

Envy and Jealousy of Living apart Together Relationships in Continuing Care Retirement Communities: Perspectives of Staff and Residents

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Abstract

Moving to a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) and living apart together (LAT) as a repartnering form represent new late-life beginnings. A large study on LAT relationships constructed in CCRCs identified envy and jealousy, yet they were not examined in-depth. Envy is wanting something we lack, whereas jealousy is fear of losing something that is ours to another. These emotions are rarely explored in the context of older adults' relationships. Using Goffman's framework of (semi)-totalitarian institutions, our aim is to heuristically examine experiences of envy and jealousy from the perspective of residents and staff. In total, thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted in three CCRCs in Israel with ten LAT residents, ten non-LAT residents and ten CCRC staff members, including social workers. Findings refer to kinds of envy, ignoring envy and the development and consequences of LAT-related jealousy and/or envy in CCRCs. The discussion and conclusions address how semi-totalitarian CCRC features influence envy and jealousy experiences. They include implications for social work practice with older adults and their family members regarding adjustment to life in the CCRC and may assist CCRC management and social workers in addressing possible consequences of envy and jealousy.

Keywords: continuing care retirement community (CCRC), living apart together (LAT), envy and jealousy, semi-totalitarian environment, qualitative research

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Introduction

Moving to a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) (Ayalon, 2016) and living apart together (LAT) (Bowman, 2018) are both phenomena that represent new beginnings late in life. CCRCs are a living alternative for older adults who wish to remain independent within the protected premises of a residential living arrangement (Shippee, 2009) and usually include social workers in order to enhance the residents' well-being (Murty, 2017). LAT is an intimate relationship between unmarried individuals who remain in separate homes but occasionally spend time and live together (De Jong Gierveld, 2002). Previous findings on the meaning of LAT as a form of late-life repartnering in CCRCs have focused on its construction as a special friendship rather than partnership (Koren and Ayalon, 2019).

Envy is wanting something we lack, whereas jealousy is related to a fear of losing something that is ours to another (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010). Envy and jealousy in old age have scarcely been studied and when they have been studied, it was with adults up to the age of eighty years. Some studies included older adults up to the age of seventy years (e.g. Mujic and Oswald, 2018), and in other studies (e.g. Henniger and Harris, 2015) younger age groups included a range of ten years (30–39; 40–59), whereas adults aged fifty to eighty years were included within the same age group. Emotions change with ageing (Carstensen *et al.*, 2011), and therefore, it is important to understand how specific emotions such as envy and jealousy are experienced in old age and how social workers within CCRCs experience such emotions amongst CCRC residents in order to assist them in coping.

Heuristically, using Goffman's (1961) framework on totalitarian institutions, our aim is to explore envy and jealousy in late-life LAT relationships in CCRCs, including perspectives of residents above the age of seventy-five years and staff members, including social workers. Such knowledge has the potential to help us understand more about these emotions in old age and about life and LAT relationships in CCRCs, and it may assist older persons, family members and social workers in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of CCRCs, assist with adjustment and help residents face such emotions and cope with them.

Envy and jealousy

Envy refers to wanting something the other has (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010) and relates to the experience of lacking something (Toback *et al.*, 2018) along with the feelings of unjustified inferiority (Recio and Quintanilla, 2015). Jealousy, in contrast, refers to the fear of losing someone or something we have to someone else (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010). Most commonly,

jealousy refers to losing a lover to another (Dijkstra *et al.*, 2010), either physically or emotionally (Sobraske *et al.*, 2013). Although both envy and jealousy generate vulnerability (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010; Toback *et al.*, 2018), jealousy involves greater vulnerability because the threat of losing something significant affects one's self-image (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010). Both emotions involve competition; however, envious feelings refer to social comparisons to those most similar to us (Henniger and Harris, 2015) and stem from one's status worsening, whereas jealousy presupposes competition on a personal level with a rival (Ben-Ze'ev, 2010). Both envy and jealousy are commonly perceived as negative emotions. However, social comparisons and personal competition may motivate the envious and the jealous to take action to improve their situation. Such actions could be constructive and may enhance psychological growth (Toback *et al.*, 2018) but not necessarily (Mujcic and Oswald, 2018).

