



Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding

Alexis Shotwell

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Prejudice is often not a conscious attitude: because of ingrained habits in relating to the world, one may act in prejudiced ways toward others without explicitly understanding the meaning of one's actions. Similarly, one may know how to do certain things, like ride a bicycle, without being able to articulate in words what that knowledge is. These are examples of what Alexis Shotwell discusses in *Knowing Otherwise* as phenomena of "implicit understanding." Presenting a systematic analysis of this concept, she highlights how this kind of understanding may be used to ground positive political and social change, such as combating racism in its less overt and more deep-rooted forms.

Shotwell begins by distinguishing four basic types of implicit understanding: nonpropositional, skill-based, or practical knowledge; embodied knowledge; potentially propositional knowledge; and affective knowledge. She then develops the notion of a racialized and gendered "common sense," drawing on Gramsci and critical race theorists, and clarifies the idea of embodied knowledge by showing how it operates in the realm of aesthetics. She also examines the role that both negative affects, like shame, and positive affects, like sympathy, can play in moving us away from racism and toward political solidarity and social justice. Finally, Shotwell looks at the politicized experience of one's body in feminist and transgender theories of liberation in order to elucidate the role of situated sensuous knowledge in bringing about social change and political transformation.

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