

1 Running head: FLUOXETINE AND ZEBRAFISH AGGRESSION

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16 **Acute fluoxetine differently affects aggressive display in zebrafish phenotypes**

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37 **Abstract**

38 Zebrafish have been introduced as a model organism in behavioral neuroscience and  
39 biological psychiatry, increasing the breadth of findings using fish to study the neurobiology  
40 of aggression. Phenotypic differences between leopard and longfin zebrafish were exploited  
41 in order to elucidate the role of phasic serotonin in aggressive displays on this species. The  
42 present study revealed differences in aggressive display between leopard and longfin  
43 zebrafish, and a discrepant effect of acute fluoxetine in both populations. In mirror-induced  
44 aggression, leopard animals showed higher display latencies than longfin, as well as lower  
45 display duration and frequency (Experiment 1). Moreover, 2.5 mg/kg fluoxetine decreased  
46 the duration and frequency of display in longfin, but not leopard; and 5 mg/kg fluoxetine  
47 increased display frequency in leopard, but not longfin (Experiment 2). It is suggested that  
48 zebrafish from the longfin phenotype show more aggressive motivation and readiness in the  
49 mirror-induced aggression test than leopard, and that acute fluoxetine increases aggression in  
50 leopard and decreased it in longfin zebrafish.

51 *Keywords:* Zebrafish; Aggressive display; Serotonin; Fluoxetine; Phenotypic  
52 differences

53

54

55 **1. Introduction**

56       The biological comprehension of factors underlying aggression is still limited  
57 (Miczek et al., 2007), even though a range of mental disorders present aggression as a  
58 symptom (Krakowski, Volavka, & Brizer, 1986). Despite the paucity of neurobiological data  
59 on aggression, a role for monoamines has been proposed (Miczek et al., 2007; Takahashi,  
60 Quadros, Almeida, & Miczek, 2011). In most animal models, acutely increasing the  
61 serotonergic transmission inhibits aggressive behavior (Takahashi et al., 2011); a metanalysis  
62 of preclinical studies demonstrated that, across species, pharmacologically increasing 5-HT  
63 levels inhibits aggression (Carrillo, Ricci, Coppersmith, & Melloni Jr., 2009).

64       While this observation appears to hold for most studies, some controversies and gaps  
65 appear in the literature, especially in basal vertebrates such as fish. For example, in the  
66 metanalysis by Carrillo et al. (2009), 5-HT decreased aggression in wrasses and trouts, but  
67 not in the Siamese fighting fish. Zebrafish have been introduced as a model organism in  
68 behavioral neuroscience and biological psychiatry (Norton & Bally-Cuif, 2010; Stewart et al.,  
69 2015), increasing the relevance of findings using fish to study the neurobiology of  
70 aggression.

71       A role for 5-HT in zebrafish aggressive behavior has been suggested by  
72 neurochemical studies. After eliciting an aggressive display towards a mirror (mirror-induced  
73 aggression, MIA), 5-HT levels were increased in the telencephalon, while 5-HIAA was  
74 increased in the optic tectum of zebrafish (Teles, Dahlbom, Winberg, & Oliveira, 2013). Male  
75 and female zebrafish respond to agonistic encounters in a similar fashion; nonetheless, males  
76 present higher 5-HT turnover in the forebrain in relation to females, suggesting that  
77 aggressive bouts could be more stressful to males than females (Dahlbom, Backström,

78 Lundstedt-Enkel, & Winberg, 2012). Filby et al. (2010) demonstrated that dominant males  
79 show an overexpression of genes associated with the serotonergic system in the  
80 hypothalamus, including *tph1b* and *htr1aa*, while females showed overexpression of *tph2*,  
81 *htr1aa*, *slc6a4a*, and *mao* in the hypothalamus and *tph1a* and *tph2* in the telencephalon.

82 While these results suggest that aggressive behavior can be linked to differences in the  
83 serotonergic system – especially in the context of dominance hierarchies –, a causal  
84 relationship is more tenuous. Filby et al. (2010) treated dominant male zebrafish with  
85 fluoxetine (3 or 4.5 µg/L), without effects on aggressive behavior in a dyadic encounter;  
86 however, a similar concentration (3 µg/L) decreased aggressive displays in the MIA (W. H. J.  
87 Norton et al., 2011). Using a much higher concentration (5 mg/L), Theodoridi et al. (2017)  
88 were able to inhibit attacks and chasing behavior in dominant animals in dyads. The lack of  
89 consistency could be due to dosing, behavioral paradigms (e.g., MIA vs. dyadic encounters),  
90 or other variables.

