We live longer than ever before, which means that we also live longer with disorders such as those connected with dementia. Most people diagnosed with dementia live in ordinary housing for a long time, relying on their social network for support, mainly involving spouses or adult children. There is limited research on how families and couples manage daily life with dementia, and social workers may only have knowledge and skills at a general level about older people with the condition. This thesis investigates how couples manage dementia-related challenges, as well as whether and how these challenges and ways of managing relate to aspects of couples’ we-ness.

In this study, video-recorded joint interviews involving couples where one of the partners had a diagnosis of dementia were analysed, benefiting from multimodal conversation analytic framework. The articles demonstrate how the spouses managed dementia jointly, and how they used their common ground as a couple as an important resource for telling stories and remembering. Spouses without dementia approached sensitive topics carefully, and multimodal communicative resources were employed to balance face-threatening effects of the topic. The results are further discussed in the light of implications for social work education, practice and theory, largely highlighting the importance of adopting a couples-sensitive approach in which relational and interactional aspects are emphasised.

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