

1 **Anxiety-like behaviour is regulated independently from sex, mating status, and the**
2 **sex peptide receptor in *Drosophila melanogaster***

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18 **Abstract**

19 Sex differences in anxiety-related behaviours have been documented in many animals
20 and are notable in human populations. A major goal in behaviour research is to
21 understand why and how sex differences in cognitive-emotional states like anxiety arise
22 and are regulated throughout life. Anxiety allows individuals to detect and respond to
23 threats. Mating is a candidate regulator for anxiety because threats are likely to change
24 – often in sex-specific ways – when individuals shift to a post-mating reproductive state.
25 However, we know little about how mating mediates anxiety-related behaviour in males
26 and females, or about how males might influence female anxiety via seminal proteins
27 transferred during mating. To address this gap, we examined anxiety-related behaviour
28 in the fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster*, an emerging model animal for anxiety, with
29 respect to sex, mating, and sex peptide, a seminal protein known to modulate a host of
30 female post-mating responses in fruit flies. We assayed anxiety-like behaviour using the
31 open-field assay to assess individual avoidance of the interior of an arena ('wall-
32 following' behaviour). We found sex differences in activity level, but no evidence for sex
33 differences in wall-following behaviour. We found no effects of mating in either sex, or of
34 the presence of the sex peptide receptor in females, on wall-following. Our results
35 suggest that anxiety is not one of the cognitive-emotional states regulated by mating and
36 sex peptide in fruit flies, and that researchers need an alternative model for sex
37 differences in anxiety.

38 **Keywords:** activity, anxiety, *Drosophila*, mating, movement, open field test, sexual
39 conflict, sex differences, sex peptide, sexual dimorphism, thigmotaxis, wall-following

40

41 **Introduction**

42 A major goal in behaviour research is to understand why and how sex differences in
43 cognitive and emotional states arise and are regulated throughout life (Johnston & File,
44 1991; Schuett & Dall, 2009). Understanding sex differences in anxiety, in particular, has
45 the potential to yield insights sex differences in human mental health and illness
46 (Palanza & Parmigiani, 2017). Anxiety has adaptive value in increasing sensitivity to risk
47 and allowing individuals to prepare for danger (Jacobson & Roche, 2018; Marks &
48 Nesse, 1994; Perrot-Minnot et al., 2017). The optimal expression of anxiety should
49 depend on an individual's probability of threat and on vulnerability when threats are
50 realized (Bateson et al., 2011), parameters that are likely to differ between males and
51 females (e.g., through differences in exposure to predators (Magnhagen, 1991) or
52 predator evasion ability (Roitberg et al., 2003) in many animals. Hence, males and
53 females should often follow different decision rules for translating cues about risks into
54 emotional states and behavioural decisions. Sex differences in anxiety-related behaviour
55 have been reported in several animals (Feingold, 1994; Moscicki & Hurd, 2015; Scholl et
56 al., 2019). Yet, we currently lack information about how common sex differences in
57 anxiety are and how they are regulated by environmental conditions and individual state.

58 Mating is a strong candidate regulator for sex differences in anxiety. In many animals,
59 mating represents a shift to a reproductive state that can alter an individual's risks and
60 vulnerability, and thereby change its optimal expression of anxiety (Bateson et al., 2011).

61 As examples, individuals might experience different predation risk in the search for
62 mates versus the post-mating search for egg-laying sites (e.g., Prokopy & Roitberg,
63 1984); mated females might suffer increased vulnerability to predation from an heavier
64 post-mating egg load, which decreases flight performance in zebra finch (Kullberg et al.,

65 2005) and butterflies (Almbro & Kullberg, 2012). Because mating reshapes behaviour
66 and physiology in females much more than in males, mating might mediate sex
67 differences in anxiety.

