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Factors Determining Attraction of Neurodivergent Applicants to Organizations

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Abstract

Neurodivergence is used to describe a broad range of neurodevelopmental differences that result in a distinct set of challenges for individuals in interacting with the world around them. Within Diversity, Equity and Inclusion campaigns, neurodiversity is the term used to describe the composition of a space to include neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals. The unique perspectives that come from workplace neurodiversity are a valuable tool, yet companies are routinely missing out on the addition of neurodivergent individuals because of current hiring practices. This study was developed using the theoretical bases of person-organization fit, which emphasizes value congruence between organizations and employees, and stigma. For this study, participants were shown one of two correspondences from a hypothetical employer, one which signaled acceptance of neurodivergence and one that signaled indifference. After this, participants were asked to rank their likelihood of application. Results indicate that on average, neurodivergent individuals are more likely to apply to companies that signal acceptance than those who signal indifference. Additionally, past use of accommodations and neurodivergence of the respondent were examined as potential moderating factors. Prior use of accommodations bore no impact on a neurodivergent individuals' likelihood of application to either environment. However, neurodivergent individuals were significantly less likely to apply to a company that lacked signals of acceptance than their neurotypical peers. Finally, using likelihood of disclosure of neurodivergence as the dependent variable, it was found that neurodivergent individuals are significantly more likely to disclose to their peers in a social setting than to a peer in a work setting or a superior in a work setting.

Introduction

Neurodivergence, a term coined by sociologist Judy Singer, is used to describe a collection of neurodevelopmental differences, not disabilities, that result in a unique set of challenges for neurodivergent individuals as they interact with the academic and professional world (Wiginton, 2021). Diagnoses commonly categorized as neurodivergence are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and other specified learning disabilities (Frueh & Baumer, 2021). While most individuals who self-identify as neurodivergent do not view themselves as disabled, most diagnoses that fall under the umbrella of neurodivergent are legally classified as an invisible disability to guarantee protections from discrimination in education, employment and all other sectors covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (Tello, 2017).

Current research shows that neurodivergent individuals have fundamental differences in how they processes external stimuli, resulting in different reactions to and interactions with neurotypical individuals and the institutions built by and for neurotypical individuals (Cooks-Campbell, 2022). As the academic understanding of neurodiversity continues to evolve, an argument is developing that incorporating more neurodiversity into the workplace creates a competitive advantage for employers. Hiring a combination of neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals is hypothesized to maximize points of view and various approaches to any given set of business problems (Faragher, 2018).

It is conservatively estimated that approximately 11% of undergraduate students are neurodivergent, with some estimates ranging up to 30% (Conditt, 2020). Given that there are approximately 19.6 million undergraduate students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), this translates to approximately 2.156 million neurodivergent students enrolled in

American universities and colleges. In the general population, this number rises to a conservative estimate of 30% and a maximum estimate of 40% (ADHD Aware, 2021). However, approximately 80% of neurodivergent individuals are unemployed or underemployed, meaning that their skillsets are not being properly utilized or their positions do not align with their experiences and qualifications. In addition, neurodivergent individuals generally find themselves with a lack of opportunity for upward mobility into more fulfilling positions (Austin & Pisano, 2017).

Current, rigid organizational norms and hiring processes are large contributors to the exclusion of neurodivergent people from workplaces (Faragher, 2018). Expectations of eye contact, handshakes, and adherence to other neurotypical social norms are non-intuitive or uncomfortable for some neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with autism and sensory issues, and can prevent them from being hired into a role that matches their qualifications and experiences. Incorporating neurodiversity into DEI campaigns and initiatives has had some success at bringing neurodivergent people into the workplace, with Neurodiversity at Work programs at large companies such as SAP and Hewlett Packard Enterprises boasting increased productivity and quality (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Reasonable accommodations, such as noise-canceling headphones, fidget items, and work from home options, combined with mindfulness of superiors has allowed for both individual success and overall benefits to the organization (Cooks-Campbell, 2022).

The mismatch between jobseekers and employers' preconceived assumptions about the behavior of applicants is disadvantageous to both neurodivergent individuals and the companies that they target for employment (Faragher, 2018). To successfully address this mismatch, the broad question of possible causes of this disconnect between what candidates search for in an employer

and what hiring managers search for in a candidate must be explored. If the drivers of this disconnect can be found, a deeper understanding can be curated of how employers can reach a larger talent pool and how neurodivergent individuals can achieve better placement in the labor market.

Research Focus

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 codified protections for disabled Americans with respect to employment, accommodation, and all other aspects of life where discrimination may be present. For most neurodivergent individuals, especially those diagnosed as children, their first exposure to legal protections came in the form of Section 504, which specifically provides equal access to education for students with disabilities (Office for Civil Rights, 2020). Outside of the educational environment, protections for neurodivergent individuals primarily come from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In the employment search, a key qualifier relating to the ADA is that disclosure of disability in the application process is strictly voluntary (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). In situations of neurodivergence, the lack of a consistent, physical manifestation raises the question of disclosure or non-disclosure on an individual basis. Although there has been progress, neurodiversity is still stigmatized by some, ranging from implicit biases and assumptions to outright discrimination (Cooks-Campbell, 2022). The classifications of some of these conditions in the common discourse as “learning disabilities”, specifically ADHD and dyslexia, carries a connotation that they exist within the educational environment but are resolved after graduation and before entry into the workforce. While there has been a marginal shift to more people understanding the ever-presence of neurodivergence, this stigma is still largely present.

Although there is increasing social acceptance, the stigma around neurodiversity leaves a significant impact on neurodivergent individuals through self-stigmatization, causing them to live with a constant fear of judgement from neurotypical individuals around them. This was understood through informal interviews with neurodivergent, college-aged individuals. The goal of these interviews was to understand the neurodivergent person's experience with the employment search and how they feel their neurodivergence impacts them in the workplace. A common theme in these interviews was the confession that they did not formally disclose their neurodivergence to a peer, superior, or HR, but worked hard so that small mistakes would not be written off as a symptom of their diagnosis.

