



Introduction

Thirty-three years ago, Jaber “Jay” Gubrium founded the *Journal of Aging Studies* to address what he identified as a need for more scholarship that challenged existing theory and empirical work within aging. The fields of sociology and gerontology have advanced tremendously since the journal’s inception, and *JAS* has been a beacon for seasoned and emerging scholars alike who wish to interrogate and disrupt pejorative, reductionist, and universalizing framings of the processes and experiences of aging. Applying a constructivist approach to aging and the life course, Jay was a pioneer in debunking societal misconceptions about age, old people, and, notably socially disenfranchised elders, such as nursing home residents and those with Alzheimer’s. His first book *Living and Dying at Murray Manor* offered a novel, effecting glimpse into the everyday life and struggles of nursing home residents. *Oldtimers and Alzheimer’s: The Descriptive Organization of Senility* ushered in a crucial turn in the field of aging research, and especially dementia studies. Both projects relied on narrative analysis to offer rich and compelling accounts of older people and the institutions set up to “serve” them, and in so doing Jay also helped pave the way to increasing the methodological rigor of qualitative studies in the field.

JAS quickly became a home for innovative, provocative aging research. The journal’s long-standing popularity is due in large part to Jay’s vision, but it has also relied on top scholars both domestic and international as board members, reviewers, authors, and readers. A number of editorial board members have been with the Journal from the beginning, including David Ekerdt, Sarah Matthews, Laura Katz Olson, and John Williamson. This journal’s success – and many of the theoretical and substantive advances in the field of aging studies – also owes a great deal to their steadfast commitment. I venture to speak for our scholarly community when I thank them for all they have given us.

I had the great good fortune to be introduced to Jay’s work as an undergraduate (thank you, John Williamson). Reading his books as I was working in a nursing home with people who had “Oldtimers” was formative in my journey to becoming an academic. I could not have been more honored when my first article landed in *JAS* 15 years ago. The piece was based on a qualitative study of seniors with early-stage Alzheimer’s, and I feared data from interviews with diagnosed individuals would be dismissed as unreliable given the predominant narrative of dementia as self-loss and, thus, carers as the “real victims.” My reviewer comments were extensive (it was my first sole-authored piece, after all!), but incredibly insightful, greatly improving the final product and my subsequent scholarship. I never forgot how positive the experience was, and now that I have had many more interactions with the peer-review process, I am confident those comments were truly exceptional.

I was delighted when Jay asked me to serve on the editorial board a decade ago, and have been impressed with the consistently high standard of articles he sends out for review. When he invited me to succeed him as Editor of *JAS*, I was honored and keenly aware of the size of the shoes I was agreeing to step into. To say that Jay has been a model of generosity in his passing of the proverbial torch will surprise no one who knows him. But, as Editor, I also benefit from the open and embracing community of scholars committed to innovation and critique that he built across disciplines and methodologies. I hope to continue offering a space for meaningful engagement with the most important topics within the social sciences and humanities of aging. In an ageist society, anyone lucky enough to survive into old age will experience marginalization. I welcome any and all efforts to help realize our shared hopes of creating a society in which everyone can age, and die, meaningfully and on their own terms.