68 Furthermore, males in some species appear to manipulate female post-mating
69 responses for their own benefit (Arnqvist & Rowe, 2005). Males might benefit from
70 manipulating female anxiety; for example, a female's optimal level of anxiety manages
71 risks to maximize her lifetime reproductive success, whereas a male does best if his
72 mates maximize immediate offspring output before re-mating, setting up the potential for
73 conflict. Female animals often do show profound changes in diverse behaviours after
74 mating (Hopkins et al., 2018), including behaviour related to cognitive-emotional state. In
75 some insects, mating impacts female long-term memory retention (Scheunemann et al.,
76 2019), reduces sleep (Isaac et al., 2009), increases locomotion (Brutscher et al., 2019),
77 and alters aggression towards conspecifics (Bath et al., 2017; Chamorro-Florescano et
78 al., 2017; Papadopoulos et al., 2009). In other insects, mating influences male
79 behaviour; for example, male parasitoid wasps show altered locomotion after mating
80 (King & Owen, 2012). Furthermore, studies in vertebrates and insects have reported
81 mating-induced changes in neural tissue in both sexes (Alvarado-Martínez & Paredes,
82 2018) (e.g., Alvarado-Martínez & Paredes, 2018; Ellis & Carney, 2010; Immonen et al.,
83 2017; Xu et al., 2019), suggesting that mating-induced changes in cognition and emotion
84 might be more widespread than currently appreciated. However, whether mating induces
85 shifts in anxiety-related behaviour in males and females remains unknown.

86 We addressed this knowledge gap by investigating anxiety-like behaviour in the fruit fly
87 *Drosophila melanogaster*. Fruit flies are a promising model for anxiety (Iliadi, 2009; Kaur

88 et al., 2015; Perry & Baciadonna, 2017). They display anxiety-like behaviour that shares
89 environmental sensitivity, and neurochemical and genetic regulation, with vertebrates
90 (Besson & Martin, 2005; de la Flor et al., 2017; Iliadi, 2009; Lebreton & Martin, 2009;
91 Mohammad et al., 2016). Fly anxiety-like behaviour is often measured in open field tests
92 where individuals can choose between exposed and sheltered areas (Doria et al., 2019;
93 Finn et al., 2003; Perals et al., 2017). Like rodents and humans, fruit flies prefer to stay
94 close to the arena perimeter, and more anxious individuals spend more time close to the
95 perimeter ('wall-following'; Kallai et al., 2007; Lebreton & Martin, 2009; Mohammad et
96 al., 2016; Simon et al., 1994).

97 However, whether fruit flies exhibit sex differences in anxiety, and the magnitude of sex
98 differences, remains unclear. Male and female fruit flies differ in habitat use (Taylor &
99 Kekić, 1988) and in body size, which might generate sex-specific risk and vulnerability,
100 and thereby sex differences in anxiety. Some studies report sex differences in the wall-
101 following anxiety-like behaviour of fruit flies, but these differences are often small and
102 inconsistent. Some studies report higher wall-following by females (Besson & Martin,
103 2005; Liu et al., 2007), but others report no sex differences (Lebreton & Martin, 2009;
104 Martin, 2004) or differences that vary with nutritional state (Argue & Neckameyer, 2013).
105 These discrepancies in reported sex differences might relate to variation in arena
106 design, with more recent studies using round arenas instead of the square arenas of
107 earlier work (Besson & Martin, 2005; Lebreton & Martin, 2009; Martin, 2004) because
108 fruit flies prefer to spend time in the darkened corners of square arenas (Soibam et al.,
109 2012), which might disrupt measures of wall-following. Moreover, previously observed
110 sex differences in anxiety-like behaviour might have been caused by sex differences in

111 responses to stress (e.g., Harris et al., 2008), with previous assays conducted in
112 stressful conditions (arenas devoid of food or moisture).

113 It is also unclear whether mating impacts anxiety-related behaviour in fruit flies. Mating
114 induces a shift in both habitat use (Prokopy & Roitberg, 1984) and egg load (Sirot et al.,
115 2015), which might influence risk and vulnerability. Many post-mating changes in female
116 behaviour have been detected in fruit flies (Sirot et al., 2009), with many changes
117 regulated by sex peptide, a male accessory gland protein transferred during copulation
118 (Sirot et al., 2015). Mating in general, and sex peptide in particular, are therefore
119 promising candidate regulators for sex differences in anxiety-like behaviour in fruit flies.
120 If fruit fly anxiety is indeed regulated by sex or by mating, flies offer significant
121 experimental advantages for uncovering the genetic, developmental and neurobiological
122 bases for sex-specific anxiety, including high-throughput behavioural phenotyping and
123 advanced molecular and genetic tools (Anholt & Mackay, 2004; Neville & Goodwin,
124 2012; Sokolowski, 2001).

