

Felt Pressure to Conform to Gender Roles in the Context of General Social Conformity

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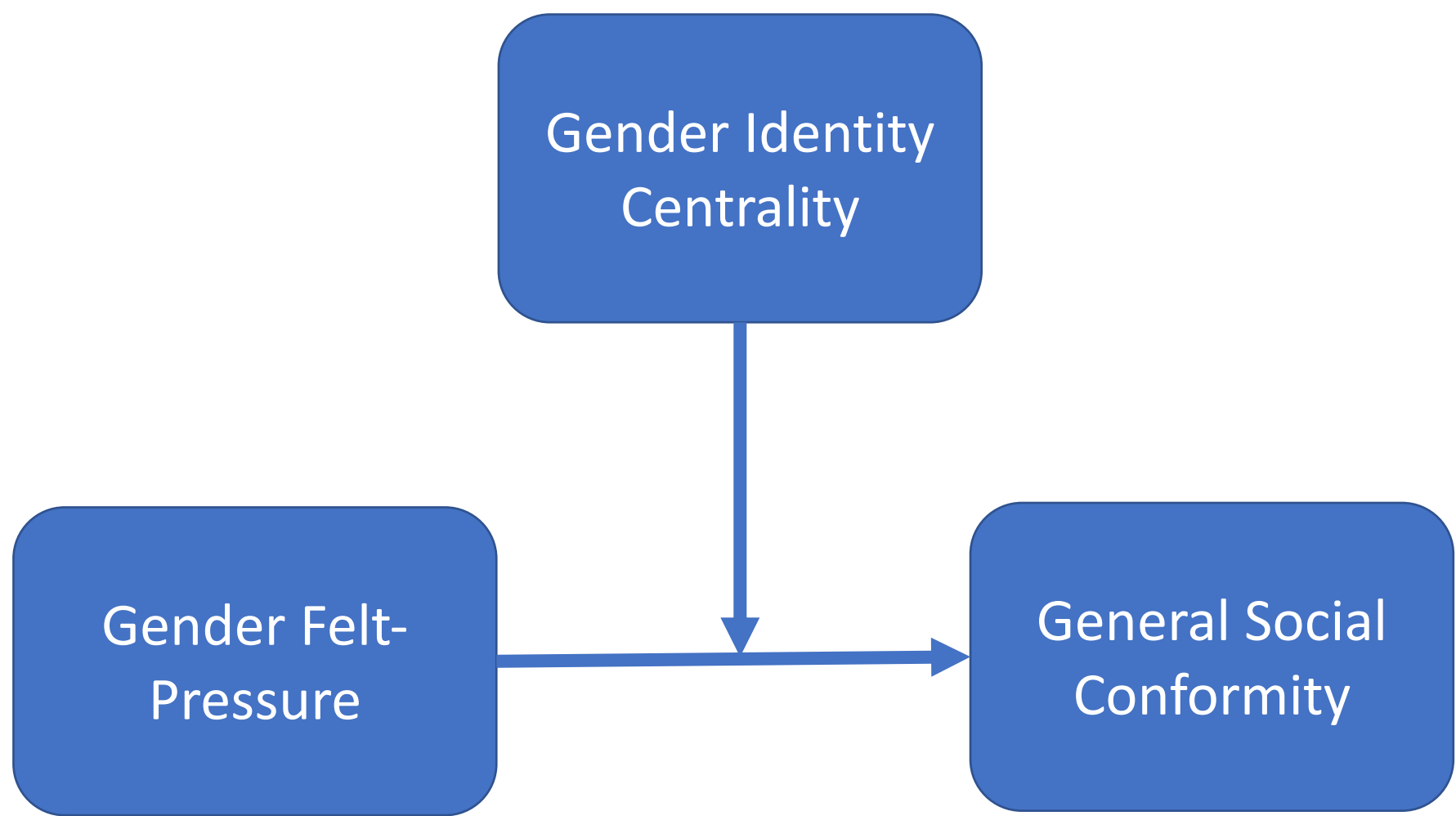
Background