This fear of being defined primarily by one's disability is common with other stigmatized traits and identities as well. People with physical disabilities have long reported this exaggerated response to external perceptions of their condition, some going as far as to say "If he [a blind man] performs them [ordinary actions] with finesse and assurance they excite the same kind of wonderment inspired by a magician who pulls rabbits out of hats" (Chevigny, 1962). However, when a disability caused a misstep or failing, according to a girl with one leg when recounting her experience in sports, "It was a foregone conclusion that I fell because I was a poor, helpless cripple" (Baker). While an individual with a stigmatized identity may be self-assured and experiences great self-worth, their fear of judgement by others is grounded in a long history of watching non-stigmatized individuals judge and stereotype others. In the case of an invisible disability, such as neurodivergence, there is understandable hesitancy to subject oneself to the possibility of being stigmatized (Goffman, 1963).

The investigation into how neurodivergent people fit into the workplace falls under the theoretical umbrella of person-environment (P-E) and person-organization (P-O) Fit. Person-

environment fit is the broad category of psychological research that seeks to understand how an individual interacts with their environment as a function of congruence and similarity (Edwards J. R., 2008). Person-organization fit is more specific, adding the constraint of an organization rather than just the general environment within which a person exists (Morley, 2007). For individuals in the labor market, it has become increasingly apparent that they are not just looking for any job, but for a position that they are well equipped to perform. In addition to being a good skill match for the job, it has been observed that value congruence has been a key metric in which individuals assess their fit within an organization (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). This framework can be used as a lens to view neurodiversity in the workplace. Given that neurodivergence creates a fundamental difference in how an individual interacts with the world, is it plausible that this lens created by their difference will follow them into their organizations.

Between these two bodies of work, a set of questions arose regarding the experiences of neurodivergent individuals going through the job application process and in the workplace. While companies do not typically state outright if they are or are not accepting of neurodiversity or if reasonable accommodations are provided, those signals can be sent informally through a variety of channels. The first and most important question is if acceptance of reasonable accommodations is viewed as a manifestation of a cultural value that neurodivergent individuals consider when initially applying for jobs. Even if not utilized by neurodivergent individuals in the workplace, accommodations are more tangible than abstract statements about the acceptance of neurodivergence, so it is thought that willingness to allow for accommodations can be analogous to acceptance of neurodiversity for the purpose of this study.

This also raises the question of the potential impacts of past use of accommodations. According to informational interviews and conversations with neurodivergent individuals, a history of accommodations in primary, secondary, or post-secondary education resulted in a higher awareness of how they function with and without accommodations in a productive environment. Given this increased awareness, it is worth investigating if these individuals are more sensitive to signals of acceptance of accommodations, or a lack thereof, than their neurodivergent peers who did not use accommodations.

As individuals who have dealt with societal and self-stigma throughout their lives, there is also the question of how sensitive they are to the absence of signals of acceptance, especially in comparison to their neurotypical peers. This was seen strongly through the informal interviews and online forums written by neurodivergent individuals. While acceptance is overall a positive attribute and will likely be well received by both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals, the question is if there is a higher degree of sensitivity to the absence of acceptance among neurodivergent individuals when compared to their neurotypical peers.

The final question under investigation is meant to assess what prompts neurodivergent individuals to disclose. Primarily, does the stigma surrounding certain diagnoses, such as ADHD or dyslexia, result in a different likelihood of disclosure of neurodiversity depending on the context, such as whether disclosure is occurring in a work setting or a social setting.

Hypotheses

Through preliminary evaluations of past research, informal interviews and conversations with neurodivergent college students who have held full time jobs or internships, it is hypothesized that:

I. Neurodivergent individuals will show a stronger preference for a company that signals acceptance of accommodation over a company that shows indifference.

II. The largest difference in sensitivity to a lack of acceptance of accommodations will be found among neurodivergent individuals who utilized accommodations in secondary and/or post-secondary education.
III. Neurodivergent individuals will show a higher sensitivity to the absence of signaling of acceptance by potential employers than their neurotypical peers, resulting in a comparatively lower average likelihood of application to a company that lacks these signals.
IV. Neurodivergent individuals will be more likely to disclose to their diagnosis to peers in an informal setting, rather than in a work setting, or to superiors or human resources at any point.

Methods

This study was approved by the Washington University in St Louis Institutional Review Board. Approval and consent documentation can be found in Appendix A. A full copy of the survey shown to participants can be found in Appendix B.

Participants

For this study, the Qualtrics Sample Size Calculator was used to determine the appropriate statistically significant sample size. Of the approximately 19.6 million students enrolled in college in the United States, it is conservatively estimated that 11% are neurodivergent (Conditt, 2020) so the population size was found to be 2.156 million. Using a 95% confidence interval as well as a 5% margin of error, the sample size calculator determined that at least 385 responses would be needed (*Sample Size Calculator,* n.d.). 396 valid survey responses were collected in total.

Participant recruitment was done through word of mouth, snowball sampling, and the utilization of Prolific survey distribution. 154 responses were collected through word of mouth and snowball sampling and 242 were found using Prolific. To avoid having to provide separate

versions of the survey to neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals, a single survey was distributed with skip logic used to tailor the displayed questions to each respondent. Participants found through word of mouth and snowball sampling were not compensated for their responses as no identifying information was collected and no software was used that would have allowed for payment. Participants found using Prolific were compensated $0.64 for their participation.

Both neurodivergent and neurotypical participants were recruited for this study. In total, 166 neurodivergent participants were recruited and 230 neurotypical participants were recruited. The scenario each participant was shown was decided randomly and not impacted by any of their survey responses. Because assignment of scenario to the accepting company or the indifferent company was random, 67 neurodivergent individuals saw the accepting scenario and 99 saw the indifferent scenario while 128 neurotypical individuals saw the accepting scenario and 102 saw the indifferent scenario.

The demographic of interest was primarily college students and recent college graduates who were applying for or working in entry level positions. To account for the variable amount of time that individuals use to complete a bachelor's degree, an age range of 18-30 was included in selection criteria.

Variable Design

The independent variables in this study are the neurodiversity status of the participant (neurodivergent = 1; neurotypical = 0) and past use of accommodations for neurodivergent individuals. The manipulated variable is whether the participant was shown the correspondence with an employee at an accommodating company (AC) or a firm that is indifferent to accommodations (IC). The manipulated variable was combined with past accommodation use or neurodiversity status to investigate Hypotheses II and III, respectively. The dependent variables

of focus are the likelihood of application for Hypotheses I, II and III, as well as their likelihood of disclosure under different conditions to investigate Hypothesis IV.