In British English, there is a clear distinction between envy and jealousy, yet in American English envy and jealousy are used interchangeably (Ramachandran and Jalal, 2017). In the Hebrew language, there is one word, *'Kin'ah*, for both. Although there is a distinction in Hebrew whereby *'Kin'ah of* refers to envy and *'Kin'ah to* refers to jealousy, the link word is not always added in speech. Therefore, at times, it is unclear whether one is referring to envy or jealousy.

Both envy and jealousy are divided into types. Envy can be malicious and/or benign (Recio and Quintanilla, 2015). Malicious envy includes wicked wishes towards the other, whereas benign envy does not. Benign envy is openly expressed, whereas malicious envy is hidden or disguised, and if harm occurs to a subject of envy, the person who is envious derives satisfaction from the harm caused to the subject of envy (Recio and Quintanilla, 2015). Jealousy can be reactive (Martínez-León *et al.*, 2017), normal and pathological (Costa, *et al.*, 2015) or anxious and preventive (Martínez-León *et al.*, 2017). Normal jealousy is a reaction to a perceived threat that really occurred, whereas pathological jealousy is constantly present without the perceived threat actually occurring (Costa *et al.*, 2015). Pathological jealousy includes anxious jealousy, which focuses on the possibility of partner betrayal, or preventive jealousy, which refers to actions taken to prevent betrayal (Martínez-León *et al.*, 2017).

Envy and jealousy in old age

Envy occurs less often with age (Henniger and Harris, 2015), and when it occurs, it is less severe (Mujcic and Oswald, 2018). These studies (Henniger and Harris, 2015; Mujcic and Oswald, 2018) did not differentiate between benign and malicious envy. Furthermore, Mujcic and Oswald's (2018) longitudinal study asked about being an envious person

rather than about incidents of envy; thus, perhaps what was measured was a trait rather than a state of envy.

Older people, who believed that their age group was lower in status, perceived that others envied them maliciously and experienced more age discrimination. However, in other age groups in society, findings showed that envy was related to less age discrimination when referring to benign envy towards well-to-do baby boomers (Vauclair *et al.*, 2016).

The CCRC

The CCRC represents a living alternative for older adults who wish to remain independent within the protected premises of a residential living arrangement. In contrast to nursing homes, the CCRC is offered to older adults who are independent upon first entering the setting (Shippee, 2009). Yet, settings also include a nursing unit for those older adults who require further assistance over time (Ayalon, 2016). In 2012, there were 184 CCRCs in Israel, which provided 23,040 living units for older adults. This constitutes thirty-one units per 1,000 individuals over sixty-five or sixty-four units per 1,000 individuals over seventy-five (Brodsky *et al.*, 2012). CCRCs in Israel are required by law to provide social work (SW) services by certified social workers (Israel's CCRC regulations, 2018). The role of social workers in CCRCs is to enhance and preserve the residents' social and personal well-being (Murty, 2017). Therefore, the consequences of envy and jealousy on residents' well-being are a concern for social workers in CCRCs.

LAT in the CCRC

LAT is a form of late-life repartnering, defined as an exclusive intimate relationship between unmarried individuals who remain in separate homes and whose finances are separate (Bowman, 2018), but occasionally spend time and live together (De Jong Gierveld, 2002). Previous findings on LAT in CCRCs identified that LAT partners insist on being referred to as special friends rather than partners. Such special friendships are distinguished from other friendships by being exclusive, which is demonstrated by spending most of their time together during the day. Thus, whereas LAT relationships usually enhance autonomy, in CCRCs it limits partners' autonomy. Furthermore, LAT residents tended to hide the romantic aspect of their relationship to avoid disapproval of non-LAT residents. Such disapproval was based on perceiving LAT as inappropriate due to valuing the idealisation of a deceased spouse. The findings were explained by the semi-total features of CCRCs as institutions

in which most daily life and social activities occur within the same premises (Koren and Ayalon, 2019).

