

This is an English summary of the article “¿Puede la mente salir del cuerpo? Marina Weiler: la neurocientífica que está poniendo a prueba los límites de la conciencia,” published on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, by Rose Elizondo in *La Tribuna del País Vasco*.

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The article profiles neuroscientist Marina Weiler and her work at the Division of Perceptual Studies, where she investigates one of the most challenging questions in science: the nature of consciousness. Trained in mainstream biomedical research, Weiler built her career using advanced neuroimaging techniques to study brain function and neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's. Her early work aligned with the dominant scientific paradigm, which views the brain as the generator of the mind and consciousness as a product of neural activity.

Over time, however, her research focus shifted. Rather than only asking how the brain works, she began exploring whether the brain fully explains the mind, or whether it might act instead as an intermediary or filter for processes not entirely reducible to biology. This shift led her to DOPS, a research group known for studying phenomena often considered controversial, including near-death experiences, extrasensory perception, and mediumship.

A central focus of Weiler's work is the study of out-of-body experiences (OBEs), in which individuals report perceiving themselves from a location outside their physical bodies. Traditionally dismissed as purely subjective or anecdotal, these experiences have been difficult to study scientifically. Weiler approaches them differently: she identifies individuals who can voluntarily induce such states and examines their brain activity under controlled laboratory conditions using tools like functional MRI, eye tracking, and physiological monitoring.

Her findings suggest that these experiences are not entirely random or purely imagined. In some cases, they are associated with reproducible patterns of brain activity, shifting the discussion from personal testimony to measurable data. This does not, however, settle the question of what these experiences are. One interpretation is that they are complex illusions generated by the brain, possibly linked to disruptions in how the brain integrates sensory information and represents the body. This view is consistent with the prevailing materialist model of neuroscience.

At the same time, the data leave open a more provocative possibility: that current models may not fully explain these phenomena. Weiler does not claim definitive conclusions, but she highlights that no existing explanation completely accounts for the observed patterns. This uncertainty connects to what philosopher David Chalmers has termed the “hard problem” of consciousness—the question of why subjective experience exists at all, beyond the brain's physical processes.

While neuroscience has made significant advances in mapping brain activity and identifying neural correlates of consciousness, it still cannot fully explain how or why conscious experience arises. By studying extreme or unusual states—such as OBEs and other non-ordinary

perceptions—Weiler’s work pushes the boundaries of current understanding and tests whether existing frameworks are sufficient.

Her research occupies a complex position within the scientific community. On one hand, it is grounded in rigorous methods and contributes to established fields like neuroimaging. On the other, its subject matter places it at the edge of scientific inquiry, where skepticism and curiosity coexist. Some researchers see this work as a necessary expansion into unresolved questions, while others worry it risks blurring the line between empirical science and speculation.

Ultimately, Weiler’s contribution lies not in providing definitive answers, but in reframing the questions. By bringing controversial topics into controlled experimental settings, she opens them to systematic study. Her work suggests that, despite major advances in neuroscience, fundamental aspects of consciousness remain unexplained—and that science may need to broaden its approach to fully understand the relationship between mind and brain.