Interaction on NLC attitude questions about children: the ‘stroppy’ respondents

*Marian May

* Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>How was it administered?</th>
<th>How was it monitored?</th>
<th>Who recorded the data?</th>
<th>How many questions (duration)?</th>
<th>How many and who were the respondents?</th>
<th>Who was the interviewer?</th>
<th>Where were the respondents from?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewer comments</strong></td>
<td>Notes at time of interview</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>AIFS interviewers</td>
<td>Australia-wide</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structured questionnaire (all)</strong></td>
<td>CATI</td>
<td>Coded questionnaires (no audio-tapes)</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>About 299 questions (about 40 minutes)</td>
<td>2,231 male and female respondents in total</td>
<td>AIFS interviewers</td>
<td>Australia-wide</td>
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</table>

1. *Negotiating the Life Course (NLC) Survey Wave 1 1997*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-call</th>
<th>By telephone</th>
<th>Audio-tape</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>25 women from NLC Wave 1</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>NSW, ACT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structured questionnaire (part)</strong></td>
<td>By telephone</td>
<td>Audio-tape</td>
<td>AI</td>
<td>About 10 questions (4–15 minutes)</td>
<td>27 women aged 20–54 interviewed in NLC Wave 1 and WOC</td>
<td>AI</td>
<td>NSW, ACT</td>
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<td><strong>In-depth interviews</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Audio-tape</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>3 women aged 15–49 interviewed for NLC Stage 1 and WOC</td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>NSW, ACT</td>
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**Notes:** AI Annie (Pseudonym for AIFS interviewer). ACT Australian Capital Territory. AIFS Australian Institute of Family Studies. CATI Computer-assisted telephone interviews. MM Marian May. NA Not applicable. NSW New South Wales. UQ University of Queensland.
Table 2 WOC Survey sample, 1998

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<th>Pseudonym</th>
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**Notes:**  
* Age at time of Wave 1 NLC (respondents were approximately two years older by the time of the WOC telephone interview).  
* Educational level (secondary only): 1 ‘completed secondary’; 2 ‘incomplete secondary’.  
* Total number of children respondent thought she would have in future plus children already born when asked in 1997. The questions asked were: ‘How many children have you ever had?’ and ‘How many (more) children do you think you will have in the future?’.  
* Number of additional children respondent thought she would have in future when asked in 1997, in response to the question, ‘How many (more) children do you think you will have in the future?’.

**Source:** NLC 1997.
Table 3 Responses to Question 194 of 27 WOC respondents, NLC Wave 1, 1996–7 and WOC Survey, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
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<th>Statements 1–7</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 strongly agree; 2 agree; 3 mixed feelings; 4 disagree; 5 strongly disagree; R refused; -1 don’t know.
Responses that differ between the two surveys are shaded.

Sources: NLC 1997, WOC Survey 1998
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement No.</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Mixed feelings</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know/Refused</th>
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Source: WOC Interview Schedule, 1998
Negotiating the Life Course Questions 193 and 194

Q193: I’m going to read you some statements about children and I’d like you to tell me whether you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE or STRONGLY DISAGREE with each one:

Q194: Do you STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE?

1. A life without children is not fully complete 1 2 3 4 5
2. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother 1 2 3 4 5
3. Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the father 1 2 3 4 5
4. Watching children grow up is life’s greatest joy 1 2 3 4 5
5. It is better not to have children because they are such a burden 1 2 3 4 5
6. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work 1 2 3 4 5
7. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother 1 2 3 4 5

Source: NLC 1997

1 Strongly agree
2 Agree
3 Mixed feelings
4 Disagree
5 Strongly disagree

R Refused
-1 Don't know
Criteria for formulating attitude statements:

1. Avoid statements that refer to the past rather than to the present.
2. Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual.
3. Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way.
4. Avoid statements that are irrelevant to the psychological object under consideration.
5. Avoid statements that are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or by almost no one.
6. Select statements that are believed to cover the entire range of the affective range scale of interest.
7. Keep the language of the statements simple, clear, and direct.
8. Statements should be short, rarely exceeding 20 words.
9. Each statement should contain only one complete thought.
10. Statements containing universals such as all, always, none, and never often introduce ambiguity and should be avoided.
11. Words such as only, just, merely, and others of a similar nature should be used with care and moderation in writing statements.
12. Whenever possible, statements should be in the form of simple sentences rather than in the form of compound or complex sentences.
13. Avoid the use of words that may not be understood by those who are to be given the completed scale.
14. Avoid the use of double negatives.

