



# (Mis)Using Personas with **THE SEVEN DWARFS**

Cassandra H. Leung | [www.cassandrahl.com](http://www.cassandrahl.com) | @Tweet\_Cassandra

# New Slides, Who Dis?

tester, UX enthusiast

intersectional feminist

blogger, speaker



MoT fangirl

she / they



# What is a User Persona?

A persona ... is a fictional character created to represent a user type that might use a ... product in a similar way.

**Marketers** may use personas together with market segmentation, where the qualitative personas are constructed to be representative of specific segments.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persona\\_\(user\\_experience\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persona_(user_experience))

The demographic profile includes four main sections: personal background, professional background, user environment, and psychographics.

Psychographics include details such as attitudes, interests, motivations, and pain points.

<https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/how-to-define-a-user-persona/>



# Personas ≠ Roles

User personas are not the same as user roles!!

- Roles refer to users in relation to the software and are often linked to permissions
  - E.g., admin, team leader, premium user
  - “As a [user role], I want x so that y.”
- Personas describe users on a personal level and should include details that are relevant for the software, but still make sense outside it
  - E.g., technically proficient, uses a screen reader
  - “How might [user persona] respond to this feature?”



# Traditional Personas

## Charles Thomson

- 59 year old man in Birmingham, UK
- Married with three adult children
- Full-time accountant with masters degree
- Earns £78,000 pa + bonus
- Owns mobile, laptop
- Likes reading, watching cricket
- “Have you seen this morning’s paper?”



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## What they’re really trying to say:

- Nearing retirement
- No dependants
- Disposable income
- Highly educated
- Comfortable using technology
- High value persona



# Traditional Personas

## Cassandra H. Leung

- 29 year old woman in Munich, Germany
- Single, no dependants
- Full-time software tester with further education
- Earns [redacted]€ pa
- Owns mobile, tablet, laptop, e-reader
- Likes cats, listening to music
- “Fuck off.”