Survey Design

This survey was designed using the Qualtrics platform. The first questions ensure that the participant fits within a specified age range (18-30) and has applied for an internship or full-time job. This guarantees that all respondents fit within the criteria of the population under investigation. After this, they are asked if they are neurodivergent to determine if they will be shown all survey questions (if neurodivergent) or only aspects relating to Hypothesis III (if neurotypical). Neurodivergent participants are then asked questions about past use of accommodations, as is applicable to the evaluation of Hypothesis II.

After collecting information about accommodation history for neurodivergent participants and after neurotypical participants answer their initial questions, all participants are shown scenarios from a simulated networking discussion. Networking emails have become a common first point of contact used by undergraduate students as they target a company for employment after graduation. Students often feel as though these initial interactions determine, or at least influence, their likelihood of receiving a job offer, and are also considered by students to be a signal with regards to their ability to be a good cultural fit with the company. For neurodivergent students, this can be an opportunity for them to investigate if a potential employer would be accepting of their neurodivergence and if they would be open to requests for reasonable accommodations.

In this study, hypothetical scenarios were written as a networking email exchange between the participant and an alumnus of their school who is now working at “Company X”. The participant is shown an email that they sent to the alumnus, requesting information about company culture,

shown in Appendix C. The participant is then shown one of two possible responses from the alumnus. Both responses describe the implementation of an "Open Door Policy" by HR and upper management, but the accommodating company includes descriptions of peers helping as well as explicit acceptance and aid from superiors and HR (Appendix D).

Immediately after reading these scenarios, participants are asked to rank how likely they are to continue with the application process. Participants who report low numerical scores (<=2) are then asked why they do not want to continue. Regardless of score for this question, all participants are then congratulated on receiving an offer and are asked to respond "Yes" or "No" to if they will accept or not.

After completing this section, neurotypical participants finish the survey and neurodivergent participants are shown questions related to Hypothesis IV. This is accomplished by displaying five situations to the participant, involving a variety of situations and individuals they could possibly disclose to, such as a peer in a social setting or a superior in a work setting. After reading each prompt, respondents were asked to rank their likelihood of disclosing that they are neurodivergent or their likelihood of asking for reasonable accommodations on a scale from 1-7. The full prompt shown to participants can be found in Appendix E.

Participants were given the option to exit the survey at any point and to leave any questions blank that they did not feel comfortable answering to protect their confidentiality.

Results

Given the optional nature of each individual question, surveys that lacked responses to key questions, such as the likelihood of application, likelihood of disclosure, or accommodation history, were omitted from the dataset. Although over 700 responses were collected in total, the removal of incomplete surveys and participants that did not meet the sample criteria resulted in

396 total responses, with 195 responses that saw the accepting situation and 201 that saw the indifferent situation.

Excel was the primary tool used to analyze the data collected from the survey. All independent and manipulated variables were coded as binary variables. The participant's status as neurodivergent or neurotypical was coded as 1 or 0, respectively. For neurodivergent individuals, use of post-secondary accommodations was coded as 1 and lack thereof was coded as 0. Both dependent variables were measured on a scale of 1-7, based on participants' likelihood of application or likelihood of disclosure, with 1 representing an extremely low likelihood of application or disclosure and 7 representing an extremely high likelihood.

To conduct initial exploratory analysis, t-tests assuming unequal variances were used on the variables involved with Hypotheses I – IV. More specifically, t-tests assuming unequal variances were used to assess if there was a statistical significance in the difference of likelihoods of application between the accepting and the indifferent company for Hypotheses I and the likelihoods of disclosure in a variety of situations for Hypotheses IV. For all t-tests, a significance level of 0.05 was used, as is standard practice.

For Hypotheses II and III, the inclusion of a potential moderating variable meant that the t-tests were merely exploratory and were not a sufficient statistical test of significance. Moderated linear regression models were used to evaluate possible influence of the respective moderating variable for each hypothesis. For Hypothesis II, the regression evaluated the possible influences that past use of accommodations on the likelihood of application, with respect to whether individuals were shown the correspondence from the accommodating company or the indifferent company. For Hypothesis III, self-identification of the participant as neurodivergent or neurotypical was the moderating variable.

Hypothesis I stated that there would be a difference between likelihood of application to companies that signaled acceptance of accommodations versus companies that showed indifferent towards accommodations. Of the 166 neurodivergent participants, 67 were shown the correspondence with an accommodating company and 99 were shown the indifferent company based on random assignment. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: T-tests assuming unequal variances of Neurodivergent Individuals shown the Correspondence with an Accommodating Company (AC) or with the Indifferent Company (IC)

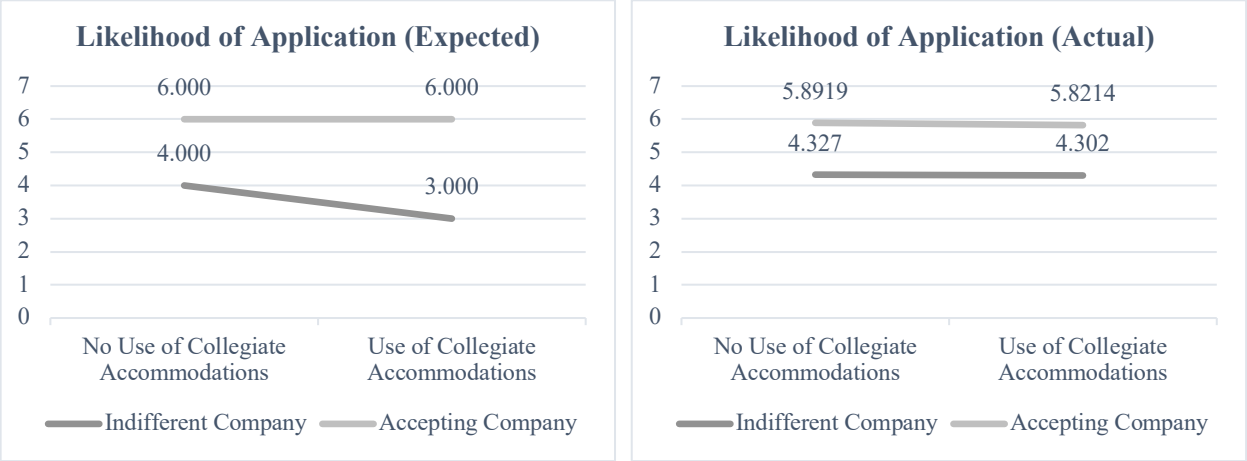
	AC	***IC***
Mean	5.895522388	4.303030303
Variance	1.216191768	2.254174397
Observations	67	99
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	163	
t Stat	7.872292497	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.60403E-13	
t Critical two-tail	1.974624621	

