

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL WORK

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CONVERSATION
ANALYSIS and
SOCIAL WORK

What is Conversation Analysis (CA)?

- *Conversation analysis is an approach to the study of social interaction and talk-in-interaction ...*
- *Conversation analysts attempt to describe the stable practices and underlying normative organizations of interaction by moving back and forth between the close study of singular instances and the analysis of patterns exhibited across collections of cases.*

Sidnell (2016)

- *The idea is to take singular sequences of conversation and tear them apart in such a way as to find rules, techniques, procedures, methods, maxims ... that can be used to generate the orderly features we find in the conversations we examine.*

Sacks (1984a)

Relevance for social work

- Centrality of communication in social work

Reith-Hall et al (2022)

- In England, the professional regulator requires social workers to use
- *a range of appropriate communication methods to build relationships.*

Social Work England (2019)

- In Sweden, the Ethics in Social Work states
- *...a receptive, non-judgmental approach is necessary in order to create openness and engender a trusting relationship with the client'*

Akademikeforbundet (2015, p9)

CA articles on social work ->| 2020

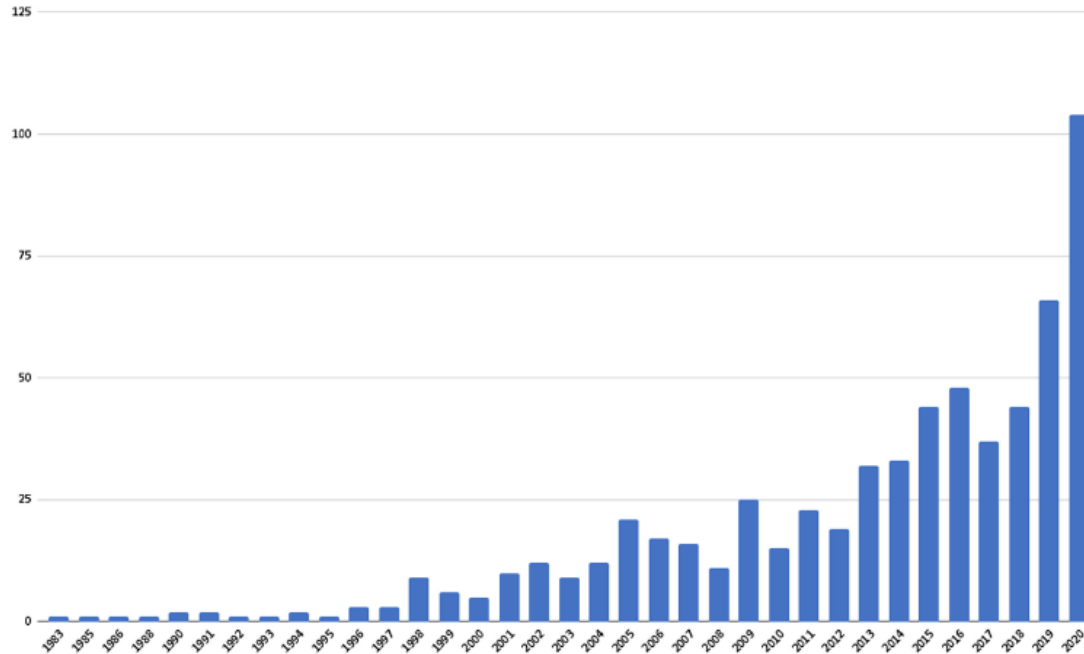


Figure 2. Articles per year in extended sample.

