

Remembering Adele E. Clarke, 1945–2024

Rachel Washburn & Carrie Friese

Adele E. Clarke passed away on January 19, 2024 in San Francisco at the age of 78. Hailing from New York, Adele moved to Northern California in 1970, where she became part of the women's health movement and met her husband, Allan Regenstreif. After teaching at the College of the Redwoods and coordinating the women's studies program at Sonoma State University, Adele returned to university and studied sociology under the mentorship of Anselm Strauss and Virginia Oleson. She completed her doctorate in 1985 and joined the faculty in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) the same year. Her pathbreaking scholarship in the areas of women's health, science and technology studies, biomedicalization, and qualitative research methods has been honored by several awards from the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Social Studies of Science, the Society for Medical Anthropology, and the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. Among her many talents was making connections across fields of study and with scholars across the globe. Adele's intellectual generosity and mentorship spanned generations of scholars, many of whom continue to make important contributions to their respective fields.

We met Adele in the early 2000s as graduate students in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at UCSF at a time when she was expanding her scholarship on globalization and qualitative research methods. As her students, we had the good fortune of not only taking her courses, but also benefitting from her mentorship. In our regular meetings with Adele, she would often grab a piece of paper, place it on her desk, and map our early research ideas. She was a kind listener and an encouraging yet firm mentor who believed that mentorship relationships worked best when students had room to think and grow. She was never overbearing yet always present, showing her care by leaving newspaper clippings and notes in our mailboxes in the department.

Adele was trained in Chicago sociology, grounded theory, and social worlds/arenas analysis by Anselm Strauss, work that had a profound impact on her worldview, identity, and scholarship. As her students, among our earliest contact with the significance of Anselm's legacy was in two different courses, one on symbolic interactionism and another qualitative research methods. In the qualitative research methods course, taken in the second year of graduate training, Adele replicated the approach Anselm Strauss had taken years earlier when Adele was his student. The course was designed to train novice researchers in the epistemological underpinnings of qualitative inquiry and commonly used modes of analysis with an emphasis on grounded theory and phenomenology. The course also included a research practicum in which students carried out a small qualitative research project and workshopped their research through group data analysis in class. Students were separated into smaller groups based on their respective approaches, where we worked with Adele and other grounded theorists in analyzing one another's data – often but not always qualitative interviews. When we took this course, Adele was completing her first article-length manuscript on situational analysis, published 2003 in *Symbolic Interaction*. Though SA was not a major part of the curriculum in this course in the early 2000s, Adele created many messy SA maps in analysis workshops based on students' work. In fact, Adele told us that this is what inspired her to write the article; she found that as students were talking about their data and their codes,

she was creating what have become familiar to us all as messy situational maps. She made these maps to relate the more microscopic analysis students were doing with their coding back to the big picture of their research projects.

In addition to her significant impact in the areas of qualitative inquiry and symbolic interactionism, Adele was also an early and consequential contributor to science and technology studies. She co-edited with Joan Fujimura *The Right Tools for the Job: At Work in Twentieth Century Life Sciences* (published in 1992) and wrote *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the 'Problem of Sex'* (published in 1998) based on her doctoral research. In *Disciplining Reproduction*, Adele braided together several strands of scholarship and established herself as a leading feminist science studies scholar, an area that was coalescing as she wrote. Using a social worlds/arenas framework, the book traces studies of reproduction in a variety of academic disciplines across the early part of the twentieth century. Already attuned to the importance of work and the significance of non-human materialities and human collaboration for getting work done, in *Disciplining Reproduction* we see Adele's thinking deepen on the positions that would become positional analysis.

In *The Right Tools for the Job*, the conceptual foundations of SA are also readily apparent. In their helpful introductory chapter, Clarke and Fujimura describe as a central aim of the book foregrounding "interrelations among elements," raising the question "What elements are in the situation?" Indeed, here they forward an alternative to other popular analytics in STS at the time, arguing for a move away from a focus on "laboratory," "production contexts," or "work contexts" toward an analysis of "the situation itself" (Clarke/Fujimura 1992, S. 17). Situations, they described, are populated by a wide range of human and non-human elements that not only constitute conditions of possibility but are also requisite to getting scientific work done. In both *Disciplining Reproduction* and *The Right Tools of the Job*, along with other works Adele published in the 1990s, foundational concepts central to SA such as situations, elements, positions, and of course, social worlds and arenas can all be found.

In addition to STS, the roots of situational analysis can also be found in Adele's long-term engagement with symbolic interactionism and Strauss's social worlds and arenas theory. By the 1990s, Adele, with others, began to see important incompatibilities with the positivist roots of grounded theory and poststructural and postmodern social thought. Her longtime friend and interlocutor, Kathy Charmaz, was also undertaking her own revisioning of grounded theory that would become known as Constructivist Grounded Theory. Adele's enduring interest in materialities and non-human elements, including discourses and visual cultures, led her to seek alternative modes of analysis that retained the systematic nature of grounded theory but moved beyond human action as the central analytic concern.

We note that, in 1996, Adele described what would become SA to Anselm – just weeks before his death.