As the p-value for a 2-sided test is less than the stated significance level ($4.604\ e^{-13} < 0.05$), I reject the null for Hypothesis I. Participants were more likely to apply to a company that actively signaled acceptance of reasonable accommodations and neurodiversity as opposed to a company that did not signal acceptance. The expected and actual results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Expected (left) and actual (right) difference in the likelihood of application to a company that signaled or lacked signals of acceptance through employee correspondence.

Hypothesis II stated that neurodivergent individuals who had previously used accommodations in post-secondary education would show a higher sensitivity to a lack of signaling of acceptance of accommodations when compared to their neurodivergent peers who had not used accommodations in post-secondary education. To evaluate connections in the data collected regarding past use of accommodations and likelihood of application, exploratory t-tests assuming unequal variances were used and showed a lack of statistical significance within isolated populations (Appendix F). The difference in the sample population means between those who used accommodations in college and those who did not is visualized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Expected (left) and actual (right) difference in likelihood of application between the population of neurodivergent individuals who reported the use of college accommodations in college those who did not.



A moderated linear regression model was also constructed for Hypothesis II to investigate the past use of accommodations in college as a moderating variable to explain the difference in likelihood of application between neurodivergent individuals who had been shown the correspondence from the accepting company versus the indifferent company. Given the binary coding of both the predictor and independent variables, the base group was established as individuals who were shown the correspondence that lacked a signaling of acceptance and did not use accommodations in college (IC + NCA). The three remaining categories from this data

set, Accepting Company + College Accommodations (AC + CA), Accepting Company + No College Accommodations (AC + NCA), and Indifferent Company + College Accommodations (IC + CA), were each established as dummy variables to assess significance relative to the base group. The output of the regression model can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Moderated linear regression model output with Accommodating Company or Indifferent Company as the independent variable and past use of accommodations as the moderator.

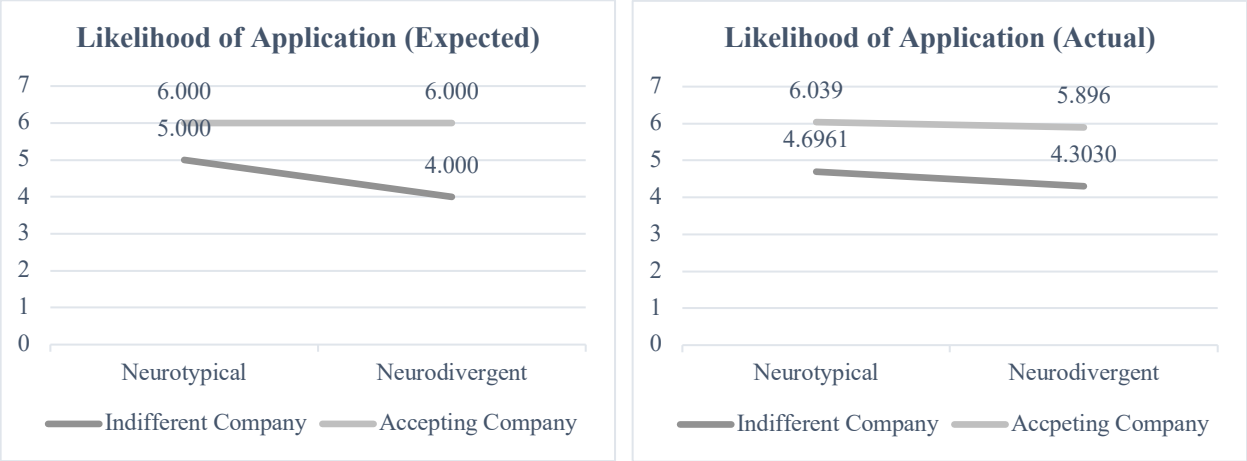
Regression Statistics				
Multiple R	0.489223429			
R Square	0.239339563			
Adjusted R Square	0.224987479			
Standard Error	1.366383393			
Observations	163			
	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.327272727	0.184243099	23.48675607	1.44645E-53
AC + CA	1.494155844	0.317213207	4.710257362	5.35891E-06
AC + NCA	1.564619165	0.290525516	5.385479333	2.55625E-07
IC + CA	-0.024947146	0.278144221	-0.089691405	0.928645327

The regression shows statistical significance of the model as well as the sample populations who were shown the accommodating company versus the indifferent company. However, this was already shown through the analysis of Hypothesis I that neurodivergent individuals would prefer a company that signaled acceptance over one that signaled indifference. The clear insignificance between the IC + CA population and the base group, or those who used accommodations and those who did and were shown the indifferent correspondence, suggests that past use of accommodations does not have a moderating influence on the likelihood of application.

As in Hypothesis II, Hypothesis III used exploratory t-tests (Appendix G) to examine data regarding the possible influence on likelihood of application by whether the respondent was neurodivergent or neurotypical. The first t-test evaluated individuals who had been shown the accepting correspondence, which showed that there was no statistical difference in the likelihood of application between neurodivergent individuals and neurotypical individuals ($p = 0.3866$). However, the exploratory t-test comparing mean likelihood of application between

neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals showed the difference in application to the company that lacked signals of acceptance in their pre-application correspondence was approaching statistical significance ($p = 0.063$).

Figure 3: Sample mean differences of actual (left) and expected (right) results between Neurodivergent and Neurotypical populations when shown the accepting versus indifferent correspondence.



