

# Respecting Participants in Privacy-Related User Studies

Case Study of Mobile Messaging by  
Low-Income New Yorkers

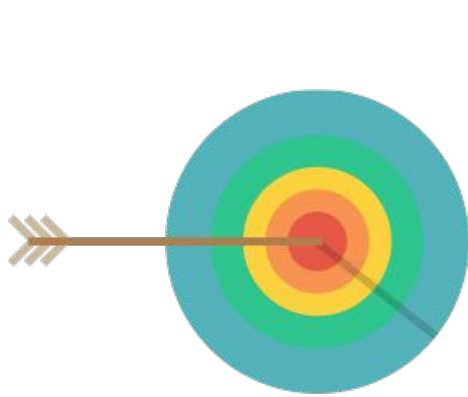
# Hello, I'm Ame



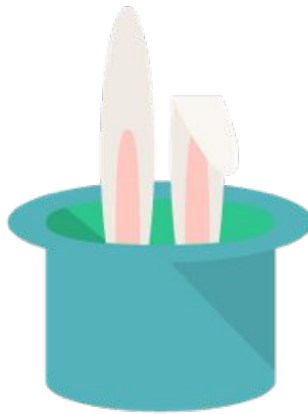
@ameellio

@simplysecureorg

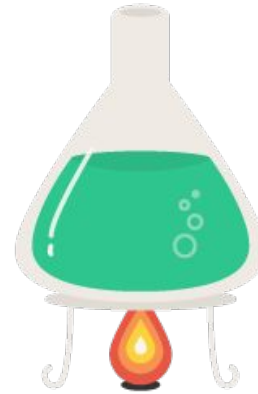
# Background: Simply Secure



UX Designers



Developers



Usability  
Researchers



Users

## Goals

- Foster the community of UX professionals involved in security & privacy
- Collaborate directly with technologists to improve software
- Create and distribute free, open resources

# Resources: Photograph, Share, Tweet, Blog

**Github:** <https://github.com/simplysecure/resources/>

NYCMobMsgConsentForm.pdf

NYCMobMsgModelRelease.pdf

NYCMobMsgParticipantsBillofRights.pdf

NYC MobMsgScreener.pdf

**Tech Report:** <https://github.com/simplysecure/resources/>

NYCMobMsgTechReport.pdf

## **SimplySecure.org/blog**

<https://simplysecure.org/blog/recruiting-screeners>

<https://simplysecure.org/blog/participant-rights>

<https://simplysecure.org/blog/model-release>

**Twitter:**

@ameellio



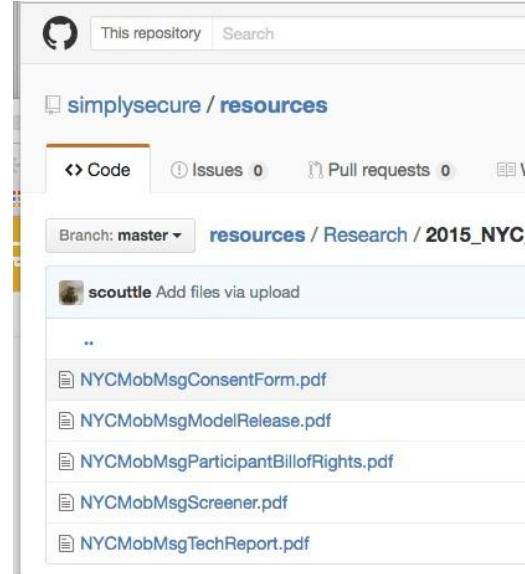
## Case Study: In-Context Fieldwork



# Outcomes



Tech Report



Resources



Community Discussion

# Outcomes



# Meeting People In Brownsville and Harlem, NYC

Summary: Participants shared how surveillance is inevitable and privacy is impossible.





## Renters' Mindset

Your mobile phone handset is owned by a hostile carrier. There's no way to hide from them, and they are constantly trying to get more of your money.

# Resources

# Why a Participants Bill of Rights is Necessary

**Informed Consent** and **Committees for Protection Human Subjects** are standard in many academic, governmental, and industrial contexts.

What about a document in **user-facing language**?

Starting an interview as someone empowered to complain is different than signing a document as a subject.

# Participants Bill of Rights: Change Power Dynamics

*We respect you and appreciate your time. Everyone participating in an interview has the following rights:*

- 1. I can ask questions about the interview, the organization, or the interviewer at any time*
- 2. I do not have to answer any question that I do not want to*
- 3. I can refuse for the interview to be recorded by video or audio, and I will still be compensated*
- 4. I can leave at any time, and I will still be compensated*
- 5. I can provide confidential feedback about my interview experience to the interviewer's manager*
- 6. I must approve the use of any photos, audio, video, or anonymized quotes that are used publicly, whether on a website, on a blog, or in the press*
- 7. Even after a photo, video, or quote has been published, I have the right to request its removal at any point in the future*

*You can reach us anytime by calling or texting to [x] or by email at [x].*



# Model Releases Solve an Important Problem

Simply Secure is not doing academic social science research. We do **not** audio record or video record interviews because we want more privacy-conscious people to participate.

But we believe photography is an important tool for building empathy, making memorable stories, and improving design.



# Photographs Make Stories Memorable

Loyalty club and coupon apps have very aggressive app permissions

# Example: Model Release

Default is **no photography**, but there are options for:

- \_ Non-personally identifiable photography
- \_ Personally identifiable photography requiring a model release

As an example, we shared photographs from the Humans of New York Instagram feed.

If people sign a model release, spend 3-5 minutes at the end to take flattering photographs, and share them with participants.





