

**design ethnography**  
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**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*

source: Williams

**components of culture**

***cultural behavior***: what people do  
***cultural artifacts***: what people use  
***cultural knowledge***: people's hidden understanding


source: Spradley

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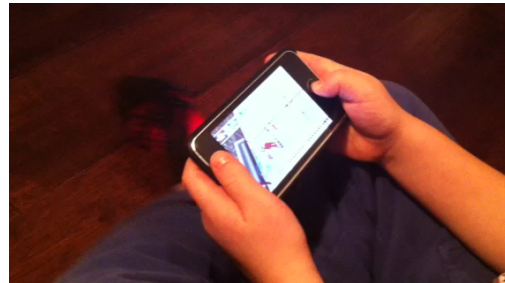
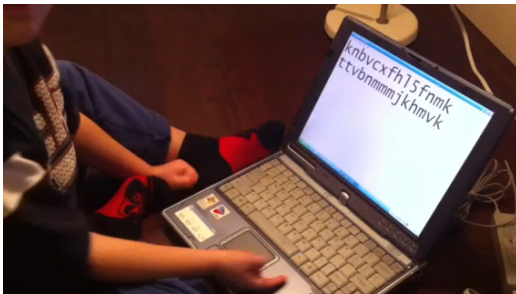
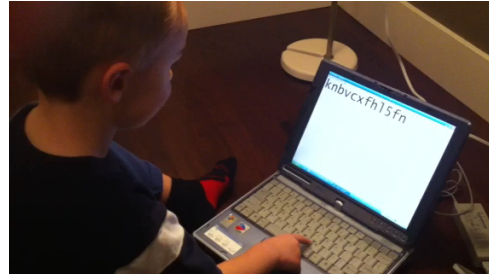
**learning one's culture**

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

source: Spradley

**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?

### design ethnography

A research method that can be used to understand a particular environment or domain of people for the purposes of designing new technology products  
(also called applied 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

**what to record**

**cultural behavior:** what people do  
**cultural artifacts:** what people use  
**cultural knowledge:** people's hidden understanding

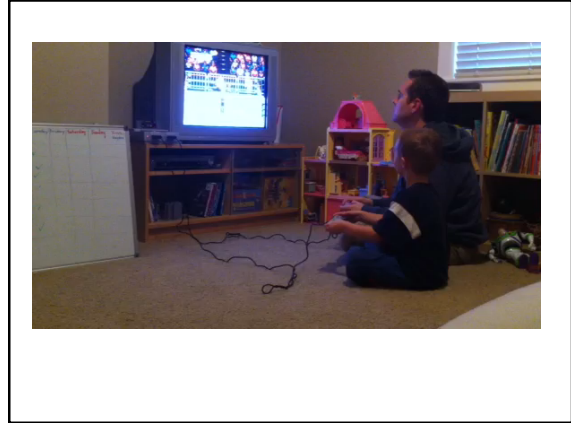
**why** people do **say, do, and use**

source: Spradley

**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?