A moderated linear regression was completed to evaluate if neurodivergence was a potential influential variable on the likelihood of application between participants who were shown an accepting correspondence and those who received correspondence lacking signals of acceptance. The moderated linear regression created from this dataset was used to provide more insight into the results obtained from the previously mentioned exploratory t-tests. Responses from survey participants who were neurotypical and were shown the correspondence from the indifferent company (IC + NT) were treated as the base group in this regression. Three dummy variables were generated as well, Accepting Company + Neurodivergent (AC + ND), Accepting Company + Neurotypical (AC+NT), and Indifferent Company + Neurodivergent (IC + ND). The output of this regression model can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Moderated linear regression model output with whether the respondent was shown the correspondence from the Accepting Company or the Indifferent Company as the independent variable and neurodivergence as the predictor.

Regression Statistics				
Multiple R	0.502555119			
R Square	0.252561647			
Adjusted R Square	0.246841456			
Standard Error	1.310827035			
Observations	396			
	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	4.696078431	0.129791217	36.18178908	5.2662E-127
AC + ND	1.199443957	0.206134771	5.818736699	1.23341E-08
AC + NT	1.342984069	0.173981967	7.719099224	9.84173E-14
IC + ND	-0.393048128	0.184937821	-2.1252988	0.034186535

For all dummy variables, it was found that $p < 0.05$, which indicated statistically significant differences from the base population. This supports that neurodiversity is a moderating influence on the likelihood of application when a company lacks signals of acceptance in pre-application materials. Neurodivergent individuals are more sensitive to the lack of a signals indicating acceptance than their neurotypical peers. Thus, Hypothesis 3 cannot be rejected.

For Hypothesis IV, two t-tests were used, one comparing the difference in likelihood of disclosure in a work setting to a peer versus a superior and the second looking at the likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a social setting versus a work setting. These tests are shown in Tables 4 and 5, respectively, and contain the results for Hypothesis IV.

Table 4: t-Test assuming unequal variances of a neurodivergent individual's likelihood of disclosure to a peer versus a superior in a work environment

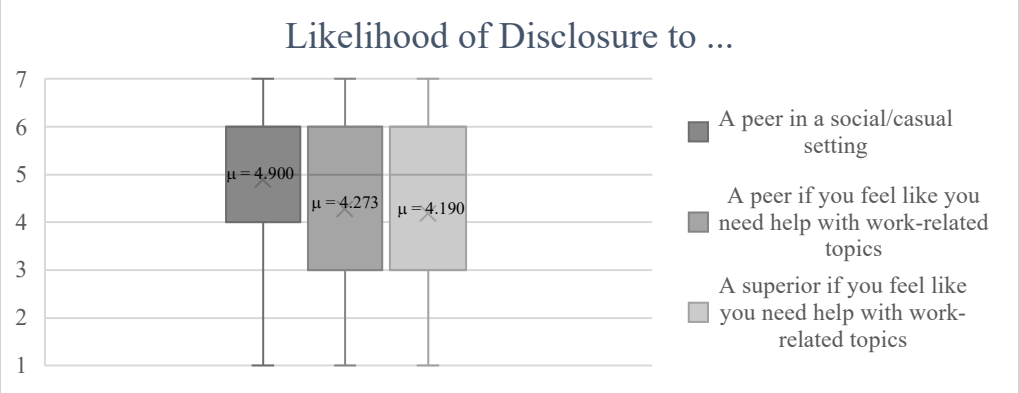
	Peer	***Superior***
Mean	4.272727	4.190083
Variance	3.533333	3.855234
Observations	121	121
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	240	
t Stat	0.334447	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.738334	
t Critical two-tail	1.969898	

Table 5: t-Test assuming unequal variances of a neurodivergent individual's likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a social setting versus a peer in a work setting

	Social	***Work***
Mean	4.900826	4.272727
Variance	2.973416	3.533333
Observations	121	121
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	238	
t Stat	2.708563	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.007248	
t Critical two-tail	1.969982	

Table 4 indicates a lack of statistical significance in the difference of sample means between likelihood of disclosure to a peer or a superior in a work setting. However, Table 5 shows that the difference in likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a social setting versus in a work setting is statistically significant. Sample distributions of each category can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Plot of sample of neurodivergent individuals' likelihood of disclosure when faced with the choice to disclose to a peer in a social setting, a peer in a work setting or a superior in a work setting.



Discussions

Hypothesis I

The statistically significant difference in sample means between neurodivergent individuals who were shown the accepting company and those shown the indifferent company allowed for the rejection of the null hypothesis. This falls into alignment with current work regarding person-environment and person-organization fit. These theories posit that individuals will be more

drawn to workplaces that demonstrate shared values (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). For neurodivergent individuals, it is logical to assume that being accepted as who they are, and not having to hide a part of their identity, is an attractive value in an organization and would increase their likelihood of application.

By rejecting the null for Hypothesis I, a baseline was established for Hypotheses II and III, which evaluate the same dependent variable as Hypothesis I, likelihood of application, but each with an additional, potentially interactive, independent variable.

Hypothesis II

The lack of statistical significance of the population shown the indifference correspondence and utilized accommodations in college (IC + CA) when compared to the base group (IC + NCA) suggests that the use of accommodations in college does not have a significant moderating influence on a neurodivergent individual's likelihood of application. Even though the model shows overall statistical significance and participants who view the accepting correspondence show significant differences compared to the base group, these can be explained by the findings that supported Hypothesis I, which demonstrated that neurodivergent individuals are more likely to apply to a company that signals acceptance of accommodations over one that signals indifference. Overall, it was found that the use of reasonable accommodations in post-secondary education does not have a moderating impact on the likelihood of application. This leads to the conclusion that Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

This observation does align with previously published findings under the broader umbrella of P-E fit. While the rejection of the null for Hypothesis I supported prior P-E fit claims, it was because values were assumed to be a driving factor in P-O fit. It has been suggested in prior research that individual values and value congruence with the organization are the driving factors

behind successful P-O fit (Morley, 2007, 111). When past use of accommodations was added as a potential moderating variable, the lack of a significant influence on likelihood of application could be traced back to the idea that an accommodation in college has become standard and expected and, as such, is less diagnostic of an organizations' values. The findings in this study suggest that past use of accommodations bears little to no impact on the underlying values that drive neurodivergent individuals away from companies that lack signals of acceptance.