Segment 1 Tina

65. Int: now i'm going to read through some statements about children >sorry this is my first time (^)
66. [ ] get used to <^) [so]=
67. Tina: [oh that's alright ] [hh]
68. Int: =i'm going to read through some statements about children and i'd like you to tell me whether you
69. Tin a: [oh that's alright] [hh]
70. Int: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree, with each one. a nd the first one is, a life without
71. children is not fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with that.
72. Tina: disagree.
73. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or
74. strongly disagree (^with that^)
75. Tina: agree.
76. Int: children have too great an impact on the freedom of the father. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or
77. strongly disagree
78. Tina: u:m (.) agree.
79. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy. do you
80. strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree
81. Tina: ↑oh (3.6) strongly agree.
82. Int: *strongly agree.* it is better not to have children because they are such a burden. *do you strongly agree,
83. agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.*
84. Tina: ↑u::m disagree.
85. Int: a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not
86. work. *do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.*
87. Tina: strongly agree.
88. Int: ( ) whatever career- sorry whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is that of becoming a mother. (*do you
89. strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.*)
90. Tina: (um) strongly disagree.
91. Int: *strongly disagree.* OKAY.
STATEMENT 1

Segment 2 Kristen  (Strongly agree/Strongly agree)

167. Int: and the first one is, a life without children is not
168. fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree,
169. disagree, or strongly disagree [↑weːll i think a lot of
170. Kristen: [↑weːll i think a lot of
171. people it's different but to me; because i've always
172. wanted them and because (.). hh uːm (.). my periods
173. have never been regular, it's very important to me.
174. Int: riːght. ðrɪːght⁰=
175. Kristen: =soː you knoːw (.). because i never got my periods
176. regular, and i thought i couldn't have children •hh=
177. Int: =ðrɪːght⁰=
178. Kristen: =soː to me=and because i looked after children when
179. i was younger,
180. Int: ye[aːh
181. Kristen: so[rt of knew what to do, and everything, •hh i
182. didn't feel complete unless i had children=so- (.). it
183. was very important to me, yeah.
184. Int: (ðrɪːght⁰) so a life without children is not fully
185. complete. do you agree with that.
186. Kristen: uːm (0.6) weːll- to me, if you're speaking [to øme⁰
187. Int: [↑yeeah
188. )]↑yeeah to [↑you=ðiðis is [your] own=
189. Kristen: [yeah]
190. Int: =([personal opinion]<
191. Kristen: [yeah ] uːm for me, yes. [because
192. Int: [so would
193. you- would you say you agree, or strongly agree.
194. Kristen: i'd strongly agree with [that.
195. Int: [strongly agree=
196. Kristen: =yeah=because children i think make your life really,
197. Int: =riːght=
198. Kristen: =ðøyeað⁰=
199. Int: =now the next question is ((next question))

[MMPh#6:167–99]

Segment 3 Annegret  (Mixed feelings/Mixed feelings)

88. Int: •hhhh and the first one is, a life without children is not
89. fully complete. do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or
90. strongly disa-
91. Annegret: [t! o(h) $i remember these questions from last time$
92. •hh [uː:hmmm ha ha:::