125 Here, we investigate sex differences in wall-following anxiety-like behaviour and how
126 they are mediated by mating and sex peptide in *D. melanogaster*. To do this, we
127 assayed wall-following in two experiments. In the first, we compared the effect of mating
128 on wall-following in males and females. In the second, we compared the effect of mating
129 on wall-following in females that were deficient in the sex peptide receptor gene
130 (hereafter, SPR- females) or in genetically-matched control females. SPR- females do
131 not bind sex peptide transferred from males and hence show disrupted post-mating
132 responses, as well as a reduction in sleep independently from mating (Oh et al. 2014).

133 We measured total locomotion so that we could relate any differences in wall-following to
134 overall activity level.

135

136 **Methods**

137

138 *Fly stocks and culture*

139 We used flies from an outbred, lab-adapted Dahomey genetic background (Partridge &
140 Farquhar, 1983). To obtain adult flies for each experiment, we collected eggs from
141 population cages and raised larvae at a standardized density on standard fly food
142 medium (Clancy & Kennington, 2001). Emerging adults were collected as virgins within 8
143 hours of eclosion using ice anesthesia and housed in same-sex vials containing food
144 media in groups of 10. Flies were maintained and experiments conducted at 25°C on a
145 12:12 dark:light cycle.

146 *SPR*- flies bore the genetic deficiency *Df(1)Exel6234*, a deletion that covers the sex
147 *peptide receptor* gene and four adjacent genes of unknown function (Yapici et al., 2008).
148 We used an *SPR*- stock backcrossed into a Dahomey genetic background, into which
149 the w^{1118} allele (conferring white eye colour) had been backcrossed. The *Df(1)Exel6234*
150 carries a *white+* transgene that partially rescues the w^{1118} phenotype, such that *SPR*-
151 flies had red eyes. We used the genetically-matched, white-eyed w^{1118} Dahomey flies as
152 controls to allow us to easily distinguish *SPR*- flies from controls (see also Dean et al.,
153 2012; Perry et al., 2016). White-eyed flies have impaired vision, which can affect
154 locomotion and other behaviours (Krstic et al., 2013; Reed & Reed, 1950).

155 *Experimental design*

156 In each experiment, we assigned flies to a mating or non-mating treatment and then
157 assayed their anxiety-like behaviour in 10 minute filmed trials, following protocols in flies
158 where this is sufficient time to detect treatment differences (e.g., Argue & Neckameyer,
159 2013; Burnet et al., 1988; de la Flor et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2007; Mohammad et al.,
160 2016; Soibam et al., 2012). Previous research in chipmunks and mice indicates that
161 results from shorter trials are consistent with those from longer trials (Montiglio et al.,
162 2010). We conducted the experiment over successive days.

163 *Experiment 1: Sex differences and mating effects on anxiety-like behaviour*

164 To test for sex differences in wall-following, and whether sex differences depend on
165 mating, we assayed behaviour in mated and un-mated virgin males and females in a
166 fully factorial design. For the mating treatment, pairs of two-day old male and female flies
167 that were two days post-eclosion were transferred via gentle aspiration into vials
168 containing food media, and observed until mating occurred. We recorded the latency to
169 mating and duration of mating. Pairs that did not mate within five hours were discarded.
170 Following mating, flies were separated into individual vials containing food media. Virgin
171 flies were handled in an identical manner, being transferred to new vials containing food
172 media twice throughout the same period as mated flies. All flies in this experiment were
173 derived from the Dahomey stock population and had red eyes. Sample sizes were 37
174 virgin males, 28 mated males, 40 virgin females and 31 mated females.