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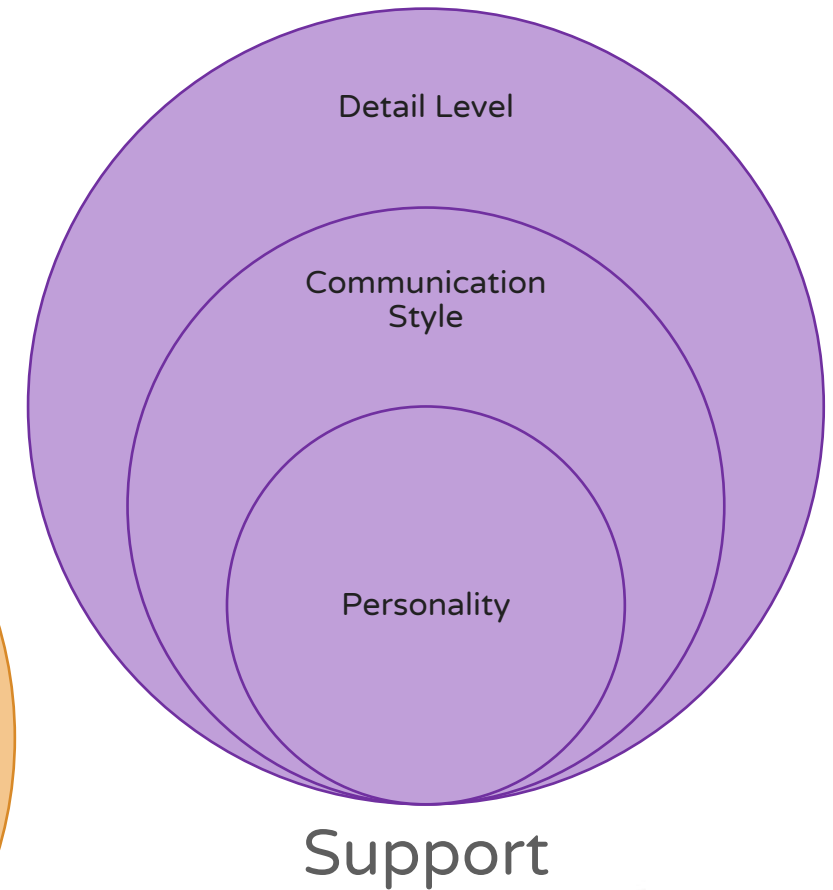
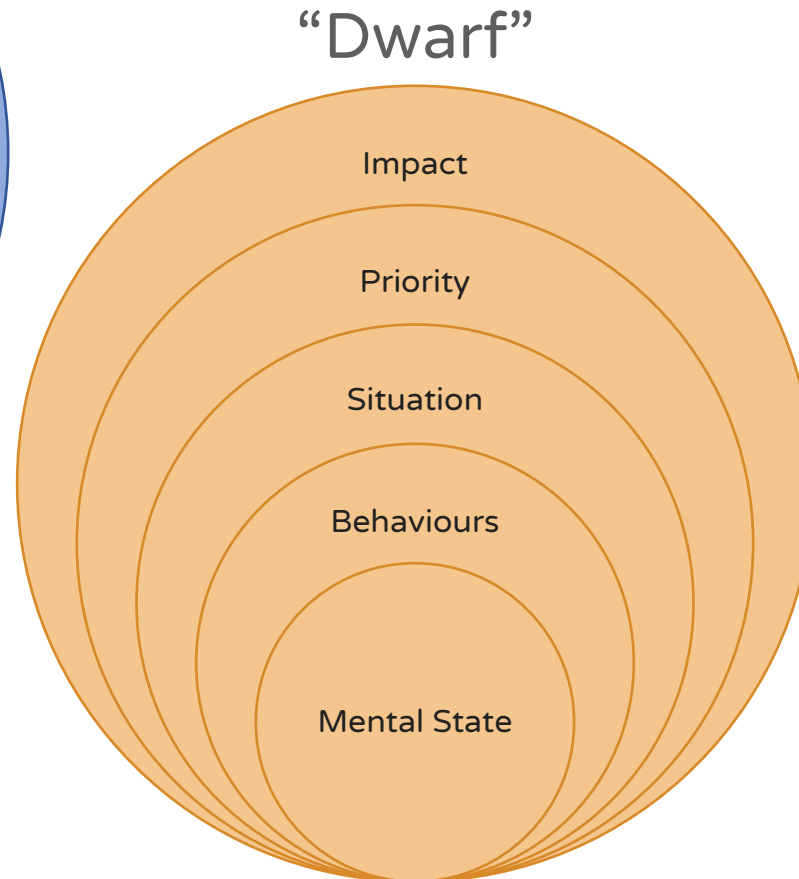
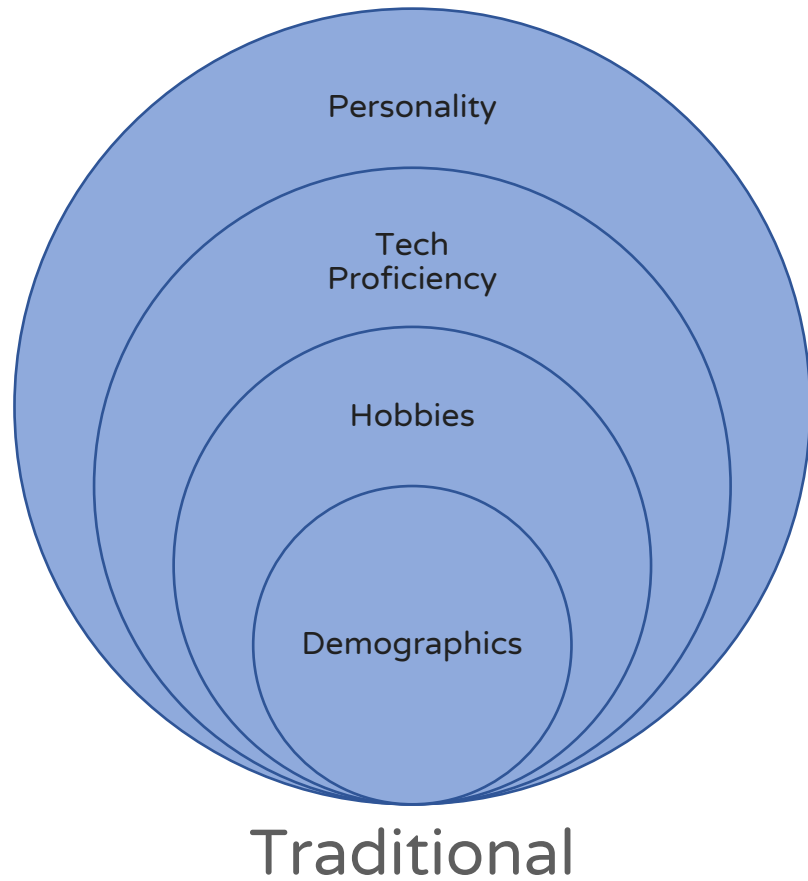
# Traditional Personas

Some of my problems with traditional personas:

- Not designed for testing  
=> Information isn't helpful or relevant
- Hint at potentially useful information instead of stating it
- Focus on traditional demographics, assume fixed characteristics and ignore other important factors
- We still have to make up a lot of details
- Most try to cover many different groups in one  
=> Become too generic to be representative



# A Different Core



# Dwarf Personas

“Dwarf personas” focus on users’ mental states and should help us understand how they might be personally impacted by the product. They appreciate that users are complex and can’t always be represented by a single persona.

