This paper shares the results of research into the designing for one approach as used within design education. The term designing for one refers to a (student) designer designing for one individual in which the individual’s specific interests, accessible tools, capabilities, etc. shapes the designer’s process and are reflected in the resulting bespoke design. This particular study looked at four individual case studies in which design students of various disciplines and educational levels from universities both in the US and in Belgium used this approach. With courses held off campus, often in the homes of the participants, working with participants from user groups that were often marginalised (such as people with dementia living in a care facility or participants marginalised because of language comprehension, physical disability, etc.) the four cases ran across design coursework within bachelor-degree, discipline-specific programmes.

In order to identify how these cases were operating differently than what Schön referred to as courses in which students are practicing practice (2017), these cases were analysed by a panel of 21 design education experts. Specifically, these cases were analysed for factors that relate to Gero and Kumar’s theory of creativity framework (1993). This theory suggests that creativity is prompted by variables that move the design process from the known and routine into areas that are unfamiliar and unknown. For design students...
specifically, this idea of routine includes a student’s familiarity with elements that make up the formal qualities of the discipline they are learning to do (colour, size, material, imagery, movement, format, etc.) as well as the expectations related to the use of these qualities.

Although the analysis of these cases did not focus on the creativity of the outcomes, it did focus on qualities that were shifting the student’s experience away from the known and the routine into the unknown. Eleven variables were identified in the designing for one approach that offered this shift. Next to this, the analysis included over 200 pages of interview transcripts from students in the four cases, looking to identify how these variables impacted a student’s experience.

What this paper offers to readers, then, is a list of designing for one change variables that both design researchers and educators can use and adapt in order to enable and unlock the unexpected from their routine design educational practice.

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Andrea is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer in the Inter-Actions Research Unit at the LUCA School of Arts. She is also a lecturer at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences in the Postgraduate Space and Service design programme. In terms of medium, her expertise domains are interaction design, visual language communication and service design. Her research focus is on participatory processes and engaging marginalized communities in the design process (people with dementia, young people with autism, people with a disability, people on the fringes of society, etc), exploring the potential of experience-based student learning and developing sustainable services that are responsive to the needs of communities and non-profit organizations. Her research specifically looks at relation-based design participation (taking place in lived-environments instead of lab-based situations) between designer and participant and necessary proxy participants and how this informs design decisions (products, services, functionality) as well as the designer’s future creative practice.

In 2016, together with Dr. Niels Hendriks, she co-founded the Dementia Lab Conference, an international conference which focuses on dementia and design currently in its 5th year (2021, Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Vancouver, Canada). A native of the US, based in Belgium since 2010, Andrea has also worked in New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK and Portugal in workshops and educational exchanges.