

Neuroscience Seminar Series

Friday, April 6th, 2018 at 11:30

Salle des Conférences (R229)

Centre Universitaire des Saints-Pères

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Sex, brain and gender: From dimorphism to mosaic

Whereas a categorical difference in the genitals has always been acknowledged, the question of how far these categories extend into human biology is still not resolved. Documented sex/gender differences in the brain are often taken as support of a sexually dimorphic view of human brains (“female brain” or “male brain”). Studies in animals, however, suggest that sex differences in the brain do not ‘add up’ to create two types of brains. Indeed, a recent analysis of volume, cortical thickness, diffusion anisotropy, or connectivity in over 1400 human brains from four datasets reveals that most brains are comprised of unique ‘mosaics’ of features, some more common in females compared to males, some more common in males compared to females, and some common in both females and males. A similar analysis of gender-related data (behaviors, personality characteristics, emotional and cognitive abilities, and attitudes) of over 5500 individuals reveals that humans possessing only feminine (i.e., more common in women than in men) or only masculine characteristics are extremely rare. Scientifically, these findings call for a shift in our conceptualization of the relations between sex and the brain, from dimorphism to mosaic. Socially, these findings question the meaning of sex/gender as a social category.

Those interested in meeting with the speaker please contact

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