Observation-Ethnographic method

- ‘Ethno’- ‘human groups’ and ‘lived culture’
- ‘graphy’ – ‘studying and writing about’

• Recommended reading- ‘Journal of contemporary ethnography’ + Chicago school of sociology

• Key issues and points in ethnography (covert and overt observation):
  - Closed settings chosen for research mean you need a special membership/access e.g. if you are observing university student you’ll need a pass/id card
  - But in open spaces e.g. observing people in public spaces like parks you don’t need permission
  - Covert-ethical complications as the participants don’t know they’re being watched
  - Overt- can overlap with covert as it might begin as a covert observation or some people may know who you are and others may not etc
  - Key informants- ‘gate keepers’- people who let you in and introduce you to people
  - Getting out of the research can sometimes be hard when doing ethnographic research because you build up a relationship so you can’t just ignore them afterwards + disadvantaged groups may want to know if you’re representing them accurately (overt obs) and many may feel exploited and abandoned if you just walk away at the end of research

Alan Bryman-Social research methods-recommend

• Observations can be hard as it is not easy to analyse and understand something that you do all the time e.g. observing students in the library if you are a student yourself and go to the library all the time