CA articles on social work *practice* → | 2020

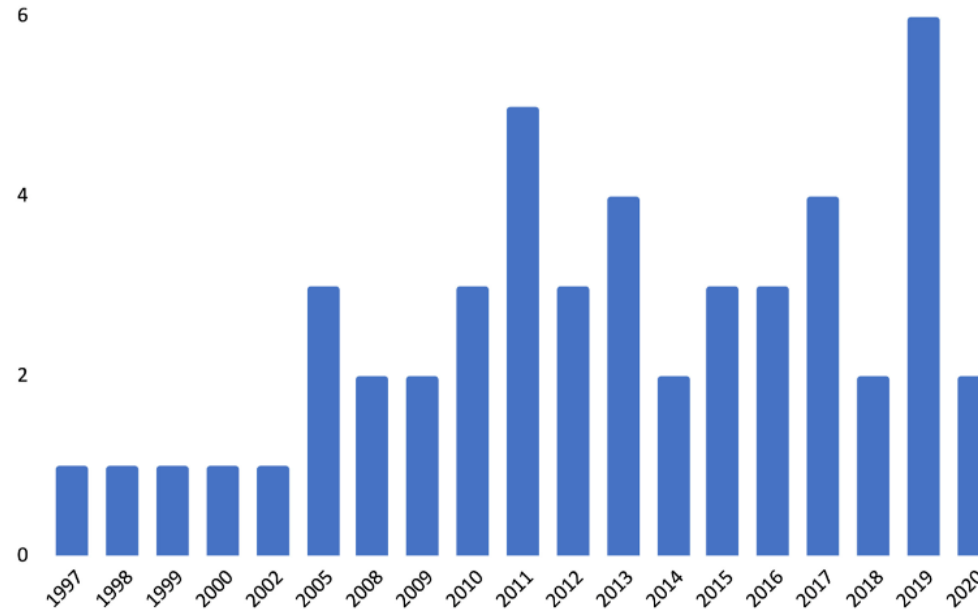


Figure 3. Articles per year in core sample.

A supervision meeting

SUP: Have you done a discharge plan with the hospital_ .hhh

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SW: Uhm:

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<midwifer-ee:> services ar::e uhm they- they're both on
annual leave at the moment for a whole week?,

A supervision meeting

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>we were< meant to have a core group meeting this week
because they weren't en- able to attend the conference
(0.3) two weeks ago because they were on leave

A supervision meeting

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annual leave at the moment for a whole week?, .hh so
>we were< meant to have a core group meeting this week
because they weren't en- able to attend the conference
(0.3) two weeks ago because they were on leave .hhh and
they're on leave this week again and we were meant to
have the core group meeting that we °were° gonna create
a post () uhm: a pre-birth plan .hhh

Some principles of CA

- An economy of distributed rights
 - To speak
 - To respond
 - To ask questions
 - To make complaints
 - To make requests
 - To issue directives
- Speakers orient to these differently in different settings.

Sacks et al (1974)

Some principles of CA

- Interaction is organised by the orderly progression of turns
 - Turn constructional units of meaning
 - Turns and the coordinated transition from one speaker to another
 - Adjacency pairs of turns
 - Sequences
 - ‘Sequences of sequences’ (Schegloff, 2007)
- ‘Order at all points’ (Sacks, 1984b)

Some principles of CA

- Recipient designed
- Speakers format their turns in ways that are tailored for the other person
 - Displays of knowledge and epistemic entitlement
 - Preference organisation in formatting turns such as requests or questions

Some principles of CA

- Action oriented

- *Talk is constructed and is attended by its recipients for the action or actions it may be doing* (Schegloff, in Levinson, 2013)
- CA is motivated by identifying actions that a speaker is forming and how it is being ascribed by the recipient
 - Introducing oneself
 - Explaining the referral
 - Asking for help
 - Confirming a plan

Some methods of CA

- Collecting data
 - Recordings of ‘naturally occurring’ conversations
 - Consent and ethics
 - Audio and visual data
 - Whose interactions are at stake?

Some methods of CA

- Making transcriptions
 - Including features of pauses, prosody and pitch
 - Consider relevance of sighs, laughter, silence
- Jefferson (2004)
- Hepburn and Bolden (2017)

- Taking into account embodied as well as verbal interactions such as gesture, eye gaze, body position (Mondada, 2023)

Some methods of CA

- Thinking about phenomena that feature in the interactions
 - Adjacency pairs
 - Repair
 - Questions
 - Decisions

- Building a collection
 - Analysing what happens in each instance of the phenomenon
 - Identifying patterns across the collection

Some applications of CA in social work

- Specifying and extending understanding of concepts
 - Affiliation in online social services (Thell, 2022)
 - Respect in work with sexual offenders (Mullins and Kirkwood, 2022)
 - Persuasion with older couples with dementia (Nilsson and Olaison, 2022)
- Identifying responses to interactional problems
 - Racism in calls to mental health counsellors (Iversen et al, 2024)
- Raising questions about practice
 - Making decisions in supervision (Webb et al, 2022)

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