91 Recent studies also showed that 5-HT levels are lower in zebrafish with the leopard  
92 phenotype than in animals with the longfin phenotype, an alteration that is accompanied by  
93 increased monoamine oxidase activity (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, & Herculano, 2013). These  
94 neurochemical differences were accompanied by increased anxiety-like behavior that is  
95 rescued by fluoxetine treatment (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013). Interestingly, in  
96 longfin animals fluoxetine *increases* anxiety, and 5-HT levels are negatively correlated with  
97 anxiety-like behavior; it is possible that embryological differences in the serotonergic system  
98 produce opposite adult phenotypes.

99 These phenotypic differences are exploited in the present work to clarify the role of  
100 phasic serotonin on aggressive displays in zebrafish. We hypothesized that the

101 hyposerotonergic phenotype of leopard zebrafish would produce increased aggressive  
102 behavior, and that fluoxetine would rescue this phenotype. The experimental evidence  
103 produced in the present work contradicted this hypothesis, since longfin were shown to  
104 display more aggressive motivation and readiness in the mirror-induced aggression test than  
105 leopard zebrafish, and since acute fluoxetine increased aggression in leopard animals and  
106 decreased it in longfin zebrafish. This manuscript is a complete report of all the studies  
107 performed to test the effect of skin phenotype and fluoxetine on aggressive behavior. We  
108 report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and  
109 all measures in the study.

110

## 111 **2. Methods**

### 112 *2.1. Animals, housing, and baseline characteristics*

113 Outbred populations were used due to their increased genetic variability, decreasing  
114 the effects of random genetic drift which could lead to the development of uniquely heritable  
115 traits (Parra, Adrian Jr, & Gerlai, 2009; Speedie & Gerlai, 2008). Thus, the animals used in  
116 the experiments are expected to better represent the natural populations in the wild. Adult  
117 zebrafish from the wildtype strain (longfin and leopard phenotypes) were used in this  
118 experiment. Animals were bought from a commercial vendor, and arrived in the laboratory  
119 with an approximate age of 3 months (standard length =  $13.2 \pm 1.4$  mm), and were  
120 quarantined for two weeks; the experiment began when animals had an approximate age of 4  
121 months (standard length =  $23.0 \pm 3.2$  mm). Animals were kept in mixed-sex tanks during  
122 acclimation, with an approximate ratio of 50 male:50 female. Both phenotypes were kept in  
123 the same tank before experiments. The breeder was licensed for aquaculture under Ibama's

124 (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis) Resolution  
125 95/1993. Animals were group-housed in 40 L tanks, with a maximum density of 25 fish per  
126 tank, for at least 2 weeks before experiments begun. Tanks were filled with non-chlorinated  
127 water at room temperature (28 °C) and a pH of 7.0-8.0. Lighting was provided by fluorescent  
128 lamps in a cycle of 14-10 hours (LD), according to standards of care for zebrafish (Lawrence,  
129 2007). Water quality parameters were as follows: pH 7.0-8.0; hardness 100-150 mg/L  
130 CaCO<sub>3</sub>; dissolved oxygen 7.5-8.0 mg/L; ammonia and nitrite < 0.001 ppm. All manipulations  
131 minimized their potential suffering of animals, and followed Brazilian legislation (Conselho  
132 Nacional de Controle de Experimentação Animal - CONCEA, 2017). Animals were used for  
133 only one experiment and in a single behavioral test, to reduce interference from apparatus  
134 exposure.

135

## 136 2.2. *Mirror-induced aggression*

137 The protocol for mirror-induced aggression was adapted from Norton et al. (2011).  
138 Animals were individually transferred to a tank (15 x 10 x 30 cm) containing 1 L of holding  
139 tank water. The tank was lit from above with white light (445 ± 56 lumens). Tanks were not  
140 aerated during testing, so as not to disturb the animals. However, system water, which shows  
141 adequate D.O. levels (7.5-8.0 mg/L), was used throughout the experiments. Animals were  
142 allowed to acclimate to the tank for 5 min; after that, a mirror was positioned on the outside  
143 of the tank (on the narrower side), in an angle of 22.5°. All steps of the experiment were  
144 executed under constant Gaussian white noise (55 ± 2.5 dB above the tank). Behavior was  
145 recorded with a digital video camera (Samsung ES68) positioned in the wider side of the  
146 tank, and analyzed by observers blind to treatment using the event-recording software X-Plo-

147 Rat (<https://github.com/lanec-unifesspa/x-plo-rat>). The following endpoints were analyzed:  
148 time in the square nearest to the mirror (s); frequency (N) and duration (s) of aggressive  
149 display; total number of squares crossed (N). Aggressive display was defined as a swimming  
150 posture with erect dorsal, caudal, pectoral, and anal fins (Gerlai, Lahav, Guo, & Rosenthal,  
151 2000).

