

## BACKGROUND

- Emerging evidence suggests that the relational capacity of *interpersonal curiosity* (i.e., the desire to know about the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of other people) promotes social functioning and enhances socioemotional well-being.<sup>1</sup>
- Prior research on the culture of masculinity reveals that, as boys transition to manhood, they are encouraged to suppress stereotypically feminine qualities (e.g., relational skills and emotional acuity) in favor of those that are stereotypically masculine (e.g., autonomy and stoicism).<sup>3,4</sup>
- Given its deeply relational nature, interpersonal curiosity may be discouraged among males over the course of their development. However, possible ties between interpersonal curiosity and male gender identity have yet to be examined empirically.

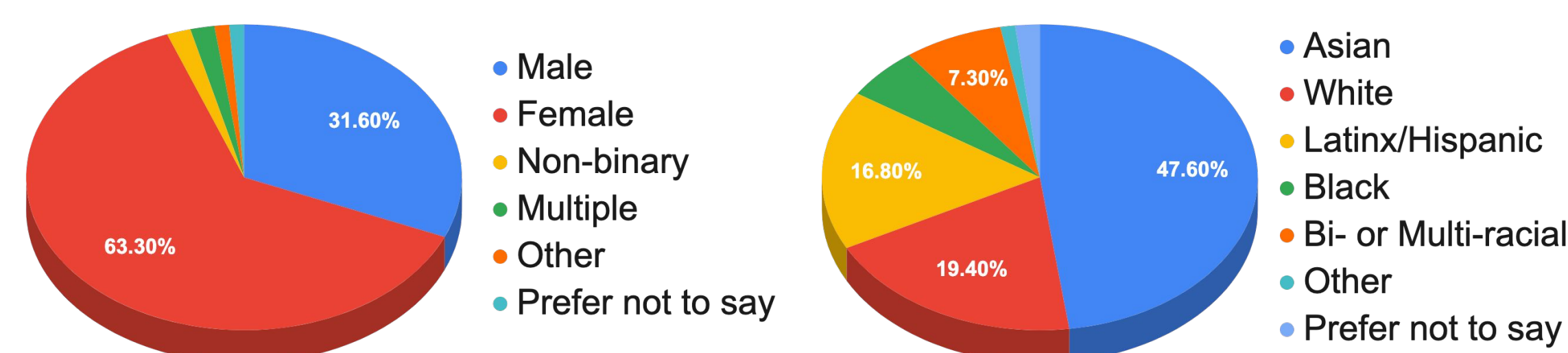
### Purpose of the Present Study

- To explore possible ties between male gender identity and interpersonal curiosity by examining gender differences in:
  - Trait interpersonal curiosity, along with trait curiosity more broadly (i.e., including intellectual curiosity)
  - College students' reported curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of others, as well as how often they report asking about others' thoughts and feelings

## METHOD

### Participants

- Participants included 278 college students ( $M_{age} = 19.68$  years;  $SD_{age} = 1.24$  years) from New York City.