By the early 2000s, Adele's thinking on situational analysis had crystalized and we became some of the first users of this new method, first through the qualitative research class and early advising meetings, and later in our dissertation work. Adele's development of relational maps was, for example, in part informed by our and our classmates' early experiences with making and using messy maps. As we worked on our doctoral research, we had the honor of serving as TAs in Adele's qualitative research methods course, through which we gained an even deeper appreciation of SA. Working alongside Adele training newcomers to qualitative research, we made messy maps of students' projects and learned how to do relational mapping, SW/A mapping, and positional mapping. We encountered common challenges in mapping and how to use grounded theory coding alongside SA. We also celebrated the success of the method together. While a TA on this course, Carrie remembers Adele

bringing champagne and cake to the qualitative research methods course when the first edition of *Situational Analysis* (published in 2005) was completed.

Adele taught her students how to be academics, and part of that was highlighting the importance of celebrating what might seem to be individual accomplishments as the achievements of scholarly collectivities and intellectual support systems.

After graduating from UCSF, our collaborative relationship with Adele deepened. She was contemplating an update to the first edition of *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn* with Sage and invited us to assist her in this work. Adele had an established tradition of working closely with current and former graduate students, cultivated through several projects, including consequential work on biomedicalization, which transformed how sociologists and others think about medicalization. Carrie had published a chapter on SA with Adele for *The Grounded Theory Handbook* (2007) and was working on article with Adele, rooted in grounded theory coding, for *Social Studies of Science* (2012). And the three of us had established mechanisms for teaching SA beyond UCSF through invited workshops.

Our work on the second edition of *Situational Analysis* began in 2010 with meetings and outlines where we asked how we could better present the histories of qualitative inquiry, the roots of SA, and provide hands-on guidance regarding how to use the method in empirical studies. We drew upon the questions we had been asked while teaching workshops in order to add new chapters. We drew on the work of junior scholars and new users of SA in order to provide new exemplars of the method. The first edition of SA was very much rooted in the epistemological affordances of SA, while the second edition was more rooted in the everyday practices involved in using the method. We therefore developed items like the “frequently asked questions” section of the book to make it more user friendly for a range of social researchers.

In 2013, Adele retired and became Professor Emerita in Sociology and History of Health Sciences at UCSF. Despite retiring, she continued to be very active, forging new collaborations, and engaging in new projects, including on SA and questions of reproductive justice in the Anthropocene and beyond (see *Making Kin Not Population*, 2018). During this phase, our collaborations with Adele on SA blossomed. We completed the second edition of *Situational Analysis* (2018) and edited two editions of *Situational Analysis in Practice* (2015, 2022), which showcased the uptake and significance of SA across disciplines and geographic locales. Our work with Adele occurred alongside Adele’s scholarly and personal relationships with Reiner Keller and Hella von Unger among other German sociologists – informing what is now a distinctively German approach to SA.

Adele would often recount to us Anselm’s feeling that academic work generally and methodological work more specifically becomes, once it is out in the world, something new. As the originator of *Situational Analysis*, she knew that it would become something unique in other people’s hands. In our own work, we seek to continue to use – and in the process – innovate situational analysis through its very practice. Neither of us are methodologists in the way that Adele was; we have always been ‘users’. And Adele always knew – as an STS scholar – that ‘users matter’ (Oudshoorn 2005). Going forward, we will seek to honor Adele by using SA, and in the process, expanding on and innovating SA, in creating good, interesting, important, creative, rigorous and even risky research.

Literature

- Clarke, A. E. (1998): Disciplining Reproduction. Modernity, American Life Sciences, and the Problems of Sex. Berkeley. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520310278>
- Clarke, A. E. (2003): Situational Analyses: Grounded Theory Mapping After the Postmodern Turn. In: *Symbolic Interaction*, 26. Jg., H. 4, S. 553–576. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2003.26.4.553>
- Clarke, A. E. (2005): *Situational Analysis. Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Clarke, A. E./Friese, C. (2007): Grounded Theorizing Using Situational Analysis. In: Bryant, A./Charmaz, K., *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Los Angeles, S. 362–397. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941.n17>
- Clarke, A. E./Friese, C./Washburn, R. (2015): *Situational Analysis in Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory*. Walnut Creek.
- Clarke, A. E./Friese, C./Washburn, R. (2018): *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn*. Second edition. Los Angeles, London/New Delhi/Singapore.
- Clarke, A. E./Fujimura, J. H. (1992): The Right Tools for the Job. *At Work in Twentieth-Century Life Sciences*. Princeton, NJ. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400863136>
- Clarke, A. E./Haraway, D. J. (2018): *Making Kin not Population: Reconceiving Generations*. Chicago.
- Clarke, A. E./Washburn, R./Friese, C. (2022): *Situational Analysis in Practice. Mapping Relationalities Across Disciplines*. 2nd Edition New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035923>
- Friese, C./Clarke, A. E. (2012): “Transposing Bodies of Knowledge and Technique: Animal Models at Work in Reproductive Sciences.” In: *Social Studies of Science* 42. Jg., H. 1, S. 31–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312711429995>
- Oudshoorn, N. (2005): Clinical Trials as a Cultural Niche in Which to Configure the Gender Identities of Users: The Case of Male Contraceptive Development. In: Pinch, T. J./Oudshoorn, N.: *How Users Matter: The Co-construction of Users and Technologies*. Cambridge, S. 209–228. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/3592.003.0015>