

Writing Biographies

Biographies or profiles are cohesive “ideal” representations of significant events based on the experience of focus group participants or interviewees. The biographies comprise essential and relevant information gathered during the research. They are written in the first-person story, using similar language, direct quotes and tone delivered by the participants.

The aim is to retain humanity, and authenticity through storytelling, maintain a distance from our interpretations and just “listen” the stories of potential users to a broader

audience. We relate their individual experiences to the social and organisational context they operate. Crafting a profile can bring an aesthetic component into reporting our research that makes both the researchers’ and readers’ work enriching, pleasurable, and at times touching to the spirit (Garman, 1994).

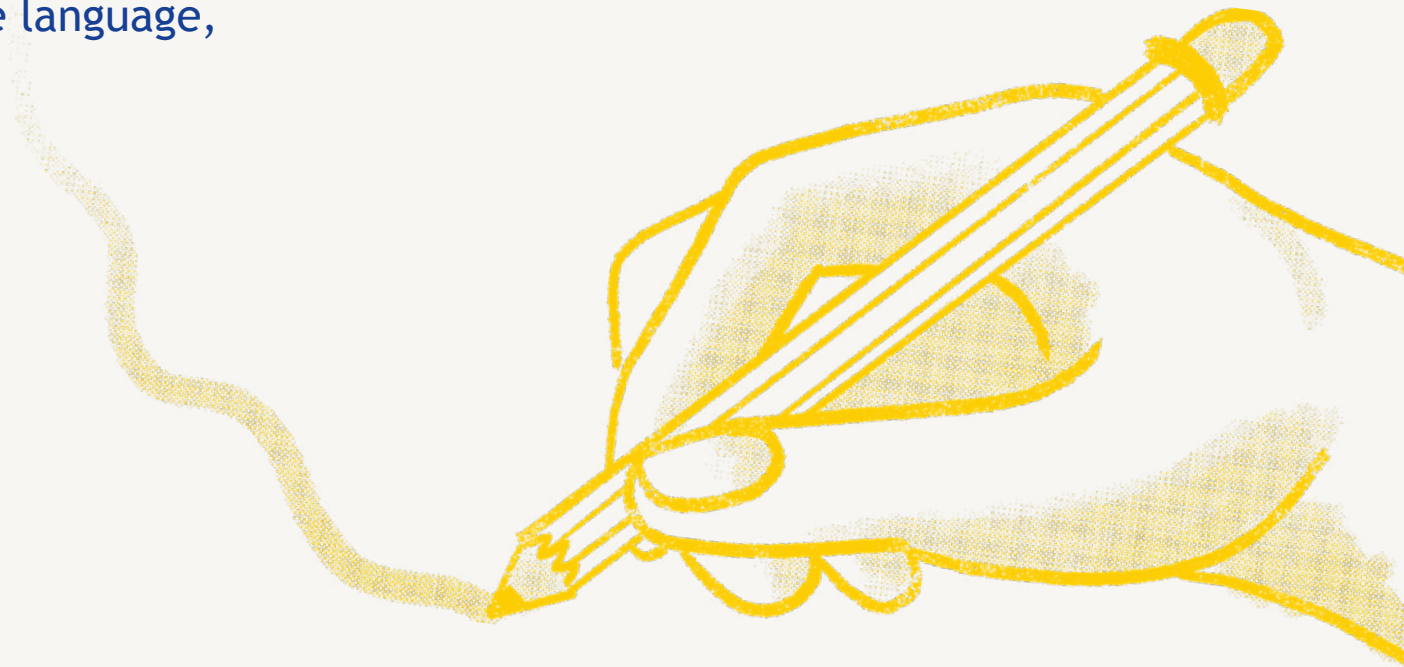
Depending on the type of the research and selected population, we may carefully create representative **personas “talking” on behalf of the type group**. For example: *The biography of 22 years old unemployed game designer represents the combination of 20-24 years old unemployed creatives in focus groups.*

These biographies are written after analysing and categorising the focus group transcripts. The biographies are not an analytical research tool but a primer for the reader to better grasp the complexity of the deeper and formalised analysis. Biographies bring **humanity and emotions to the exploration of people without falling victim to heavy-handed theories.**

When writing these biographies, be sure:

- Record and transcribe the interview or the focus group. We can then easily select and use the authentic narration of our participants.
- Once you have read the transcript, mark passages of interest, and label those passages.
- Following categories are always represented in the biographies:
 - basic biographical data of the “ideal” participants (focusing on their studies, work experience, personal values, individual understanding of and attitudes towards the project);
 - experience and reflections; attitudes towards objects and spaces associated with Learning Community components;
 - relationships and connections to relevant actors, institutions and spaces.
- Gradually complete and reveal to the reader a picture of the Learning Community Components (meaning, identity, practice, community, materiality), structure, relationships, history, everyday realities, space and objects, etc.

- In crafting a profile, protect the identity of the participant if the written consent form calls for doing so.
- Check each text reduction or linguistic modification with the original interview transcript.
- Do not be too repetitive.
- Use the language and the tone of the group, do not use poetic or too descriptive language, do not stylise. Just let it flow.



*In research and design, we use **biographies/ profiles of users and selected stakeholder to raise awareness, for communication and negotiation with public institutions, including potential future users and information campaigns to the broader public.***

References:

⇒ Irving Seidman - Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences, pages 119-128.

⇒ Studs Terkel - Working, 1972

Garman, N. (1994). Qualitative inquiry: Meaning and menace for educational researchers. In J.

S. Smyth (Ed.), Conference proceedings for the mini-conference, Qualitative Approaches in Educational Research. Flinders University, South Australia