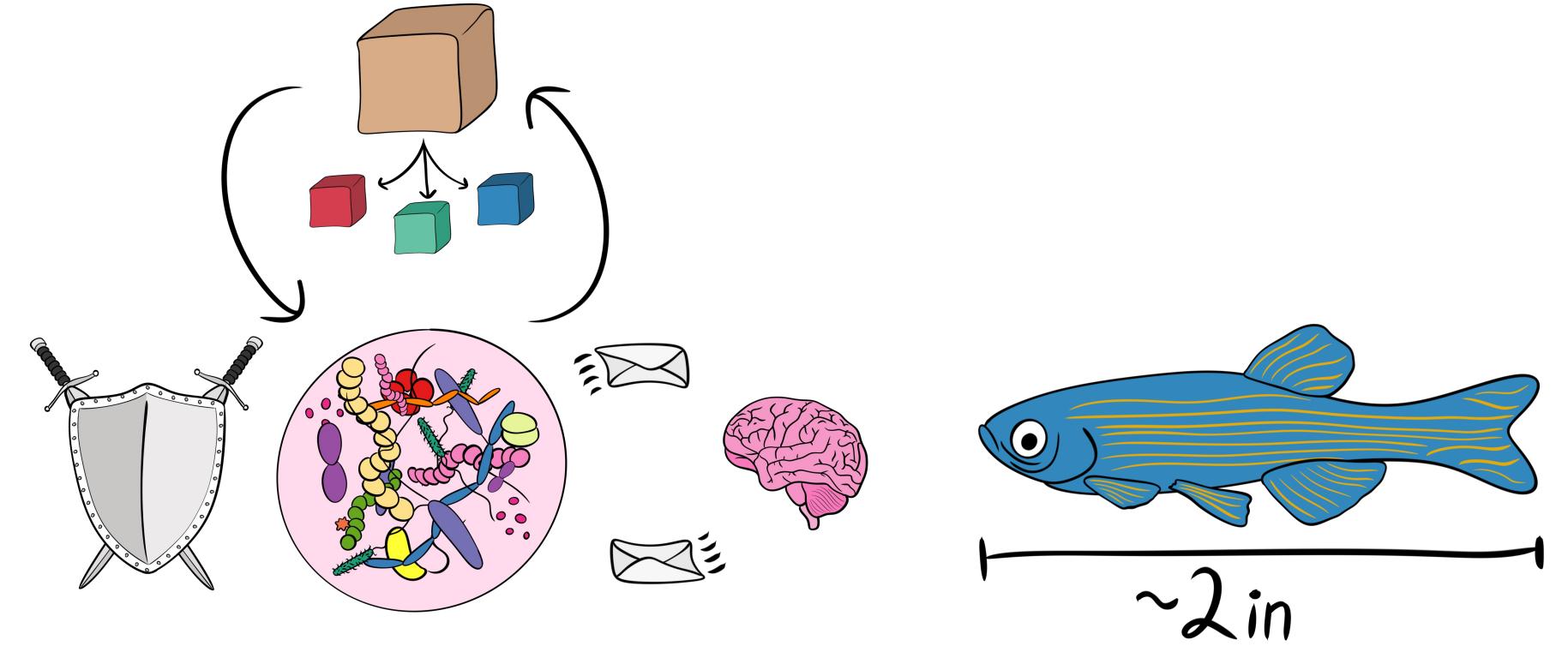




# How do environmental factors impact the gut microbiome to influence the health of the host?

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## Background



### Gut Microbiome:

- The gut microbiome is the collection of microorganisms (bacteria, archaea, viruses) that inhabit a host organism's gastrointestinal tract (mouth to anus)
- The gut microbiome aids its host in digestion & absorption of nutrients, supporting the immune system, & communicating with the nervous & endocrine systems
- The microbiome is relatively stable, but if disturbed it can become unstable and jeopardize the host's health