152

### 153 2.3. Data availability

154 Datasets and scripts for all analyses are available from [https://github.com/lanec-](https://github.com/lanec-unifesspa/5HT-aggression)  
155 [unifesspa/5HT-aggression](https://github.com/lanec-unifesspa/5HT-aggression) (doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1006701).

156

### 157 2.4. Experiment 1

158 **Sample size calculation and groups.** Sample sizes were calculated on results  
159 regarding the effects of fluoxetine on total time in broadside display in *Betta splendens*,  
160 reported by Lynn et al. (2007); as a result, the closest endpoint (time on display) was chosen  
161 as the primary endpoint, and calculations for sample sizes are valid only for that endpoint.  
162 Calculations were based on Rosner's (2016) method for comparing two means, and assumed  
163  $\alpha = 0.05$  and power 80% on a two-tailed analysis. Based on these calculations, 15 animals  
164 were used in each group in Experiment 1. Animals were derived from the stock population  
165 described in section 2.1, and displayed either the longfin (Group LOF) or leopard (Group  
166 LEO) phenotypes. Animals were randomly drawn from the tank immediately before testing,  
167 and the order with which phenotypes were tested was randomized *via* generation of random



168 numbers using the randomization tool in <http://www.randomization.com/>. Blinding was not  
169 possible, due to the obvious differences in skin phenotype.

170 **Experimental design and statistical analysis.** Animals were allocated to each group  
171 according to phenotype. Immediately after being drawn from the tank, animals were  
172 individually transported to the experiment room, and left undisturbed for 30 min. After this  
173 interval, animals were exposed to the MIA test, described above. Differences between groups  
174 were analyzed using Approximative Two-Sample Fisher-Pitman Permutation Tests 10,000  
175 Monte-Carlo re-samplings, using the R package ‘coin’ (Hothorn, Hornik, van de Wiel, &  
176 Zeileis, 2006). The data analyst was blinded to phenotype by using coding to reflect  
177 treatments in the resulting datasets; after analysis, data was unblinded. Data are presented  
178 using individual dot plots combined with boxplots. Effect sizes are noted in the text as  
179 Cohen’s d.

180

### 181 *2.5. Experiment 2*

182 **Sample size calculation and groups.** In the absence of similar experiments in the  
183 literature, sample sizes were calculated based on the assumption of fixed effect sizes for both  
184 the phenotype and the dose factors, with a projected effect size of 0.4, and 80% power;  
185 calculations were made using the R package ‘pwr2’ (Lu, Liu, & Koestler, 2017). Based on  
186 these calculations, 10 animals were used in each group in Experiment 1. Animals were  
187 derived from the stock population described in section 2.1, and displayed either the longfin  
188 (Group LOF) or leopard (Group LEO) phenotypes. Animals were randomly drawn from the  
189 tank immediately before testing, and the order with which phenotypes were tested was

190 randomized *via* generation of random numbers using the randomization tool in  
191 <http://www.randomization.com/>. Blinding for phenotype was not possible, due to the obvious  
192 differences in skin phenotype. Animals from each phenotype were randomly allocated to  
193 treatment (vehicle or either fluoxetine dose) *via* generation of random numbers using the  
194 randomization tool in <http://www.randomization.com/>.

195 **Drug treatments.** Fluoxetine (FLX) was bought from EMS, dissolved in Cortland's  
196 salt solution (Wolf, 1963), and injected intraperitoneally in cold-anesthetised animals (Kinkel,  
197 Eames, Philipson, & Prince, 2010). FLX doses (2.5 and 5.0 mg/kg) were based on the  
198 demonstration of effect on the light/dark test on longfin (Maximino, Puty, Benzecry, et al.,  
199 2013) and leopard (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013) zebrafish. Experimenters were  
200 blinded to treatment by coding drug vials.

201 **Experimental design and statistical analysis.** Animals were allocated to each group  
202 according to phenotype. Immediately after being drawn from the tank, animals were  
203 individually transported to the experiment room, injected with vehicle or drug, and left  
204 undisturbed for 30 min. After this interval, animals were exposed to the MIA test, described  
205 above. Differences between groups were analyzed using two-way analyses of variance with  
206 robust estimators on Huber's M-estimators, using the R package 'rcompanion' (Mangiafico,  
207 2017). P-values were adjusted for the false discovery rate. The data analyst was blinded to  
208 phenotype by using coding to reflect treatments in the resulting datasets; after analysis, data  
209 was unblinded. Data are presented using individual dot plots combined with boxplots. Effect  
210 sizes are reported as partial  $\epsilon^2$  values, and were calculated using the R package 'lsr' (Navarro,  
211 2015).