Hypothesis III

The combination of exploratory t-tests and the linear regression model indicate that, while there is no difference between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals in the likelihood of application to a company that signals acceptance of accommodations, there is a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of application to a company that lacks signals of acceptance. When looking at the actual sample means of these populations, the likelihood of application to a company that signals indifference is lower among neurodivergent individuals ($\mu = 4.303$) versus neurotypical individuals ($\mu = 4.696$). These findings suggest that a lack of signaling acceptance will be more detrimental to an employer than the benefits that come with signaling acceptance. This supports the notion that neurodivergent individuals are more sensitive to the lack of signaling of acceptance by a company when compared to their neurotypical peers.

This hypothesis was formed at the intersection of the value congruence aspects P-O fit and past work on stigma and stigmatized identities. In the context of P-O fit, this study is examining if there is a significant difference between the values that draw neurodivergent versus neurotypical individuals to an organization. Because a neurodivergent individual may view themselves through the lens of a stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963), their self-perception as neurodivergent may influence the values they seek out in an organization. Past P-O fit research

has found that perceived value congruence is a good indicator of feelings of fit within an organization (Cable & Judge, 1996). This aligns with the findings in this study, as the lack of signaling of acceptance results in value incongruence for neurodivergent individuals, so they would not want to enter the organization in the first place. The significant difference in the likelihood of application to the indifferent company suggests that the status of an individual as neurodivergent or neurotypical has an impact on their underlying values and what they seek to find in a potential future employer.

Since acceptance of neurodiversity is not yet the norm, it is plausible that a neurodivergent jobseeker would need a direct indicator that they would not be stigmatized because of their neurodiversity. In "mixed social situations", situations that involve both stigmatized and non-stigmatized identities and traits, the default is to cater to the non-stigmatized identity (Goffman, 1963). By finding signals of acceptance from employees or formal recruiting channels, neurodivergent individuals would plausibly feel more comfortable entering these mixed situations as they will be less preoccupied with concealing outward behavioral traits of neurodiversity.

Hypothesis IV

Two t-tests were conducted to evaluate Hypothesis IV to get a better understanding of who neurodivergent individuals are likely to disclose to and the situations in which they are likely to disclose. This was evaluated by comparing the average likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a social/casual setting versus in a work setting and the average likelihood of disclosure in a work setting to a peer versus a superior. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a social setting versus a work setting ($p = 0.007$) but

not in the likelihood of disclosure to a peer in a work setting versus a superior in a work setting ($p = 0.738$).

As no data was collected regarding the likelihood of disclosure to a superior in a social/casual setting, as this seemed like a far more unlikely interaction, a definitive statement cannot be made regarding the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. However, a reasonable conclusion can be drawn from this data that the decision to disclose is driven by fear of being stigmatized within the context of the work environment.

Supported by informal interviews and prior research about neurodiversity and stigma, disclosure in the context of needing help is viewed negatively by neurodivergent individuals, as it can reinforce any fears of implicit bias that the counterparty may have about neurodivergent individuals in a formal employment setting (Goffman, 1963). This can be illustrated using the example of being late for a planned event. If a neurodivergent individual is late for lunch plans with a peer and makes a joke about time blindness associated with ADHD, there is a high likelihood of it being laughed off. However, if the same individual were late for a work event or meeting, even with the same peer, they would be more likely to not provide a neurodivergence-related reason out of fear that their tardiness would be written off as a potential liability to the organization and could be tracked as a risk for potential repetitive occurrence because of their ADHD.

Limitations

Several limitations arose through the data collection and analysis. The first limitation was difficulty in recruiting neurodivergent participants. Although it is conservatively estimated that at least 11% of university students are neurodivergent, there are no resources to distribute the survey solely to this group. To alleviate this, the invitation to complete the survey when

distributed through snowball sampling and word of mouth invited all to complete it, but with an emphasis to complete it if the potential respondent had ADHD, Dyslexia or Autism. While the total number of neurodivergent participants was less than the total number of neurotypical participants, there was an even enough distribution that sample size differences are unlikely to unduly impact results.

Additionally, this study was only applicable to a sub-set of neurodivergent individuals. Although it is estimated that 30%-40% of the general population is neurodivergent (ADHD Aware, 2021) and up to 80% of neurodivergent adults face unemployment or underemployment (Austin & Pisano, 2017) these numbers also include individuals with more severe limitations linked to their neurodivergence or other comorbid conditions. For some individuals, these limitations can be prohibitive to searching for or holding full time employment, even with reasonable accommodations. As the focus of this study was about what drives neurodivergent individuals in their decision to apply to a potential full-time employer, neurodivergent individuals who are unable to work in a formal setting due to their severe limitations were not able to be included in the sample population.

The other main limitation was not realized until after the completion of data collection. For Hypothesis IV, likelihood of disclosure to different people and in different contexts was evaluated. I hoped to find that the situation in which disclosure was occurring was more important than the person to whom a neurodivergent individual was disclosing. However, without including a category for participants to rank their likelihood of disclosure to a superior in a social/casual setting, there is not enough evidence to support this claim. Without this data, there is an incomplete matrix for likelihood of disclosure between disclosure in a work or casual setting and disclosure to a peer or superior.

Practical Implications and Future Research

This research will be most impactful for hiring managers and company recruitment specialists. Neurodiversity has been shown to be a net asset to a workplace in terms of company culture and overall productive output (Austin & Pisano, 2017). However, cultural signals regarding reasonable accommodations lead to neurodivergent individuals self-selecting out of the application process. This presents a disadvantage to employers, as they are unable to access the full neurodivergent talent pool in a time of increasing labor shortages (Faragher, 2018). By increasing their awareness of the signals the company and its employees are sending regarding acceptance of reasonable accommodations, hiring managers can increase the size of their applicant pool and increase the diversity of their candidates.

This also lays the foundation for future academic research into neurodiversity as a facet of person-organization fit. Leading theories on P-O fit posit that the primary determinant of high satisfaction between the individual and their organization is value congruence (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). By viewing acceptance of accommodation as the manifestation of a value that neurodivergent individuals look for in an organization, this opens the door to deeper study into what additional values are sought after by and make a position more appealing to neurodivergent individuals.

