

# The Power of One: Exploring the Needs of the Unheard and Unseen

## Output Phase I, II & III

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## **Current Team Members**

**Dr. Marianne Boes** | UMCU, Pediatric Immunology Group at Center for Translational Immunology

**Prof. Dr. Jojanneke van der Toorn** | UU, Organizational Behavior Group

**Dr. Daniel Lakens** | TU/e, Human-Technology Interaction group, Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences

**Iris Buizer** | TU/e, Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences

**Renee Noortman** | TU/e, Department of Industrial Design

**Dr. Özge Bilgili** | UU, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

**Dr. Mathias Funk** | TU/e, Future Everyday Group, Industrial Design

**Dr. Martine Veldhuizen** | UU, Department of Languages, Literature and Communication

## **Former Team Members**

**Manon Klarenaar** | TU/e, Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences

**Anna-Lea van Ooijen** | TU/e, Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences

**Anne Schietecat** | Eindhoven University of Technology, Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences

**Dr. Merel van Goch** | UU, Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Dr. Cristiana Teixeira Santos** | UU, Department of Law, Economics and Governance

**Dr. Lieke Stelling** | UU, English Language & Culture, Institute of Cultural Inquiry

**Dr. Daniel Tetteroo** | TU/e Future Everyday Group, Industrial Design

**Dr. Monique Simons** | Wageningen University, Department of Social Sciences, Consumption and Healthy Lifestyles Group

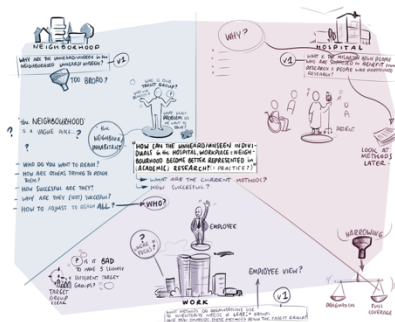
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## I. Introduction

Researchers and professionals often focus on what they perceive as the average individual, which prevents them from recognizing those who fall outside this scope. These unseen and unheard individuals typically have an intersecting complexity of social problems or belong to marginalized groups. There is a consistent lack of data about the needs of these individuals. With the Power of One team, which comprises researchers from psychology, industrial design, cultural history, cell biology, law, interdisciplinary sciences, and English literature, we examined the barriers that prevent individuals from being empowered to make their needs and views known to professionals (including researchers, policymakers, and aid workers). We examine barriers related to collecting data from marginalized groups in the workplace, the difficulty of reaching out to a representative set of patients to be included in medical research, and the challenge of reaching out to neighborhood residents with activities and support (e.g., social and sports activities). Through interviews, participatory research and co-creation methods, and by collaboration with societal partners (e.g., The Netherlands Patient Federation, Workplace Pride Foundation, the municipality of Utrecht), we investigated how individuals in society who are often not reached can be better included. In the current report, we summarize the output of the Power of One with an emphasis on the last and third phase of the project.

### Research aims



1. What strategies do researchers and practitioners use to identify the needs of unseen populations?
2. Do these strategies sufficiently reach the individuals within these populations?
3. What are recommendations for improvement?

## II. Research

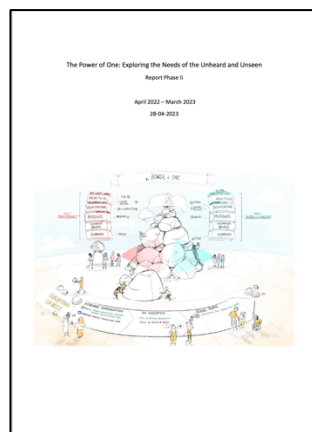
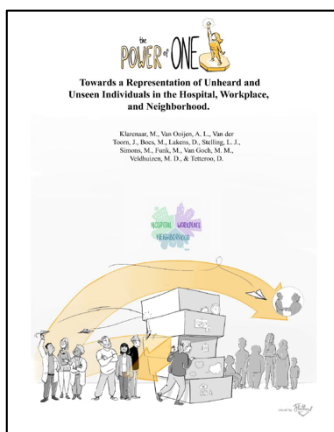
### Phase 1 and Phase 2

