

Do You Believe in Life After Love?

Evidence from SHARE

Enda Patrick Hargaden

NUI Galway

April 1, 2022

Abstract

This paper analyzes the effects of divorce on self-reported life expectancy. Exploiting the panel nature of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) data, I estimate if people believe in life after love. Consistent with Cher (1998) a bifurcated grip-strength measure controlling for whether people believe they aren't strong enough is associated with lower life expectancy. While history of psychosis ("feel something inside me say I really don't think you're strong enough") appears to reduce life expectancy, evidence of its interaction with individual-level strength is limited.

JEL Codes: J12, I31, K36.

Keywords: Life expectancy, marital dissolution, family law, tunes.

1 Introduction

As argued by Cher (1998), jilted lovers can struggle to believe in life after separation. While that work is mostly qualitative, I tackle the question quantitatively.

Exploiting the panel nature of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) data, this paper asks if people believe in life after love. More specifically, I analyze the effects of divorce and marital dissolution on self-reported life expectancy. Crucially, my analysis controls for potentially confounding variables. Firstly, using a bifurcated measure of grip-strength (“*not strong enough*”) I account for individual-level resilience. Secondly, drawing inspiration from the seminal work on the topic (“*feel something inside me say I really don’t think you’re strong enough*”), I investigate if hearing negative voices affects self-reported life expectancy. To achieve this, my preferred specification includes a variable measuring whether the person has ever been admitted to a psychiatric hospital in both levels and interacted with the ‘not strong enough’ variable. Thirdly, as a robustness check I control for household income and age, because that seems appropriate. I cluster my standard errors at the individual level.

2 Empirical Results

The main results of the paper are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Effects of marital separation on life expectancy/belief in life

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
After Love	1.15 (0.8)	1.39* (0.8)	1.37* (0.8)	1.35* (0.8)	1.35* (0.8)
Not Strong Enough			-2.02*** (0.2)	-2.02*** (0.2)	
Voices Inside (Proxy)				-2.36*** (0.8)	
<i>Voices Inside</i> × <i>Not Strong Enough</i>					0.19 (1.7)
Income and Age Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Person & Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	202,548	202,548	202,548	202,548	202,548

3 Discussion

The results provide strong evidence that people do indeed believe in life after love. In all specifications, the effect of marital separation on longevity is positive. In particular, the dependent variable is self-reported probability of living another five years. The interpretation of the coefficients is that separation increases this self-reported probability by about one percent. People do indeed believe in life after love, even slightly longer life after losing that useless ex-spouse.

Consistent with the hypotheses proposed by Cher (1998), I find below-median grip strength (“Not Strong Enough”) reduces life expectancy, and similarly the proxy for negative voices also enters with a negative coefficient. There is no evidence of interactions between these effects; the implications of this for overall welfare is beyond the scope of this paper.

References

- Börsch-Supan, Axel**, “Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE),” *Wave 8. Release version: 8.0.0*, 2022. Data set. DOI: 10.6103/SHARE.w8.800.
- Sarkisian, Cherilyn (aka *Cher* or *The Goddess of Pop*)**, *Believe*, Dreamhouse Studios (London), 1998. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZXRv4MezEw>.