Heuristic framework: (semi)-totalitarian institutions

Based on Goffman's (1961) characteristics of total institutions, the following (see: Bengtsson and Bülow, 2016) defines the CCRC as a semi-totalitarian institution: most domains of life occur in the same place and under the authority of the CCRC staff, thus emphasising the significance of social workers within the CCRC. Residents' daily life is practiced in the immediate company of other residents, which may evoke envy and jealousy. However, supposedly, staff treats residents uniformly, thereby possibly reducing envy. Daily activities are scheduled by the CCRC staff in cooperation with residents, with one activity leading to another. The activities are designed to fulfil the official aim of the institution, which is to reduce loneliness by providing social activities and opportunities to socialise within a safe environment. Assisting and encouraging residents to be involved in determining social activities is one of the roles of social workers (Murty, 2017). The CCRC is a semi-totalitarian institute, however, because residents' autonomy is maintained and they are free to opt out of activities offered within the institutions (Ayalon, 2016), which corresponds with person-centred care (PCC) (Rockwell, 2012). Knowledge of envy and jealousy in CCRCs and their influence on LAT and non-LAT residents may help social workers be more effective supporters and plan interventions accordingly. The role of social workers within the CCRC group-living context is characterised by balancing between the well-being of residents as individuals and as a collective and distinguishing between the two (Koren and Doron, 2005). According to Rockwell's (2012) SW approach, combining between PCC and relational care in institutional settings may reduce this effect. CCRC residents and staff are stakeholders who have mutual influence on the CCRC environment, and as such, their perspectives are important. Our aim is to examine envy and jealousy related to late-life LAT relationships in CCRCs from the perspectives of LAT residents, non-LAT residents and staff such as social workers, using a semi-totalitarian institution framework. *The research question:* What is the experience of envy and jealousy in the CCRC from three perspectives: LAT residents, non-LAT residents and staff?

Method

The findings presented in this article are based on data from a large qualitative study whose aim was to investigate the meaning of late-life repartnering (e.g. LAT) in CCRCs (thus excluding residents who were

already a couple when they entered the CCRC). This criterion was chosen to explore how features of CCRCs contribute to constructing new repartnering relationships within such settings, if at all, and the ensuing consequences. One of the themes inductively identified, and not yet published, was envy and jealousy. The aim of this article was to explore this in-depth. To present the complexity of such a reality, we used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) including (corpus) data on the meaning of LAT as a form of late-life repartnering in the CCRC from three different datasets: LAT residents, non-LAT residents and CCRC staff.

Sampling and sample

Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used, including institutions recognised as CCRCs and the criteria of the three data-sets mentioned above. Three CCRCs and thirty participants were included in the actual sample, ten for each data-set: ten widowed LAT residents, ten widowed non-LAT residents, ten CCRC staff (four social workers, two medical staff, two housemothers, one group instructor, one operations manager) (See Table 1). The CCRC staffs were chosen because they all had constant and direct contact with residents, although they were from different professional backgrounds. We found essential similarities in their perceptions of LAT in the CCRCs, despite their diverse educational training.

Table 1 Demographic information

Perspective	10 LAT Residents	10 Residents not LAT	10 Staff
CCRC1 (<i>n</i>)	2	4	3
CCRC2 (<i>n</i>)	2	1	3
CCRC3 (<i>n</i>)	6	5	4
Age (years)	76–96	84–93	30–70
Gender (<i>n</i>)	Women—5	Women—8	Women—10
	Men—5	Men—2	Men—0
Marital status (<i>n</i>)	Widowed—10	Widowed—10	Widowed—2
			Married—4
			Divorced—1
		Single—2	
Duration in the CCRC (years)	1–15	2.5–13	0.5–30
Duration of repartnering (years)	1–6	Not relevant	Not relevant
Form of repartnering (<i>n</i>)	LAT—10	Not relevant	Not relevant
	Cohabitation—0		
	Remarriage—0		
Children (<i>n</i>)	0 (1 resident)—3	1–3	2–4
Grandchildren (<i>n</i>)	0–12	2–14	0

Data collection

The first author contacted social workers of several CCRCs in northern Israel. Three CCRCs consented to participate. The social worker in each CCRC approached residents and CCRC staff after receiving permission from the CCRC director. In the process of recruitment, we learned about the scarce number of LAT residents in CCRCs. The first author trained undergraduate students specialising in SW with older adults to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Each student conducted two interviews in Hebrew and audiorecorded and transcribed them verbatim.

Interview guide

Interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide adapted to accommodate the grammar needed for each of the three data-sets. The opening question asked participants to tell their story of late-life LAT established in the CCRC. This enabled each participant to begin talking on a topic of their choice, related to the question. During recruitment and data collection, we learned about the sensitivity of relating to the phenomenon of LAT as repartnership. We subsequently addressed it as 'a special relationship'. Questions were asked to explore the following topics: (1) Partnership—for example: 'What makes your/their relationship special?'; (2) The CCRC environment—for example: 'How does the CCRC environment accommodate your needs?'; (3) Significant others—for example: 'What do you think are the staff members' attitudes towards LAT in the CCRC?'; (4) Old age—for example: 'What does being old mean to you?' During the interview, probing question were asked, for example: 'You mentioned she was jealous, did she have reason to be jealous?'