### Zebrafish:

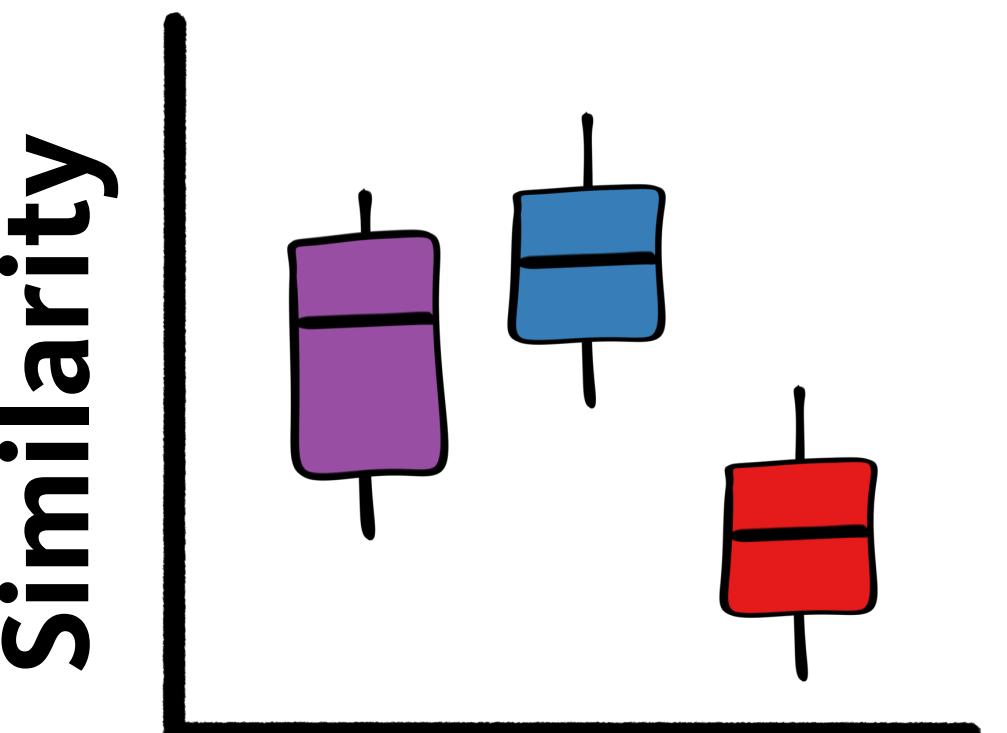
- Zebrafish are an ideal model organism because they have many well established, high-throughput protocols
- Simple microbiomes and share 70% genes with humans
- Unlike mice, no standardized diet for studies
- Typically inhabit 28°C fresh water
- Zebrafish facilities are often contaminated by pathogens or parasites, causing non-protocol induced variation in study results

## Broader Impacts

By better understanding the underlying mechanisms that drive the microbiome:

- Develop microbiome-targeted therapies to support host health
- Mitigate harmful impacts of anthropogenic climate change
- More optimally manage wildlife, livestock & agriculture and human health

