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Measuring conspiracy beliefs among Democrats and Republicans: A test of the measurement invariance of four short-form conspiracist ideation scales

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ABSTRACT

Are Republicans more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than Democrats? This question has received considerable attention among researchers, but answering it requires measures of conspiracist belief that function the same among Democrats and Republicans. Unfortunately, evidence of such *measurement invariance* is scarce. To address this limitation, the current preregistered study ($n_{Democrats}$ = 351; $n_{Republicans}$ = 339) tested the invariance of four short-form conspiracist ideation measures—the *General Measure of Conspiracism* (GMC), the *Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale – 5* (GCB-5), *the Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire* (CMQ), and the *American Conspiracy Thinking Scale* (ACTS)—across the two major US political parties. Given the lack of prior research on the topic, we preregistered the optimistic hypothesis that all four scales would achieve the highest level of invariance (i.e., strict factorial invariance). The GMC was the only measure to reach this level. The GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS, by contrast, only achieved the third-highest level (i.e., metric invariance), despite the GCB-5 demonstrating the greatest overall fit of the measures tested. Researchers who are interested in comparing levels of conspiracist ideation between Democrats and Republicans may, therefore, be best served by using the GMC.

1. Introduction

Democrats and Republicans differ psychologically. They differ in terms of their levels of openness to experience (Cooper et al., 2013), beliefs about the importance of fairness (Graham et al., 2009), views on climate change (Hornsey et al., 2016), and interest in intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Sheldon & Nichols, 2009). Recently, some researchers have argued that Democrats and Republicans also differ in their levels of conspiracist ideation, such that Republicans are more conspiracy-minded than Democrats (e.g., Galliford & Furnham, 2017; Imhoff et al., 2022; Van der Linden et al., 2021; Walter & Drochon, 2022; see also Hofstadter, 1964).[1] However, this has been hotly debated, with other researchers arguing that the difference is mostly due to the specific conspiracy theories that are typically used to assess conspiracist ideation (e.g., Enders, Farhart, et al., 2023; Oliver & Wood, 2014; Uscinski et al., 2016).

The present study does not aim to resolve this debate. Instead, it aims to test whether measures that are often used to compare levels of conspiracist beliefs between Democrats and Republicans are well-suited to the task. Specifically, we test the measurement invariance of four short-form conspiracist ideation scales in samples comprised of members of the two major US political parties. Establishing the invariance of these measures is crucial for making substantive comparisons across the parties (see Gregorich, 2006), including, critically, comparisons for determining whether Democrats or Republicans score higher in conspiracist ideation.

1.1. Background

Measurement invariance exists when a scale assesses a construct equivalently across different groups (see Meade & Lautenschlager, 2004). For example, if researchers find that a measure of extraversion operates the same among younger adults and older adults, they can conclude that the measure is *invariant* across the two age groups. In contrast, if researchers find that a measure of extraversion operates differently among younger adults and older adults, perhaps because the

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[1] People at both ends of the left-right political spectrum tend to score high in conspiracist ideation (see Krouwel et al., 2017; Van Prooijen et al., 2015), but those on the far right tend to score the highest (see Imhoff et al., 2022).

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measure is better at assessing excitement-seeking in younger adults than older adults, they would conclude that the measure is *variant* (or measurement *non-invariant*). This could occur if, for instance, the items used to assess excitement-seeking reference interests that are more common among younger adults than older adults (e.g., enjoying horror films; Olaru et al., 2019). In addition to different age groups, measurement invariance can be tested across groups comprising different gender identities, education levels, nationalities, and, relevant to the present study, political orientations.