175 *Experiment 2: The role of the sex peptide receptor in female anxiety-like behaviour*

176 To test whether *SPR* mediates female wall-following, we compared the behaviour of
177 *SPR*- and control females that were experimentally assigned to a mating or non-mating

178 treatment. The mating treatment was conducted as described above. We used male flies
179 from the control Dahomey background. Sample sizes were 37 virgin control females, 32
180 mated control females, 31 virgin SPR- females and 41 mated SPR- females.

181 *Behavioural assays*

182 We assayed wall-following in three-day old flies, one day following mating. We followed
183 an open-field protocol to measure the proportion of time flies spent near the perimeter or
184 centre of an arena (Besson & Martin, 2005; Iliadi, 2009; Mohammad et al., 2016). To do
185 this, each fly was placed in a petri dish (inner diameter 54 mm) that was partially filled
186 with agar medium to leave 5 mm between the agar surface and lid. Circular arenas elicit
187 more activity than square arenas, as animals tend to spend more time without moving in
188 the corners of square arenas (Liu et al., 2007; Soibam et al., 2012), such that it is
189 unclear whether preference for wall-following or preference for corners varies across
190 treatments. We placed filter paper that had a marked central inner zone (diameter 36
191 mm) onto the agar to form a damp surface. Preliminary trials indicated that this division
192 of space was effective in capturing fly movement along the perimeter versus into the
193 centre. We used a fresh arena and filter paper for each trial. Flies were transferred into
194 arenas by gentle aspiration and, after a 5 minute acclimation period, were recorded for
195 10 minutes using digital cameras (Toshiba Camileo X400). All trials were conducted
196 between 1 and 7 h Zeitgeber time.

197 A single observer scored videos using JWatcher (v 1.0; Blumstein & Daniel, 2007).
198 Scores were recorded blind to the mating treatment, but sex and eye colour are visible.
199 We recorded movement and location and calculated (1) the proportion of each ten-

200 minute trial spent in the outer zone; (2) the proportion of total moving time spent in the
201 outer zone; and (3) the total time spent moving.

202 *Analyses*

203 We used two measures of anxiety-like behaviour: the proportion of time spent in the
204 outer zone (of the 10 minute trial) and the proportion of time spent moving in the outer
205 zone (of the total time spent moving). The former is proportional to another commonly
206 used measure, the number of crosses flies make into the centre zone (Martin, 2004). For
207 experiment 1, we tested for effects of sex, mating and their interaction (as fixed factors)
208 on these measures using quasibinomial generalized linear models (using the R package
209 'lme4'; Bates et al., 2015). We weighted the proportion of time spent moving in the outer
210 zone by the total time spent moving. We included time of day as a polynomial covariate,
211 and its interaction with sex because males and females have distinct activity patterns
212 across the day (Isaac, 2019; Isaac et al., 2009). We initially included trial date as a
213 random factor, but it explained little variance in behaviour (0.000% for the proportion of
214 time spent moving in the outer zone), so we removed it from final models. We tested for
215 effects of these same factors on total movement time using a generalized linear model
216 with a Gamma distribution. For experiment 2, we tested for effects of *SPR*- genotype,
217 mating and their interaction on measures of anxiety and total movement time, using
218 analogous models. We again included time of day as a polynomial covariate. We used
219 the 'outlierTest' function in the 'car' package in R to identify outliers for each model using
220 a Bonferroni outlier test (Fox & Weisberg, 2019). We identified several outliers
221 (Experiment 1: N = 2 for wall-following behaviours, N = 4 for total time moving;
222 Experiment 2: N = 1 for wall-following behaviours, N = 4 for total time moving) and
223 winsorized these outliers using the Winsorize function in the 'DescTools' package

10

224 (Signorelli et al., 2019). Analyses were conducted in R (version 3.6.1; R Core Team,
225 2016).