## 1) Sensitivity

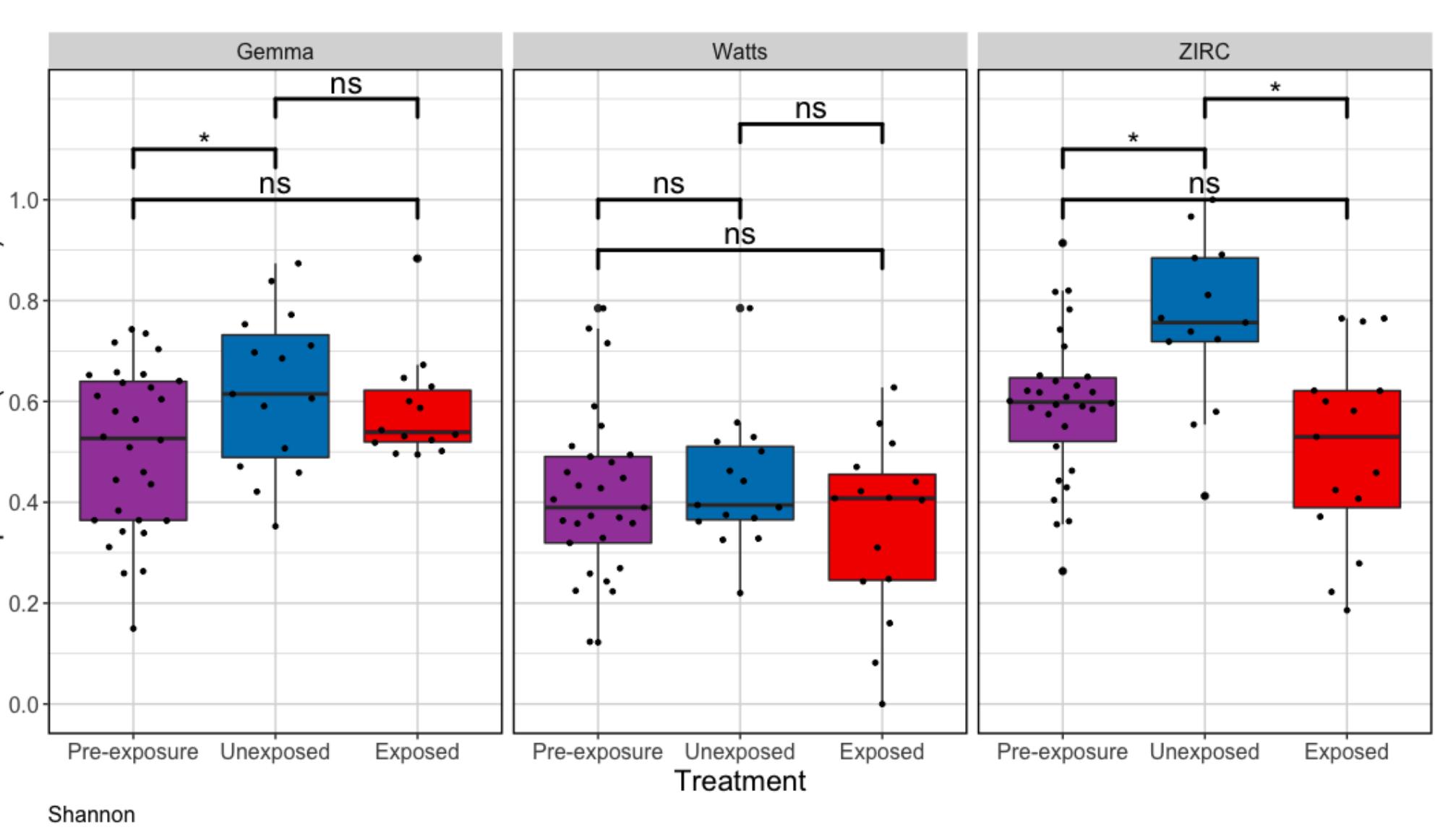


- How sensitive is the microbiome to an environmental factor?
  - What are the long-term impacts on the development of the microbiome?
- Explore with dietary and pathogen exposure model