Typically, researchers have focused on four levels of measurement invariance (see Gregorich, 2006). Each level imposes greater restrictions on the aspects of the measurement model (e.g., loadings; residual variances) that are allowed to vary across the groups.[2] The first level of measurement invariance, *configural invariance*, concerns whether the same items load on the same factors across groups. This form of invariance is required for the other three forms of invariance to hold. The second level, *metric invariance*, concerns whether factor loadings are equivalent across groups. Establishing metric invariance allows for substantive comparisons of the factor variances and covariances between groups, as it indicates that the items are contributing to the factor scores to the same degree and, therefore, the factor scores represent the same construct in both groups. The third level, *strong factorial invariance*, concerns whether item intercepts are equal across groups. Establishing strong factorial invariance allows for substantive comparisons of the factor and observed means between groups, as it ensures that the average endorsement of the items is not being systematically influenced by something other than the common latent factor. Finally, the fourth level, *strict factorial invariance*, concerns whether residual variances are equal across groups. Strict factorial invariance allows for substantive comparisons of observed variances and covariances between groups, as it ensures that elements that could contaminate the observed variances and covariances (e.g., differences in factor loadings, item intercepts, and residual variances) are equivalent between the groups.

In the present study, we consider the measurement invariance of four short-form measures of conspiracist belief: the *General Measure of Conspiracism* (GMC; Drinkwater et al., 2012), the *Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale – 5* (GCB-5; Kay & Slovic, 2023), the *Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire* (CMQ; Bruder et al., 2013), and the *American Conspiracy Thinking Scale* (ACTS; Uscinski & Parent, 2014). Despite all of these measures being so-called *generic* measures of conspiracist ideation (i.e., they aim to assess beliefs that underlie many different conspiracy theories rather than the belief in specific conspiracy theories), they differ in ways that could influence whether they are likely to be invariant.[3]

The GMC includes five items that directly ask people whether they find conspiracy theories believable or not (e.g., "I have heard several conspiracy theories, which I believe to be true"). The inexactness of these items may allow them to operate in a similar fashion among members of the two political parties. For example, the phrase "conspiracy theories" may call to mind the politically aligned conspiracy about the suppression of environmentally friendly energy production technologies among Democrats and the politically aligned conspiracy about climate change being a hoax among Republicans. Alternatively, the phrase "conspiracy theories" may call to mind politically misaligned conspiracies. Either way, the ambiguity of the items could result in a measure of conspiracist ideation that operates comparably between the two groups because the measure primes the political beliefs of each group in functionally similar ways. However, since the term "conspiracy theory" can and has been interpreted in many different ways (including by researchers; e.g., Brotherton, 2015; Douglas et al., 2019; Uscinski, 2020), it is possible that measurement non-invariance could occur for the GMC if certain definitions or interpretations are more common on one side of the political aisle than the other. For example, if Democrats associate the term "conspiracy theories" with the political right, whereas Republicans consider the term to be politically neutral, you could find that Republicans score higher on a measure of conspiracist ideation simply because endorsing the items does not implicate their political views. To our knowledge, no work has examined the measurement invariance of the GMC, including with respect to political orientation. We included it here because it is exceptionally face-valid and, therefore, holds promise of being invariant across the political spectrum.

The GCB-5 was developed by extracting one item from each of the five *themes* of conspiracist belief captured by the *Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale – 15* (GCB-15; Brotherton et al., 2013). Given that it was only recently introduced, there is not much existing evidence for the GCB-5's invariance, although some research has indicated that the GCB-5 has strong-factorial invariance across different gender identities and age groups (Dagnall et al., 2023). Moreover, research on the long-form GCB-15 has indicated that it has strong factorial invariance across different gender identities (Dinić et al., 2024; Drinkwater et al., 2020), strong factorial invariance across British and Serbian samples (Dinić et al., 2024), and either metric or strong-factorial invariance across English- and Spanish-speaking samples (Fasce et al., 2022). We included the GCB-5 in the present study because it is based on one of the most popular measures of conspiracist ideation to date (i.e., the GCB-15).

The CMQ contains five items, with three of its items being drawn from a scale assessing one's level of suspicious thought patterns (Sjöberg, 2005) and two of its items being created anew. We are not aware of any research examining the measurement invariance of the CMQ across the US political parties, but large-scale studies have shown that the CMQ is metric invariant across English-, German-, and Turkish-speaking samples (Bruder et al., 2013) and across 26 different countries when shortened to four items (Imhoff et al., 2022).[4] We included it in the present study because, like the GCB-5's predecessor, it is one of the most popular measures of conspiracist ideation.