Finally, further research can be conducted into how feelings of self-stigmatization or the possession of a stigmatized identity can be mitigated in the workplace. As an internalization of social stigma, self-stigmatization can linger even as social norms change. Given that neurodiversity is becoming more widely accepted as a different ability rather than a disability, it will be interesting to see how the self-perception of neurodivergent individuals changes over time.

Conclusion

For neurodivergent individuals, applying for a full-time job raises questions that their neurotypical counterparts do not need to consider, such as whether they will disclose their neurodiversity and if the company they are applying to will be accepting of them. Networking emails and informal communication with current employees at a prospective employer serve as a litmus test whether the company will be accepting of their neurodiversity or their potential need for accommodations. Neurodivergent individuals showed a higher likelihood of application to companies who signaled acceptance than companies who lacked those signals and showed a stronger aversion to a company that lacked signals of acceptance than their neurotypical peers. This indicates a difference in priority of values between neurodivergent and neurotypical job applicants, which employers can take into consideration when focusing on which values to emphasize to potential applicants during the recruitment process. This can maximize value congruence and allow employers to tap into a significantly under-utilized talent pool of neurodivergent individuals. Likelihood of disclosure is highly dependent on the context in which disclosure would occur rather than to whom the disclosure was occurring, which falls in line with modern understandings of self-stigma regarding invisible disability.

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Appendix

Appendix A: IRB Approval Memo

IRB ID #: 202112113

To: Barri Levitt

From: The Washington University in St. Louis Institutional Review Board,

Re: Assessing attraction to accommodating companies in neurodivergent college students

Approval Date: 12/17/21
Next IRB Approval Due Before: N/A

2018 Common Rule/Equivalent Protections Yes

Type of Application:	**Type of Application Review:**	**Approved for Populations:**
New Project	Full Board:	Children
Continuing Review	Meeting Date:	Signature from one parent
Modification	Expedited	Signature from two parents
	Exempt	Prisoners
	Facilitated	Pregnant Women, Fetuses, Neonates
		Wards of State
		Decisionally Impaired

MATERIALS APPROVED

Recruitment/Advertisement Materials:
Recruitment: Website
Recruitment websites_ Edited.rtf
Questionnaires:
Subject Data Collection Instruments
Thesis_Survey_Edited.docx

This approval has been electronically signed by IRB Chair or Chair Designee:
Melanie Koleini, MS
12/17/21 1535

IRB Approval: IRB approval indicates that this project meets the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects. IRB approval does not absolve the principal investigator from complying with other institutional, collegiate, or departmental policies or procedures.

Recruitment/Consent: Your IRB application has been approved for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on your application form. If you are using written informed consent, the IRB-approved and stamped Informed Consent Document(s) are available in *my*IRB. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your research files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject. (A copy of the *signed* Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject if your Consent contains a HIPAA authorization section.)

Continuing Review: Federal regulations require that the IRB re-approve research projects at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but no less than once per year. This process is called "continuing review." Continuing review for non-exempt research is required to occur as long as the research remains active for long-term follow-up of research subjects, even when the research is permanently closed to enrollment of new subjects and all subjects have completed all research-related interventions and to occur when the remaining research activities are limited to collection of private identifiable information. Your project "expires" at midnight on the date indicated on the preceding page ("Next IRB Approval Due on or Before"). You must obtain your next IRB approval of this project by that expiration date. You are responsible for submitting a Continuing Review application in sufficient time for approval before the expiration date, however you will receive reminder notice prior to the expiration date.

Modifications: Any change in this research project or materials must be submitted on a Modification application to the IRB for prior review and approval, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. The investigator is required to promptly notify the IRB of any changes made without IRB approval to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects using the Modification/Update Form. Modifications requiring the prior review and approval of the IRB include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or funding sources, changing the Informed Consent Document, increasing the anticipated total number of subjects from what was originally approved, or adding any new materials (e.g., letters to subjects, ads, questionnaires).

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks: You must promptly report to the IRB any unexpected adverse experience, as defined in the IRB/HRPO policies and procedures, and any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others. The Reportable Events Form (REF) should be used for reporting to the IRB.

Audits/Record-Keeping: Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your project. There are Federal, State and Institutional requirements for record retention. Check with your organization and your funding agreement to learn more about what record retention requirements apply to your project.

Additional Information: Complete information regarding research involving human subjects is available in the "Washington University Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures." Research investigators are expected to comply with these policies and procedures and to be familiar with the Belmont Report, 45CFR46, and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. This document and other important information is available on the HRPO website http://hrpo.wustl.edu/.

Appendix B: Full Survey Questions

How old are you?

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Age

Have you gone through a recruiting/application process for an internship or full-time position?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Which of the following have you been diagnosed with?

- ☐ ADHD/ADD
- ☐ Dyslexia
- ☐ Autism/Asberger's/ASD
- ☐ Dyspraxia
- ☐ None of the above

At what age were you diagnosed?

0 3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27 30

Age of Diagnosis

In elementary, middle, or high school, did you receive any of the following accommodations for your coursework? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Extra time on in-class exams/quizzes
- [ ] Extended deadlines on at-home assignments
- [ ] Separate room for testing
- [ ] Scribe/diction assistant
- [ ] Notetaker
- [ ] Audio Reader
- [ ] Voice-to-text technology
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other

On standardized tests (ACT, SAT, SAT IIs, Aps, etc.), did you receive any of the following accommodations? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Extra time
- [ ] Separate room for testing
- [ ] Scribe/diction assistant
- [ ] Audio Reader
- [ ] Voice-to-text technology
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other

In college, did you receive any of the following accommodations for your coursework? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] Extra time on in-class exams/quizzes
- [ ] Extended deadlines on at-home assignments
- [ ] Separate room for testing
- [ ] Scribe/diction assistant
- [ ] Notetaker
- [ ] Audio Reader
- [ ] Voice-to-text technology
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other

How useful do you feel the accommodations you have received have been helpful over your academic career? (1=Not Useful at All, 7=Highly Useful)

Not at all useful		Slightly useful		Moderately useful		Very useful		Extremely useful
1	2		3	4	5		6	7

Usefulness of Accomodations

Would you like to have the option to continue utilizing some form of accommodation when you enter the workforce?