### Gut microbiome's sensitivity to different diets and pathogen exposure

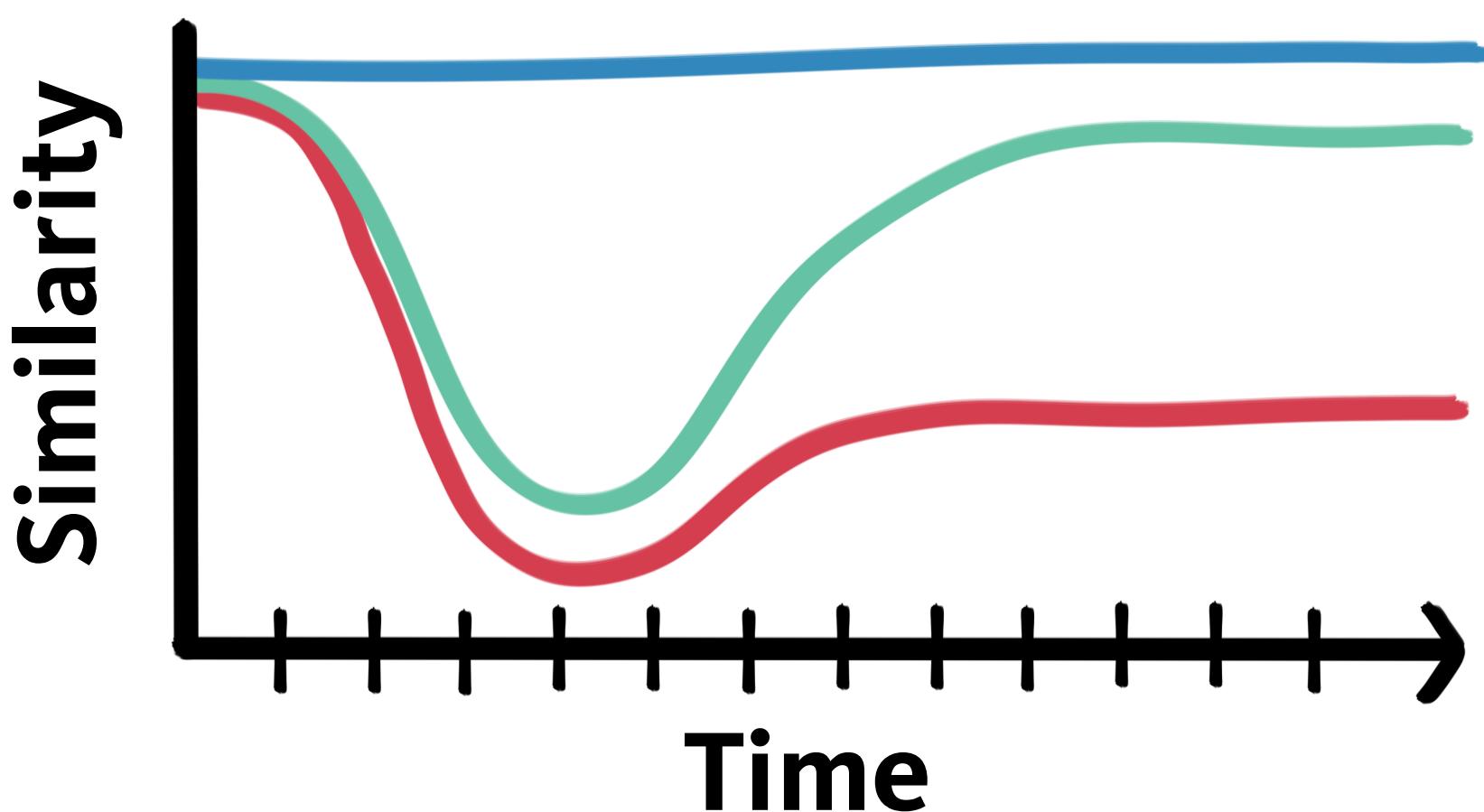
- Fish were fed one of three diets
- Half the fish were exposed to a common zebrafish pathogen
- We measured their gut microbial diversity at 3 & 6 months of age

### Gut microbiome's sensitivity to pathogen exposure was linked to diet



- The gut microbial diversity differed by diet
- ZIRC diet fed fish had higher microbial gut diversity than fish fed the Gemma or Watts diets
- Pathogen exposure inhibited diversification in ZIRC diet fed fish, but not in fish fed the other two diets