212

213 **3. Results**

214 *3.1 Experiment 1*

215 LEO zebrafish showed longer latencies to display than LOF animals ( $Z = 3.3925$ ,  $p =$   
216  $0.0005$ ,  $d = 1.5779$ ; Figure 1A), as well as shorter display durations ( $Z = -2.5659$ ,  $p = < 2.2e-$   
217  $16$ ,  $d = -1.0605$ ; Figure 1B) and frequency ( $Z = -2.7073$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $d = -1.1372$ ; Figure 1C),  
218 and time spent near the mirror ( $Z = -3.2284$ ,  $p = < 2.2e-16$ ,  $d = -1.4593$ ; Figure 1D). No  
219 differences were found in total locomotion ( $Z = -0.69887$ ,  $p = 0.4965$ ,  $d = -0.2573$ ; Figure  
220 1E).

221

222 *3.2. Experiment 2*

223 No main effects of phenotype ( $p = 0.5736$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.0326$ ) or FLX dose ( $p =$   
224  $0.5044$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.0482$ ) were found for latency, but a significant interaction was found ( $p$   
225  $= 0.0412$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1622$ ); nonetheless, post-hoc tests did not detect any differences  
226 between groups (Figure 2A). Main effects of phenotype ( $p = 0.0132$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.2429$ ) and  
227 FLX dose ( $p = 0.0062$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.2297$ ), as well as an interaction effect ( $p = 0.009$ ; partial  
228  $\epsilon^2 = 0.1986$ ), were found for display duration (Figure 2B). Post-hoc tests suggested that FLX  
229 (2.5 mg/kg) decreased display duration on LOF, but not LEO ( $p = 0.032$  vs. 0 mg/kg).  
230 Similarly, main effects of phenotype ( $p = 0.0458$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.2744$ ) and FLX dose ( $p =$   
231  $0.004$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.2476$ ), as well as an interaction effect ( $p < 0.0001$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.3598$ ),  
232 were found for display frequency (Figure 2C); post-hoc tests suggested that FLX (5 mg/kg)  
233 increased display frequency in LEO, but not LOF animals ( $p = 0.004$  vs. 0 mg/kg). No main  
234 effects of phenotype ( $p = 0.2692$ ; partial  $\epsilon^2 = 0.3704$ ) were found for time near mirror, but a

235 main effect of FLX dose ( $p = 0.0004$ ; partial  $\varepsilon^2 = 0.0164$ ) and an interaction effect ( $p <$   
236  $0.0001$ ; partial  $\varepsilon^2 = 0.5760$ ); post-hoc tests suggested a inverted-U-shaped curve for FLX-  
237 treated LOF (0 vs. 2.5 mg/kg:  $p = 0.0012$ ; 0 vs. 5.0 mg/kg:  $p = 0.0167$ ), while a monotonic  
238 increase for FLX-treated LEO (0 vs. 2.5 mg/kg:  $p = 0.0496$ ; 0 vs. 5.0 mg/kg:  $p < 0.0001$ )  
239 (Figure 2D). No main or interaction effects were found for total locomotion (Figure 2E).

240

#### 241 **4. Discussion**

242 The present work demonstrated that zebrafish with the leopard skin phenotype show  
243 less aggressive readiness and less aggression in relation to longfin animals. Moreover, a  
244 different pattern of fluoxetine effects was observed, with fluoxetine decreasing aggressive  
245 display (but not readiness) in longfin animals and increasing it in leopard animals. Evidence  
246 for dose-dependence was also observed.

247 Serotonin (5-HT) has long been implicated in the neurobiological mechanisms of  
248 aggressive behavior (Miczek et al., 2007; Summers & Winberg, 2006; Takahashi et al., 2011).  
249 In a metaanalysis of preclinical studies, Carrillo et al. (2009) demonstrated that, across species,  
250 pharmacologically increasing 5-HT levels inhibit aggression. Interestingly, in their  
251 metaanalysis a species-specific effect was found in fish, with 5-HT decreasing aggression in  
252 wrasses and trouts, but not in the Siamese fighting fish (Carrillo et al., 2009). The present  
253 study examined only aggressive displays, which was elicited in the mirror-induced aggression  
254 test; as a result, dominance hierarchies were not induced. Similar results were observed by  
255 Norton et al. (2011), which observed reduced aggressive displays in Tübingen zebrafish  
256 treated with fluoxetine. When zebrafish are allowed to form dominance hierarchies,

257 fluoxetine either produces no effect (Filby et al., 2010, using WIK zebrafish) or reduces  
258 aggression in dominant males, but not in subordinates (Theodoridi et al., 2017, undescribed  
259 phenotype). Given that these studies used different phenotypes than those reported here,  
260 conclusions are limited.

