The Origins and Appearance of Sex Differences in Mental Disorder

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Statement of Originality

I, Sarah I. Grime, declare that the work contained herein is my own unless otherwise cited. Information derived from the published and unpublished works of others has been acknowledged via referencing.

This thesis has not been submitted, in part or full, to another educational institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree qualification.

Sarah I. Grime

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# Table of Contents

Statement of Originality .................................................................................................................. 2  
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 3  
List of Tables ....................................................................................................................................... 7  
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................... 8  
Abstract ............................................................................................................................................... 9  
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 10  
Chapter One: Evolution of Sexual Dimorphism .............................................................................. 14  
  1.1: Origin of Two Sexes .................................................................................................................. 14  
  1.2: Exploring the Influence of Sexual Dimorphism in Humans ....................................................... 21  
Chapter Two: Sex and Gender .......................................................................................................... 23  
  2.1: Terminological Confusion in the Study of Sexual Dimorphism ............................................... 23  
  2.2: The Influence of Genetics on Human Sexual Dimorphism ....................................................... 27  
  2.3: The Influence of Hormones on Human Sexual Dimorphism .................................................... 39  
Chapter Three: Sex Differences in the Brain .................................................................................... 44  
  3.1: Development of the Sexually Dimorphic Brain ....................................................................... 45  
  3.2: Sex-Based Differences in Brain Morphology and Physiology ................................................... 53  
  3.2.1: Techniques and mechanisms used to study brain morphology and physiology ............... 53  
  3.2.2: Sex Differences in Brain Structure and Function .................................................................. 57  
Chapter Four: Impacts of Sex Differences in Human Behaviour ..................................................... 64  
  4.1: Sex Differences in General Intelligence and Cognitive Abilities ............................................ 65  
  4.1.1: Biological and Social Contributions to Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities ................. 69  
  4.2: Sex Differences in Social Behaviour: Play and Activity Interests across the Lifespan ............... 75
SEX DIFFERENCES IN MENTAL DISORDER

4.2.1: Social and Biological Explanations of Sex Differences in Play and Activity Interests. ................................................................. 79

4.3: Sex Differences in Personality Traits: Aggression .................................................. 83

4.3.1: Multifaceted Explanations of Sex Differences in Aggression ................................ 88

Chapter Five: Sex Differences in the Onset and Development of Mental Disorder ............. 99

5.1: Overview of Depression and Anxiety Disorder: Characteristics and Prevalence . 100

5.2: Influence of Gendered Factors on Prevalence of Depression and Anxiety Disorders ..................................................................................... 104

5.3: Biological Underpinnings of Sex Differences in Depression and Anxiety Disorders ..................................................................................... 111

Chapter Six: Sex Differences in Autism Spectrum Disorder ........................................... 122

6.1: Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder ..................................................................... 123

6.2: Sex Differences in Autism Spectrum Disorder .......................................................... 130

6.2.1: Methodological Issues Impacting the Identification of Sex-Differences in ASD ..... 130

6.2.2: Behavioural Differences between Males and Females with an ASD ..................... 146

6.2.3: Biological Theories for Sex Differences in Autism ................................................. 148

6.3: Researching Sex Differences in Autism: Conclusion ................................................ 155

References ....................................................................................................................... 157

Appendicies ..................................................................................................................... 214

Appendix A ...................................................................................................................... 214

Appendix B ...................................................................................................................... 225
List of Tables

Table 1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Sexual Dimorphism ................................................................. 188
Table 2 Number of Assessment Measures Employed in Research Studies ............................................. 142
Table 3 Most Commonly Used Assessment Measures ............................................................................. 143
Table A 1 30 studies representing investigations into the female-male variation in ASD .......... 214
List of Figures

Figure 1: Reconstruction of F. dorothea..............................................................155
Figure 2: Depiction of a normal (typical) human karyotype.................................30
Figure 3: Depiction of homologous chromosomes with three difference genes........32
Figure 4: Comparison of the homologous and non-homologous regions of the X and Y chromosomes. ..........................................................33
Figure 5: The FCG model. ..................................................................................37
Figure 6: Coronal sections of the sexually dimorphic nucleus of the preoptic area (SDN-POA) in adult rats ........................................................................47
Figure 7: Depiction of electrical synapse and a chemical synapse. .........................49
Figure 8: Overview of brain regions. ....................................................................59
Figure A 1: Visual representation of the allocation of studies to analysis groups according to the age ranges .................................................................225
Abstract

The biological underpinnings of sex differences were explored in relation to male- and female-specific functioning in typical development as a means of understanding how these factors may inform similar sex-based variation in atypical development. The influence of genetic and hormonal factors was explored in relation to sex-specific brain development and the subsequent sex-based variation in behaviour, including intelligence, social characteristics, and personality traits. Discussion then addressed sex differences in the symptom manifestation of mental disorder (i.e., depression and anxiety) and developmental disorder with a particular focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder. An exploration of the methodological issues encountered in researching sex-specific behavioural profiles in autism is presented highlighting the need for incorporating sex as a variable in future studies of ASD to better inform the diagnosis and treatment of females.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, sex-differences, gender-differences, methodological issues