Paper prepared for the Negotiating the Life Course Workshop 17 – 18 May 2002
Marian May – Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University
93. Int: [>yeah, well you do:, (they're funny question-)]<]
94. Annegret: =$they were silly last time too$ [•hhh ]=
95. Int: [o(h) heh heh]
96. Annegret: =um heh u:m (1.0) hhh
97. (0.3)
98. Int: >>i'll read it out again.<<
99. Annegret: =>yeah no no i remember it< [um •hhh
100. Int: [>oh you remember it<
101. Annegret: hhhhhh (2.0) it's a really hard one to answer
102. becau::se (.) >you know< um life is different now
103. with a child than it was before a child, and i wouldn't-
104. •hh i mean if i hadn't had a child i probably wouldn't
105. regret not having one, but-, hh having had one, it's a
106. very (.) important part of my life [so, (.). •hhh] i c- i=
107. Int: [yeah yeah ]
108. Annegret: =don't think i can actually (1.0) °i think° i have to be
109. neutral on that one¿ hhhh=
110. Int: =sure. i'11- >i'll just read that again< a life without
111. children is not fully complete. (.) so you- you're
112. neutral, neither agree nor di[sagree.
113. Annegret: [yeah. yeah.

[MMPh#1:88–113]

STATEMENTS 2 and 3

Segment 4 Kristen  (Disagree/Disagree)

201. Int: =now the next question is, children have too - >sorry
202. the next statement< children have too great an impact
203. on the freedom of the mother. do you strongly agree,
204. a[gree,
205. Kristen: [ah what does that mean. like=--
206. Int: =>children have< too much impact °on the freedom of
207. the mother°
208. (1.0)
210. Int: a::h so children (0.3) u::m (0.3) t! (0.6) well- if
211. you- if the- if you have children,
212. Kristen: mm
213. Int: they actually inhibit the freedom of the mother. a
214. lot.
215. Kristen: what=they depend on me a lot?
216. Int: a::h so it actually means that you have a lot less
217. freedom than (°you would have if you hadn't had
218. °). [like the way the qu--
Kristen: [↑o::h-

Int: =the way the=statement is (   ),=

Kristen: =yea::h=

Int: =children (. ) inhibit your freedom too much.

Kristen: no:: i don't think so.

Int: so [now-] would you say you disagree or=

Kristen: [no. ]

Int: =strong[ly °disagree°]

Kristen: [i- d- ] i disagree with that

one. (0.3) yeah.=cos i think if you're gunna •h- i

think if you- really wanted children in the first

place, (0.6) •h u:m then it's- it's not really a job

it's- you know >the sort of thing< you enjoy doing

like anything=like if you enjoy doing something,

[*hh ] then it's not a=

Int: [yeah]

Kristen: =problem but if it's something that you've (. ) got,

and you don't know (. ) •h how to handle it, well

then it's a different kettle of fish=like] to=

Int: [yeah]

Kristen: =me, i like it because •h she fills in my time, and

she's more company.

Int: yeah. [°yeah°

Kristen: [you know than my actual husband is=which is

good to me, because i think if i didn't have

children, i think i'd f- think i'd be u:m (2.0) >not

that i have childre- children for that reason< but i-

but (. ) um i think i get a lot more out of the kids

than what i do with my own husba[nd=w ]ell=

Int: [right]

Kristen: =with both of them really, [•hh=]

Int: [yeah]

Kristen: =because (. ) they sort of- (. ) you know, he goes off

and does his own thi:ng, and i don't mind that=but

•h they're- they're very good company for me=i get

the break when she goes to kindy and things like

that, •h so i do get the break=an i've got a carer

that looks after her, so that i can go out one night

to: a restraunt >and that< so- •h but- on the whole,

(0.3) um •h no, i think it gives me something to

do=think you know y- (. ) it gives me: (. ) i think

i'd be bored silly if i didn't have kids=i'd- i

wouldn't know what to do with myself really=i think

•h they sort of fill my lif:e you know they make it

more fulfilling,

Int: °yeah°

Kristen: yea:h.
but- i mean these sort of questions- (are sort of )

Kristen: yeah. yeah.

the next- the next one is, children have too great an
impact on ((Annie goes on to the next statement))

Segment 5 Jess  (Statements 2 and 3: Disagree/Strongly disagree)