Disclaimer:

- Disney’s dwarfs used for inspiration only
- Creative licence used
- Sorry about the name “Dopey” – not my choice!



# Dwarf Personas

## HAPPY

- The Temporary One
- Content, open-minded, forgiving
- Willing to let small things go
- No expectations
- Mood / mental state could change at any time
- “Sounds great!”



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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Playing games on holiday with no time pressures and low stress
- **Priority:** Nice design, fun to use
- **Impact:** Low risk unless pushed towards a different mental state
- Casual user
- Technically proficient
- Physically able



# Dwarf Personas

## DOC

- The Picky One
- Suspicious, difficult to impress
- Easily turned off
- Detail oriented
- Prefers specificity over ambiguity
- Can be distracted by lots of options or comparisons
- “Hmm, I’m not sure about that.”



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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Learning about privacy and trying to find a secure email provider
- **Priority:** Accurate, clearly presented information
- **Impact:**
  - Mistrust => non-adoption
  - Confusion and abandonment of secure email => stuck with non-secure email and less privacy





# Dwarf Personas

## **SNEEZY**

- The Distracted One
- Forgetful, erratic
- Short attention span
- Multi-tasker
- Doesn't like long or complicated workflows
- Will stop mid-flow and continue later
- “Sorry, did you ask me something?”



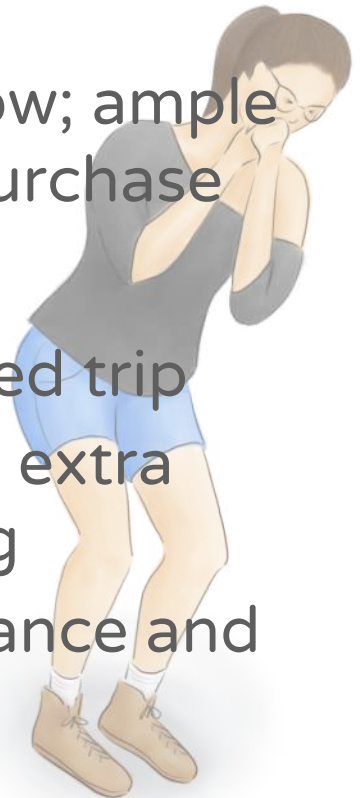
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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Trying to make arrangements for a trip, across several sites – just one task on a list of to dos
- **Priority:** Quick, simple workflow; ample time to complete booking / purchase
- **Impact:**
  - Incomplete booking => ruined trip
  - Booking the wrong thing => extra stress to correct the booking
  - Session times out => annoyance and wasted time



# Dwarf Personas

## DOPEY

- The Confused One
- Unsure / overwhelmed
- Takes comfort in familiar patterns
- Seeks information / guides
- Prone to errors
- “Shit, what did I just do?”



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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Using internal systems at a new company to change a customer's billing information
- **Priority:** Clear instructions and warning messages
- **Impact:**
  - Wrong action taken => customer is charged too much
  - Customer complains => job is at risk



# Dwarf Personas

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BMD False Alarm

Amber Alert (CAE) - Kauai County Only

Amber Alert (CAE) Statewide

1. TEST Message

PACOM (CDW) - STATE ONLY

Tsunami Warning (CEM) - STATE ONLY

DRILL - PACOM (CDW) - STATE ONLY

Landslide - Hana Road Closure

Amber Alert DEMO TEST

High Surf Warning North Shores

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reportedly selected

the option that should  
have been selected

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# Dwarf Personas

## **SLEEPY**

- The Exhausted One
- Mentally / physically exhausted
- Stressed, high cognitive load
- Impatient, low tolerance for issues
- “On the edge” – mood / mental state could worsen at any time
- “I really don’t have time for this right now.”



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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Travelling frequently across time zones and using a calendar app to keep track of meetings, flight times, etc.
- **Priority:** Self-explanatory features
- **Impact:**
  - Time zones for calendar appointments aren’t clear => stress, inconvenience, cost of having to rebook missed flights
  - Appointment saved in the wrong time zone => missed meetings => lost work, money, reputation





# Dwarf Personas

## **BASHFUL**

- The Anxious One
- Shy, reserved, nervous
- Worried about making a mistake
- Sometimes avoids taking action “just in case”
- Willingness to seek help can vary
- “Umm, I don’t know.”