## 2) Resiliency

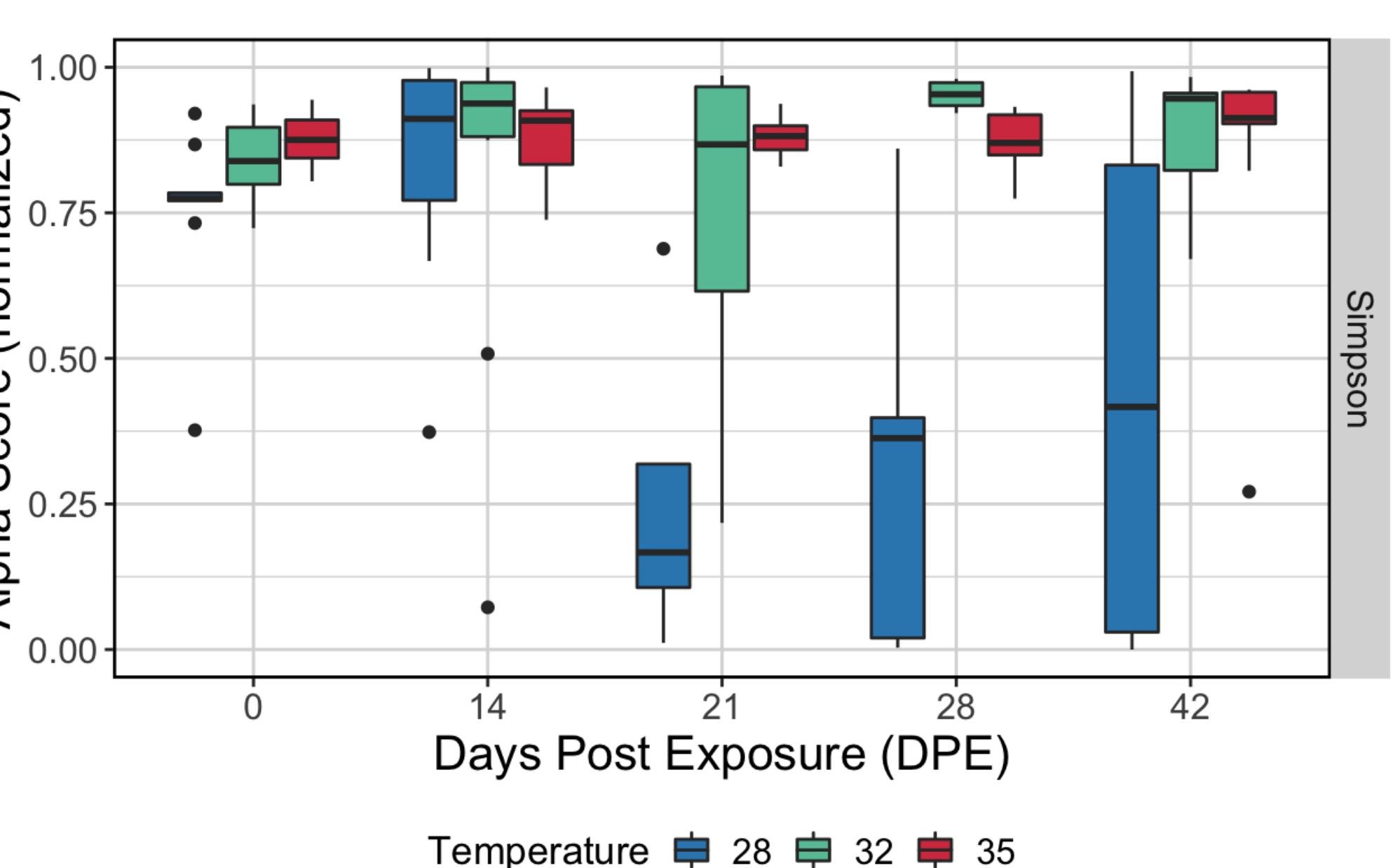


- Can the microbiome recover from environmental exposures to which it is sensitive?
  - Is recovery linked to health?
- Explore with temperature and parasite exposure models