Data analysis

The undergraduate students took part in initial data analysis under the supervision of the first author. Each data-set included ten interviews analysed by a team of five undergraduate students. Each student analysed the two interviews he/she conducted. First, students and the first author became familiar with the data by reading and rereading each interview and noting down initial ideas. The second author did the same for selected interviews. Secondly, initial codes were generated by coding the entire texts into smaller segments and providing a relevant title or titles for each segment (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thirdly, analysis across interviews was performed using a WORD table. The excerpts illustrating

a code were 'copied/pasted' in the relevant columns along with line numbers inserted in the transcribed interview document. This created a list of codes that enabled constant comparisons within and across interviews. Then, codes were arranged into categories for identifying themes.

The next phase, triangulation (Patton, 2002), was conducted by both authors. The aim was to identify themes that emerged across the entire data corpus including all three data-sets, similar to reviewing themes in thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by performing constant comparisons. During this phase, we identified that the words 'envy' and 'jealousy' were addressed in all three data-sets, revealing new content worthy of further examination and development into themes and sub-themes. Following this, quotes mentioning envy or jealousy were arranged according to data-sets and then read and reread to identify themes across data-sets. Each theme includes quotes from at least two data-sets. Quotes were then selected for illustration according to content and structure richness. The last step involved in-depth analysis of each quote on descriptive, linguistic and interpretive levels. Descriptive refers to analysis of text/content, whereas linguistic refers to analysis of grammar and metaphors. Combining these two levels leads to uncovering sub-text and assists with deriving interpretations that are data grounded. This means integrating what was said with how it was said, which helps to understand the meaning of the experience without introducing outside interpretations which are deductive; rather, it provides inductive interpretations that are derived from inside. Inductive interpretations are a way to ensure that the findings are based on the participants' subjective perspectives; they are a way of bracketing the researcher's presumptions (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Trustworthiness and ethics

To ensure referential adequacy, all study stages were conducted systematically and documented. Triangulation was performed by using different sources to provide corroborating evidence. The complexity of the phenomenon is presented using rich quotes and in-depth analysis in the findings section (Patton, 2002). The ethics committees of both universities (approval #067/14; provided February 2014) approved the study. Each participant signed a letter of consent. Furthermore, data were collected by individual interviews conducted by SW students who are sensitive to the possible abuse of older people in residential care. The possibility of encountering such incidents was mentioned in class; however, during the interview process no evidence of mistreatment of residents that required reporting to authorities was identified.

Findings

Three themes related to envy and jealousy were identified. The first addresses three kinds of envy: (1) 'positive envy', referring to 'how nice that they are a couple' and 'I wish I also had it'; (2) a less positive approach of 'people don't always wish well'; and (3) envy of 'the status couples enjoy in relation to singles in the CCRC'. The second theme addresses ignoring envy: (1) LAT residents ignoring those who envy them and (2) non-LAT residents ignoring the phenomenon. The third theme refers to the development and consequences of envy and/or jealousy: (1) LAT residents claiming envy and/or jealousy arise when friendship becomes partnership and (2) how a partner's jealousy may cause the termination of the LAT relationship.

Quotes were chosen for illustration according to richness of content and structure. LAT residents are labelled as LATR1–10, non-LAT residents are labelled as NLATR1–10 and CCRC staffs are labelled as STAFF1–10.

Kinds of envy

This theme is illustrated by staff and non-LAT residents.

Positive envy

Staff member:

Interviewer: How do you think residents who are not in an LAT relationship feel?

Interviewee: I think a bit envious [...] positive envy - envy of how nice that they are a couple. Some perhaps say: "I wish I also had it." I don't think its envy of: "too bad they are a couple and I'm not" because I think everyone thinks they could be in a partnered relationship if they just wanted to. It's a matter of wanting, willingness, it's not that anyone prevented it. There were cases when a new man came and as I said, the number of men is scarce, and several women were interested and watched when he stuck to someone and became her partner (STAFF8, age 53 years, 11 years working in CCRC).

