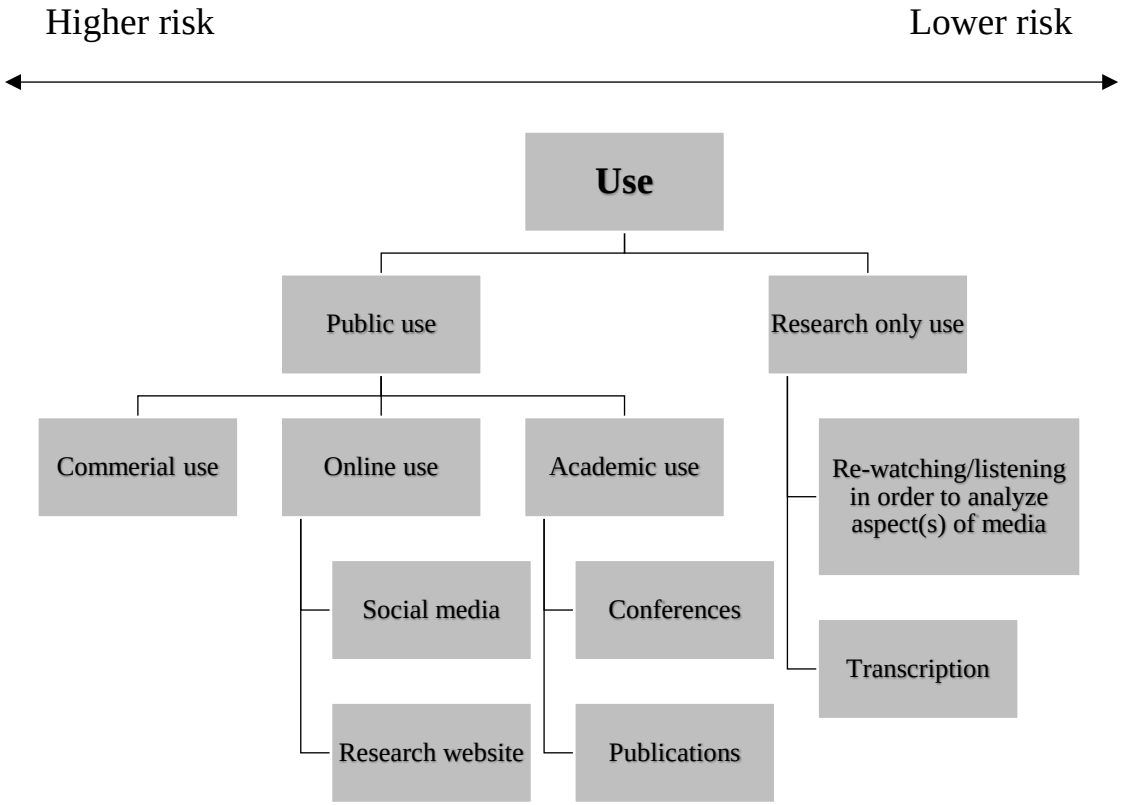
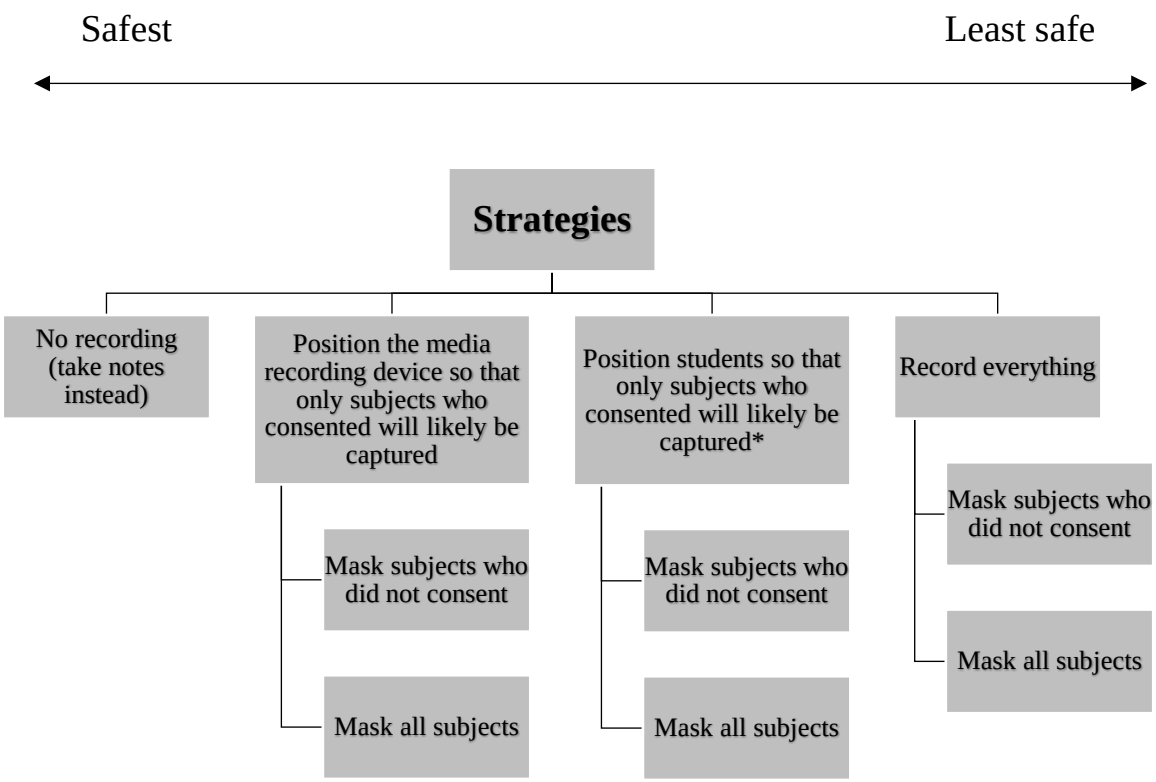
Classroom Observations with Media Recording: Best Practices for Mitigating Risks

Recording observations in a classroom presents unique concerns for how to evaluate and handle risks to subjects. This suggestion guideline is a tool to help investigators determine potential risks involved when recording classroom observations, and corresponding measures to mitigate those risks.

CPHS suggests using the safest strategy possible, especially for higher risk uses. For example, if the recording will be used for commercial use, investigators should consider positioning the media-recording device in a way that only captures consenting subjects, and masks non-subjects who may have been accidentally captured by the media. If choosing to use a less safe suggestion for a high-risk use, justification should be provided in the corresponding protocol submission. The distinctions in the following flowcharts should help researchers and Committee members in writing or reviewing a protocol's Risks section.





Other Considerations:

- Setting
- Age of students
- Potential sensitivity of information being studied and captured in the media
- Even if the media recording device or students are positioned so that only subjects who consented are captured, the recording might still capture voice (and possibly images) of those who did not consent. Depending on the case, it might be important to notify the subjects (and their parents, if applicable) about this risk
- *Positioning non-subjects out of range of the recording device may introduce privacy concerns as others in the room will know who is in the research. When utilizing this option, make sure not to limit access for students who might be seated in specific locations due to special needs or other reasons
- For photographs, identifiable data should be avoided, if possible (e.g., taking photos of classwork labeled with student names)

Should you have any questions in this regard, you may contact OPHS staff at ophs@berkeley.edu or 510-642-7461.