Aim and description
Even though biological sex is the most frequently studied group difference in brain and behavioral research, it is not well understood if and how sex differences impact neurodiversity and mental health. Yet, there are marked sex differences in the prevalence, clinical expression, and course of many psychiatric conditions. It is currently unclear how biological and sociocultural effects interact over the developmental course of an individual’s life and how they influence a person’s mental health. This Lorentz workshop functioned as pressure cooker to move the field forward beyond an oversimplified interpretation of the impact of sex and gender on mental health.

Organization/Format
We came together with researchers, clinicians and policy makers all with various backgrounds, during the Lorentz workshop to exchange knowledge, discuss and rethink how we should address sex and gender in neuroscience of mental health. This co-creations session included three sorts of sessions: knowledge exchange, tutorials on novel methodologies and focus groups. At the end of each day we had discussions where we exchanged different perspectives on the topic that were addressed in the different focus groups. We also had an open space XS session at the start of the week, to get started on the topics that could be addressed in the focus groups. Each of the focus groups worked on a one pager draft that is part of a scientific report that we are writing in co-creations during the workshop. Each group focused on different aspects of this topic including methodology, stakeholders and clinical impact. In the focus groups we had a number of brainstorming methods and writing exercises to makes sure that everyone got the opportunity to contribute to the end product. Furthermore, due to the sensitivity of this topic (which is addressed in the stakeholder focus group), we wanted to disseminate novel insights in a nuanced way and therefore recorded a podcast during the week, in which we interviewed a number of the participants. This turned out really well as the discussions that we had through the workshop days are reflected in the podcast recording. You can listen to it here.

Tangible outcome
We have reached all our aims and beyond. We have facilitated a great network of people that are still active on slack. And a number of spinoff projects have resulted from this workshop. Furthermore, we are currently writing up the scientific article and the podcast will be released shortly.

Scientific breakthrough
The motivation for us to host this workshop is that we think it would help the field forward to work interdisciplinary on this topic and to exchange knowledge and generate live insights to guide ideas and thinking. Which is an important addition on the classical (but more slow) publication process. This is exactly what happened during the workshop, everyone experienced and ‘aha’ moment at some point during the workshop. We for example got to learn more about how important it is to include stakeholders into the definitions and assessments of sex and gender and re-evaluate these with changes in societal norms. And the tutorials gave participants insights and tools to study differences beyond mean group
effects and address similarities as well. We are very thankful to the Lorentz center and LUF to have made this workshop possible.

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