### Procedure

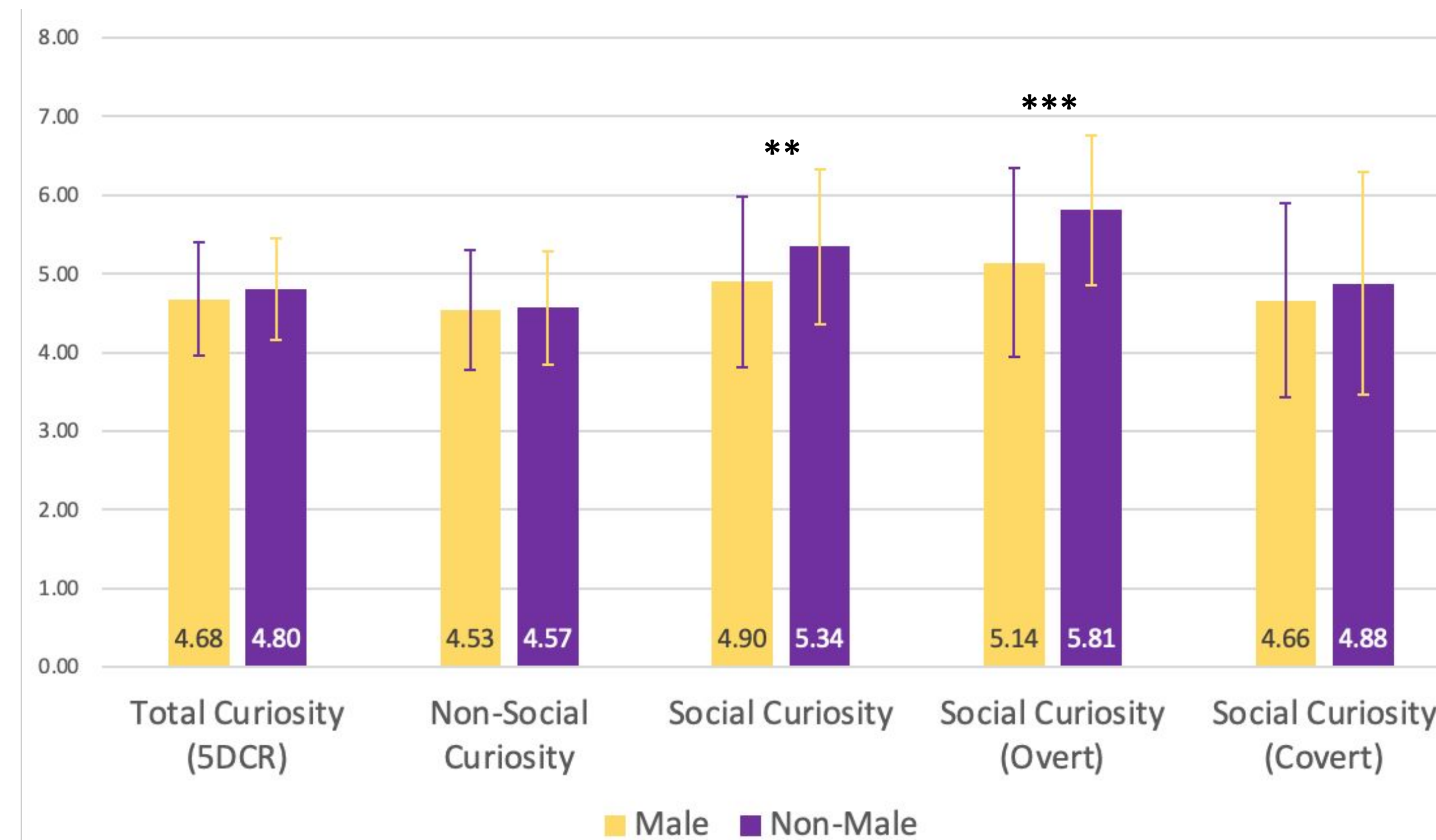
- Participants completed a Qualtrics survey as part of a broader study of interpersonal curiosity and gender ideology.

### Measures of interpersonal curiosity included:

- Social Curiosity dimension of the Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale Revised (5DCR)<sup>2</sup>, which includes subscales for “overt” (e.g., question-asking) and “covert” (e.g., listening to conversations) social curiosity
- Responses to the question: “On a scale of 1 to 5, how curious are you about the thoughts and feelings of other people?”
- Averaged scores across responses to two 5-point Likert scale questions [options ranging from “never” to “all the time”]:
  - “When you’re with someone who has a *similar* background to you, how often do you ask about their thoughts and feelings?”
  - “When you’re with someone who has a *different* background than you, how often do you ask about their thoughts and feelings?”