- ○ Yes
- ○ Maybe
- ○ No

How likely are you to continue utilizing accommodations after entering the workforce?

Extremely unlikely 1 | Somewhat unlikely 2 | 3 | Neither likely nor unlikely 4 | 5 | Somewhat likely 6 | Extremely likely 7

Likelihood of accommodation utilization

see Appendix C and D for information request and employee response

How likely are you to continue with the application process after getting this response? (1=will not apply and 7= very excited to apply)

Extremely unlikely 1 | Somewhat unlikely 2 | 3 | Neither likely nor unlikely 4 | 5 | Somewhat likely 6 | Extremely likely 7

Likelihood of application

How likely are you to disclose your neurodiversity to HR during the application process?

Extremely unlikely 1 | Somewhat unlikely 2 | 3 | Neither likely nor unlikely 4 | 5 | Somewhat likely 6 | Extremely likely 7

Likelihood of disclosure

Appendix C: Participant Information Request

You are currently looking for a post-graduation job and want to know more about Company X. You find an alumni of your university who works there and send them the following email to express your interest.

Hello,

I hope you are doing well. I am a current student at Washington University in St Louis and am currently going through the job search process. I came across your profile through the school's LinkedIn and noticed you work at Company X. I am very interested in the firm and was wondering if you could provide a bit of insight into the day-to-day culture, both among your peers and the company as a whole.

If it would be easier, I am more than happy to set up a call in the coming weeks. I am relatively available so please let me know what works best for you.

Looking forward to hearing back from you and learning more about Company X.

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Company X Employee Response

You check your inbox the next day to see the following reply from the alumni

Hi,

Thank you for reaching out, I am more than happy to provide some insight into the firm culture. Overall, I really enjoy working here. There is a great deal of collaboration among peers, and it is definitely a team-based environment. That being said, we all know that we have our own strengths and weaknesses. When I have needed a bit of extra time or a more relaxed environment from the bullpen, I noticed that my teammates and superiors were more than willing to give me the resources I needed.

Recently, HR has led the company to embrace an "Open Door Policy" among the upper levels, from line managers to HR representatives. The purpose of this is to make sure we feel heard and if anything can be done to help us work at a higher level, we are provided that support. I have to say I was skeptical at first, but I have watched it become much easier to ask for help or bring issues to management/HR's attention as they arise. I was given noise cancelling headphones when I mentioned that the noise in the bullpen was overwhelming, and IT installed a text-to-speech program for one of my teammates to help them process lengthy documents. We both feel like we are performing better than ever with these small adjustments.

I hope this was helpful, please let me know if you have any other questions.

Sincerely,

Appendix E: Disclosure Scenarios

You have been working for a few weeks. The email from your school alumni was an accurate representation of the culture based on your experiences to this point. Please rank the following

	Very Unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly Unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately Likely	Very Likely
How likely are you to disclose your neurodiversity to a peer in a social/casual setting (ex: jokes, stories, not work-related conversation)?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How likely are you to disclose your neurodiversity to a peer if you feel like you need help with work-related topics?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How likely are you to disclose your neurodiversity to a superior if you feel like you need help with work-related topics?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How likely are you to ask for accommodations on a case-by-case basis?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How likely are you to ask for formal accommodations from HR, given you feel they would be helpful?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix F: Hypothesis II exploratory t-Tests assuming unequal variances

ACCOMMODATING

T-TEST: TWO-SAMPLE ASSUMING UNEQUAL VARIANCES		
	a = 0.05	
	Used Accommodations	*No Use of Accommodations*
MEAN	5.821428571	5.891891892
VARIANCE	1.411375661	1.099099099
OBSERVATIONS	28	37
HYPOTHESIZED MEAN DIFFERENCE	0	
DF	54	
T STAT	-0.24895179	
P(T<=T) ONE-TAIL	0.402171265	
T CRITICAL ONE-TAIL	1.673564906	
P(T<=T) TWO-TAIL	0.804342531	
T CRITICAL TWO-TAIL	2.004879288	

INDIFFERENT

T-TEST: TWO-SAMPLE ASSUMING UNEQUAL VARIANCES		
	a = 0.05	
	Used Accommodations	*No Use of Accommodations*
MEAN	4.302325581	4.327272727
VARIANCE	1.787375415	2.668686869
OBSERVATIONS	43	55
HYPOTHESIZED MEAN DIFFERENCE	0	
DF	96	
T STAT	-0.083116321	
P(T<=T) ONE-TAIL	0.466966057	
T CRITICAL ONE-TAIL	1.66088144	
P(T<=T) TWO-TAIL	0.933932114	
T CRITICAL TWO-TAIL	1.984984312	

Appendix G: Hypothesis III exploratory t-Tests assuming unequal variances

ACCOMMODATING

T-TEST: TWO-SAMPLE ASSUMING UNEQUAL VARIANCES

	a = 0.05	
	Neurodivergent	*Neurotypical*
MEAN	5.895522388	6.0390625
VARIANCE	1.216191768	1.171690453
OBSERVATIONS	67	128
HYPOTHESIZED MEAN DIFFERENCE	0	
DF	132	
T STAT	-0.868649661	
P(T<=T) ONE-TAIL	0.1933077	
T CRITICAL ONE-TAIL	1.65647927	
P(T<=T) TWO-TAIL	0.386615399	
T CRITICAL TWO-TAIL	1.978098842	

INDIFFERENT

T-TEST: TWO-SAMPLE ASSUMING UNEQUAL VARIANCES

	a = 0.05	
	Neurodivergent	*Neurotypical*
MEAN	4.303030303	4.696078431
VARIANCE	2.254174397	2.213647835
OBSERVATIONS	99	102
HYPOTHESIZED MEAN DIFFERENCE	0	
DF	199	
T STAT	-1.863816045	
P(T<=T) ONE-TAIL	0.031910254	
T CRITICAL ONE-TAIL	1.652546746	
P(T<=T) TWO-TAIL	0.063820507	
T CRITICAL TWO-TAIL	1.971956544	