### Gut microbiome's resiliency to different temperatures and parasite exposure

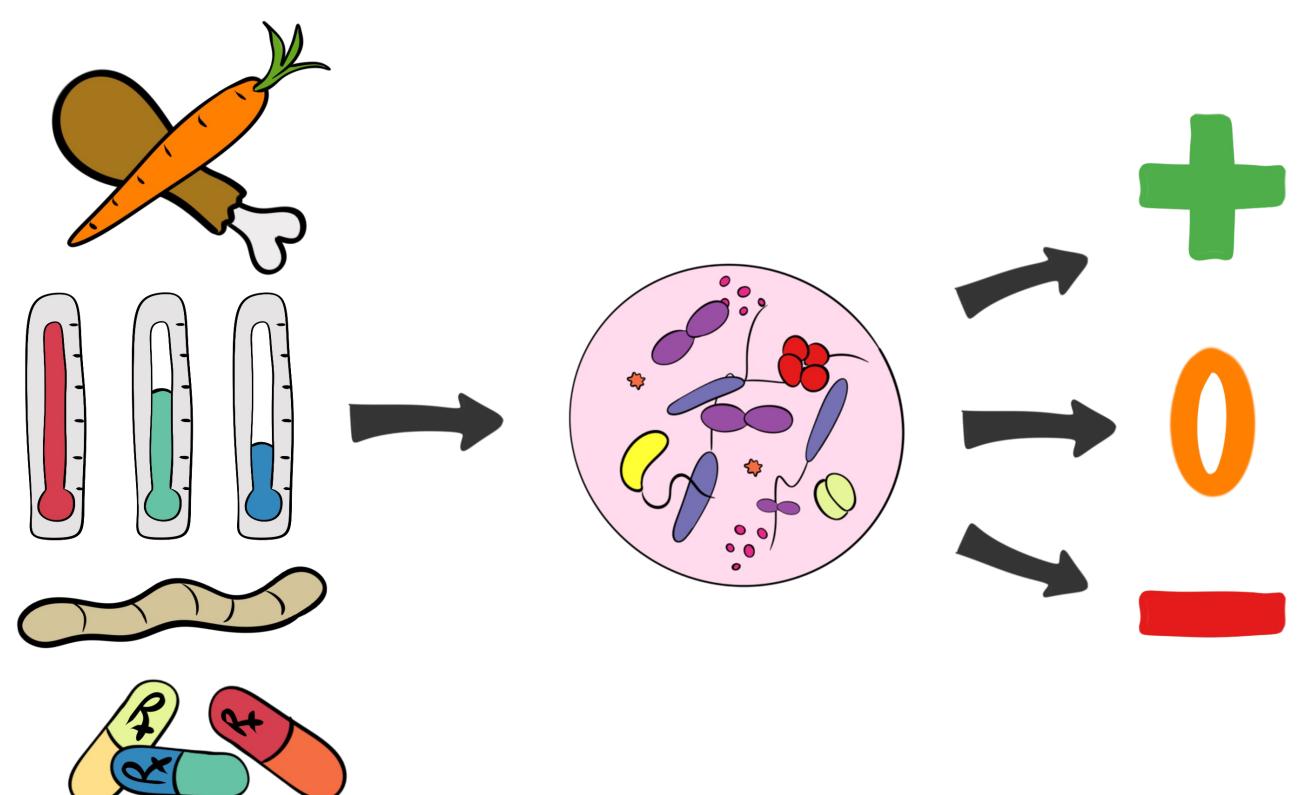
- Fish were reared at 28, 32 & 35°C water
- Half the fish were exposed to a parasitic worm
- We measured their gut microbial diversity at 0, 14, 21, 28 & 42 days after exposure

### Gut microbiome's were differentially resilient to temperature and parasite exposure



- Fish exposed to higher temperatures had higher microbial diversity, and vice versa
- Fish at 28°C were most impacted by parasite exposure

## 3) Mediation



- Do changes to the microbiome drive variation in health outcomes?
  - What are the underlying functions of the microbiome that yield these effects?
- Explore this through a multi-factor exposure study using antibiotics to deplete microbiome

## Future Work

- Assess how environmental impacts to the gut microbiome result in differential health outcomes for the host organism
- Using a multi-factor exposure study involving antibiotics, parasites and temperature

## Acknowledgements

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## More Info

- Find more about our research at [lab.sharpton.org](http://lab.sharpton.org)
- Scan QR code for digital copy