To explain what she means by positive envy, the staff member contrasts between 'I wish I also had it' and 'too bad they are a couple and I'm not'. It is the difference between emphasising what a person wants for himself and emphasising what he does not have in comparison with what the other has. She explains positive envy as related to residents' perception of themselves as having control over the decision: 'because I think everyone thinks they could be in a partnered relationship if they

just wanted to', by adding: 'it's a matter of wanting, willingness, it's not that anyone prevented it'. The staff member strengthens her perception of residents as capable of freewill as related to forming an LAT relationship. However, this statement is followed by a case that illustrates a lack of control over whom a new man will choose. Thus, presenting a more realistic situation related to the higher percentage of women in the CCRC in comparison with men, which limits the ability to form a LAT relationship despite willingness.

The next quote from a different staff member illustrates less positive envy:

People don't always wish well

I believe some are envious because there are many that would like a partner and can't find one, because at any age you usually want to find a partner, not everyone but some. I heard a resident when she spoke, I heard some envy when a couple connected, people don't always wish well, we see that throughout life (STAFF10, age 48, 3 years working in CCRC).

This staff member believes residents are envious because not all can find a partner. Like the previous staff member, she too refers to not being able to find a partner as the reason for not repartnering. Thus, not being able to find a partner despite wanting one causes envy, which is explained as follows: 'People don't always wish well, we see that throughout life'. She begins the quote with a generalisation about wanting to repartner at any age, continues with a specific example of a resident and ends with a general statement about human nature. Bringing a specific example between two generalisations assists in turning the particular into the general. As such, envy becomes perceived as the common reaction to LAT in the CCRC.

The next quote, of a non-LAT resident, presents a more complex reality for them.

NLATR4: I think that if there was love for 62 years it cannot be replaced. To marry another woman after so many years means to neglect what was. It means simply that you love another woman. If I didn't do it all the years, so after she passes away, I cannot do it and I won't do it.

Interviewer: What do you think about repartnering when you see it from aside, among others?

NLATR4: I'm not envious. First of all, I'll tell you, look there is one couple here, she was here, and he came when I came, after she came. Now they are, I don't think they married but they go together, they look happy, could be.

Interviewer: Do you think happiness is possible in late-life repartnering?

NLATR4: Not me, for me no, but maybe, maybe, maybe, look, it's not nice to say but perhaps these people already before tended to look aside (NLATR4, man, age 87, CCRC resident, 4 years).

This non-LAT resident refers to late-life LAT as undesired and as representing a deviation from normative behaviour: 'To marry another woman after so many years means to neglect what was'. Thus, as an undesired phenomenon, there is nothing to envy. Despite the possible happiness LAT could bring, normative behaviour is more desirable. For LAT to become less desirable, the resident tries to stigmatise the ones who LAT: 'It's not nice to say but perhaps these people tended to look aside already before'. Whereas the above represents a reason for not envying LAT residents, the following quote of a staff member illustrates a reason for envy.

Envy of the couple status

I think they have this couples' status that they can go out and have fun, and I believe none of the singles would try to push into the [couples] group that organises things for themselves independently, that means not something we [the CCRC staff] organise, they get organised on their own, so there might be some envy (STAFF8, age 53, 11 years working in CCRC).

The cause of envy is the status of being more independent in having fun as a couple in the CCRC, in comparison with singles. The two statuses are well established, with a clear distinction between them: 'I believe none of the singles would try to push into the [couples] group'. The couple's independence is emphasised in three ways: First, 'the [couples] group that organises things for themselves independently', second, 'that means not something we [the CCRC staff] organise', third, 'they get organised on their own', emphasising the possible reason for envy.

Ignoring envy

This theme represents residents' (LAT and non-LAT) perspectives of dealing with LAT and envy in the CCRC.

Ignore 'the others' in the CCRC

The following quote illustrates the perspective of a male LAT resident:

Interviewer: How do other residents refer to your LAT relationship?

