

# speculative design

cultural studies

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# speculative design

designs that cause you to critically think about culture and existing practices (*reflective design, critical design*)

designs that move beyond existing practices (*many designs are just iterations on the same thing*)

designs that blend art, design, and HCI

# culture & cultural studies

# why are we studying culture?

we want to design products that:

- embody culture

- fit flexibly within culture

- critique culture



# cultural studies

study of the production of social meanings  
cultural description and analysis

# what is culture?

a social definition:

*“a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values”*

the production and circulation of *meaning*

# components of culture

*cultural behavior*: what people do

*cultural artifacts*: what people use

*cultural knowledge*: people's hidden understanding

# components of culture

*cultural behavior*: what people do

*cultural artifacts*: what people use

*cultural knowledge*: people's hidden understanding

*explicit*: we know it and can share it

*tacit*: we are not aware we know it



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*cultural artifacts:* what people use

*cultural knowledge:* people's hidden understanding

*explicit:* we know it and can share it

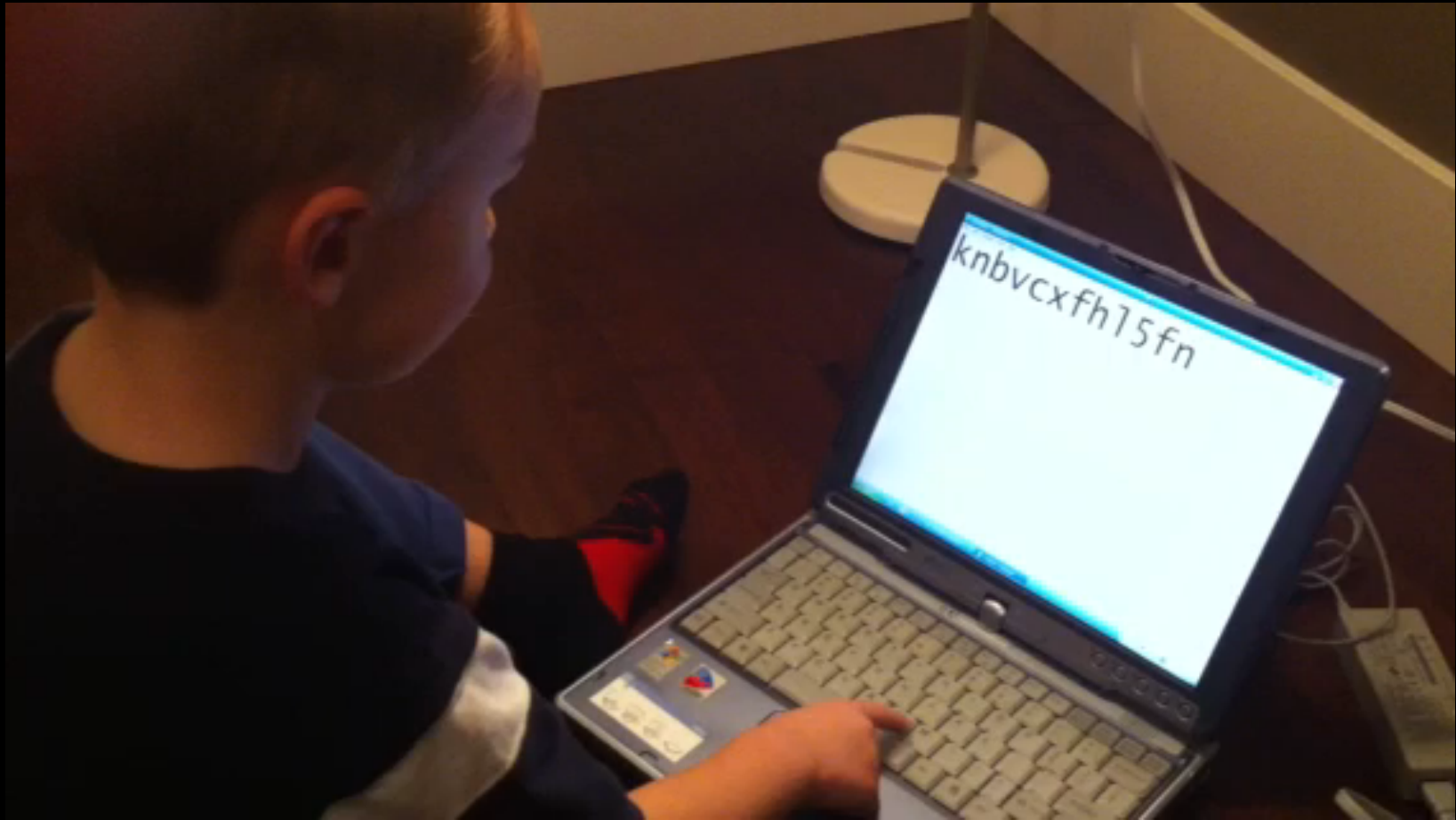
*tacit:* we are not aware we know it

# learning one's culture

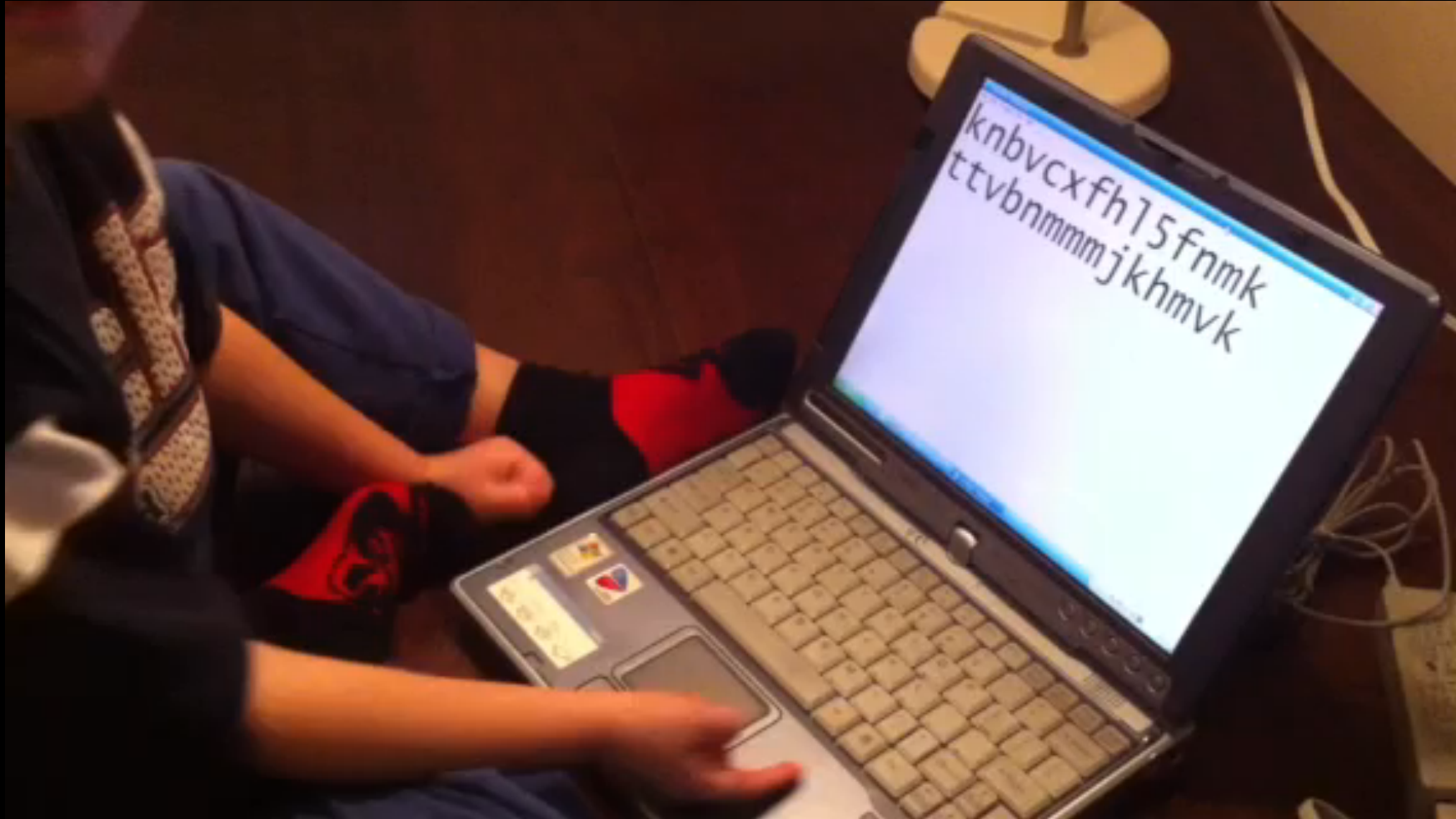
observe, share with others, interact in the culture  
it helps us interpret and generate behavior