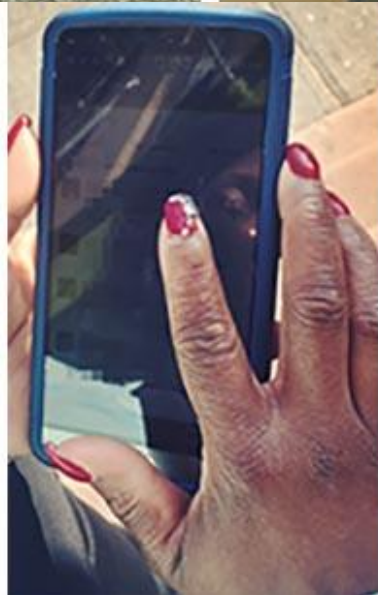
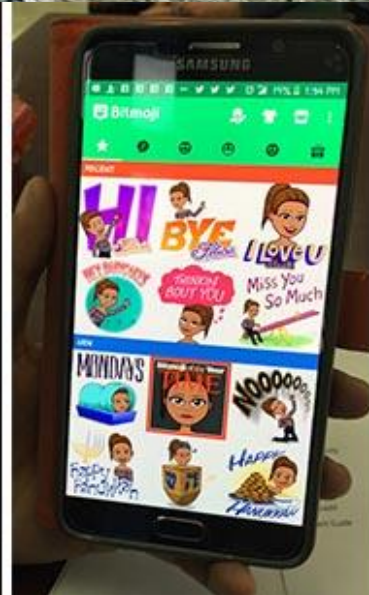
Sharing Specific Examples of Public Photography  
Example Humans of New York photographs printed out for the interview





Participants are Powerful People  
Respect them through photography





**Non-Identifiable Photography**  
Shares participants' contexts with a wider group





“Cops are catfishing people on Facebook. If you click on the wrong link – BAM they got you. They take over your account and get your friends.”

# Discussion





# Should This Photo Require a Release?

How should we as a community deal with screenshots?

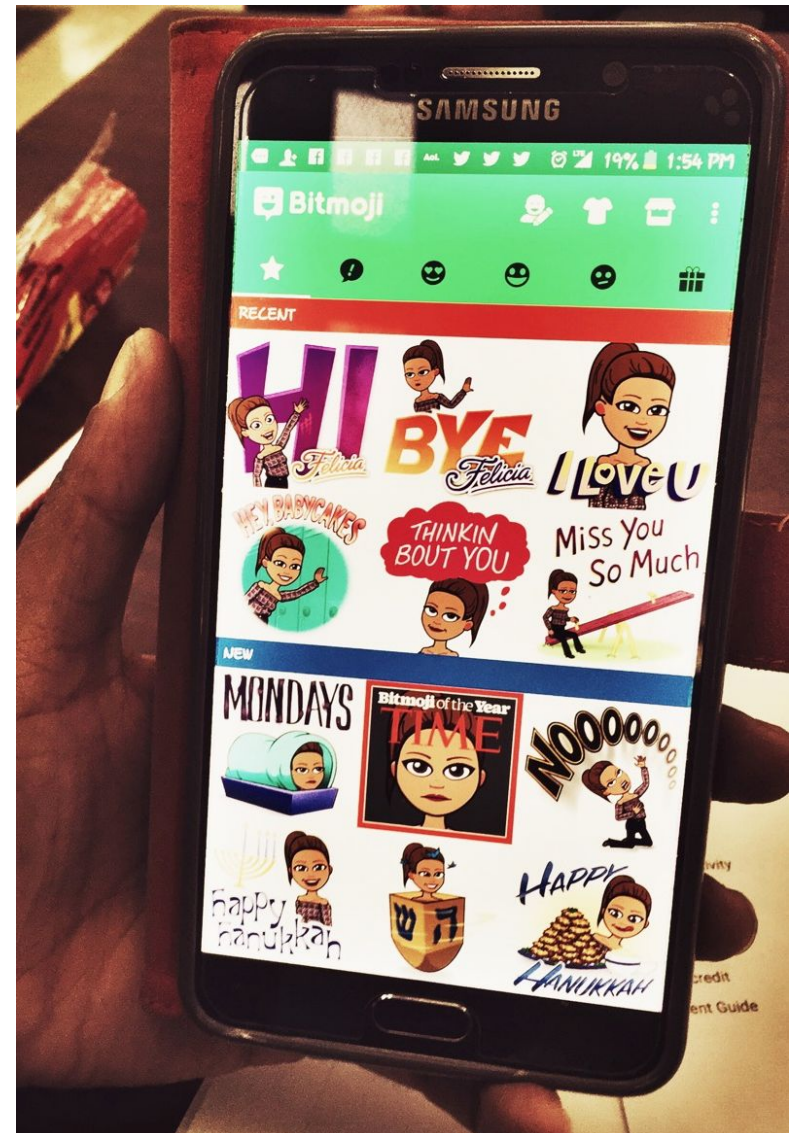
# Not Just Qualitative Studies, but Quantitative Too

What does it mean to recruit participants who consent to installing logging apps?

Who have no problem with being surveilled?

How confident are we that their behavior extends to people with privacy concerns?

What alternatives are there for online behavior tracking that protect (some) privacy?



# Questions for Planning User Studies

How representative are your participants?

- \_ Demographics

- \_ Attitudes

What's the least amount of data you can collect? How does the need to publish inform your choices?

What's the threat model? How might your participants be harmed if they were known to participate in your research?

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**Twitter:**

@ameellio



# Thank You

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Get involved:

Email [slack@simplysecure.org](mailto:slack@simplysecure.org) for an invitation to our public channels about design, usable security, research, and more

**Simply Secure**