92. Int:  (º                  º) children have too great an impact
93. Jess: on the freedom of the mother. (ºdo you strongly agree
94. agree disagree or strongly disagreeº)
95. Jess: have too much impact?=
96. Int:  =yep
97. Jess: on the mother >as opposed to the father,< o:r-
98. Int:  oh well we ask that ([
99. Jess: [so t[a]-
100. Int:                              [it says children have too
101. Jess: great an impact on the freedom of the mother [(and]=
102. Jess: [yes ]
103. Int:  =the next one) children have too great an impact on the
105. Int:  oh a::h disagree::
106. Jess: disagree. and what about the father.((baby squeals))
108. Int:  >you've got strongly disagree, disagree, agree or
109. Jess: strongly agree<
110. Jess: stro- oh hang on=i'd better get him, hold on
111. (34.0)((attends to baby))
112. Jess: hello::::? huhm huhm +hh
113. Int:  you right?
114. Jess: yess. fire away=now let's see, the first of them. now-
115. Int:  just- have too great an impa::ct, [and i said, what was=
116. Jess: on this-
117. Jess: =it?
118. Int:  a:h no:w (. ) children have too great an impact on the
119. Jess: freedom of the mother. now do you strongly agree,
120. >agree, disagree or strongly disagree<
121. Jess: yeah strongly disagree actu[llly probly, ] yea::h
122. Int:  [ºstrongly disagreeº]
123. Jess: they're that- i mean- they deserve everything. i mean-
124. Int:  ºrightº (that's [ ]
125. Jess: [mm]
126. Int:  ºchildren have too great an impact on the freedom of
127. Jess: the fatherº) do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or
129. Jess: ↑o:h that's a hard one, ºisn't it.º (2.0) because it's a
very (1.0)(it's a difficult- what's the w-
the wording's so critical, (. ) because the impact isn't
just direct.=it's indirect ( .) impact. °you know,°=the
father of this one's off doing lots of overtime
[for (him)] not=

Int: [ri::ght ]
Jess: =direct impact as in [face to] face,
Int: [ i see ] °yep° but that's still

[( )]
Jess: [but they-] that's ri::ght=they um- (1.0) i don't
think they have an undue impact
Int: so you're saying it's not (direct)
Jess: mm ye:s
Int: (i'll put there just indirect impact [ ]
Jess: [mm]
Int: [ ] ((goes on to next question))
Jess: [mm]

STATEMENT 4
Segment 6 Jess (Agree/Refused)

138. Int: =^u:m (. ) watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.
do you strongly agree agree disagree or strongly disagree
139. Jess: is life's greatest joy?
140. Int: ( )
142. Jess: t! i would say one of (. ) life's greatest joys
144. Jess: [hhh ] [ha]
145. Int: huh [huh
146. Jess: [$yes i know. it's the wording=i'm terrible with these
thi[ngs$]
147. Int: [NO THAT'S OKAY, °that's o[kay°
149. Jess: [u:m (3.0) ((baby
starting to make unhappy noises)) what's the middle- o:h-
it's a- it's really hard- i thi:nk these hh HAH HAH
151. [HAH •hhh ] ^u:m (1.3) it is- well it- i think it's=
153. Int: ["huh huh huh°]
154. Jess: =one of life's greatest joys=but how can i sort of- i mean-
[•hh] it is l- it is >i mean< it- •hhh
155. Int: [mm ]
156. (1.3)
157. Int: well you could agree, but maybe not strongly
159. (1.6)
160. Jess: yea:::hh= i- (.) the wording then even-
161. Int: yeah. so i can't actually change the wording
162. Jess: that's ri:ght. [u::m
163. Int: yeah
164. Jess: ↑i ↑mean d- it is. it is. it is.magnificent. (0.6) •hh °but
165. anyway but- it's um- there are o:her things that are
166. magnificent too° •hh
167. Int: (i'll just write here,) one of life's greatest joys
168. Jess: ye:s
169. Int: ( )
170. Jess: °yes°
171. Int: ( )
172. Jess: °mm hm°
173. Int: A:N D i mean you can always refuse to answer any of these
174. questions
176. Int: ( )
177. Jess: yeah
178. Int: so (if you want to do that )
179. Jess: u:m (3.0) mm (1.3 ) [but that does- it puts you in the=
180. Int: [(well you-
181. Jess: =position of being absolute
182. Int: °mm°
183. Jess: when in fact you sort of know it's magnificent but then
184. there are other magnificent things too
185. Int: well the other thing there is- i mean- ( ) option
186. you don't have to leave it out)
187. Jess: mm it is isn't yeah (1.0) i'll leave it out.
188. Int: okay (well )
189. (( clunk - dropped phone??))
190. Jess: >sorry<
191. Int: >that's alright< A:H- ((goes on to next statement))

