What happens next?

A narrative model for faith progress and change in adults

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Research perspective

¶ social construction

¶ language is....
  - social, performative, constructing
  - indexical and reflexive
¶ dynamic engagement with society gives...
  - sense of self identity
  - attribution of characteristics
¶ faith is socially attributed
What methodology?

ethnography
ethnomethodology or talk-in-interaction
conversation or discourse analysis
critical or rhetorical discourse analysis
speech act theory
critical language theory
discursive psychology
socio-linguistics
narrative theory or enquiry

What analytic tools?

- turn-taking in conversation
- personal discourses
  - other voices
  - memories
- narrative structures
  - plots and themes
  - consistency of characters
  - mythic ‘gap’
- language structures
  - structural ‘gap’
  - up and down voice intonation
Sally’s faith story 1

S: ……………………………… I’d say oh yes I do believe (0.75) 
erm (.25) you know it started off when I was younger (.) my 
↑ parents were (1.5) both ↓ Welsh .hh my father both from ↓ 
very, very poor I mean real poor backgrounds .hh my 
↑ mother’s father was a miner she was one of six .hh and ↓ 
they lived y:you know there was no running water there 
was ↓ nothing we were ↑ really poor .hh my ↑ father’s ↓ 
family were er also hill farmers in (.) South Wales .hh so ↓ 
↑ they were brought up in real poverty my ↑ father was a ↓ 
communist (.75) erm because of the ↑ poverty ↓ he’d seen ↓ 
.hh erm my mother was they were both brought up chapel ↓ 
(.75) which is you know (.) six hours on a Sunday enough 
to put anybody off religion especially a child .hh so (.) we ↓ 
did go to church (.) as a family (1.0) erm but I don’t think ↓ 
we ever really thought about it and I was a Sunday 
school teacher for ye:ars in my teens (1.5) you know every 
Sunday I used to teach (.) Sunday school .hh and it I never ↓ 
really ↑ thought ↓ about it it was just, (0.5)

First faith – the ‘start’

¶ new locale
¶ Sally’s voice
¶ narrative details
¶ faith part of every day family life
¶ themes included...
  -family, working, rural life, church
¶ themes excluded...
  -social, Bible study, private devotion, ritual
What changed? (1)

S: er I went to Oxford (.75) where of course there was a lot of (.75) you know I I realise I I was from an incredibly (.75) .hh erm traditional background you go to away from your home .hh and wow you know there's all these new people and everybody talking, talking, talking the whole time and .hh and it was just wonderful really but it did (.25) make me question (.25) the sheer existence of God .hh and you know how can there be a god when all these terrible things happen and so on all the usual things that (.25) people think .hh and I suppose (.25) from being quite a (.5) religious (.25) little girl and religious teenager .hh and erm (.25) wanting to serve God .hh I really went the other way and became quite aggressively (.5) against (.25) the idea of God.

What changed? (2)

I: ?was there any (.25) did you have a friend or anything that that you teamed up with that was (.25) anti =

I: = or .hh did any thing happen ((    ))

S: ^Christ^ians actually strange, strange thing

I: [right

I: mm

S: it's just I just (.25) logically looked at the world and thought well there cannot be a god (.25) if this happens can’t be a loving god anyway (.5) and I read um Bertrand Russell 'why I am not a Christian' .hh and I read oh I read quite a lot of (.5) anti-religious stuff .hh
What changed...?

¶ Sally’s first faith attribution
  - family, rural community, service
  - church/school, non reflective and
    populated with experiences

¶ Sally’s second faith attribution
  - peer group, urban community
  - academic and abstract, non-
    experiential

First and second faith together....

S: and I’ve so I’ve done I did services for about ten years or I did six a year
and I did Mother’s Day .hh Harvest Festival .hh Christmas Day .hh
anything that the children would be (.) would be there in force (.) I
would (.) write and (.) do the whole service and I’d say to the vicar .hh
‘please could you give us a sermon at this point’ =
S: = but otherwise it would all just run
I: =
S: oh I know
I: it sounds great did you enjoy it =
S: = yes, yes [I ^did ^yeah I ^did love it
I: it sounds fun actually yeah
S: .hh and ^yet my ^friend ((name)) who I’d spoken to about it she said
‘how ^can ^you ^do ^all ^this when you don’t even believe in God’
.hh an I said ‘well I don’t ^know if I believe in God or ^not but if I ^do
these ^things (0.5) perhaps (0.5) I’ll
find ^out ^t
Sally’s faith no. 3...

S: stood up ………….and (.) he. you can imagine can’t you he was faced
with (.). hh a fu:ll (.). chapel of grieving teenagers who are all thinking
‘how can there be a god when this happens’ ………….and he made
the most ↑wonderful .hhhh um ser↓mon (.). and it absolutely
shattered me (.). and that was the ↑turning point for me =

I: = ↑really =

S: =↓yeah he stood up and I’ll never forget it he said ‘I know ((girl’s
name)) is now in ↓heaven (0.5) I know that’. hh (2.0) and I looked
↑at ↑him and I thought ↑yea↓ (1.0) an. and that’s that’s ↑when I
came back ↑!

S: I know and that’s when I came back and I looked up to the chapel (.).
the window (1.0) and I saw the (.). image of God and Christ and
everything and I thought ↑yeah (1.5) I’m ↓back ↓

living life to the full…

¶ faith as social attribution - accounts for change
¶ openness, the belief in ‘Large Gods’, holding
more than one story or theme are ‘mature’,
‘healthy’ and ‘skilled’ responses
¶ behavioural aporia are creative
¶ behavioural opportunities
¶ faith narrative provides creativity and
consistency – spiritual health