

Scott, Laura S. (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 deconstruction of the main reasons why some couples do not feel the urge or desire to have children. The primary focus of this book is to help the public understand the choice of others not to have children, and to make couples who have decided not to have children feel like they are not abnormal for their decision. The book is written from a "childless by choice" perspective, rather than a "childless by circumstance" perspective, which I will explain in this review. Scott's main research for her book is taken from interviews that she conducted herself with people who have chosen not to have children as a part of her Childless by Choice Project. The Childless by Choice Project is a unique study apart from others that may have attempted to understand the reasoning of the couples who choose not to have children as Scott herself is "childless by choice" which adds a personal aspect to the book. It is also a unique book as most of the research and interviews included were conducted by Scott during her project. She explains to the readers that it is okay not to want to have children of your own, and the book includes a brief breakdown at the end including her interview process as well as the general information and statistics that she finds in her research.

Scott started the Childless by Choice Project "to survey the childfree to see if [their] realities matched the assumptions [of the general public], and to identify the most compelling motives to remain childless" (p. 5). The Childless by Choice Project took place over a span of four years with the main goal to spread information to couples who did not intend on having

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children of their own, as well as to people who may not understand why some couples do not choose to have children. During the timespan when the project took place, Scott conducted interviews with various couples of many different backgrounds including gay and lesbian couples, couples of various religious backgrounds, couples who always thought they would end up with children but later decided otherwise, and even couples who tried to have children but then found out that they were unable to conceive naturally and then decided that they ultimately would not have children and were okay with the final outcome. However, the one aspect that all the couples had in common was that they were “childless by choice” rather than “childless by circumstance.” Couples who are “childless by choice” make a conscious decision that they do not want to have children, whether the decision is made when they are fourteen years old or forty years old. “Childless by circumstance” couples wish that they had children, but for some reason they do not. This reason could be that they are unable to find a partner to raise a child with, or that they and their significant other are unable to conceive children naturally and do not have the means to have children in another way such as in-vitro or through a surrogate mother. Scott only uses couples who identify themselves as childless by choice in the Childless by Choice Project as these couples are the only ones who are able to shed light and understanding about not wanting to have children, as childless by circumstance couples may still yearn for a child even after the decision to remain childless has been made.

While some researchers in the past have attempted to determine why some couples decide not to have children, Scott’s book is unique in the sense that she herself is childless by choice. Scott identifying herself as childless by choice gives the book more of a personal feeling to it as she inserts personal stories and feelings into her writing and explains her thoughts and

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reflections on the subject. She also informs the people she is interviewing that she is childless by choice and that seems to make the respondents more open to answering the survey questions honestly as they know that they will not be judged for their answers by her. Though other research has been gathered and other books have been written on this topic, the researchers or authors may be simply doing research for the sake of getting their writing published or as part of an assignment while Scott wrote this book out of passion and curiosity for the subject as it resonates personally with her. The personal aspect to the book makes it much more interesting to read and allows the reader to be empathetic with how Scott and other childless by choice couples feel.

Another interesting aspect of Scott's book is the fact that most of the research that is included is research that Scott conducted herself. "As much of the literature was dated, cited studies that were twenty to thirty years old, [Scott's] need for more current and relevant data became apparent" (p. 219). A survey was created by Scott in order to gather couple's opinions and feelings behind why they are childless by choice. "By intention, all survey respondents were over age eighteen and residents of North America who self-identified as childless by choice" (p. 220). As the book progresses, the reader sees how passionate Scott is about the topic as her research is very thorough and took a lot of time to complete and analyze.

Results of Scott's Childless by Choice Project were nearly unanimous among those who were interviewed— many couples choose not to have children and that is perfectly okay. Even without children, it is still possible to be happy in life. Despite popular belief, the most popular reason for not wanting to have children is not a dislike for them. In fact, not liking children was not even in the top five reasons couples chose not to have children. There were many different

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reasons that surfaced among the respondents, but the most common reason for couples to not have children was reported as them having “satisfaction with their relationship and with their lives, and some feared children would be detrimental to that satisfaction” (p. 77). The second most popular statement for couples not wanting to have children was because they “value freedom and independence” (p. 79), and the third most popular reason to not have children among the interviewed couples was “not want[ing] to take on the responsibility of raising a child” (p. 80).

Another useful part of this book is the breakdown of responses to the survey that Scott conducted and a copy of the survey itself at the end. This is useful as it helps people who may be doing research on the topic to find information quickly and efficiently. It is also beneficial that Scott includes the questionnaire that she used while interviewing couples as it allows the reader to see what exact questions were asked and it shows that her methods of gathering information were sound and effective.

When Laura Scott wrote this book, she had the intentions of informing the public why some couples voluntarily choose not to have children. She also wanted to make the book a resource for couples to use if they are undecided about whether they are going to have children or not, and as a help book for couples who have decided they do not want to have children to understand that they are not alone in their decision. The only limitation that I found within the book was the lack of research that Scott included other than her own, however she states that there is not very much information that has been published regarding childless by choice couples. The types of academic audiences that would be interested in reading this book would be teachers, doctors, therapists, councillors, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, lawyers,

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and judges. Even though I do intend on having children one day, I think that this book was a very interesting read and it has helped me to understand why some couples do not choose to have children.