

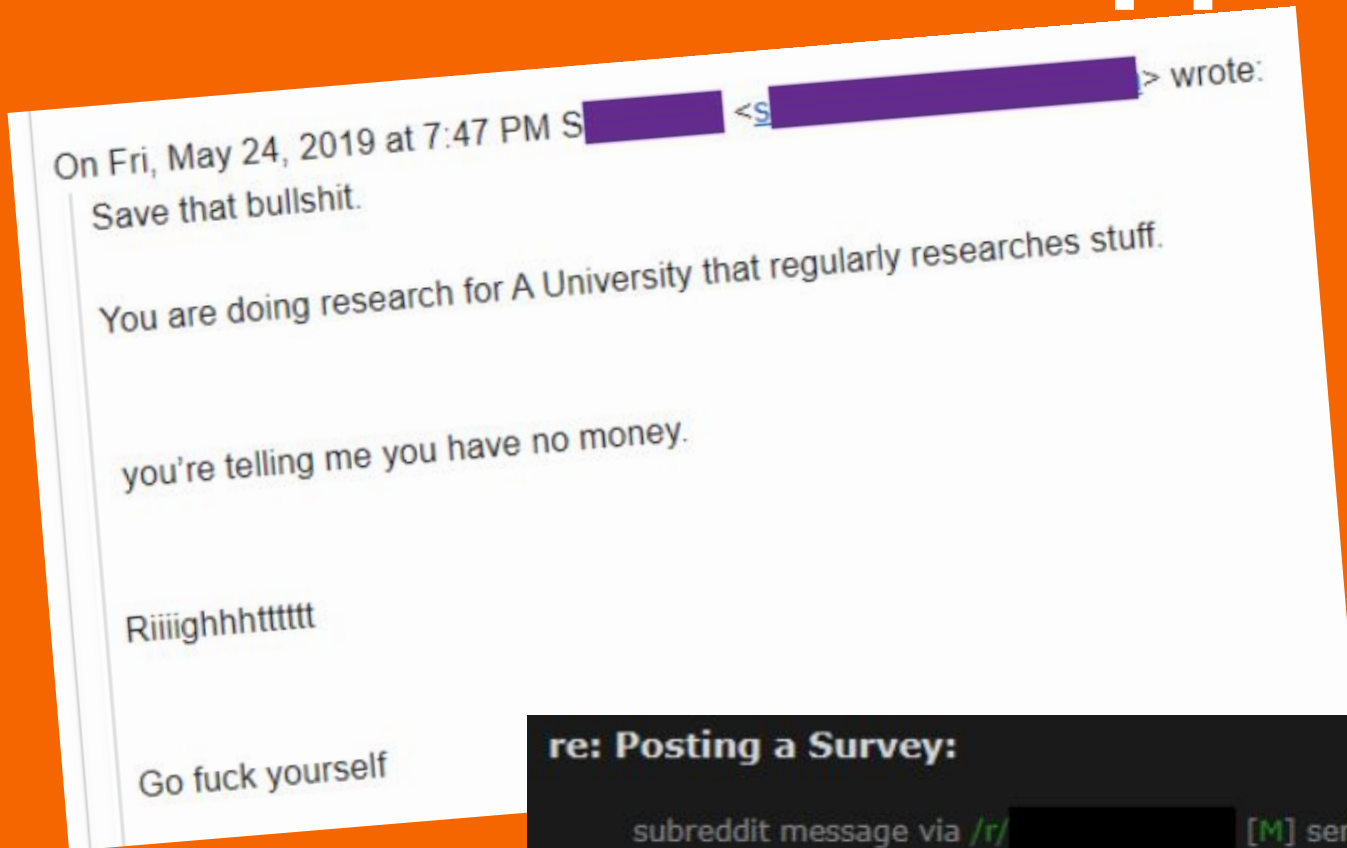
Under the Bridge: Trolling and the Challenges of Recruiting Software Developers for Empirical Research Studies

Ella Kokinda, Makayla Moster, James Dominic, Paige Rodeghero

Clemson University



Has this ever happened to you?



Reserachers: "Thanks so much for your interest in our research, I just wanted to confirm your timeslot for the interview!"

Them:



re: Posting a Survey:

subreddit message via /r/ [redacted] [M] sent 1 year ago

Nope. Too boring. We'll gladly accept cooler research studies in the future though.

[Permalink](#) [Delete](#) [Report](#) [Block Subreddit](#) [Mark Unread](#) [Reply](#)

Importance of Meta Research

- enables researchers to continuously improve research practices [1]
- why does it matter?
 - software engineering is ever evolving, so should its research practices
 - benchmarking ourselves with other research disciplines who recruit for human studies

1. J. P. Ioannidis, D. Fanelli, D. D. Dunne, and S. N. Goodman, “Meta-research: evaluation and improvement of research methods and practices,” *PLoS biology*, vol. 13, no. 10, p. e1002264, 2015.

Proposed Research

- **Goal: Understanding recruitment challenges as a whole as well as bring awareness to the side of research which may not be apparent to some**
- **Proposed Research Questions (RQs)**
 1. **What challenges do SE researchers encounter during participant recruitment?**
 2. **How have these challenges impacted research?**
 3. **How have these challenges impacted researcher wellbeing?**
 4. **What are lessons learned from recruitment challenges?**

Pilot Study

- **lab came together to share experiences from 7 different studies**
 - recruitment methods
 - challenges
 - what was successful

- **classified challenges into categories**
 - participant recruitment
 - community engagement
 - data poisoning

Pilot Study Results

- **Participant recruitment**
 - ghosting
 - cancellations
 - incomplete data (online recruitment)
- **Community engagement**
 - difficult in online settings
 - need to understand the communities reaching out to
 - general rudeness and poor reception
- **Data poisoning**
 - purposeful disruptive behaviour in surveys
 - trying to be “funny” in gender preference boxes
 - hostile responses



Based on these
preliminary results
what do we currently
recommend?

Proposed Recommendations for Recruitment

- introduce work plain and concisely
- identify researchers and institutions
- explain why are you are approaching this person or community
- motivate benefits of participation
- clear and concise impacts to participants
- explain how you handle and anonymize data
- provide contact information
- link to survey or interview questions for moderator preview

Thank you!

- Ella Kokinda
 - ekokind@clermson.edu