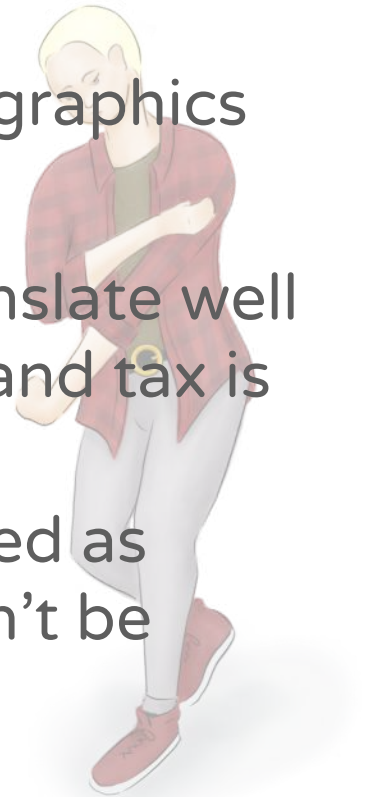
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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Moved to a different country and uses websites in non-native language
- **Priority:** Localisation, helpful graphics
- **Impact:**
  - Tax information doesn’t translate well => wrong options selected and tax is under/over paid
  - Large blocks of text displayed as pictures or PDFs => text can’t be easily translated



# Dwarf Personas

## **GRUMPY**

- The Angry One
- Impatient
- Easily annoyed / frustrated
- Prone to “rage clicking” and device shaking
- Likely to complain publicly and abandon a product based on one bad experience
- Resistant to change
- “Why is everyone so incompetent?”



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## Ideas to develop further:

- **Situation:** Having a bad day; manipulating and analysing a large data set using a spreadsheet app
- **Priority:** Reliability
- **Impact:**
  - App crashes => data / changes lost
  - Long processing times => frustration, wasted time

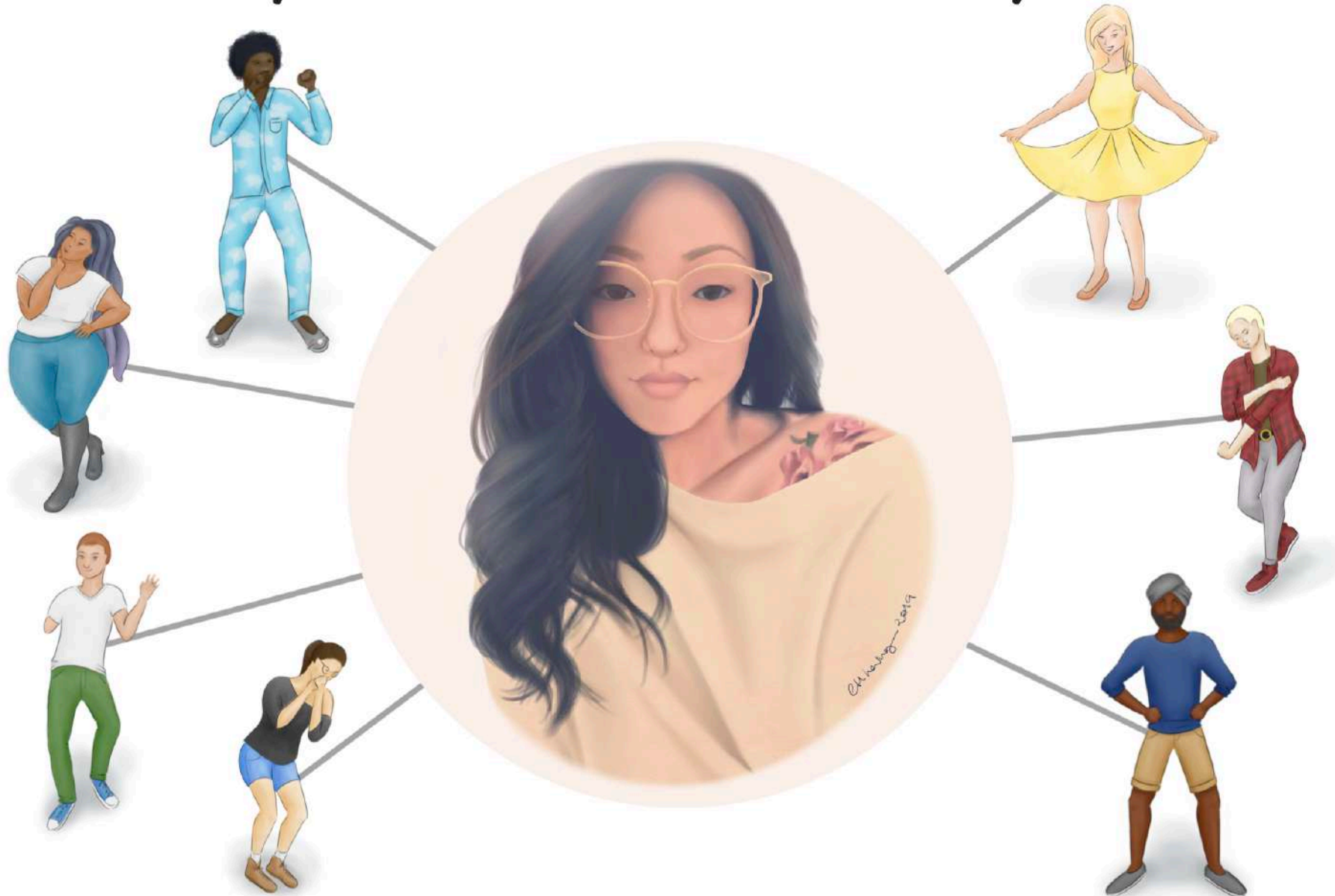
Could also be The Disgruntled One  
aka: Bad Actor / Security Threat