In its original incarnation, the ACTS comprised three items drawn from McClosky and Chong's (1985) research on left- and right-wing radicalization. A fourth item, which was originally used to validate the three-item version of the scale, was later added (Uscinski et al., 2016). To our knowledge, no work has examined the measurement invariance of the ACTS across political parties, but prior research has found that the scale achieved configural invariance across 24 language groups (Han et al., 2022). We have included it here because it is frequently used among political scientists to assess conspiracist ideation (e.g., Enders, Diekman, et al., 2023; Uscinski et al., 2022). Consequently, it is often used to assess levels of conspiracist ideation among Democrats and Republicans.

In sum, the levels of measurement invariance of these four generic conspiracist beliefs measures have yet to be examined across the two major US political parties. This is despite the scales being frequently used to both compare levels of conspiracist ideation among Democrats and Republicans and examine the association of conspiracist ideation with various politically relevant constructs. Consequently, it is possible that the extant empirical picture of the differences between the parties is incorrect. To draw accurate conclusions from such comparisons, measurement invariance is required.

[2] Researchers can also obtain *partial* invariance. See the Supplementary Material for a discussion of why partial invariance is not considered here.

[3] See the Supplementary Material for a description of the differences between specific and generic measures of conspiracist ideation, as well as a discussion of why, on average, generic measures should be more likely to be measurement invariant than specific measures.

[4] Imhoff et al. (2022) compared a total of 29 different groups in their two studies. However, two of the groups were collected in Switzerland, differing only in the language spoken (i.e., French or German), and three of the groups were collected in Belgium, differing only in the language spoken or region of Belgium targeted (i.e., French, Flanders, or Wallonia).

1.2. Current study

In the present study, we evaluate the configural, metric, strong factorial, and strict factorial invariance of the GMC, GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS between Democrats and Republicans. Given the lack of prior research on the topic, we optimistically hypothesize that strict factorial invariance will be achieved for the four measures. This hypothesis is preregistered (https://osf.io/d6e7n/?view_only=c384abd8dc734c118262fe608837ef66), as are the materials and analyses described below.[5] The materials, data, and analytic code for the present study are provided on OSF (https://osf.io/szkyw/?view_only=3d44c64d82ed4fe3934924c3d73d0e5d).

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedures

Seven hundred twenty-six participants were recruited through Prolific.[6,7] They were each paid approximately $8.00 per hour. After excluding participants for careless responding ($n = 36$), the final sample included 690 participants.[8] We used Prolific's demographic prescreening feature to recruit approximately equal numbers of participants identifying as women (49.71 %) and men (49.13 %) and approximately equal numbers of participants identifying as Democrats (50.87 %) and Republicans (49.13 %). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 93 ($M = 42.98$, $SD = 14.60$). Additional demographic information can be found in the output provided on OSF (https://osf.io/szkyw/?view_only=3d44c64d82ed4fe3934924c3d73d0e5d).

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Political orientation

Political orientation was assessed using the question, "Which term best describes your political orientation?" Participants could choose from five responses presented in randomized order: "Democrat", "Republican", "Independent", "Undeclared", and "Prefer to self-describe". The "Prefer to self-describe" option was presented with an accompanying textbox allowing participants to report their affiliation in their own words. We focused on partisanship instead of other common measures of political orientation because it provided a relatively clean categorization for the purpose of the measurement invariance tests.[9]

2.2.2. The four short-form conspiracist ideation measures

The participants were presented with the four measures of conspiracist ideation on a single survey page (Table 1). To account for order effects, the items for the four measures, as well as the attention check items, were presented in randomized order. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale (−3 = "Strongly disagree"; 3 = "Strongly agree").

Table 1
The length, Cronbach's alpha, McDonald's omega, and an example item for each of the four short-form conspiracist ideation measures.

Measure	Items	α	ω	Example item
General Measure of Conspiracism	5	0.91	0.91	Conspiracy theories accurately depict real life events.
Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale – 5	5	0.85	0.85	Evidence of alien contact is being concealed from the public.
Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire	5	0.85	0.86	Government agencies closely monitor all citizens.
American Conspiracy Thinking Scale	4	0.88	0.88	The people who really "run" the country are not known to the voters.