226

227 **Results**

228

229 *Experiment 1: Sex and mating effects on wall-following behaviour*

230 *Wall-following behaviour*

231 We found no evidence for differences in wall-following between the sexes or between
232 virgin and mated individuals, nor evidence for an interaction between sex and mating
233 status, for our two measures of wall-following (proportion of time spent in the outer zone,
234 Fig. 1a: sex: $\chi^2_{1,129} = 1.04$, $P = 0.31$; mating status: $\chi^2_{1,129} = 0.02$, $P = 0.89$; interaction:
235 $\chi^2_{1,129} = 0.001$, $P = 0.97$; proportion of moving time spent in the outer zone, Fig. 1b: sex:
236 $\chi^2_{1,129} = 1.21$, $P = 0.27$; mating status: $\chi^2_{1,129} = 1.55$, $P = 0.21$; interaction: $\chi^2_{1,129} = 0.91$,
237 $P = 0.34$). When we restricted the analyses to individuals that spent at least half of the
238 trial moving, the results were qualitatively similar, suggesting that inactive individuals did
239 not influence this result.

240 We found some evidence that the extent of wall-following varied non-linearly throughout
241 the day, with an initial increase in wall-following followed by a decrease and then a
242 smaller increase (time of day (cubed): proportion of time spent in the outer zone: $\chi^2_{3,129} =$
243 11.67 , $P = 0.008$; proportion of moving time spent in the outer zone: $\chi^2_{3,129} = 9.16$, $P =$
244 0.03). As with wall-following, we found similar results when we restricted the analyses to
245 individuals that spent at least half of the trial moving.

246

247 *Time spent moving*

248 Males spent more time in motion than did females ($\chi^2_{1,129} = 8.33$, $P = 0.004$; Fig. 1c).

249 There was no evidence for an effect of mating on moving time ($\chi^2_{1,129} = 0.48$, $P = 0.49$),

250 nor evidence for an interaction between sex and mating ($\chi^2_{1,129} = 0.20$, $P = 0.65$). There

251 was no detectable effect of time of day on the total time spent moving ($\chi^2_{3,129} = 2.73$, $P =$

252 0.43). We found qualitatively similar results when restricting our analysis to individuals

253 that spent at least half the trial in motion.

254

255 *Experiment 2: The role of the sex peptide receptor in female wall-following*

256 *Wall-following behaviour*

257 We predicted that if wall-following behaviour is mediated by sex peptide transferred

258 during copulation, then we would observe an interaction between mating and *SPR*-

259 genotype. We found no evidence for an interaction for either measure of wall-following

260 (proportion of time spent in the outer zone, Fig. 2a: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.45$, $P = 0.50$; proportion of

261 moving time spent in the outer zone, Fig. 2b: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.68$, $P = 0.41$). However, *SPR*-

262 females engaged in more wall-following than did control females regardless of mating,

263 spending relatively more time in the outer zone compared with control females

264 (proportion of time spent in the outer zone, Fig. 2a: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 18.15$, $P < 0.001$; proportion

265 of moving time spent in the outer zone, Fig. 2b: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 27.14$, $P < 0.001$). We found no

266 evidence for an effect of mating on wall-following (proportion of time spent in the outer

267 zone, Fig. 2a: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.00$, $P = 0.97$; proportion of moving time spent in the outer zone,

268 Fig. 2b: $\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.21$, $P = 0.65$), consistent with experiment 1. We found no evidence for
269 time of day effects (proportion of time spent in the outer zone, $\chi^2_{1,134} = 4.83$, $P = 0.18$;
270 proportion of moving time spent in the outer zone, $\chi^2_{1,134} = 6.36$, $P = 0.10$), although the
271 pattern appeared similar to that of experiment 1.

272 *Time spent moving*

273 There was no evidence for effects on overall activity of mating (Fig. 2c; $\chi^2_{1,134} = 1.25$, $P =$
274 0.26), *SPR*- genotype ($\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.64$, $P = 0.42$), their interaction ($\chi^2_{1,134} = 0.05$, $P = 0.82$),
275 or time of day ($\chi^2_{3,134} = 0.35$, $P = 0.95$).