A report on the Phase 1 findings and reflections can be found here:

<https://unusualcollaborations.ewuu.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/431/2023/06/ThePowerofOne-Phase1-FinalReport.pdf>

A report on the Phase 2 findings and reflections can be found here:

<https://unusualcollaborations.ewuu.nl/unusual-collaborations/the-power-of-one/>



### Phase 3

#### Research paper on Workplace subproject

In the workplace subproject, led by Jojanneke van der Toorn, we aimed to comprehend the complexities of employees' decisions regarding the disclosure of personal information on sexual orientation and gender identity. To this end, Anne Schietecat and Iris Buizer conducted and analyzed 23 interviews assessing employees' attitudes toward collecting such data in the workplace. The project team, which also included Özge Bilgili and Martine Veldhuizen, recently submitted a research paper on the findings to *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* and are awaiting a decision and reviews. An abstract is printed below:

***Disclosing Identities at Work: Employee Attitudes towards Sharing Personal Information on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity***

**Background.** Organizations committed to non-discrimination and inclusivity can monitor employee experiences to expose inequalities and develop precise, targeted policies. One approach is to collect and analyze personal data on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, are employees prepared to share such personal information? What are their hesitations, and under what conditions are they willing to disclose?

**Purpose.** To comprehend the complexities of employees' decisions regarding the disclosure of personal information on sexual orientation and gender identity, our study investigates their attitudes toward collecting such data in the workplace.

**Methodology.** We conducted 23 in-depth semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion.

**Findings.** We uncovered four factors that shape employees' attitudes towards data collection, including (1) the perceived benefit and relevance of sexual orientation and gender identity to the workplace, (2) minority vs. majority group membership, (3) fear of misuse of information and negative career-related consequences, and (4) the risk of categorization. Additionally, we found four key conditions that influence employees' disclosure decisions, including (1) the transparency of data collection purposes, (2) the accessibility and perceived privacy of data, (3) trust and anonymity issues, and the (4) voluntariness of the data collection process.

**Originality.** To our knowledge, this is the first empirical study on employees' attitudes towards data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace.

**Implications.** By shedding light on these employees' attitudes, this research enhances our understanding of disclosure practices of employees belonging to sexual and/or gender minority groups within work contexts, helping to foster more inclusive work environments.

#### Hospital Narrative Tool

In the hospital subproject, led by Daniel Lakens and Marianne Boes, we sought to understand the barriers patients face when participating in medical-scientific research. The findings aim to inform strategies for equipping professionals with a more representative group of patients. We employed various methods to explore these challenges. Interviews conducted by Anne Schietecat with both professionals and patients revealed several obstacles, including practical barriers (such as limited time and financial constraints), personal and relational barriers (like patient motivation and the doctor-patient relationship), and assumption-driven barriers (such as biases held by medical professionals). Building on these insights, Renee Noortman developed an interactive story as a research tool to further explore barriers to patient inclusion. This story-based approach encourages individuals to identify barriers themselves. Available as an easily accessible online app, it is designed for use on smartphones and can be utilized in waiting rooms before appointments. The app is currently being refined and distributed among healthcare partners to gather more data on the experiences of both patients and

medical professionals. The ultimate goal is to eliminate these barriers and increase the diversity of patients participating in medical-scientific research.



## Dissertation

The narrative tool forms an important part of Renee Noortman's dissertation, which she will defend at TU/e in the coming year.

## III. Education

### Graduate Honours Interdisciplinary Course at UU

In the Medical Humanities Course, featuring Martine Veldhuizen as a lecturer, students actively participated in the Graduate Honours Interdisciplinary Seminar under the theme "The Unseen and Unheard in the Hospital and Workplace." In the final session taking place on November 21, 2023, the students presented their diverse projects, exploring creative expressions through mediums like blogs, podcasts, music, and more. This allowed students the freedom to share their perspectives on the often-overlooked aspects of healthcare and work environments, contributing to a rich and varied discourse.