## RESULTS

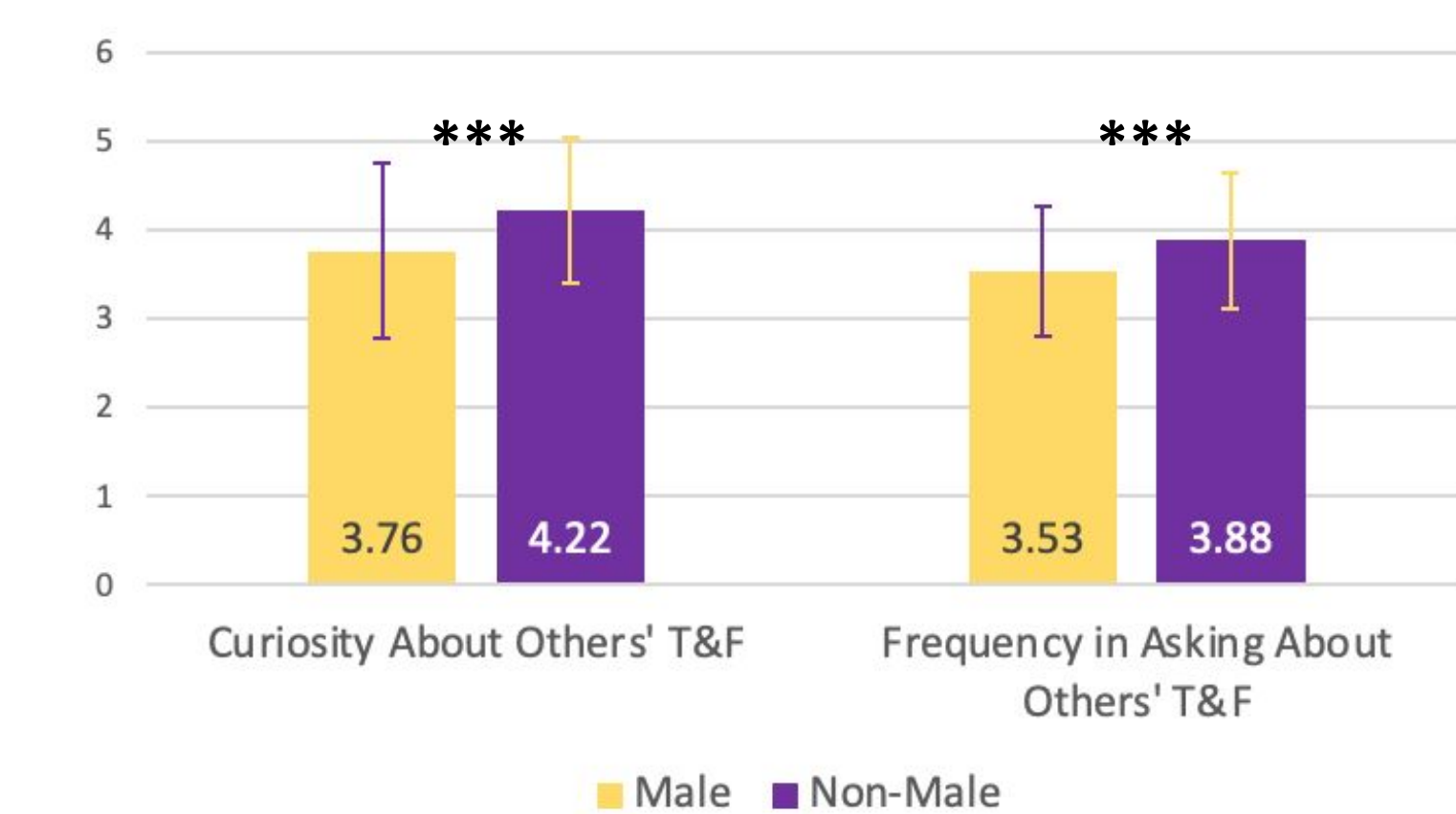
**Figure 1.** Average 5DCR score, Non-Social Curiosity score, Social Curiosity score, Overt Social Curiosity score, and Covert Social Curiosity score from men and people of other genders.



**Table 1.** Results from Mann-Whitney U tests assessing possible gender differences in participants' 5DCR scores, its non-social dimensions [i.e., average of joyous exploration, deprivation sensitivity, stress tolerance & thrill-seeking scores], social curiosity dimension, and the overt and covert social curiosity subscales.

		N	Mean rank	U	Z	p	r
<b>Total Curiosity</b>	Non-Male	188	142.93	7251.50	1.511	.131	.091
	Male	87	127.35				
<b>Non-Social Curiosity</b>	Non-Male	188	137.99	8175.50	0.004	.997	.000
	Male	87	138.03				
<b>Social Curiosity</b>	Non-Male	188	148.08	6283.50	3.091	.002**	.186
	Male	87	116.22				
<b>Overt</b>	Non-Male	188	152.46	5459.00	4.449	<.001***	.268
	Male	87	106.75				
<b>Covert</b>	Non-Male	188	143.63	7119.00	1.730	.084	.104
	Male	87	125.84				

**Figure 2.** Average Overt Social Curiosity score, 5DCR score, and reported curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of others from men and people of other genders.



**Table 2.** Results from Mann-Whitney U tests assessing possible gender differences in participants' reported curiosity about others' thoughts and feelings (T&F), as well as the frequency with which they report asking about others' thoughts and feelings.

		N	Mean rank	U	Z	p	r
<b>Curiosity About Others' T&amp;F</b>	Non-Male	188	149.32	6049.50	3.685	<.001***	.222
	Male	87	113.53				
<b>Frequency of Asking About Others' T&amp;F</b>	Non-Male	188	149.23	6066.50	3.528	<.001***	.213
	Male	87	113.73				

## DISCUSSION

- Males reported significantly lower levels of trait interpersonal curiosity (i.e., 5DCR social curiosity dimension scores), than non-males, and differences were especially pronounced on the “overt” social curiosity subscale. Notably, this effect cannot be explained by a difference in curiosity generally, as no gender differences emerged for overall trait curiosity (i.e., 5DCR scores).
- In addition, males were significantly less likely to report being interested in others' thoughts and feelings, and reported asking others about their thoughts and feelings significantly less frequently than non-males.
- Observed gender differences are consistent with findings from prior research demonstrating that emotional acuity is discouraged among men under masculine culture that privilege stereotypically masculine qualities such as stoicism.<sup>3</sup>
- Findings suggest that males are less interpersonally curious than people identifying with other genders. Future research should examine the potential mechanisms and developmental processes by which this disparity may arise.

## REFERENCES

- Han, J., Way, N., Yoshikawa, H., & Clarke, C. (2023). Interpersonal curiosity and its association with social and emotional skills and well-being during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584231162572>
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