- Gender is one of the most prominent social categories throughout children’s development, influencing names, clothing, activities, and occupations.
- Many children report feeling pressure to conform to cultural gender roles, referred to here as *gender felt-pressure* (Egan & Perry, 2001).
 - Gender felt-pressure is associated with other gender-related outcomes, including gender identity, gender typicality, and gender-related bullying (e.g., Navarro et al., 2016).
- Understudied, however, is whether gender felt-pressure may extend beyond gender concepts.
 - Limited prior research has shown a positive correlation between gender felt-pressure and race/ethnicity felt-pressure (Aoyagi, Santos, & Updegraff, 2014; Leaper & Wilson, 2016).
- Theoretical explanations of self-concepts (e.g., Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Knight, Dalal Safa, & White, 2018) suggest that individuals’ identities vary in their centrality and importance
 - The relative strength of those identities may influence an individual’s interpretation of their environment, for example in the interpretation of pressure to conform.

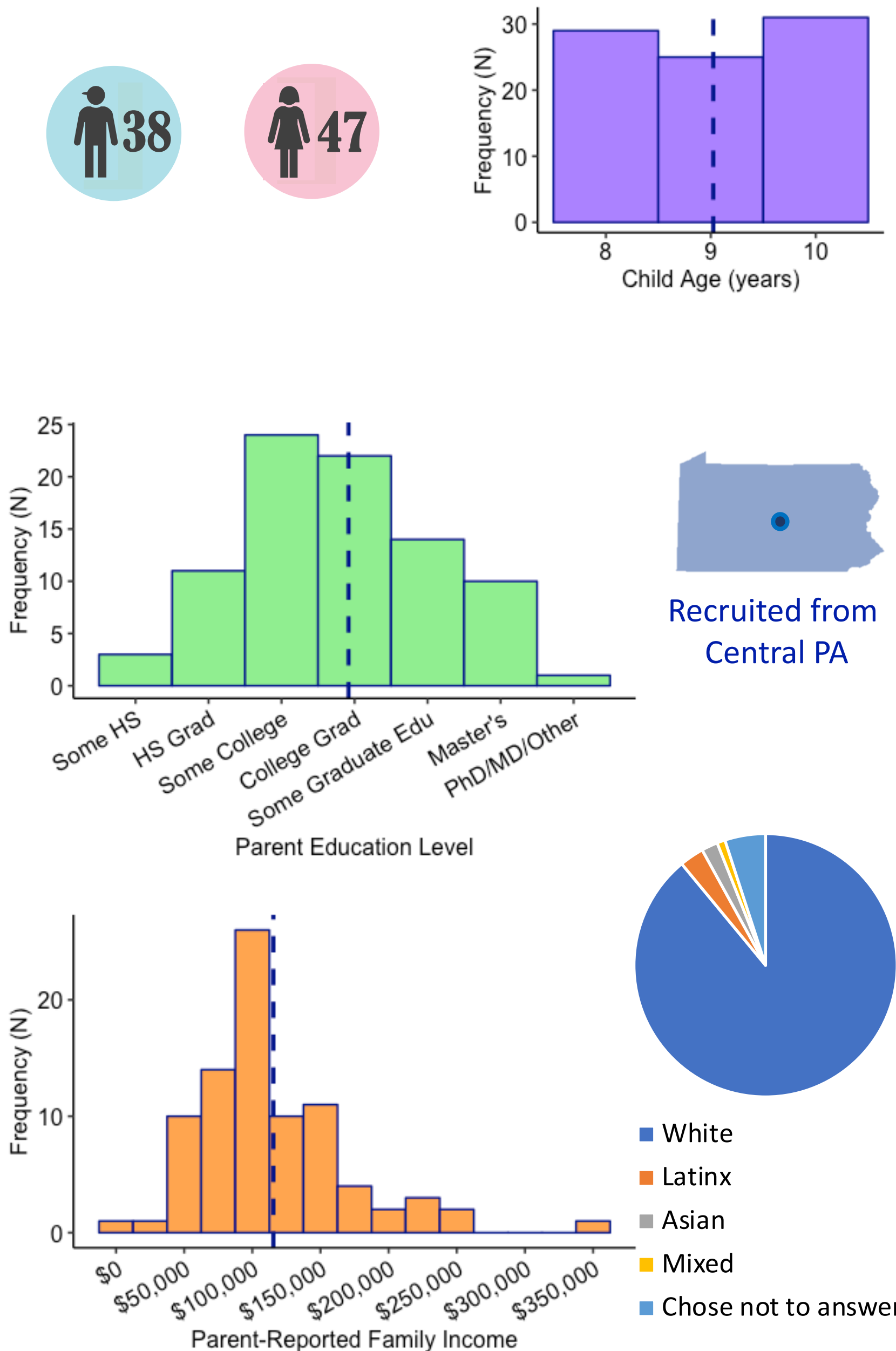
Questions & Hypotheses

Is gender felt-pressure a domain-general construct that affects other social identities?

- We hypothesized that gender felt-pressure is part of a domain-general tendency to conform to social norms, such that children who report feeling a general obligation to conform will report more gender felt-pressure.