## Interdisciplinary Sciences at UU

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, Iris Buizer gave a guest lecture during one of Özge Bilgili's course on Psychology of Ethnic Relations at University College Utrecht. During this guest lecture, they provided valuable insights into the goals and outcomes of the Power of One project. Additionally, the lecture was combined with a panel debate among students, offering students a unique opportunity to engage in a discussion on diversity in the work place and gain a deeper understanding of the project's significance.

## Making Diversity Work at UU

Jojanneke van der Toorn incorporated project findings in the bachelor course “Making Diversity Work: Building Inclusive Organizations”, taught for the third time this year to ca. 120 bachelor students from faculties across the university.

## Industrial Design at TU/e

The narrative tool is incorporated in Master course education (one course in Q4 about data-enabled design; a new Master course on conversational user interfaces) by Dr. Mathias Funk.

# IV. Outreach and Collaboration

## Talks

Project findings have been included in numerous lectures delivered across Dutch organizations and at international conferences by Jojanneke van der Toorn. In addition, Özge Bilgili presented findings during her Opening Talk at the Faculty of Social and behavioral Sciences in 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3nFltY1zvQ>

## Video

We produced a video for the CUCo website, illustrating findings and learnings from the project's initial phase. This video showcases our collaborative efforts during the research stage, where we effectively utilized our diverse skills and expertise. With the assistance of Flatland Agency, we documented collective journey. The video is available on the CUCo website, providing insight into the dedication and collaboration that drove our research efforts: <https://www.unusualcollaborations.com/the-power-of-one>







## Slide Deck

We developed a slide deck that includes both the outcomes of the workplace and hospital contexts. The deck will serve as an aid for effectively communicating our research outcomes with external parties, such as lectures, conferences, external stakeholders, and healthcare professionals. Collaborating with Flatland, we have used their expertise to come up with engaging visuals that enhance the overall impact of our presentations. By consolidating our findings into these visually appealing slides, we aim to not only present our research effectively but also foster collaboration and contribute to the broader discourse in academic and healthcare communities.

## Op-ed

We collaborated with Issuemakers in drafting an op-ed, linking our findings to current events. We have yet to finalize it and submit to a newspaper. To give an indication, the first few paragraphs are printed below:

“De strijd om personeel gaat allang niet meer alleen over loon.”<sup>1</sup> Met deze zin slaat Peet Vogels op 10 januari in het AD de spijker op z’n kop. De wensen en behoeften van werknemers zijn veranderd en werkgevers dienen hier rekening mee te houden. Deze verschuiving is deels toe te schrijven aan de krappe arbeidsmarkt, maar maakt deel uit van een bredere trend naar gepersonaliseerde oplossingen: “Maatwerk voor iedereen, is het nieuwe motto.”<sup>1</sup>

Om mensen aan het werk te krijgen én te houden, zijn concessies van werkgevers nodig. Het werk dient zich aan te passen aan de mens, niet andersom; in de praktijk blijkt namelijk dat er in de meeste banen (ook in gespecialiseerd werk) meer flexibiliteit is dan in eerste instantie lijkt.<sup>1</sup> Deze manier van denken zal de nieuwe generaties werknemers (G en Z) aanspreken, bij wie de behoefte van het individu hoger op de agenda staat.<sup>1</sup> Bijzonder verlov, zoals verlov voor menopauze, verlov voor mantelzorg en nu ook menstruatieverlov, krijgt meer aandacht in de cao onderhandelingen maar hoe stemmen werkgevers hun beleid het beste op hun personeel af? En hoe doen zij dit zonder bepaalde groepen medewerkers over het hoofd te zien?

Dat was een van de centrale vragen in ons interdisciplinaire onderzoek<sup>1</sup> naar waarom mensen in gemarginaliseerde groepen vaak onvoldoende betrokken worden door professionals en instanties. Denk aan tegenvallende deelname van buurtbewoners aan hulpinitiatieven, de behoeften van LHBTIQ+ werknemers die onvoldoende meegenomen worden in de ontwikkeling van nieuw organisatiebeleid en de ondervertegenwoordiging van mensen met een migratieachtergrond in klinische studies naar de werkzaamheid van nieuwe medicijnen.

[...]

