

Case 4: Protecting Research Subjects

A brilliant doctoral student of Lee's is preparing for her dissertation defense in a medical anthropology program. Her research on family relationships and child treatment discusses the borderlands of discipline, child abuse and neglect. She has important theoretical contributions to make in the area of evolving cultural definitions of parent-child relationships among the sub-population she studied in the US. The student plans to publish her work as an ethnography, complete with many of the candid black-and-white photos she took of the children and families she studied. Lee is stunned by the evocative power of these photographs, but has come to three discomfiting conclusions:

1. when she began her research, the student did not include photographic methods as part of application to the local Internal Review Board;
2. consequently, the student has no signed permission from any of the individuals pictured in the photographs to use these identifying images in research or publication; and
3. some of the photographs portray evidence of physical violence with children that would likely be considered child abuse by professionals outside the study community.

How should Lee facilitate the dissemination of this student's important work and help her to protect her research subjects?