examples of children

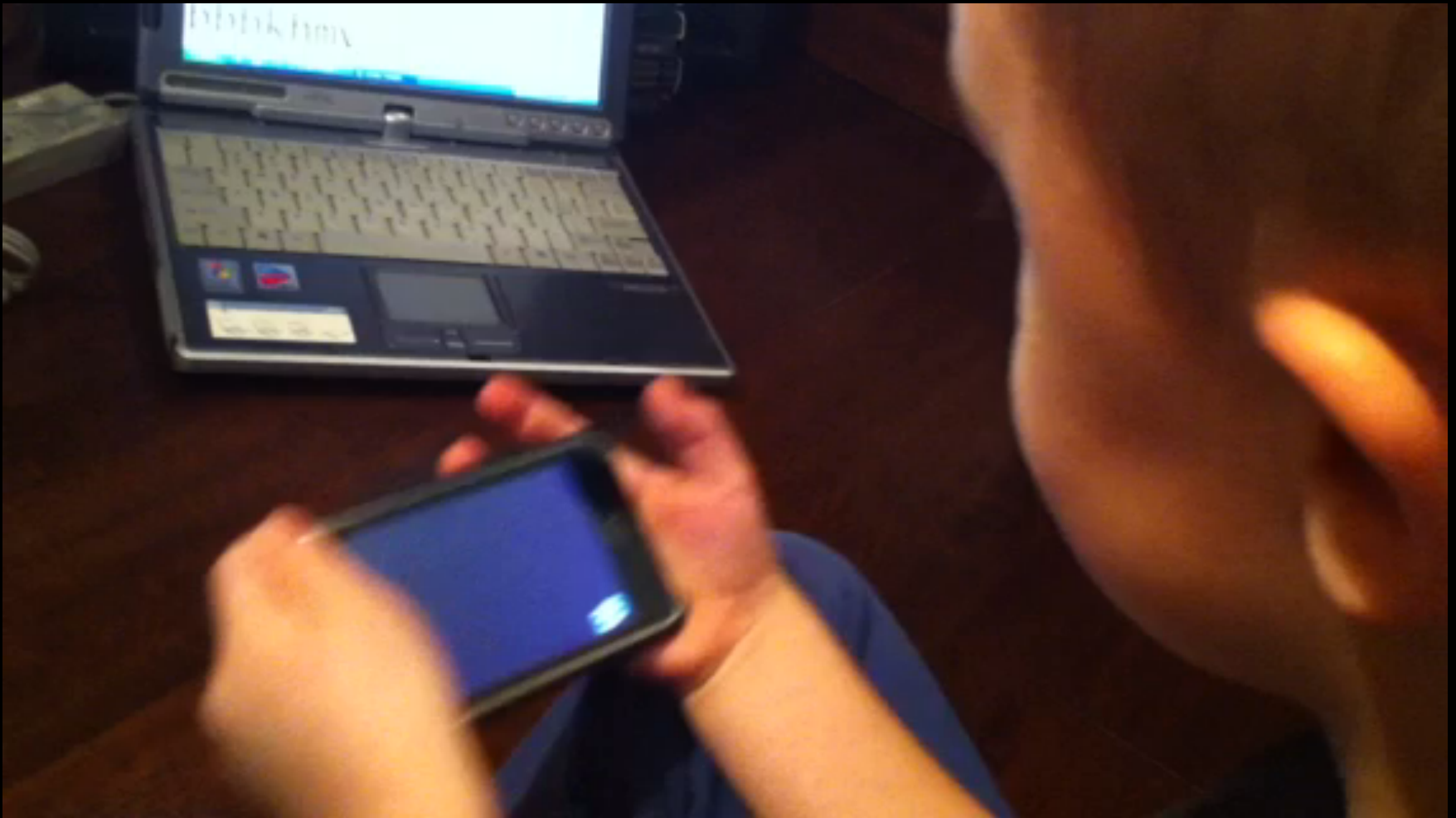
early usage of computers











# epistemology

the study of knowledge

in simplest terms,

*what do we know and how do we know it?*

# the origin of meaning

what preceded the object?

how is it similar/different from what you know?

what experiences have you had with it?

# the sony walkman



1979: first personal stereo tape deck  
why would anybody want one?









# focus on aesthetics and culture



what kind of music player are they using?



which phone do you prefer?



# how to observe culture

# design ethnography

# traditional ethnography

comes from cultural anthropology  
*ethno* “folk” - *graphy* “description”

the scientific study of human culture

real people  
real behaviors  
social activity  
interactions



# design ethnography

builds on traditional ethnography but:

- focuses on a product or design space
- is shorter term
- less expensive
- potentially less intrusive

# design ethnography

exploratory in nature

naturalistic (not in a controlled environment)

seeks the view of those being observed

set aside *naïve realism*



# embed yourself in a culture

immerse yourself in the environment

*e.g., gain trust of users, same dress code, same work times, etc.*

observe real activities of real people

*e.g., don't use second hand accounts*

ask people about their activities

*e.g., question why people do things (ethnographic interview)*

# cautionary notes

be non-disruptive

be non-interventionist

be respectful

be unbiased

# what to record

## 1. what people say

*listen & ask:* conversations with others, think alouds

*collection methods:* notes, audio record, diaries

# what to record

## 2. what people do

*watch:* behaviors, patterns, routines

*collection methods:* photos, video, notes, sketches, diaries

# what to record

## 3. what people use

*watch:* wear and tear, pathways, objects, products

*collection methods:* photos, video, notes, diaries

# what to record

4. **why** they say, do, and use things

note: these all map to “culture”

*cultural behavior*: what people do

*cultural artifacts*: what people use

*cultural knowledge*: people’s hidden understanding

*explicit*: we know it and can share it

*tacit*: we are not aware we know it

# video example

write down what you see

what do people say?

what do people do?

what do people use?

what cultural understanding is present?

is it tacit or explicit?







what did you see in the video?

what do people say?

what do people do?

what do people use?