## 24hr Session

On November 15, 2023, the Power of One group convened for a productive 24-hour session. During this all-day meeting held at de Zalen van Zeven in Utrecht, we dedicated the day to various subprojects of Phase 3. Tasks included refining the slide deck for the workplace and hospital contexts, brainstorming potential articles for the opinion piece, delving into the hospital context narratives, and exploring creative avenues for establishing a narrative within the workplace context. Additionally, discussions

revolved around the future of the Power of One Project, contemplating post-CUCo scenarios, subproject continuation, and thinking about ways to secure funding. The day concluded with a dinner in Utrecht, fostering a better understanding of each other's work. Some participants even opted for an overnight stay in Utrecht. It was a highly productive and enjoyable day!

## **Lessons Learned**

As the project entered its third year, team members were asked to reflect on 'lessons learned' about interdisciplinary collaboration in Phase 2 of the project. Six team members sent their reflections. This report summarizes the responses, listed alphabetically. The full reflections are available at the end of the document.

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### **Lessons learned**

#### **Communication and meetings**

Communication is key. Physical meetings are considered necessary and important, but at the same time difficult to attend due to team members working and living in different locations.

#### **Content versus process**

Team members stressed the importance of not only discussing content, but also process, in an interdisciplinary collaboration. It is important to take a step back and view the project from a meta perspective.

#### **Different phases**

One team member reflected on the different phases of the project: because phase 1 was more exploratory and introductory, we stayed at the surface level and thus collaboration was considered easier, as opposed to phase 2 in which we delved deeper into the matter, which required different strategies.

#### **Disciplines and interdisciplinarity**

Some team members reflected on their own discipline, both in itself and in relation to other disciplines. For example, one team member said the interdisciplinary collaboration made them realize that disciplines differ in research approaches. The differences in epistemology and more practical issues such as methodology and speed became apparent as well. Another team member said it was nice to have a team member on board who represented a discipline adjacent to their own discipline, because it lowers the burden of being responsible for a whole research field. A team member reflected on the importance of acknowledging that a collaboration is made up of individuals and not of disciplines. Individuals are not disciplines.

#### **Emotions and feelings**

Team members said they find the project and collaboration inspiring, a great experience, and a learning experience. At the same time, some team members mentioned negative feelings, e.g. guilt, imposter feelings or unpreparedness.

#### **Facilitation**

Several team members expressed the importance of having an external facilitator, such as Flatlands in the case of this project. These facilitators help to reach a common ground and aid communication.

#### **Leadership**

One team member mentioned the idea of splitting the leadership into one team member overseeing matters related to content, and one team member taking care of the administrative part of the project. The interdisciplinary collaboration gives rise to many administrative issues, and together with the content matters, this is too much for one person.

### **Reflection**

Team members mentioned that the interdisciplinary collaboration made them reflect on themselves and their work, not only on their involvement in the project, but also on the relationship with their 'other' work, and what they find meaningful in their work.

### **Relationships**

Two team members stressed the importance of building relationships between team members, and the importance of physical meetings to facilitate getting to know each other.

### **Representation**

One team member said it is an ongoing challenge to represent voices that are not present. This not only refers to the topic of the project (unheard and unseen voices), but also disciplinary perspectives or approaches that are not part of the project.

### **Time**

Multiple team members reflected on the concept of time. They stressed the importance of time for an interdisciplinary collaboration, as these projects move slower and require more time investment. At the same time, they found it challenging to find time for the project.