261 Behavioral differences between leopard and longfin phenotypes were observed in  
262 zebrafish before (Canzian, Fontana, Quadros, & Rosemberg, 2017; Egan et al., 2008;  
263 Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013; Quadros et al., 2016; <https://doi.org/10.1101/055657>).  
264 Of special relevance is the observation that leopard zebrafish present increased brain  
265 monoamine oxidase (MAO) activity that is associated with lower serotonin levels and higher  
266 turnover of 5-HT in the brain (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013; Quadros et al., 2018).  
267 This hyposerotonergic profile was also associated with increased anxiety-like behavior that  
268 was rescued by fluoxetine treatment (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013). Moreover,  
269 Quadros et al. (2018) also found that leopard to be less aggressive than shortfin zebrafish,  
270 suggesting a consistent hypoaggressive phenotype across laboratories, conditions, and  
271 background genetics.

272 These results suggest a serotonin-linked behavioral syndrome in zebrafish that varies  
273 across populations. Indeed, the hyperanxious profile observed in leopard (Maximino et al.,  
274 2013) is also rescued by fluoxetine treatment at the same dose range as that reported here. A  
275 variety of studies in Siamese fighting fish (*Betta splendens*) suggest that fluoxetine reduces  
276 aggressive behavior (Dzieweczynski & Hebert, 2012; Eisenreich & Szalda-Petree, 2015;  
277 Kania, Gralak, & Wielgosz, 2012) and boldness (Dzieweczynski, Campbell, & Kane, 2016;  
278 Dzieweczynski, Kane, Campbell, & Lavin, 2016), which could be interpreted as either  
279 increased impulsivity or decreased anxiety. The presence of a aggression-boldness syndrome

280 has long been proposed in as a dimension in fish behavior (Conrad, Weinersmith, Brodin, &  
281 Saltz, 2011), and the literature appears to point to serotonin as an important link in that.  
282 Nonetheless, these results must be interpreted with caution, given that the *B. splendens*  
283 experiments were made with chronic fluoxetine treatment (which, along with increased  
284 serotonin levels, is thought to induce other long-term neuroadaptations; Castrén & Antila,  
285 2017). Moreover, other experiments with zebrafish (Norton et al., 2010) failed to find an  
286 effect of fluoxetine in aggression-boldness – although, again, the use of different strains and  
287 phenotypes make it difficult to generalize.

288         The results from the Carrillo et al. (2009) metaanalysis suggested a inhibitory role for  
289 phasic serotonin (i.e., 5-HT released by either the aggressive act itself, or by pharmacological  
290 manipulations such as fluoxetine); a role for tonic 5-HT, in *Betta splendens*, was discarded,  
291 because neither the 5-HT synthesis inhibitor *para*-chlorophenylalanine nor the 5-HT  
292 precursor L-tryptophan changed display behavior (Clotfelter, O’Hare, McNitt, Carpenter, &  
293 Summers, 2007). If that was also true for zebrafish, differences in aggressive display between  
294 leopard and longfin would not be expected, given that these phenotypes differ in serotonergic  
295 tone (Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013). While these differences were observed in the  
296 present work, they occur in the opposite direction from what would be predicted from 5-  
297 HTergic tone alone (i.e., we should expect leopard zebrafish to be more aggressive if  
298 aggression was linearly and negatively related to tone). It is more likely that the  
299 normalization of 5-HT levels in leopard after fluoxetine treatment is responsible for increased  
300 aggression, while the “extra” 5-HT levels after fluoxetine treatment in longfin reduce its basal  
301 aggression levels; as a result, the relationship between aggression and 5-HT levels are to be  
302 interpreted as following and inverted-U-shaped distribution (Figure 3). This is also reinforced

303 by the generally hormetic dose-response curves observed in longfin animals treated with  
304 fluoxetine. Alternatively, it is possible that a developmental effect is responsible for these  
305 discrepancies.

306         While it might be tempting to attribute these differences to genetic differences across  
307 populations, the animals used were not derived from inbred strains. The altered pigmentation  
308 observed in our leopard fish has previously been reported, in the Tupfel long-fin (TL) strain,  
309 to be due to a mutation in *connexin41.8* (Watanabe et al., 2006); nonetheless, it is unknown  
310 whether this mutation is present in our animals, or whether this genetic marker is one of  
311 many loci that differ between leopard and longfin animals (Gerlai, 2018). These differences  
312 make it difficult to make specific genetic inferences regarding the differences observed in the  
313 present work. Nonetheless, behavioral differences between leopard and longfin zebrafish  
314 were consistently observed across laboratories (and therefore across fish vendors) (Canzian,  
315 Fontana, Quadros, & Rosemberg, 2017; Egan et al., 2008; Maximino et al., 2013; Quadros et  
316 al., 2016, 2018), and the effect of phenotype on zMAO activity was observed independently  
317 at least twice (Maximino et al., 2013; Quadros et al., 2018), suggesting an important link  
318 between the serotonergic system and aggressive behaviors across zebrafish strains.