276 **Discussion**

277 We investigated sex differences in wall-following, a commonly-used measure of anxiety-
278 like behaviour (Finn et al., 2003), and its regulation by mating through the sex peptide
279 pathway. We found no evidence for sex-specific wall-following, and no evidence for
280 regulation of wall-following by mating in males or females, or by the sex peptide receptor
281 in females. However, we found that control females, which had impaired vision, showed
282 reduced wall-following, consistent with a previous finding of reduced wall-following by
283 blind females (Besson & Martin, 2005). This result, together with our finding of
284 differences in overall activity between the sexes, suggests that insufficient replication
285 does not explain the absence of sex or mating effects. Our results suggest that anxiety is
286 not one of the cognitive emotional states regulated by mating and sex peptide in fruit
287 flies.

288 We found no evidence for sex differences in wall-following behaviour. These results are
289 consistent with the idea that male and female fruit flies display similar anxiety-like

290 behaviour because they experience similar risks and vulnerability, factors predicted to
291 shape adaptive anxiety (Bateson et al., 2011). Many studies of wall-following in fruit flies
292 – and in most animals – ignore sex. Evidence from studies of fruit flies that have looked
293 for sex differences has been mixed, with some studies reporting more wall-following by
294 females (Besson & Martin, 2005; Liu et al., 2007), but others finding little support for sex
295 differences (Lebreton & Martin, 2009; Martin, 2004). Another study found more wall-
296 following by females when flies had been deprived of food, but no sex differences when
297 flies were satiated (Argue & Neckameyer, 2013). The variation among studies might be
298 explained by unknown idiosyncratic differences in conditions among labs, or by genetic
299 variation among fly populations. All studies used flies with a Canton-S background, but
300 some sub-strains of Canton-S show divergent behaviours (Columb & Brembs, 2015).
301 Alternatively, the outcomes from some studies might have been influenced by the
302 square arenas used for observations (Besson & Martin, 2005; Lebreton & Martin, 2009;
303 Martin, 2004) because flies prefer the darkened corners of square arenas (Soibam et al.,
304 2012). Furthermore, these previous studies of sex differences used observation arenas
305 that lacked food or moist medium. These stressful conditions should have enhanced sex
306 differences (e.g., Argue & Neckameyer, 2013; Harris et al., 2008) and make it difficult to
307 attribute previous observations of sex differences to an innate difference versus a sex-
308 specific stress response. Future studies of sex differences in other behaviours will help
309 to shed light on whether male and female fruit flies show broadly similar cognitive-
310 emotional states.

311 We did not find evidence that wall-following is regulated by mating in males (experiment
312 1) or females (experiments 1 and 2). Our results are consistent with a previous study
313 that reported no difference in wall-following between virgin and mated female *D.*

314 *melanogaster* (Martin, 2004), but that study had limited power to detect differences
315 because it assessed only four flies for each treatment and used square arenas. Many
316 other behaviours are influenced by mating in female fruit flies (Sirot et al., 2009),
317 including both activity level (Isaac et al., 2009; Martin, 2004; present study) and
318 behaviours related to cognitive-emotional state (sleep, Isaac et al., 2009; aggression,
319 Bath et al., 2017; long-term memory, Scheunemann et al., 2019; feeding, Carvalho et
320 al., 2006). From our data, we conclude that the wall-following aspect of locomotion is
321 regulated independently from overall propensity for locomotion. Our results are
322 consistent with the idea that mating does not contribute to sex differences in the
323 combination of risk and vulnerability that should influence the expression of anxiety
324 (Bateson et al., 2011). Mating-induced changes in female behaviour are sometimes
325 hypothesized to stem from sexual conflict and male manipulation of females (Arnqvist &
326 Rowe, 2005); the absence of mating effects observed here suggests that males have
327 little scope to influence female anxiety-like behaviour in fruit flies. An interesting direction
328 for future study would be to test the hypotheses that male fruit flies do not influence
329 female cognitive-emotional states because males would not benefit from doing so, or
330 because females have evolved resistance to male influence on their emotions, such that
331 no influence is detectable.