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## **Full reflections**

### **#1**

- When we transitioned from the first phase to the second of PO1, I reflected on my involvement in the first phase as "great experience, multi-disciplinary and inspiring, however, difficult to make the link with my core research and thus more challenging to make time". When the second phase started, I, as many of us, anticipated more work around engaging with the contexts of interest and potentially deploying interventions in the field. I was also happy to see more involvement of my PhD student. It turned out that I spent much less time on the project than in the first phase, partly because many meetings did not align with my schedule and my schedule had become extremely busy due to many factors around our departmental restructuring. Surprisingly, coming out of the pandemic phase made collaboration harder, because meetings would be held physically in Utrecht and that would be very difficult to fit into a workday: instead of spending two hours in a collaborative meeting, I would need to block 1.5 hours before and after as well. This did not work out in many cases. So, in a way, the issues that troubled me in the first phase were becoming worse and more pressing, not less. Nevertheless, I was happy to see how well my PhD student worked in the team, how she enjoyed the collaborations, the open atmosphere, the stimulating discussions. Perhaps that was the best thing that could happen from our perspective, handing over the baton to someone else, who would be able to make more of it. What about the project itself? I found the first phase easier to interact with, with less friction, because the work stayed on the surface, was more light-weight and more open to collaborate. As we move deeper into specific topics, this was replaced by much needed depth and attention to details, which in turn made it much harder to context-switch into PO1. Oftentimes, I felt unprepared and a little guilty of not being able to contribute as much as before. I'm not sure what the third phase will bring in terms of that, but I have some hope that PO1 will do its magic again.

## #2

- From the biomedical field, I am used to working towards a goal, using quantitative measures and use statistical approaches to support research findings. It was a surprise to find that this research approach is not common in many other disciplines. Qualitative research exists as well, and this approach provides meaningful insights (as well).
- Since my research approach is so much goal-oriented, I am not used to putting emphasis on the process. From our interdisciplinary collaboration, I have learned to take a step back and look at the process. We can yield more if we take a bit slower approach that would otherwise only yield the expected (or the usual) results. It takes time to benefit optimal (or better) from each others' expertise, which might simply be necessary to reach disruptive results with societal impact.
- The interdisciplinary collaboration allowed me to reflect on what I find most meaningful in my more 'disciplinary' work. My research in the biomedical field has also benefited from the interdisciplinary work on the side, as I now have a clearer idea what is my intrinsic motivation in academia, which is to train future scientists in their research (while most biomedical scientists would say to publish high profile research papers, which I value but as a side-product of training future scientists).

## #3

- It's extremely important to facilitate activities that help the team get on the same page and align visions (e.g., collaboration with Flatland & creating narratives together)
- There is an ongoing challenge in representing voices of those not at the table (e.g., citizens or other relevant disciplines)
- While disciplines are important, in the end it's the individuals that make it work, which means that the collaboration is also fragile as you can't just replace one team member with another one from the same discipline. The longevity and the relationships built between individuals are important factors to consider in making an interdisciplinary collaboration successful!

## #4

- I'm not sure if it's relevant, and it's very much on my part, but what I've learned myself during my participation in the project is the importance of (physical) encounters. During the meetings I got to know everyone in the team a bit, and I got a bit of a feeling about how everyone was on the project (for example about the output and direction of the project). This helped me during the interviews, for example, and I got the feeling that I was really part of the project.

## #5

- To keep momentum, it is important to meet regularly and preferably physically. However, this is difficult because of team members' schedules and locations.
- The physical meetings are important because during the breaks, at the coffee machine, is where relationships are built. Those are important for collaboration! For example, I really liked the dinner we had with a part of the team.
- In one-on-one conversations, team members expressed feelings of guilt, of incompetency, and doubt whether they are making a contribution to the project. These feelings were not shared with the full team, even though I think that would strengthen the collaboration. I myself felt inadequate at times, for example when I was not sure what I could contribute, or when I didn't have a good grasp on the project.

- I really like that we always discuss both content and process, and I think the facilitation by Flatland is a very important part of the success of this project.

#### #6

- More than in the first year, I realize in the second phase that we have to talk to each other a lot and often in order to achieve real integration of ideas. After all, mutual contact inspires and enthuses and prevents confusion.
- It was valuable to have a researcher from an adjacent field in the second phase (sociology in addition to my own field of social psychology). Just a different approach, but we know comparable literature and I really liked that in this phase of consolidation. Now it is not entirely up to me to represent an entire discipline and to know literature.
- As team members, we not only have different points of view on the approach and content of the research, but also on how quickly you can move from understanding the subject to solutions for practice. Some of us (in the more applied, technical sciences) are clearly more comfortable and quicker with this than others.
- It would be nice to have one content lead and one person who takes care of the administrative side of the project, because investing both in one person is very time-consuming. Rotating as we do now is also good, especially as a point of contact for Anne.