- We hypothesized that the centrality of gender identity will moderate this association, such that the link between gender felt-pressure and general felt-pressure will be weaker for children whose gender is more central to their self-concept.



Participants



Procedure

- Gender Felt-Pressure** (Egan & Perry, 2001)
 - Sample item: “I think the girls [boys] I know would be upset if I wanted to play with boys’ [girls’] toys.”
 - 10 items (4 parents, 4 peers, and 2 self); $\alpha = .74$
 - Participants responded on 4-point scale (“Definitely no” to “Definitely yes”)
- General Social Conformity** (Graziano et al., 1987)
 - Sample item: “I sometimes wear some kinds of clothes just because my friends are wearing that kind.”
 - 21 items; $\alpha = .88$
 - Participants responded on 3-point scale (“Not at all true” to “Definitely true”)
- Gender Identity Centrality** (Scottham et al., 2008)
 - Sample item: “I The fact that I’m a girl [boy] is an important part of who I am.”
 - 4 items; $\alpha = .73$
 - Participants responded on 3-point scale (“Not at all true” to “Definitely true”)

Results

Statistical Approach

Hypotheses were tested using the following equation in a hierarchical multiple regression approach. First, demographic variables were entered in the model to test their association with the outcome. Second, the predictor variables were entered alongside the demographic covariates.

