



Remembering Adele Clarke

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The editors wish to mark the passing of Professor Adele Clarke, a brilliant, generous scholar and colleague, who formed part of our senior editorial team from 2009 to 2014. Adele made a crucial contribution to BioSocieties, through her remarkable breadth of knowledge, her creative intellect and her extraordinary network. She helped steer the journal in its early years and build its foundational thematics and intellectual quality, and we honor her involvement. Of course her contribution to the field of social studies of the biosciences far exceeded her particular contribution to our journal. We thank Professor Monica J. Casper for her obituary, which describes Adele's remarkable life and career.



Adele E. Clarke Dies at 78; Leader in Sociology and Women's Health
by Monica J. Casper, Professor of Sociology, San Diego State University.

Dr. Adele E. Clarke, an internationally known sociologist and women's health scholar, died on January 19, 2024 in San Francisco. She was 78.

Throughout her long, refreshingly nonlinear career, Clarke made substantial contributions to sociology, the history of medicine, qualitative methodologies, science and technology studies (STS), women's health, and reproductive studies. She had a significant impact on, and built bridges connecting, all of these areas and was recognized for her creative interdisciplinarity.

With colleagues at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where she was a faculty member for nearly four decades, Clarke innovated the sociology of women's health, offering the first curriculum in the United States focused on social, cultural, and historical dimensions of women's health. The Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, where she received her Ph.D. in 1985, is housed

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in UCSF's School of Nursing, offering especially rich collaborations in and across women's health research. Clarke trained numerous graduate students in sociology, nursing, and other fields who continue to research women's health. She published many important works in this area, including *Women's Health: Differences and Complexities* (with Sheryl Ruzek and Virginia Olesen) and *Revisioning Women, Health, and Healing: Feminist, Cultural, and Technoscience Perspectives* (with Virginia Olesen).

Amy Agigian, Executive Director of Our Bodies Ourselves Today and associate professor of sociology at Suffolk University, remarked, "Adele Clarke was a tremendous figure in the field of women's health. She was a brilliant, truly original scholar as well as an unwavering activist for the cause. In a relationship that spanned decades, Adele contributed to many editions of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Her immense intellectual rigor, creativity, and generosity were legendary. She will be greatly missed." And Judy Norsigian, a co-founder of Our Bodies Ourselves, described her as "a scholar activist in the best sense and a wonderful colleague. She was adept at amplifying women's health concerns both in and out of the academy. Her legacy will be felt for many years to come." A fund in Clarke's name has been established at Our Bodies Ourselves Today in recognition of her support for and contributions to the organization.

Yet Adele Clarke was first and foremost a sociologist. Steven Epstein, John C. Shaffer Professor in the Humanities and chair of sociology at Northwestern University, said, "If biomedicine—a consistent object of her expansive attention—has been reshaped 'from the inside out,' then we might say her own work transformed *sociology* from the inside out. It was precisely Clarke's rock-solid grounding in interactionist sociology—combined with her capacious interest in other perspectives, her commitment to conceptual development, and her willingness to take intellectual risks—that allowed her to explode and reimagine traditional sociological approaches, both theoretical and methodological. By this path she has left us multiple important bodies of scholarship—on the reproductive sciences; on the changing character and aspirations of modern medicine—and, more broadly, an invigorated sociological framework for studying social, organizational, and political change."

Clarke's 1985 doctoral thesis on controversy and the reproductive sciences won the Roberta G. Simmons Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Medical Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association and launched a productive scholarly focus on reproduction and reproductive politics. Her 1998 book, *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the 'Problem of Sex'*, won the Eileen Basker Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Medical Anthropology and the Ludwik Fleck Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Social Studies of Science. Clarke also wrote about sterilization abuse, abortion, cervical cancer, reproductive technologies, kinship, and more. M. Murphy, professor of history at the University of Toronto, hails Clarke's work as "foundational to the creation of feminist reproductive studies as a field. Her brilliant fierce scholarship had deep activist commitments: in her opus *Disciplining Reproduction* to her work on pap smears, RU486, clitoral anatomy, and contributions to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, she modeled how to do rigorous, innovative, political scholarship. Her



imprint as a thinker and mentor runs throughout the field, and I feel such profound gratitude for what she gave us.”

Clarke was also a brilliant qualitative methodologist. Trained in Chicago School sociology, grounded theory, and social worlds/arenas analysis, she developed the method of situational analysis. Using maps to connect discourse and agency, action and structure, images and texts, histories and the present, this approach fosters understanding of the situation in its constituent elements as the unit of analysis. Her 2005 book, *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*, was awarded the Charles Horton Cooley Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Additional works on situational analysis included collaborations with former students and foreign translations. Reiner Keller, chair of sociology at the University of Augsburg, said, “Clarke’s *Situational Analysis* was pathbreaking in its opening up of classical grounded theory and its integration with discourse studies, STS, and poststructuralist epistemologies. It strongly addresses the complexities and challenges of today’s multi-layered reality and encourages researchers’ curiosity and reflexivity in the process of doing interpretive research. It has successfully traveled beyond the US, inspiring sound research and scholarship all over the globe. Adele’s impact will be felt for many years to come.”

Clarke was a key figure in science and technology studies, an interdisciplinary field investigating social, cultural, and historical dimensions of scientific and biomedical knowledge and practice. She co-edited *The Right Tools for the Job: At Work in Twentieth Century Life Sciences* with Joan Fujimura and *Biomedicalization: Technology and Transformations of Health and Illness in the U.S.* with UCSF alumni Laura Mamo, Jennifer Fosket, Jennifer Fishman, and Janet Shim. She brought science and technology studies into the doctoral sociology curriculum at UCSF, attracting students to the department, and also engaged in significant field-building work through conferences, journals, workshops, special issues, and more, including international collaborations. Chia-Ling Wu, professor of sociology at National Taiwan University, credits Clarke for her “unwavering support for the East Asian STS and feminist community,” especially noting her editorial involvement in the *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* journal.

