

Scott, L.S. (2009). Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice.
Berkeley: Seal Press.

Reviewed by: Amber Pfliger, MacEwan University

In the book, “Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice”, author Laura S. Scott provides an in-depth analysis into the lives of couples who choose to remain childless. Sparked by her own encounter with daunting parents questioning her decision to remain childless, she embarked on a four-year research mission titled the Childless by Choice Project. This project was an effort to better understand what kind of individuals choose not to have children, and their personal motives in doing so (p. 11). Throughout the book, Scott encompasses the emotionality behind the decision process of child rearing as an option, and provokes the notion that societal changes reflect an individual wish to reproduce. Moreover, her ability to entertain both sides of the Childless by Choice perspective allows for a wholesome understanding of why there is a divide amongst those who have children, and those who do not.

Scott’s primary research method for her Childless by Choice Project was conducted through a series of interviews in combination with a Likert scale which measured an individual’s agreement on eighteen motive statements. These motive statements varied from “I value my freedom and independence” to “I am concerned about the state of the world and I do not think it would be wise to bring a child into it” (pp. 234-235). These motive statements cover a variety of reasons as to why individuals would refrain from child rearing, and embodies an inclusivity that engages multiple perspectives. After compiling the results of the motive statements and with the approval of statistician Dr. Charles Hudson, they noted that the evidence was sufficient to carry

forth with the study and render statistically relevant results (p. 8). In addition, Scott integrates her quantitative research with in depth interviews of the chosen couples which allows for a well-rounded analysis of the core reasoning behind the childless by choice movement.

Early in the book, Scott indicates her stance as an early articulator of a childless life, arguing that she decided on her reproductive fate at the age of fifteen (p. 42). Although her opinions on child rearing are clearly defined, she refrains from interjecting with any personal bias she may have towards those who have children. This ability has allowed Scott to incorporate the perspectives of a diverse community with an unbiased perspective. Additionally, her personal interviews with childless couples further indicates legitimacy in her stance. Interestingly, her use of an informal interviewing style enables her to connect with her respondents on a more intimate level, which demonstrates her intent to truly understand their perspectives. Regardless, staying true to her writing style, Scott interjects her observations with humorous anecdotes that allows the reader to jest alongside the author when considering the deficits of modern parenting. Overall, she is consistent and respectful while continuously reinforcing the concept of free choice while encouraging couples to formulate their own perspectives.

Within the book, Scott places an emphasis on the categories of individuals who choose to remain childless, indicating a multitude of factors that contribute to their decision-making process. Scott identifies these groups as follows: (1) the early articulators, regarding the individuals who rejected parenting as an option early in life, (2) the postponers, which acknowledges those who had delayed child rearing and ultimately decided to remain child free, (3) the acquiescers, those who are signified by the choice to remain childfree as the result of their partner remaining child free, and lastly (4) the undecided, referring to those who are still in the

decision-making process of whether or not to child rear (p. 16). Scott's ability to identify these groups of childless individuals helps further illustrate to the reader the expansive network of individuals and the community it represents. However, it neglects the possibility that there are individuals who may not resonate with one of these categories. Therefore, we may consider a unidentified group to be a possibility.

I would argue that this unidentified group may represent those who at one point decided that they were to remain childless, but ultimately changed their mind. This is mentioned in the book where Scott is attempting to interview a woman named Tara, who admits she may not be a suitable candidate for the project as her perspective on child rearing has shifted (pp. 64-65). I believe that this change in perspective could have been further explored, and would have aided in a comprehensive understanding of why some couples may change their minds. As well, it would have worked in favour of Scott's study as it would have emphasized why someone who did not originally want children retracted their previous stance and what motivators characterized this change. However, I do acknowledge that the purpose and goal of Scott's study was to determine why couples do not have children, rather than why they do. Therefore, adding this unidentified group could have contradicted her original research plan in the Childless by Choice Project.

Furthermore, this categorical emphasis allows readers to identify themselves within a community and comprehend their place within society. As she mentions in the book, many childless by choice couples feel isolated in a society which remains planted in the expectation for married couples to child rear (pp. 69-71). Additionally, she provides insight towards the assumptions society often makes about the childless by choice population. For instance, it is assumed that many couples who do not have children do not like children (p. 155). Scott pushes

back against this rhetoric by stating the significant number of couples she did indeed work with children in some capacity. This ranged from school teachers to youth care advocates, concluding that most of the Childless by Choice couples preferred to be around children and valued children's roles within society.

Ultimately, Laura Scott's qualitative study on the childless by choice provides excellent insight as to why a larger number of individuals are deciding not to have children, and the social factors that contribute to this choice. Her ability to incorporate both humor and a humanistic approach to her work makes reading "Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice" both pleasurable, entertaining and informative. Furthermore, her in-depth analysis of childless by choice couples creates a diverse perspective for her readers to consider, and engages with the notion that having children is not for everyone. Specifically, it encourages individuals to diverge from the premise that marriage acts as a prerequisite for children, and vice versa.

Overall, I would consider "Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice" by Laura Scott to be an excellent resource for couples who are in the decision-making process of having children, or for singles who are considering a childless life. As well, I would recommend this book to both friends and family to better formulate an understanding as to why they, or their loved one, may feel hesitant towards child rearing, as it would provide insight and an alternative perspective. Regarding academics, this book could be proved useful to many disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Specifically, Scott opens a platform for other sociologists to expand on the alternative debate as to why couples do have children. Professionals in occupations such as counselling or family social services may also find interest in this book as it provides insight into the intimate thoughts of couples concerning expectations of marriage and family.

Pfliger

In conclusion, “Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice” was an excellent read that provided a consistent layer of analysis that was both interesting and relatable. In addition, I found Laura Scott’s writing style easy to follow, non-invasive and sprinkled with enough humour that kept the pages turning and therefore I will be recommending it to others in the future.