# Objections

- “We need to focus on users who will make us the most money.”
- “Those are just edge cases.”
- A “high value” traditional persona could embody every single “dwarf persona” at a different point
- People are complex and can’t – and shouldn’t – be reduced to a single persona
- The example situations are inspired by real situations that I’ve experienced in the last two years – they are “stress cases” but not uncommon cases

# Accessibility is Good for Everyone



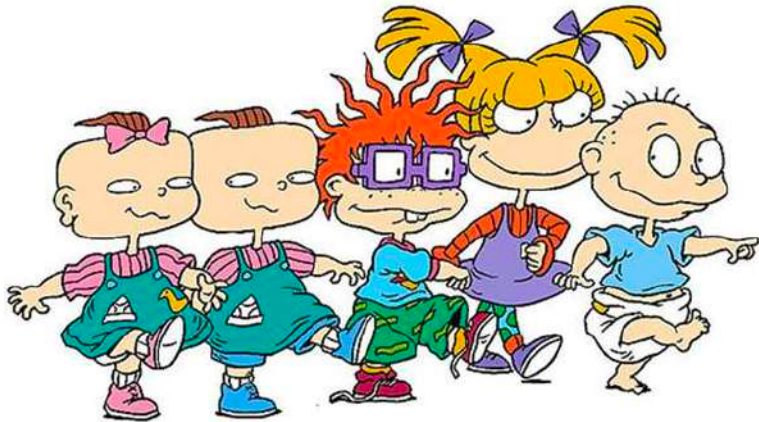
# (Mis)Use Personas

- Break away from traditional demographics
- Base personas on real people instead of generalisations
- Perform testing tours as each persona
- Think about how your product might bring out each persona (mental state) in users
- Have personas for users you don't want as well (bad actors)

There's no “right or wrong” way – only “useful or not”.

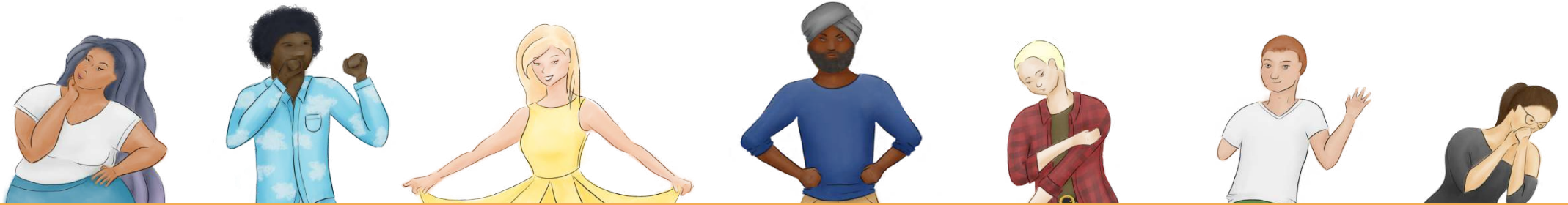


# Find Inspiration



# Diversify, Always





THANK YOU

Cassandra H. Leung | [www.cassandrahl.com](http://www.cassandrahl.com) | @Tweet\_Cassandra



# References & Resources

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persona\\_\(user\\_experience\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persona_(user_experience))
- <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/how-to-define-a-user-persona/>
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- [https://think-about.io/events/2019/speakies/eriol\\_fox.html](https://think-about.io/events/2019/speakies/eriol_fox.html)