332 We detected decreased wall-following by control females, which had reduced vision,
333 compared with *SPR*- females. The decrease was similar in virgin and mated females,
334 and hence not dependent on receipt of sex peptide, consistent with our observation that
335 mating itself did not influence wall-following. The difference between *SPR*- and control
336 females was likely caused by the reduced visual ability of control females, consistent
337 with the decreased wall-following behaviour of blind females (Besson & Martin, 2005).

338 An alternative hypothesis is that wall-following is regulated by *SPR* or any of the other
339 four genes covered by the *SPR* deletion. An effect of *SPR* that is independent from
340 mating is plausible: some female behaviours are regulated by the *SPR* pathway
341 independently from mating (e.g., sleep; Oh et al., 2014). Disrupted sleep is associated
342 with reduced cognitive function and behavioural disorders in flies and humans (van
343 Alphen & Swinderen, 2013), suggesting that *SPR* might function as a link between sleep
344 and anxiety-like behaviour in *D. melanogaster*.

345 We found that males spent more time in motion compared with females. Sex differences
346 in movement in *D. melanogaster* vary with genetic background. Females tend to move
347 more than males in Canton-S (Belgacem & Martin, 2006; Helfrich-Förster, 2000; Martin,
348 2004, but see Martin et al., 1999) and in a wild-derived population (Burnet et al., 1988).
349 Mated females move more than males in Oregon-R flies, whereas virgin females and
350 males show similar movement levels (Helfrich-Förster, 2000; Isaac et al., 2009). No sex
351 differences in movement were detected in the Berlin strain (Helfrich-Förster, 2000) or in
352 several inbred lines of unspecified genetic background (Fernández et al., 1999). Male
353 flies moved more than females in another inbred line (Fernández et al., 1999). Together,
354 these results highlight the pronounced variation in behaviour across strains within *D.*
355 *melanogaster*. Our study is the first, to our knowledge, to examine sex differences in
356 overall movement in *D. melanogaster* with the Dahomey background. Our finding that
357 mating had no effect on movement is inconsistent with the pattern in Canton-S flies
358 (Helfrich-Förster, 2000; Isaac et al., 2009), but consistent with results in the Oregon-R
359 and Berlin strains (Helfrich-Förster, 2000; see also Isaac's (2019)'s study of patterns of
360 female group movement following mating).

361 Overall, our work suggests that sex differences in anxiety are minimal in fruit flies, that
362 there is little evidence for a post-mating change in anxiety-like behaviour as part of the
363 shift to a reproductive state, and that there is little scope for male manipulation of female
364 anxiety-related behaviour in fruit flies. It will be of interest to test how general these
365 findings are in other species. Understanding sex differences in anxiety has the potential
366 for applied value because human populations show sex differences in the frequency and
367 severity of anxiety symptoms (Feingold, 1994), with strong sex differences in how mental
368 health disorders influence health and longevity (Murray & Lopez, 1997). Fruit flies are a
369 useful animal model for psychiatric conditions generally (van Alphen & Swinderen, 2013)
370 and an emerging model for anxiety specifically (e.g., Mohammad et al., 2016). However,
371 our results suggest that alternative animal models are needed to recapitulate the sex
372 differences in anxiety observed in humans. Further study is needed to determine
373 whether anxiety-related behaviour in *D. melanogaster* is modulated by aspects of the
374 social environment apart from mating.

375

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382

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587 **Figure legends**

588 Figure 1: Wall-following (a,b) and movement behaviour (c) of mated and virgin males
589 and females. Wall-following behaviours is expressed as a proportion of (a) total time or
590 (b) moving time. Green triangles represent virgin individuals, while orange circles
591 represent mated individuals. Smaller points represent individual data points, while the
592 larger points represent model means. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

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594 Figure 2: Wall-following (a,b) and movement behaviour (c) of mated and virgin SPR- and
595 control females. Wall-following behaviours is expressed as a proportion of (a) total time
596 or (b) moving time. Green triangles represent virgin individuals, while orange circles
597 represent mated individuals. Smaller points represent individual data points, while larger
598 points represent model means. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

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