

Figure 5.1.



Photos of positioning of speakers recorded in a university common room at lunchtime as researcher aide memoire. Recording equipment is centre foreground in top photograph.

Students often ask whether it is acceptable to make secret recordings if the subjects have given you blanket permission in advance to record them at some unspecified time. This is also ethically unwise. In our experience, it is clear that people continue to subliminally monitor their speech when it's being recorded, even if they seem to be speaking in a wholly relaxed and casual manner. For example, socially or politically dangerous topics may be avoided. In addition, speakers should at any time be able to withdraw all or part of what they say, even if they have given permission to record. But even family and friends may find it face-threatening to contact a researcher afterwards and ask that certain parts of a recording be excised from a project. We should not compound these difficulties by having made surreptitious recordings, which under any circumstances is not good research ethics. Finally, in many places it is simply illegal to undertake surreptitious recording. For all these reasons, surreptitious recordings are never approved in any form of research.