319         These results are also reminiscent of what is observed in different populations of  
320 *Astyanax mexicanus*. In that species, different populations occupy different niches, and  
321 surface-dwelling populations are much more aggressive than cave-dwelling populations  
322 (Rétaux & Elipot, 2013). These differences are related to the density of serotonergic neurons  
323 in the hypothalamus, with cavefish showing a higher number of 5-HT neurons in that region  
324 (Elipot, Hinaux, Callebert, & Rétaux, 2013). Moreover, a mutation in the *mao* gene was  
325 found in cavefish that led to an hyperserotonergic phenotype (Elipot et al., 2014). Treating

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326 surface fish with fluoxetine decreases aggression, while in cavefish the drug slightly  
327 increases it (Elipot et al., 2013). In the present paper, however, treatment with fluoxetine  
328 increased aggression in leopard animals (which show an hyposerotonergic profile in relation  
329 to longfin animals; Maximino, Puty, Oliveira, et al., 2013) and decreased it in longfin  
330 zebrafish. These differences might be due to the origin of serotonin, since, in *Astyanax*  
331 *mexicanus* populations, raphe 5-HT levels are unchanged, while hypothalamic 5-HT is  
332 increased (Elipot et al., 2013); further experiments are needed to untangle this hypothesis.

333        Interestingly, a different dose-response profile was observed between phenotypes in  
334 the present study, with the low dose (2.5 mg/kg) generally decreasing aggression in longfin  
335 and the high dose (5.0 mg/kg) generally increasing it in leopard. While difficult to explain  
336 presently, these results suggest either that an “optimal” serotonergic tone is needed to  
337 maintain aggression levels, or that serotonin transporters are desensitized or downregulated in  
338 the leopard population. While the first hypothesis is more likely, given the observation of an  
339 hyposerotonergic profile in leopard zebrafish (Maximino et al., 2013; Quadros et al., 2018),  
340 the current state of the literature and the current data are not enough to assess this.

341        In conclusion, the present experiments revealed differences in aggressive behavior  
342 between leopard and longfin zebrafish, and a discrepant effect of fluoxetine on both  
343 populations. These results are relevant to understand the role of tonic and phasic serotonin  
344 neurotransmission on aggressive behavior in preclinical models, and might contribute to a  
345 better appreciation of the complex roles of this monoamine in controlling vertebrate  
346 aggression.

347



348 **Acknowledgments**

349 Data packages and statistical analysis scripts for this article can be found at  
350 <https://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1006701>.

351

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FLUOXETINE AND ZEBRAFISH AGGRESSION

24

488 Figure captions

489 **Figure 1** – Phenotype differences in (A) latency to display, in s; (B) display duration, in s;  
490 (C), display frequency; (D), time spent near the mirror, in s; and (E), total locomotion.  
491 Boxplots represent median and interquartile range, with Tukey whiskers.