2.3. Analytic strategy

To test the measurement invariance of each of the four conspiracist ideation measures, we fit a series of models imposing increasingly strict equality constraints between the sample of Democrats and the sample of Republicans (see Gregorich, 2006). The models were fit using the {lavaan} package (Version 0.6-17; Rosseel, 2012) in R (Version 4.3.3; R Core Team, 2024). Given that the data appeared to be approximately normally distributed (Skews [g_1] = −1.04 to 0.57; Kurtoses [$g_2 - 3$] = −1.29 to 0.48), we used maximum likelihood (ML) as our estimator. For the first model (i.e., the configural model), items were constrained to load on the same factor across the two groups, although not necessarily to the same degree. For the second model (i.e., the metric model), factor loadings were constrained to be equal across the two groups. For the third model (i.e., the strong factorial model), intercepts were constrained to be equal across the two groups. For the fourth and final model (i.e., the strict factorial model), residual variances were constrained to be equal across the two groups.

We conducted a (1) Chi-Square (χ^2) test and calculated the (2) Comparative Fit Index (CFI), (3) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and (4) Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) for each model. Given that the Chi-Square test is almost always significant for samples as large as those used here, we did not use it to determine measurement invariance. Instead, to assess configural invariance, we examined whether the models fit the data well according to a set of common fixed fit index thresholds (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996; see Table 2).[10] To assess the metric, strong factorial, and

Table 2
Fixed fit index thresholds and fixed measurement invariance thresholds for determining the levels of measurement invariance of the four short-form conspiracist ideation measures.

Test	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	|ΔCFI|	|Δ RMSEA|	|Δ SRMR|
Configural	>0.950	<0.080	<0.080			
Metric				<0.010	<0.015	<0.030
Strong Factorial				<0.010	<0.015	<0.010
Strict Factorial				<0.010	<0.015	<0.010

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual. To assess the differences in fit, the metric, strong factorial, and strict factorial models were compared against the models from the previous level (e.g., the strict factorial models were compared against the strong factorial models). To be classified as metric, strong factorial, or strict factorial invariant, the models needed to either not exceed the CFI threshold or, in the case that they did exceed the CFI threshold, not exceed both the RMSEA and SRMR thresholds (Chen, 2007).

[5] To aid in the development of the analysis script for the preregistration, we collected approximately 10 % of the sample ($n = 60$) prior to submitting the preregistration.

[6] See the Supplementary Material for our sample size rationale.

[7] Privacy rights were observed and informed consent was obtained for all participants.

[8] See the Supplementary Material for a full description of our exclusionary criteria.

[9] Model results using an alternative measure of political orientation (i.e., levels of liberalism/conservatism) are provided in the Supplementary Material. The conclusions that can be drawn from the results are the same regardless of which measure of political orientation is used.

[10] These thresholds were not specified in the preregistration but align with how model fit is typically assessed.

strict factorial invariance of the measures, we conducted a series of model comparisons using a set of common fixed measurement invariance thresholds (Chen, 2007; see Table 2).[11]

3. Results

As shown in Table 3, the GMC achieved strict factorial invariance, while the GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS all only achieved metric invariance. Specifically, the GMC showed acceptable fit when items were constrained to load on the same factors for Democrats and Republicans, as well as when factor loadings, item intercepts, and residual variances were constrained to be equal between the two samples. The GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS, by contrast, only showed acceptable fit when their items were constrained to load on the same factors and when their factor loadings were constrained to be equal.

Interestingly, the GCB-5 demonstrated the greatest overall fit of the scales tested, while the GMC and ACTS demonstrated the worst. Of particular note, the RMSEA values for the GMC (0.129) and ACTS (0.148) both exceeded the commonly used cut-off threshold of 0.080 in the configural model. That said, the CFI and SRMR for the two measures indicated adequate fit.

