list of this article.

Michael Duggan and James G Matlock

Literature

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References

Footnotes

- 1.^ See Alvarado's [curriculum vitae](#).
- 2.^ See [here](#) for a list of Alvarado's contributions to the *Psi Encyclopedia*.
- 3.^ <http://theazire.org/moodle/>
- 4.^ See <https://theazire.org/the-azire-in-second-life/>.
- 5.^ <http://parapsychologyonline.org/>
- 6.^ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFfoa01t2uY&list=PLFuPOenrOTk46R92OxcObarisOBteOfKg>.
- 7.^ Alvarado (1982b).
- 8.^ Alvarado (2010, 2015).
- 9.^ Maraldi & Alvarado (2018).
- 10.^ Alvarado et al. (2014).
- 11.^ Alvarado (1993).
- 12.^ Alvarado (2011).
- 13.^ Alvarado (2019).
- 14.^ Alvarado, Zingrone, & Dalton (1998–99).
- 15.^ Mitchell (1973).
- 16.^ Alvarado (1982a).
- 17.^ Alvarado (2016).
- 18.^ Alvarado (2012).
- 19.^ Alvarado & Zingrone (2003).
- 20.^ Zingrone & Alvarado (1995).
- 21.^ Zingrone, Alvarado, & Agee (2009).
- 22.^ Alvarado & Zingrone (1994).
- 23.^ Simmonds-Moore, Alvarado, & Zingrone (2019).
- 24.^ Simmonds-Moore, Alvarado, & Zingrone (2019).
- 25.^ Alvarado & Zingrone (2008).
- 26.^ See <https://www.albizu.edu/about-us/>.
- 27.^ <https://www.parapsych.org/users/carlos/profile.aspx>
- 28.^ See Alvarado's [curriculum vitae](#).
- 29.^ See Alvarado's [curriculum vitae](#).
- 30.^ See Alvarado's [curriculum vitae](#).

31. [^] <https://www.parapsych.org/users/carlos/profile.aspx>

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