

Scott, L. (2009). Two is Enough: A Couple's Guide to Living Childless By Choice.
Berkeley: Seal Press.

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Laura Scott's book, "Two is Enough", is a publication that discusses and attempts to reveal the underlying reasons to why certain individuals choose to remain childfree. In this publication, Scott challenges the notion emphasizing parenthood as a rite of passage. In addition, she recognizes the social pressure and the inquisition that comes along with making such a conscious decision. To validate her findings, 117 respondents were asked to participate in surveys and interviews. The interviewees were childfree, Scott's research was to uncover the basis as to why. Throughout the study, Scott devised a list of eighteen motivations; this was done to uncover the motive that is most prevalent in the decision-making process of those who are childless. Moreover, she states that there are four different types of people; the early articulators, postponers, acquiescers, and undecided. Structurally, this publication yields several subdivisions that coherently expresses her findings and personal beliefs.

In Scott's work, she briefly mentions her old high school teacher, Miss Vickers. Miss Vickers was a teacher who ultimately decided to remain childfree and became a "role model for something different" (p. 23). Scott was confused as to why Miss Vickers decided to remain childfree "since she clearly enjoyed working with us kids" (p. 13). Much to her surprise, Scott discovered that there were many women like Miss Vickers around the world. Miss Vickers ultimately showed Scott that "it was possible to be childless and happy" (p. 14). As an individual who chose to be childfree, as well as, a sociologist, Scott was curious "to determine the most

compelling motives to remain childfree, and to better understand the decision-making process of the childless by choice” (p. 6). For this reason, she created the “Childless By Choice Project”.

Since Scott is childless herself, she felt she could relate with her respondents, as these individuals are usually “...wary of being judged or analyzed by those who couldn’t imagine a life without kids...” (p. 5)

Within the “Childless By Choice Project”, Scott identified four categories that described childless individuals. The first of the four categories are the early articulators. These individuals are those who have made the decision to remain without a child from an early age. Out of the 117 respondents, 113 have identified with this perspective. The next category mentioned in the publication are the postponers. Just as the name suggests, the decision to have a child was pushed for a long period of time and eventually these individuals have decided to remain childfree. Thirty-seven of the respondents self-identified themselves in this category. The third group of individuals are known as acquiescers. The individuals who fall into this category make their decision based off of what they partner decided. These people follow the footsteps of their spouse/ significant other. Fifteen out of 171 respondents felt as though this label described their situation. Lastly, the lowest occurring division, with only six out of 171, the undecided, are those who are still in their decision -making process (p. 43). Scott understands that the decision process is a complex one and realized that if she were to have interviewed a postponer or acquiescer in a time prior, they would have been undecided as well (p. 43). The categorization gives her some insight into how people make the decision. Along with this, Scott created a theory, which states “certain personality types are more inclined to remain childless than others” (p. 71). It was found that most of her interviewees described themselves as introverts; according to her theory, one with an introverted personality tends to prefer a more tranquil living

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environment, which can serve as a charging station for these individuals. She also noticed that her respondents “approached their decision about whether to have kids very deliberately- logically, rather than emotionally” (p. 72). Although, she was not able to have all her respondents complete a personality test to prove her theory, these were the trends she noticed amongst the group.

Scott highlighted eighteen motivations as to why people remain childless. She asked her respondents to rate these from a scale of 0-5 to show how applicable these are to the respondents. Out of the eighteen motives, six were found to yield the highest:

1. I love our life, our relationship, as it is, and having a child won't enhance it
2. I value freedom and independence
3. I do not want to take on the responsibility of raising a child
4. I have no desire to have a child, no maternal/ paternal instinct
5. I want to accomplish/ experience things in life that would be difficult to do if I were a parent
6. I want to focus my time and energy on my own interests, needs, or goals (p. 222)

On a scale of zero to five, these six motivators were rated highly- either a four or complete five; the mean rating was greater than 3.5. The purpose of Scott providing these motives was to get qualitative and quantitative data from the survey. Additionally, it can provide insight into the thought process of those who wish to be childless. There are similarities between the survey conducted by Scott and other surveys that had taken place prior, “which suggested that the top motives people cited in the ‘70s and ‘80s [...] are as compelling today as they were thirty years ago.” (p. 110). This shows that the motives that Scott used are reliable and valid.

When discussing the motives that go along with being childfree, some may think that the motives are quite egotistic. In the text, Scott states that wishing to be childless should not be seen

as a selfish act. She argues that the reason people want children is because they would like to see an “extension of themselves” (p. 154); this can be called a selfish act. Additionally, Scott argues that if “people really loved children and just wanted a family unit, then there are orphanages around the world packed with children who need homes” (p. 153). Another disproved belief is that those who do not want kids ultimately despised kids. Although she somewhat agrees with this statement, she argues that it is not always the case; rather it is a “rejection of cultural norms, assumptions, and ideals that support parenthood as the normative life course over all other options” (p. 157). Scott believes that since we are “in a society that idealizes parenthood”, those without children must “live along the margins” (p. 170). Furthermore, Scott states that the negative connotations that are associated with being childless should be erased by the truths.

Scott’s intention for this publication was to discover the reason as to why people prefer to be childless and the overall decision- making process they go through. Through her surveys and interviews, she was able to see trends in the reasoning behind the choice of not having kids. Scott also addresses the topic of misconceptions that arise when one is childless. Through her interviews, she unmask the truth as to why people decide to be childfree. Scott is able to successfully inform readers regarding the truth in making the choice to remain childfree, as well as, some of the reasons why individual choose this route over a more socially accepted one.

“Two is Enough: A Couples Guide to Living Childless by Choice” is a favourable book for individuals who are on the fence about parenthood, young adults wanting to gain more knowledge on the topic of being childfree, or individuals who wish to understand why certain people do not want children. Moreover, this book would be good for someone who is interested or in the field of sociology or psychology.

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Scott is childfree herself, so I felt as though there was a bias in her work. For example, when she provided statistical data, the information chosen went hand in hand with the point she had mentioned; the information was partial to her findings. Another issue I had with the book was that it was quite repetitive. The information that was discussed throughout the book was repeated frequently; it seemed as though she was using repetition to further prove the points that she made. In addition, through repetition, it was as though Scott was attempting to persuade her readers to follow the same view. Furthermore, another issue encountered was in regards to the title of the publication. I believe this publication does not serve as a guide to living childless; it did not give advice or suggestions like a guide would. All in all, I believe this book is interesting, while it opens the eyes of those who want to understand why someone would be childless. Personally, I didn't find the book to be beneficial as I have made a decision for having children. If I were someone who was not sure whether I wanted kids or not, this book would have helped me make my decision. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the topics of parenthood or childhood.