LATR7: There are all kinds, those who are not to my liking, who won't hear a bad word from me, I know whom to keep my distance from, I say a polite hello, some people are not for me. [...] behind my back there are all kind [...] sometimes you just watch, the mouth can say whatever it wants but the eyes don't cheat. He looks with his eyes and that's how you know what his opinion is, most of the people I think accept it [LAT] well, perhaps with envy, 'this guy he knows, he's a socialiser, he

knows how'. There are certainly those who think: 'What do you need this nonsense at old age'? You also have that, but no matter how much I tell my LAT friend that it doesn't matter – 'don't take the compliments and don't take the negativity, it's all not serious. You should say: 'it's good for me, it's good for you', that's what I think. Whatever is left for us, if you can sweeten up the days and evenings together, what else does a person need? (LATR7, man age 96 years, CCRC resident 8 years).

The LAT resident's answer illustrates the effect the CCRC as a totalitarian institution has on creating envy. He illustrates how he keeps his distance from those: 'not to my liking' by settling with 'I say a polite hello'. He is sensitive to the gap between spoken communication: 'the mouth can say whatever it wants' and unspoken communication: 'but the eyes don't cheat'. Although, according to this LAT resident, most residents accept the phenomenon, it does not diminish envy. To cope with envy and negative attitudes towards the phenomenon, he recruits his LAT friend: 'I tell my LAT friend that it doesn't matter'. Coping together is easier than alone. Then, he weighs the advantages versus the disadvantages: 'it's good for me, it's good for you'. He ends the narrative with the benefit of LAT towards the end of life: 'Whatever is left for us, if you can sweeten up the days and evenings together, what else does a person need?' Thus, the benefits outweigh possible envy. The next quote of a resident not in a LAT relationship illustrates how residents cope with envy by ignoring the phenomenon.

Ignore the phenomenon: 'We never spoke about it'

We never spoke about the topic. I know one case; it was so obvious that she came to hunt for a friend and it really bothered and caused criticism. You know people talk, not always sympathetically, but in general let's say I don't think there is envy. I am committing myself to something I do not know for certain, but I don't feel it's out of envy. Those who don't have it, it's because they don't want it. There are also not many opportunities when there are so few men. Yet it doesn't seem to me, you know it's not an issue, we are not busy with it here, you see I don't even know what others think, we never spoke about it (NLATR1 woman, aged 84 years, CCRC resident 2.5 years).

The non-LAT resident clearly indicates there is criticism regarding the phenomenon: 'It was so obvious that she came to hunt for a friend and it really bothered and caused criticism'. However, she emphasises twice that the criticism is not related to envy: 'I don't think there is envy' and 'I don't feel it's out of envy'—'it' referring to criticism. She states two reasons residents are not in an LAT relationship: one is not wanting such a relationship and the other is the low percentage of men in comparison with women in the CCRC. She ends with the same sentence that opened her narrative: 'We never spoke about it', which is a way of ignoring the phenomenon and perhaps avoiding recognising possible envy.

Development and consequences of envy and/or jealousy

‘With partnership – envy and/or jealousy begins’

The following quote of an LAT resident illustrates circumstances for developing envy and/or jealousy. The quote is translated from Hebrew in which the word ‘*Kin-aah*’ was used without a connecting word, and therefore, it could refer to envy and/or jealousy:

I have a goal [sic] that it’s a shame to lose a nice friendship for a partnership. Now there is no envy/jealousy; with partnership – envy/jealousy begins, friendship is friendship that’s all, and you have someone to talk to. We’ll leave it to fate to decide (LATR10, man, aged 94 years CCRC resident 11 years resident).

When referring to an LAT relationship as friendship rather than partnership, it modifies the exclusive nature of such relationships. As such, it may prevent the envy of others in the CCRC who are without such a relationship. However, it may also prevent jealousy amongst the partners who may fear losing the relationship. By remaining a friendship, the LAT relationship is less threatening to others and to the self. ‘We’ll leave it to fate to decide’ could indicate not taking full responsibility over the nature of the relationship.

The next quote of a staff member, illustrating the consequences of the exclusive nature of an LAT relationship, strengthens the previous quote:

Suddenly there is a distance from previous relationships – it isn’t necessarily related to the CCRC. It’s like when you have a group of girls and one of them gets married; the balance changes, so I could say that someone said about a couple: ‘Now that he’s only with her it’s difficult to talk to him.’ That means you should seek balance. [...] She could say she doesn’t want to repartner, there might be some, it’s not only envy of partnership but jealousy that her friend was taken, not necessarily because she wants a partner but that it’s impossible [to talk with him], that she [her friend’s partner] manages him, but there aren’t many couples in such places (STAFF4, aged 61 years, working in CCRC 11 years).