In 2012, Clarke received the distinguished J.D. Bernal Prize for Outstanding Contributions from the Society for Social Studies of Science. Of her abundant contributions to STS, biology and science studies scholar Donna Haraway commented, “Adele’s work in STS was extraordinary. From her study of non-human primate models in early to mid twentieth-century reproductive sciences to her collaboration to reopen feminist questions about reproductive freedom and justice in relation to human numbers and population, she modeled inquiry that matters to lives. I drew on her publications in my own work, taught her methodological approaches in *Situational Analysis*, and we co-mentored each other’s graduate students. She made us all better; she knew how to make kin. Her sense of humor, wide-ranging research and publishing, and extraordinary ability to nurture diverse communities shaped science studies for generations to come.”

Adele Clarke was a beloved and generous mentor to generations of sociologists, nurses, and others, many of whom went on to distinguished academic careers of their own. She was recognized as an especially savvy networker who ensured that



her students were connected to other scholars and opportunities. She was tough and kind in equal measure, consistently encouraging both excellent scholarship and a healthy work-life balance, one replete with the arts, conversation, champagne, and delicious food. (In the wake of her death, some former students have been sharing her favorite recipes.) In 2002, she was honored by the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction with the Feminist Mentor Award and was recognized as Faculty Mentor of the Year at UCSF. In 2015, the Medical Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association presented her with the Leo G. Reeder Award for distinguished service to the field. Additional honors included a Woman of Distinction award from the UCSF Center for Gender Equality, the Helen Nahm Career of Excellence Award from the UCSF School of Nursing, and the UCSF 150th Anniversary Alumni Excellence Award.

Alondra Nelson, the Harold F. Linder Professor of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, remembers Clarke as “an exceptional researcher and incomparable mentor. To be enlightened by Adele was to be grounded in the wisdom of ‘situational analysis’—her crucial intellectual contribution—and to be reminded that scholarly depth and rigor didn’t require sacrificing attention to contingency, complexity, and multiplicity, but rather confronting them. To be mentored by Adele was to enter a universe of nonjudgmental support, intellectual generosity, and infectious laughter. It was to be on the receiving end of Adele’s ‘care packages’: news clips, articles, and essays intended to stoke the flame of *your* intellectual passions, while letting you know that you were never far from her thoughts. It was to have your ideas and scholarly curiosity taken seriously and treated tenderly. It was to be enthusiastically invited into a diverse, supportive group of peers and collaborators. Adele was an intellectual powerhouse who built intellectual community. Her presence will be deeply missed, but her legacy goes on and on.”

Adele Elizabeth Clarke was born on April 1, 1945, in Brooklyn New York, to Agatha Adele Howry and Norman Clarke. She received a bachelor’s degree from Barnard College in 1966 and a master’s degree from NYU in 1970, both in sociology. A lifelong lover of dance, she studied with Deborah Hay and danced in some of Yvonne Rainer’s performances. Clarke moved to California in 1970, teaching at College of the Redwoods and Sonoma State University, where she coordinated the women’s studies program. She earned her doctorate in sociology in 1985 from the University of California, San Francisco. From 1987 to 1989, she held a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University. She was a faculty member in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Nursing at UCSF from 1985 until her retirement in 2013, holding a variety of roles including director of the doctoral program and department chair. Until very recently—and despite retirement—she was quite active in publishing, mentoring students and colleagues, and giving workshops on situational analysis.

Clarke is survived by her husband, Allan Regenstreif, a psychoanalyst. Adele and Allan, who married in 1978, lived together as partners for 53 years. They met soon after each of them left New York separately for rural Northern California as, in Allan’s words, “hippie dropouts.” Between their first and second dates, Adele joined a women’s group and gender/feminism began to play a major role in their communication. Allan wanted to join the group, as he had participated in group therapy in



New York. Adele instead encouraged Allan to start a men's group, which he did, along with a feminist men's journal and Men Overcoming Violence. Clarke and Regenstreif supported each other in returning to school for graduate degrees and professional licenses, through international job searches, and through the deaths of their parents. They often argued and had a rule to apologize and make up while preserving their differences, using disagreements as a way to move their positions and fall more deeply in love.

An automobile accident in 1995 caused Adele to have serious injuries and back pain, and later she became disabled. In the last year of her life, she was in severe pain. In her final moments, Adele and Allan were together, holding hands and talking until Adele fell asleep. She died an hour later.

Clarke is survived also by her cousins Linn Jeffries Howry (Somerville, MA), Jeffrey Clarke Howry (Lexington, MA), Alexander Habib Howry (Pinkerton, Ohio), and Cynthia Dean Howry Bruce (Norfolk, VA), and by the many students who adored her and who carry forward her legacy.

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Monica J. Casper, Ph.D. is Professor of Sociology and Special Assistant to the President on Gender-Based Violence at San Diego State University. An interdisciplinary scholar of health, reproduction, bodies, trauma, and inequality, she is the author of several books, including *Babylost: Racism, Survival, and the Quiet Politics of Infant Mortality*, from A to Z, published in 2022. She is a First Gen scholar and former college dean and has been recognized for her commitment to mentoring other scholars and fostering a humane workplace.

