

Scott, Laura S. (2009). Two is Enough: A Couple's Guide to living Childless by Choice. Berkeley: Seal Press.

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Laura S. Scott's book, "Two is Enough," provides modern insight regarding those who decide to lead lives absent of children. Laura creates a platform for the childless by choice through her project by devising a questionnaire and conducting interviews. Scott worked alongside two sociologists and a statistician to complete her project. She also enlisted the founder of an international club for the childfree to help gather participants. 171 volunteers were recruited for this research project, ranging in age from twenty-two to sixty-six. Seventy-one percent of qualified respondents were female, and twenty-nine percent were male. The sample was not large enough to be representative of the childless by choice, but Scott had enough participants for a qualitative survey, and enough data to do a statistical analysis (p. 7). To prepare for the in-person interviews, Laura devised a list of questions designed to explore how couples arrived at the conclusion to live a childfree life. This included their motivations, their decision-making process, how their families responded, how they dealt with the pressure, stigmas, and assumptions, and how they perceived their relationship (p. 112).

Laura organized the participants into four categories based on their reasoning for living childfree. The first are called early articulators, and the members of this group are those who make the choice to remain childless early on in their lives. Generally, they do so without the influence of a significant other. The second are postponers, who put off having a family, and therefore remain without children. Thirdly, acquiescers entail those who make the decision to

remain childless primarily because their partners do not wish to have children. Lastly, the undecided are couples still in the decision-making process (p. 16). From the sample of 171 participants, 113 (sixty-six percent) were early articulators, thirty-seven (twenty-one and a half percent) were postponers, fifteen (nine percent) were acquiescers, and six (three and a half percent) self identified as undecided.

Laura voices that we complete tasks sequentially based on priority, necessity, or tradition (p. 23), and that in our society today, we are increasingly making our decisions based on a variety of competing opportunities and responsibilities. Since the production of the birth control pill, women have had the ability to postpone motherhood, or avoid it all together. The decision to live a childfree life is both a choice and process. Scott described it as a series of preferences and selections in which life experiences, observations, and people act as influencers (p. 44). Three assumptions exist in regards to parenthood. First, it is expected that all individuals will at some point in their life, become a parent. Second, parenthood is viewed as a critical stage in human development. Third, all partners should be encouraged to become parents, regardless of their ability or desire (p. 45).

To gather necessary data, Laura put together a questionnaire featuring eighteen motive statements. These were chosen after identifying the most commonly cited reasons for remaining childless in literature she had read. The participants were encouraged to rate each of these declarations out of five, to indicate their applicability to their own choice to exist childfree. All of the respondents in the Childless by Choice Project survey strongly identified with at least three of the eighteen motives. The top three motivations were chosen because they were rated a four or five on the given scale by over sixty percent. The top statement, based on popular vote entailed

that the relationship that the individual was in was adored by that person, and that a child would not enhance it. Eighty-nine percent of men and eighty-three percent of women identified strongly with this declaration. In regards to age, this was the top motivator for those aged forty and older. The second most prevalent statement asserted the value of freedom and independence. Seventy eight percent of men and eighty two percent of women. This was the top motivator for those aged twenty to thirty-nine. The third statement that was most resonated with comprised of the attitude against taking on the responsibility of raising a child. Eighty-two percent of men and seventy percent of women identified with this motivator.

Scott theorized that certain personality types are more inclined to remain childless than others (p. 71). In her surveys, she noticed a pattern in that many of the individuals described themselves as introverts, with a preference for households that provided them with quiet personal time. Another aspect present was that numerous individuals interviewed admitted to being careful planners. Various participants approached the decision of having children with more logic than emotion. Laura, who amongst her participants is disinterested in parenthood expresses common assumptions regarding the decision to refrain from raising children. These include that the childless by choice are selfish, do not like kids, are immature, materialistic, and are unfulfilled. Other conjectures are that the childfree will regret their decision, and that the choice they made was easy. Two last assumptions are that everyone is capable of being a “good” parent, and that pets are child substitutes for the childless by choice (pp. 155-168). Among the couples Scott interviewed, many found difficulty in identifying the downsides to their decision based on their experience alone. However, some disadvantages did surface. Social isolation, end of life concerns, and finding a mate were three of the negative aspects brought into light. Other

downsides expressed were parenthood privilege, birth control issues, the lack of understanding and legitimacy, and the big question of “what if” (pp. 184-192).

Laura S. Scott’s intention in her project was to give a voice to those who are rarely heard. Scott states that she is hopeful that her work reaches the hands of both those who want and need these stories, and to whom the information is timely or instructive (p. 12). The contents of this book are not directed towards any particular group besides the curious. The materials provided, though from different sources, are limited in that it does not represent the childless by choice. The sample was relatively small in size compared to the population of North America, let alone the world. Although Scott interviewed a number of couples consisting of individuals from cultural backgrounds that differentiated from the west, these interviews were conducted in a progressive region of the world. Though family members and peers may fail to understand or disagree with a couple’s choice to remain childfree, in North America it is more socially acceptable in contrast to more traditional societies. Laura voices that materials collected in order to launch this project were scarce and from particular biased perspectives. Content was dated and it was her goal to attain more modern information regarding the decision and process of being childless by choice. Not a particular fault that was her own in that more recent data was limited, but perhaps the survey would have been constructed differently if she conducted her research based on contemporary findings.

Scott is effective in both simplifying concepts and engaging the reader in complex ideas. This book is a tool for couples and academics in that it is an excellent resource that provides both new and familiar perspectives and ideas. Disciplines that may benefit from this book could entail sociology, women and gender studies, education, and perhaps psychology. The style in which the

book is written informs, entertains, and captures its reader. “Two is Enough” is a book that resonated with myself as an individual who does not have an incline to become a parent, and I thoroughly enjoyed each second spent reading the content within. This book was both informative and amusing as a result from the various perspectives voiced on paper. In reading the material, I felt comfort in my own beliefs and at times questioned them. I recommend this book to anyone and everyone. Regardless of where you may stand on the matter discussed in Scott’s work, I strongly believe that being open to listening to the perspectives and experiences of others creates a strong community based on understanding.