LAT relationships created within the CCRC after moving in have the potential of changing the social balance. Comparing mature older adults to a group of girls might indicate the staff member’s attitude towards the residents and towards the CCRC. Whereas envy of not having such a relationship is uncertain, jealousy of losing the type of relationship the resident used to have with one of the partners is certain. Stating: ‘But there aren’t many couples in such places’, might indicate that even when envy and jealousy occur, they may not have much of an influence on the CCRC atmosphere because the LAT phenomenon is scarce.

‘She’d be jealous, and he couldn’t stand it’

The next quote of a staff member illustrates an LAT resident's jealousy, her fear of losing her partner:

Interviewee: There was a partner relationship that didn't work out, she was devastated, and he flourished when it was over, because she was jealous towards him, he wasn't allowed to talk with any other lady, like an 18-year-old, he wasn't able to anymore, at such an age when life is beyond you it was enough [for him].

Interviewer: Did she have a reason to be jealous?

Interviewee: He was a very attractive man, very charismatic, he knew how to tell jokes and to dance, he liked her very much, liked her very, very much and something began between them but every time he danced with someone else or told a joke or stood to talk she'd be jealous, and he couldn't stand it, it's not that he gave a reason that he was going with someone else. [...] another case that happened here, they are both no longer with us, the gentleman was her friend and suddenly he flirted with someone else and it was sad, she felt it and he went to visit her when she didn't know, and you saw glances in the yard, so yeah (STAFF9 aged 70 years, working in CCRC 30 years).

When jealousy is practised to an extreme, it may cause exactly what is feared: losing the relationship; however, not because of the original reason, that is that her partner is interested in another woman, but because jealousy itself caused unpleasant feelings that led to losing the relationship. The result was that with the termination of the relationship: 'she was devastated, and he flourished'.

Discussion

The findings represent types of envy and jealousy mentioned in the theoretical literature. The sub-theme 'positive envy' is similar to benign envy because it is openly expressed and does not include wicked wishes (Recio and Quintanilla, 2015) towards the LAT residents. The sub-theme 'people don't always wish well' is similar to malicious envy because it includes hidden wishes towards those in a LAT relationship. Whereas benign envy may not cause much harm to residents, malicious envy may create an unpleasant atmosphere of strain and stress in the CCRC. SW practice combining person-centred and relational care (Rockwell, 2012) has potential for intervening in such situations by simultaneously considering the well-being of residents as individuals and as part of a collective. This can be achieved by employing micro-, mezzo- and macro-level intervention. Micro would include therapy sessions with individual residents who experience malicious envy. Mezzo would be conducting group meetings with LAT and non-LAT residents together and apart and activities to normalise LAT such as showing cinema movies referring to the phenomenon. At the macro-level, social

workers can assist by placing this important topic in the national spotlight of policy stakeholders. For instance, currently, LAT is not even documented at the national level and thus is regarded as an invisible phenomenon. Greater attention to romantic relationships in the second half of life is desired and the public should be educated about this phenomenon. By increasing its visibility, it might become a more acceptable phenomenon over time.

The sub-theme ‘She’d be jealous, and he couldn’t stand it’, coincides with what Martínez-León et al. describe as pathological jealousy (Martínez-León *et al.*, 2017) because the woman did not have actual evidence that her partner was going out with someone else. In such cases, an individual one-to-one session that discusses an older person’s goals and concerns addressing jealous behaviour could be adopted, if the older person wishes it (to support autonomy and a person-centred approach). The sub-theme ‘With partnership – envy and/or jealousy begins’ refers to normal jealousy that could occur due to a friend in an LAT relationship having less time to spend with others. Such jealousy is normal because it is based on real occurrences (Costa *et al.*, 2015). In such cases, SW practice could employ individual therapy sessions with the involved residents, for example, in order to work on changing the allocation of time or help the non-LAT resident come to terms with the situation.

Non-LAT residents accounted for not envying LAT residents by referring to LAT as a deviation from normative behaviour, comparing LAT relationships to betrayal within marital relationships. Stigmatisation of LAT residents is perhaps easier to achieve in CCRCs because there is an audience available and due to its semi-totalitarian characteristics. The manner suggested by LAT residents of coping with such attitudes is ‘as long as it’s good for me/us/them’ we can live with it (Koren and Simhi, 2016). Thus, they bridged the gap between their ideal that their relationship be accepted and the reality of residents not accepting it. Social workers can address such situations by macro-level SW interventions in order to normalise LAT as a legitimate option in CCRCs.