Segment 7 Annegret     (Agree/Mixed feelings)

125. Int: watching children grow up is life's greatest joy.
126. (. ) and again do you strongly °agree,
127. agr[ee, disagree, (or) strongly disagree°]
128. Annegret: [u:::m
129. wouldn't have said that it was - (. ) naw (. ) i
130. i've >never even thought about whether it was<
131. •hhhh the greatest joy ↑u:::m hhh (2.0) ↑no, i
132. don't think it's life's greatest joy=i'd express
133. it- neutral i guess. on that one as well.
Segment 8 Carol  

( Agree/Agree )

148. Int: watching children grow up, is life's greatest joy. *(do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree)*
150. Carol: oh (.) agree. but >you know< getting your (.) postgraduate quals is pretty good,
153. Int: ah huh [huh
154. Carol:  [hh hh
155. Int: so was that equivalent to that?
156. Carol: [hh yea(h)h [huh [hh
157. Int: [huh huh [huh
158. Carol:  [hh hh [hh
159. Int: (10.0) ((either pause or soft talk or both))
160. Carol: oh yeah

STATEMENT 5

Segment 9 Lyn  

(Strongly disagree/Strongly disagree)

136. Int: it is better *not* to have children because they are such a burden. do you strongly agree, agr[((ee disagree )
138. Lyn: am i talking for myself or (.)[i- in general.
140. Int: [↑yeah talking for yourself.
141. Lyn: oh >for myself.< er strongly disagree.

STATEMENT 6

Segment 10 Carol  

(Agree/Agree)

165. Int: =°yeah.° a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children, as a mother who does not work.
168. Carol: [hh ↑o:::h. ↑no:. that's ↑a:::wfu:::l. ↑oh ↑that's a ↑really ↑awful ↑question.
is it?

Carol: ↑yea::h. it's really unfair.

Int: (what makes) you think it's unfair.

Carol: ↑o::h because (. ) you ↑kn::w, i mean- working women have got enough guilt on them as it i::s. u::huck •hh

↑LOOK. ↑SEE THE THING IS FOR ME, um=and i really have to challenge the validi- i think it's too broad. •hh it de pendS. it really depends on the type of work, and the HOURS that are put- that- that takes her away from the family and the child. •hh cos i don't think it's just quality time=it's gotta be quantity of time.=and whether it- she's- •hh she's engaged in a workplace that's got family friendly practices. and- and flexibility.

Int: so ↑When um- the ques- the statement is actually a working mother is able to establish (. ) just as warm and secure a relationship with her child, as a mother who does not work,=

Carol: =ye- de[pend]ing (0.3) on [the nature
Int: [um ] [depending on the nature<

Carol: of the work.

Int: would you agree or disagree with this state[ment.

Carol: [mmm,

Int: >i mean if it's possible or not possible< ^is the question^

Carol: i think it's possible, (. ) yes so, you can put agree,

Carol: •hh bu[t i thi-

Int: [but you'd want [(to put

Carol: [i- i- put in a comment there, that it really depending on the nature (1.3) um (0.6) of the work=•hh and ^also the age of the child.

Int: ^yes.^

Carol: okay?=because i- for example, i personally- i think, zero to two, (1.3) •hh they really should be: y- you know, with (. ) a one to one parent. (2.3) like- you know, in one to one care.

