

To the Editor:

More on the null hypothesis

Thanks to Paul Stevens (2026) for his reply. My original letter encouraged researchers to include the possibility of psi not existing when they explore a null result. Stevens argues that such results can only be seen as showing that psi did not occur under specific experimental conditions and cannot be extrapolated beyond that. I see the point, but I believe that researchers should explore both options. Let's look at two imaginary scenarios.

(1) A researcher notices that spontaneous paranormal experiences frequently occur during dreaming and conducts a study in which participants try to predict the future in their dreams. The study obtains a null result. The researcher can explore this finding in two main ways. First, they can assume that the psi-dreaming effect is genuine and attribute the null result to an aspect of the experiment (e.g., the study used every dream report, whereas it should have focused on those that were especially striking). Second, they can assume that the psi-dreaming effect is spurious and question the original claim (e.g., could the reports of spontaneous experiences be the result of selective reporting or poor recall?).

(2) Previous studies suggest that older people obtain higher psi scores than younger people. A researcher runs an experiment to replicate this alleged effect and obtains a null result. Once again, this finding could be explored from two main perspectives. First, the researcher could assume the psi-age effect is genuine and attribute the null result to experimental conditions (e.g., in the original studies the participants claimed to be psychic, whereas in the replication they did not). Second, they could assume that the psi-age effect is spurious and question the original studies (e.g., were the positive effects due to chance or undetected artifacts?).

In my experience, parapsychologists readily discuss ways in which null results could be the result of experimental conditions and tend to ignore the idea of null results being due to the absence of psi. Being more open to the possibility of psi not existing will help parapsychologists remain alert to possible non-psi factors at play and avoid appearing biased toward the validity of the psi hypothesis.

It is for these reasons that I would like to see *JSPR* editors and reviewers supporting this practice.

r.wiseman@herts.ac.uk

RICHARD WISEMAN

REFERENCES

- Stevens, P. (2026). Response to Richard Wiseman's letter (The null hypothesis). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 90(3), 224. <https://doi.org/10.63499/y7n5g492>