Findings indicate that a sense of agency and having control whether to LAT or not in CCRCs is related to the development of envy and/or jealousy. Such emotions might have more potential to develop when the sense of agency is lower (Baumeister and Exline, 2000). Assisting residents in increasing their sense of agency coincides with SW practice of PCC, which emphasises the importance of residents’ personal autonomy in residential care facilities (Rockwell, 2012). Our findings, however, also indicate that having control whether to LAT or not in CCRCs is controversial. Thus, the role of the sense of agency in the development of envy and jealousy in CCRCs needs to be further investigated.

The findings indicated that the status of being a couple is more desirable than being a single in the CCRC: the object of envy was the LAT’s status as a couple. This accords with previous research that indicated the

relationship between social status and envy. For example, when older persons perceive the status of older persons in general as higher than their own, they experience benign envy because they strive to belong to a higher status (Vauclair *et al.*, 2016). However, upward social comparisons contradict socio-emotional selectivity theory because they motivate striving for future goals, which is less preferred in old age (Carstensen *et al.*, 2003). CCRC features that increase the exposure of residents to social comparisons might create an environment that weakens the principles of socio-emotional theory because it causes benign envy, potentially leading to motivations towards future goals such as entering an LAT relationship.

Despite the fact that all residents are treated the same in semi-totalitarian institutions (Goffman, 1961) such as CCRCs, envy and jealousy were experienced towards other residents. These emotions occurred not because of the staffs' attitude towards residents but because of what occurs amongst and between residents, regardless of the staff. Thus, constantly being in the immediate company of other residents, which is another feature of CCRCs as semi-totalitarian institutions (Goffman, 1961), might be more influential than being treated uniformly by staff. This might indicate residents' autonomy from dependency on staff. Furthermore, although the CCRC environment is perhaps safe from foreign invaders (Kapp and Wilson, 1995), it might be less safe from internal emotional threats such as the consequences of envy and jealousy—strengthening the necessity for SW practice.

Limitations and further research

The findings do not relate to the intensity or frequency of envy and jealousy. This requires further investigation in order to be able to discuss the continuity and change of these emotions in old age (Carstensen *et al.*, 2011) and further understand possible contradictions between benign envy and socio-emotional selectivity theory (Carstensen *et al.*, 2003), which predicts the decline of negative emotions. The types of envy (Recio and Quintanilla, 2015) and jealousy (Martínez-León *et al.*, 2017) found here are very similar to the types mentioned in the theoretical literature concerning adults in general. Perhaps, this is related to the perspectives of the staff, who work with older adults but are not older adults themselves, besides one staff member aged 70 years. Further investigation of envy and jealousy from the perspective of older adults is required. The findings indicate that residents will respond differently: some will be envious, others less so, and much of this may be based on previous life experiences and values. Obtaining an in-depth understanding of such influences should be explored in future research.

Conclusions and implications

The findings related to envy and jealousy in the environment of CCRCs as semi-totalitarian institutions reveal the limited ability of staff, including social workers, to protect residents from insiders' emotional harm, such as experiencing envy and/or jealousy. These conclusions could assist social workers, older adults and their families when preparing a move to a CCRC. One of the values of SW in institutional settings is to provide PCC, beyond the medical and custodial care (Rockwell, 2012). Thus, CCRCs are an ideal setting for PCC because their values coincide with maintaining the residents' autonomy. The findings may also assist CCRC managers and staff in finding ways of dealing with emotional harm from within the CCRC. Finally, the findings further stress the important role that social workers have in CCRCs in preserving and promoting the residents' well-being (Murty, 2017) from possible emotional harm. Social workers in CCRCs can use the findings to negotiate the diverse and oftentimes strong emotions that may emerge in relation to LAT in CCRCs. They can practice as mental health assessors, counsellors and as family relationship therapists (Koenig et al., 2011) in cases of jealousy between LAT partners, and as community workers (Itzhaky and Bustin, 2002) in cases of envy by focusing on linked lives between LAT residents and non-LAT residents and intervening accordingly. As part of a relational-care approach (Rockwell, 2012), social workers could support residents in LAT relationships whilst practising PCC interventions that deal with possible emotions of envy and jealousy that might arise amongst non-LAT residents.

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