(2.3)

Int: (^°) ^um (. ) i've written down here, ah- (. ) awful question, too broad. hh and [invo ](h)lves quantity (. ) ah (. )=

Carol: [m(h)m]

Int: =and quality time spent with kids >zero to two years old< and (. )zero to two year old °kids° need (. ) one to one care, [um- and in the middle of that sen-]

Carol: [•hh yeah- um- >just a minute< ]

Int: it's qu- it's- i think it's als- it's quantity,
216. Int: $\text{mm,=}$
217. Carol: =right, (0.3) um (1.0) like- quantity of time, (0.6)
218. also out of s- like. you know they get that argument
219. about- you know, that it's quality of time that you
220. spend [with] their [kids.]
221. Int: $\text{[yeah] [°yeah°}$
222. Carol: $\text{∙hh whereas i d- i don't agree with that.}$ $\text{[°i reckon:}$
223. that (.). $\text{∙hh for a child under three:.}$ $\text{[1.0] um (.)}$
224. it's actually quality- ah- [quantity] of ti[me.]
225. Int: $\text{[quantity] [°yeah°=}$
226. but obviously you could include quality in
227. [that somewhere]
228. Carol: $\text{[yeah. ] yeah. yeah.}$
229. Int: $\text{[°yeah. o°) [°hh um (.)}$
230. Carol: $\text{[no.}$
231. Int: $\text{[°yeah °so, i've written that it involves}$
232. quantity=i'll underline quantity,
233. Carol: $\text{m[m.}$
234. Int: $\text{[(so [}$
235. Carol: $\text{[good. [yeah.}$
236. Int: $\text{[°um (.) quantity °and quality° of}$
237. ti[me] spent °with kids.°=
238. Carol: $\text{[mm]}
239. Carol: $\text{=mm=}$
240. Int: $\text{=zero to two year olds need one to one care, and it}$
241. depends also if the job is- (.). is family friendly.
242. Carol: $\text{mm. yep.}$

[MMPh#15:165–242]

Segment 11 Dale  (Mixed feelings/Strongly disagree)

176. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important
177. role in life is still that of becoming a mother. do you
178. strongly agree, agree, disagree, or [strongly disagree]
179. Dale: $\text{[oh }$
180. Dale: $\text{[°strongly disagree°}$
181. Int: $\text{[°strongly disagree°}$
182. Dale: $\text{=i mean< it's individual choice,}$
183. (2.0)
184. Int: $\text{U:M (.). that's all the questions=so that's great,}$

[MMPh#8:176–84]
STATEMENT 7

Segment 12 Jess (Disagree/Strongly agree)

196. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother. do you strongly agree disagree or strongly disagree

199. Jess: mm it's couched in such- it's- it's very- i mean i hate- i don't mean to be rude but the •hh [the w-

201. Int: [i didn't write the

202. questions

203. Jess: the wording i- i- i- comes back to clichés, (1.6) but i mean i must- being thirty six and having a child and having been a career woman all the time, •hh i'm now (.). realising what an absolutely wonderful (.). gift this is, at the end of a (.). hard working career type of (.). scenario, and •hh so; it's sort of strange to then go back to sort of household cliché type •hh words (like-) i'm- [ i'm ]

210. Int: [right]

211. Jess: =probably stereotyping myself, but •hh you know what i mean;

212. [it's that sort of-] um- because i ohhh huh huhuh =

213. Int: [†yee:h °yeah° ]

214. Jess: =probably now after the career i think ye(h)s having a child is one of the most important significant things one can ever do, HA HA •hh so i sort of tend to think (.). yes

217. cos career is just a career is just as career, t! and a life is something far more (.). precious.

219. Int: and you're (right in at the moment)

220. Jess: that's right.

221. Int: (and brand new )

222. Jess: yehhhhs <exactly (0.6) that's right (0.3) °so it's um-°>

223. hmm. [†what was the question again?

