**English 203**

**Ethics Cases in Human Subjects Research**

*What are some of the ethical issues with the following studies?*

**Wichita Jury Case (1953)**

In this study, researchers tape-recorded jurors’ deliberations in six courtroom trials to measure the influence of attorney comments on decision-making. The judge and attorneys knew the research was being conducted, but the jurors did not. The tapes were played at a law conference.

**Milgram “Obedience to Authority Study” (1963)**

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how humans respond to instructions from people in positions of authority. The researchers informed volunteers that the purpose of the research was to study learning and memory. Each subject was told to teach a "student" and to punish the students' errors by administering increasing levels of electric shock. The "students" were confederates of the researcher and were never actually harmed. The “students” pretended to be poor learners. They mimicked pain and even unconsciousness as the subjects increased the levels of electric shock. Sixty-three percent of the subjects administered what they thought were lethal shocks; some even after the "student" claimed to have heart disease.

**Humphrey “Tea Room Trade Study” (1970)**

The study planned first to obtain information about homosexual practices in public restrooms and then to conduct further investigation on the men who took part in the acts. The researcher went undercover and gained the confidence of the men by acting as a "look out." The researcher identified 100 active subjects by tracing their car license numbers. A year after he completed the initial study of direct observation of homosexual acts the researcher distributed a "social health survey" throughout the communities where he knew the subjects lived and collected data about their sexual orientation, and marital and family status.

**Restaurant Letter Study (2001)**

Recently, a faculty member from the Business School of a major university designed and implemented a study to elicit responses from restaurants to complaints from putative customers. As part of the project, the researcher sent letters to restaurants falsely claiming that he and/or his wife had suffered food poisoning that ruined their anniversary celebration. The letters disclaimed any intention of contacting regulatory agencies and stated that the only intent was to convey to the owner what had occurred "in anticipation that you will respond accordingly."