

# Personas: Concretizing User Needs

*UX505*

*Predrag “Pedja” Klasnja*



You are not your user!

Personas are **fictional characters** that represent **key types** of technology's **intended users** that were discovered through **formative work**.

# Key characteristics of personas

- Based in data
- Embody goals, traits, behaviors, and contexts that could influence if and how the technology is used
- Represent distinct classes of intended users



## Mary



### Demographics

**Age:** 49

**Occupation:** project manager

**Location:** Irvine, CA

**Life stage:** Divorced, one child

### Motivators

- **Professional success**
- **Being a good mom to her 10-year-old daughter**
- **Novelty:** Mary gets bored easily and has a high need for novel experiences
- **Social contact:** Mary is very social and enjoys working with people and spending social time with friends

### Constraints

- **Suburban living environment:** Mary gets little activity in routine daily life
- **Work days packed with meetings**
- **Free evening time limited:** Mary often works in the evening, or wants to spend time with her daughter. Free on nights when daughter with her dad
- **High technical literacy**

## John



### Demographics

**Age:** 68

**Occupation:** Mechanical engineer

**Location:** Ann Arbor, MI

**Life stage:** Retired, living with his wife

### Motivators

- Staying healthy as long as possible
- Spending quality time with his grandchildren
- Being independent and not being burden on his children
- Continuing to learn

### Constraints

- **Weather:** Often too cold or too hot to exercise outdoors
- **Access to stationary bike at home**
- **Strong need for structure and routine**
- **Travels to spend time with grandchildren**
- **Moderate technical literacy**

# Elements of personas

- **Demographics:** demographic information that might influence use (e.g., age, technical literacy)
- **Goals and motivators:** goals related to technology and motivators that could be leveraged or act as barriers
- **Behaviors:** routines and other behaviors (e.g., work practices) that create opportunities or barriers for technology
- **Context:** living and working environments and other aspects of physical and social context that may affect technology use



# Benefits of personas

- Personalize and summarize a lot of data
- Provide a mental shortcut for design considerations:
  - “Would Mary do this?”
  - “How would John react to this?”
- Allow discussion of and agreement on who intended users are
- Easy to understand by non-designers (programmers, etc.)
- Help check tendencies to design for oneself or “the elastic user”

## Some final considerations

- Personas should feel “real”—they should accurately summarize available data
- They should focus on common rather than idiosyncratic characteristics
- Content should be relevant
  - e.g., family situation might not be relevant for design of a workplace technology

# Summary

- Personas help us keep our target users' needs in mind
- Provide quick way to check our design decisions
- Keep the design team synced up about who the users are