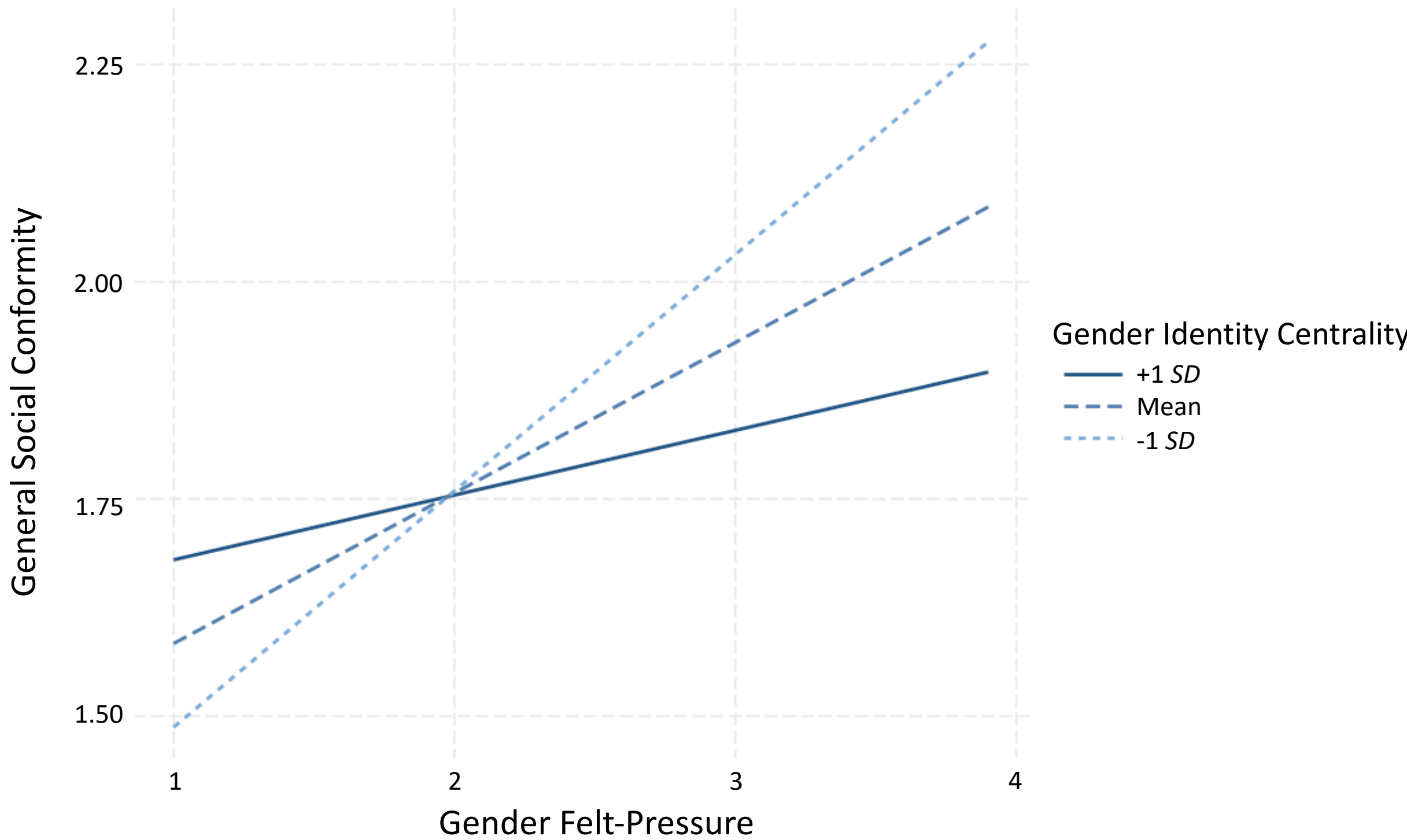
General Social Conformity_i
 $= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Gender} + \beta_3 \text{Ethnicity} + \beta_4 \text{Income} + \beta_5 \text{Felt Pressure} + \beta_6 \text{Gender Identity Centrality} + \beta_7 \text{Felt Pressure} * \text{Gender Identity Centrality} + \epsilon_i$

Independent Variables	Children’s Self-Monitoring	
	Demographic Model	Predictor Model
Block 1: Demographic Variables		
Child Age	-0.02	-0.01
Child Gender	0.14*	0.01
Ethnicity	0.00	-0.07
Family Income	-0.08	0.00
R ²	.10	
Block 2: Predictors		
Gender Felt-Pressure		0.56**
Gender Identity Centrality (GIC)		0.34*
Gender Felt-Pressure*GIC		-0.17*
R ²		.27
ΔR ²		.17

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Findings Summary

- Gender felt-pressure was positively associated with general social conformity, such that greater felt pressure was related to a greater tendency to conform to social norms.
- Gender identity centrality was positively associated with general social conformity, such that greater gender identity centrality was related to a greater tendency to conform to social norms.
- The link between gender felt-pressure and general social conformity depended on gender identity centrality, such that the association was weaker for children whose gender is more central to their identity.



Conclusions

- Findings suggest that gender felt-pressure is part of a domain-general process that exists across social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity), but that the domain-generality of gender felt-pressure depends on the centrality of children’s gender identity.
 - High GIC:** Gender felt-pressure *does not link* to general conformity
 - Low GIC:** Gender felt-pressure *does link* to general conformity
- Children may have a trait-level awareness of social cues, resulting in individual differences in pressure to conform.
 - Social cues related to important identities may be more salient, making children more attentive to those social cues over others.
- Future research questions:
 - Could this association vary across contexts for each individual?
 - What might this pattern of associations look like for children who pay very little attention to cues about social norms?

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