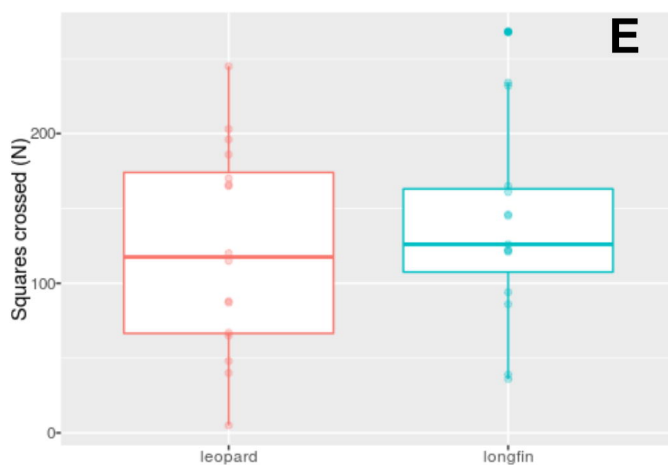
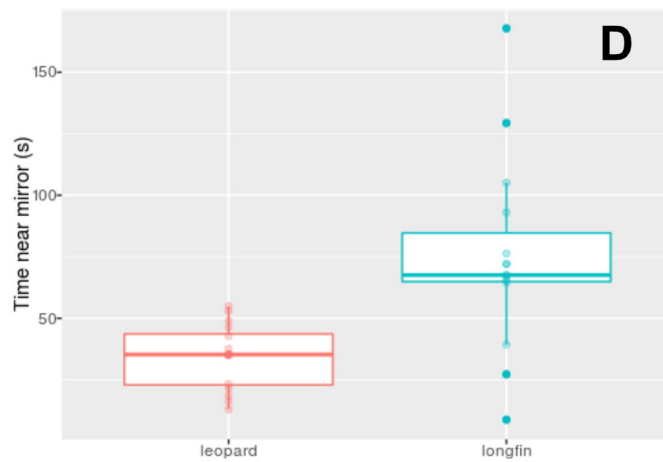
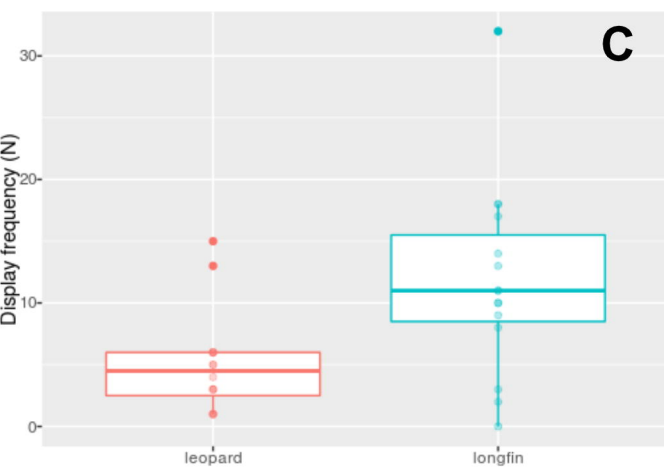
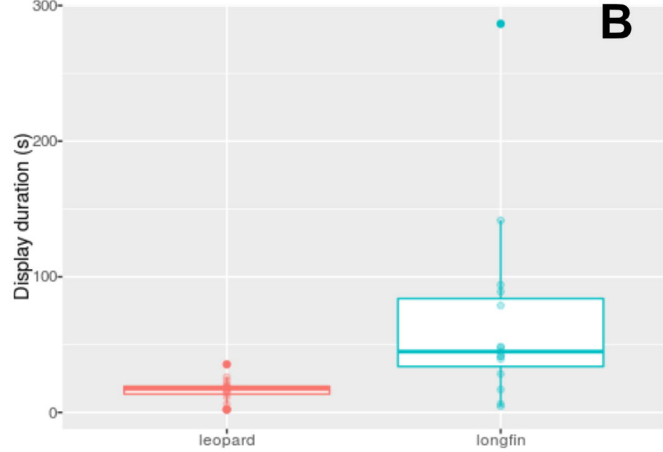
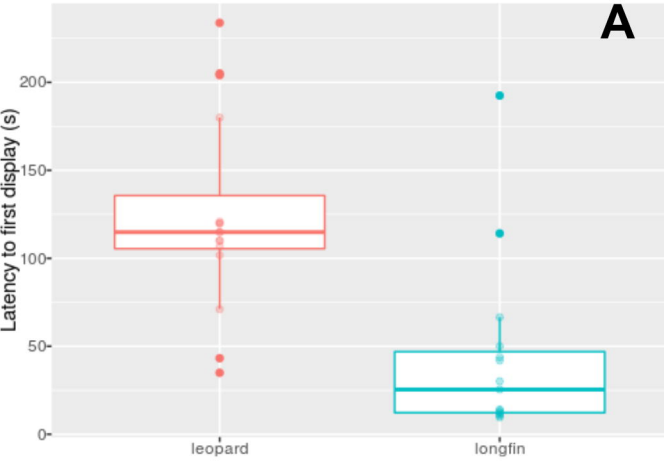
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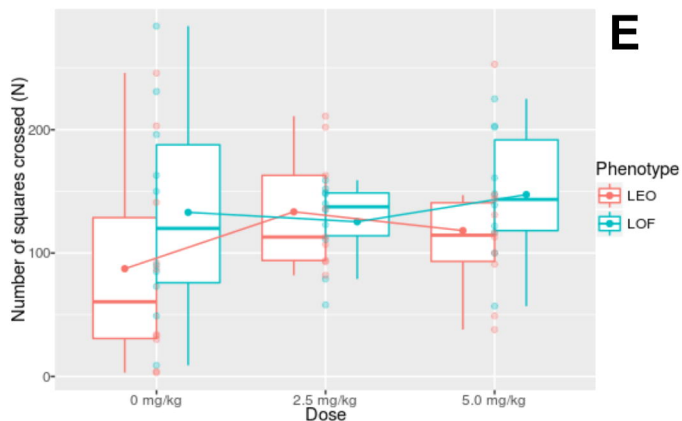
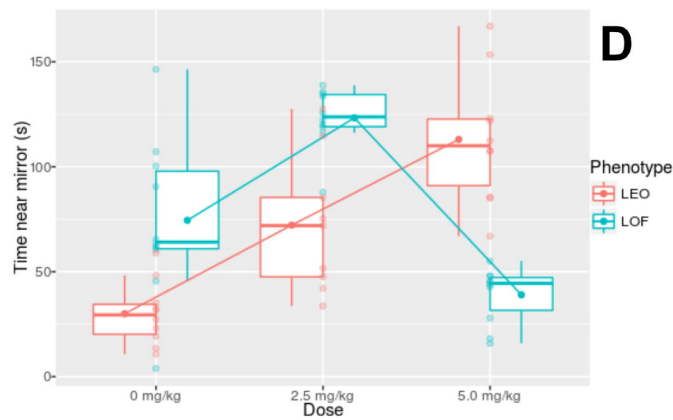
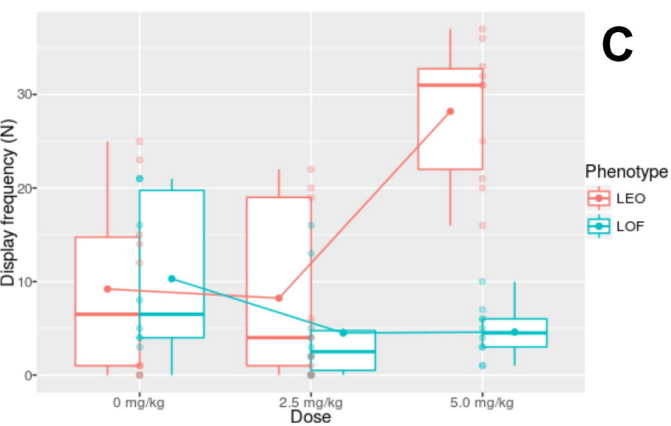
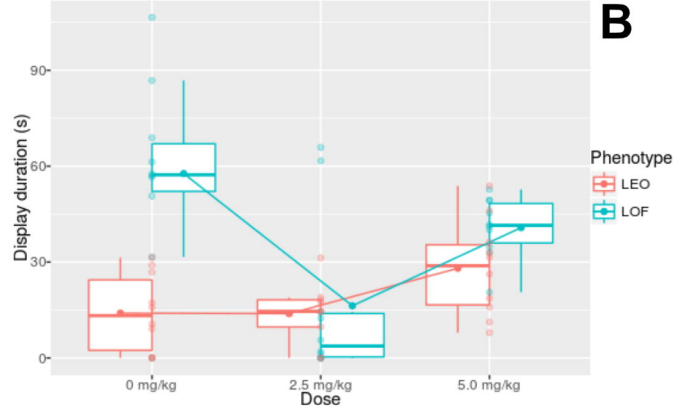
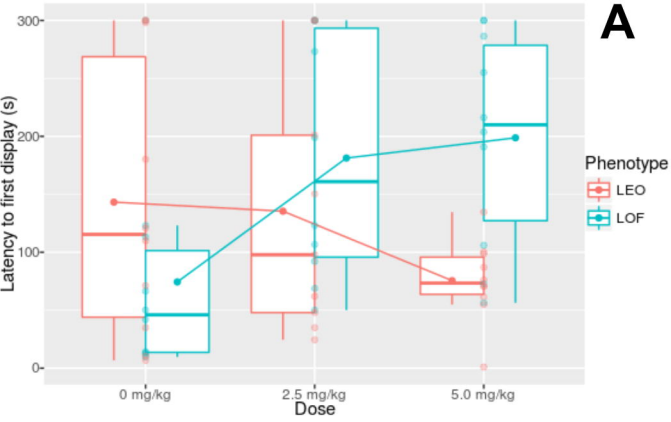
493 **Figure 2** – Effects of fluoxetine on the aggressive display of longfin (LOF, dark gray) and  
494 leopard (LEO, light gray) zebrafish. (A) latency to display, in s; (B) display duration, in s;  
495 (C), display frequency; (D), time spent near the mirror, in s; and (E), total locomotion.  
496 Boxplots represent median and interquartile range, with Tukey whiskers. Dots joined by lines  
497 represent means.

498

499 **Figure 3** – Hypothesized role of the serotonergic tone on the organization of aggressive  
500 display in longfin and leopard zebrafish.







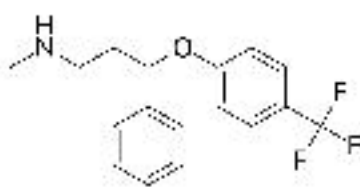
- More 5-HTergic tone

- Less 5-HTergic tone



- More aggressive displays
- More aggressive readiness

- Less aggressive displays
- Less aggressive readiness



Acute FLX

- Too much 5-HT

- Normal 5-HT