224. Int: [†so-

225. Int: °ah (.). whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother.

227. Jess: yee:h. i think it i::s.

228. Int: so you agree? or strongly agree

229. Jess: [i strongly agree. (1.3) cos you're forming another generation in a sort of indirect wa:y

231. Int: yeah ( [ ]

232. Jess: [which is- °yeah that's right°

233. Int: oka:y, °look that's actually the last um (.). question

234. Jess: mm hm

[MMP#9:196–234]
Segment 13 Kerry  (Disagree/Disagree)

142. Int:                  
143.                        
144. Kerry: now. the question. does the question mean either or,  
145.        or- um yes hhh  
146. Int: whatever career a woman may have, her most  
147.        role in life is still that of becoming a mother.  
148. Kerry: well=if she has children, as well as a career=but (.  
149.        not (. )<you know> if she doesn't have a career, then  
150.        obviously her career is, but- hh so then the  
151.        questions sometimes um don't really reflect (. )what  
152.        (. )<you want to know.> hhhh hah [hah hhh  
153. Int:                        [i see  
154. Int: so you're saying that (  
155. Kerry: ye::s  
156. Int: (=  
157. Kerry: oh=i don't think that's necessarily true for some  
158.        women.  
159. Int: (so you disagree with that  
160.        okay. that's the end of the questions.  

[MMPh#24:142–60]
Interaction on attitude questions about children: the ‘stroppy’ respondents

Background to statements in NLC Q194

- routinely used in national and international surveys as part of other item pools
- 5 of 7 statements from International Social Survey Program (37 countries in 2001)
- S6 from US General Social Survey (since 1972?)
- S7 from 1971 Australian Family Survey
General findings on Q194

- attitude statements were problematic: intent, wording, coverage, comparisons, length
- ambiguity: hard to obtain clear responses
- interviewer forced to be directive
- quibbling, qualification, hedging
- outdated concepts encapsulated in statements

Number of turns at talk as a measure of trouble

- in theory, minimum possible 14 turns
- shortest 17 turns (Tina)
- longest nearly 200 (Kristen)
- length and complexity of interaction may not indicate a problematic answer
- minimal trouble-free/non-minimal trouble-free/non-minimal troubled
S1: A life without children is not fully complete

- 15 of 27 had trouble in interpreting statement; others not transparent
- ambiguity, repetition, clarification, pauses
- negatives ‘without’ and ‘not’ in combination with disagree/strongly disagree
- personal/general contradiction
- ‘disagree’ and ‘agree’ seemed to represent the same position for some people

S2 & S3: Children have too great an impact on the freedom of the mother/father

- 15 of 27 (S2), 10 of 27 (S3) had trouble
- ambiguity not transparent
- personal/general contradiction
- implied basis for comparison
- implicit limit in ‘too’
- qualifications: ‘it depends’
- acquiescence to formulation
S4: Watching children grow up is life’s greatest joy

- 12 of 27 had trouble
- personal/general
- weighing up experience itself not comparing with other experiences (‘in general for you’)
- asking respondents who had no children
- single greatest joy an outdated concept?

S5: It is better not to have children because they are such a burden

- personal/general intent of statement
- answers show ambiguity and mixed responses
- this statement had fewest troubles in interaction
S6: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work

- reluctance to speak for others
- quibbling, much qualification: ‘it depends’
- leads to directive interviewer behaviour
- negotiated agreement often seems meaningless (e.g. Carol)
- statement may no longer adequately reflect the concept it is intended to cover

S7: Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother

- 7 of 27 had extended interaction
- strong responses
- personal/general intent
- ‘becoming’ or ‘being’?
- ambiguous ‘you’
- qualification
Stroppy respondents?

- Annegret, Carol, Jess, Dale, Kristen in particular
- women in non-mainstream situations
- experience in survey design and interviewing
- thoughtful women experiencing new social trends?

Non-response or mixed feelings

- Annegret (Statements 1,4) p267,288
- Jess (Statement 4) p286
- Chrissy (Statement 4) p291
- Carol (Statement 6) p299
- Karen (Statement 6) p301
- Helen (Statement 6) p301
- Dale (Statement 7)
Mixed feelings as non-response

- Statement 1  Annegret
- Statements 2 and 3
- Statement 4  Annegret, Jess, Chrissy
- Statement 5  Merilyn
- Statement 6  Carol, Karen, Helen
- Statement 7  Dale, Noelle