4. Discussion

One topic of much recent debate among social scientists who study conspiracist ideation is whether Democrats and Republicans differ in their levels of conspiracist belief. To answer this question, researchers need measures that operate the same when assessing conspiracist ideation among Democrats and Republicans. Unfortunately, despite a proliferation of measures for assessing conspiracist ideation, little work has been done to investigate and compare their psychometric properties (but see Kay & Slovic, 2023, 2025; Swami et al., 2017), including, critically, their measurement invariance. In the present study, we tested the configural, metric, strong factorial, and strict factorial measurement invariance of four short-form conspiracist ideation measures—the GMC, GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS—between Democrats ($n_1 = 351$) and Republicans ($n_2 = 339$). Given the lack of prior research on the topic, we preregistered the optimistic hypothesis that strict factorial invariance would be achieved for all four measures.

Unfortunately, the results indicated that our hypothesis was overly optimistic. Of the four measures tested, only the GMC achieved both strong and strict factorial invariance. Its superior performance in this arena may be due to the fact that it asks about belief in a broad, undefined category of "conspiracy theories". The ambiguity of the term may allow Democrats and Republicans to interpret the items as asking only about those conspiracy theories that are politically aligned with their beliefs or, alternatively, only those conspiracy theories that are politically misaligned with their beliefs. In either scenario, the opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to interpret the items in functionally similar ways may result in a measure of conspiracist ideation that operates similarly in both groups. These results indicate that only the GMC can be used to provide substantive comparisons of factor means, observed means, observed variances, and observed covariances between Democrats and Republicans.[12] We, therefore, recommend the use of the GMC for future work that aims to examine conspiracist ideation in relation to party affiliation.

In contrast to the GMC, the GCB-5 only achieved metric invariance. The misfit in the strong factorial invariance model can largely be attributed to the constraints placed on the intercepts of two items: (1) "The government permits or perpetrates acts of terrorism on its own soil, disguising its involvement" and (2) "Certain significant events have been the result of the activity of a small group who secretly manipulate world events." The intercepts for these two items were notably lower for Democrats than Republicans in the metric model. The difference for the first item may be due to a relatively greater trust in the government among conspiracy-minded Democrats, especially when their preferred political party is in power (Morisi et al., 2019), as was the case when the present data were collected. The difference for the second item is harder to make sense of, but it could be due to less of a belief in small, secretive syndicates among conspiracy-minded Democrats. The differences in the intercepts for these two items may, therefore, represent theoretically meaningful differences between the groups (see Church et al., 2011). In any case, because only the loadings were equivalent, the present results indicate that the GCB-5 can only defensibly be used to compare factor variances and covariances between Democrats and Republicans. It is also worth noting that the GCB-5 achieved the best overall fit of any of the measures tested. Given that it was designed to specifically tap multiple themes of conspiracist beliefs, this was unexpected, but it nevertheless indicates that, if one is not concerned with assessing differences between Democrats and Republicans, the GCB-5 may be a defensible measure to use.

Similar to the GCB-5, the CMQ only achieved metric invariance. In this case, the misfit could primarily be attributed to the constraint placed on the intercept for the item, "Events which superficially seem to lack a connection are often the result of secret activities." The intercept was lower for Democrats than Republicans in the metric model. It is possible that this indicates a relative lack of illusory pattern perception among conspiracy-minded Democrats, a feature generally believed to be common to those high in conspiracist ideation (Van Prooijen et al., 2018). Regardless, because only the loadings were equivalent, the present results indicate that the CMQ can only defensibly be used to compare factor variances and covariances between Democrats and Republicans.

The ACTS also only achieved metric invariance. The misfit in this case could primarily be attributed to the constraint placed on the intercept for the item, "Even though we live in a democracy, a few people will always run things anyway." The intercept was lower for Democrats than Republicans in the metric model. Unlike the other ACTS items, this item uses the term "always", which connotes a sense of inevitability to the loss of agency. This feeling may resonate less with conspiracy-minded Democrats than conspiracy-minded Republicans, especially when the Democratic Party is in office. Whatever the case may be, the present results indicate that, like the GCB-5 and CMQ, the ACTS can only defensibly be used to compare factor variances and covariances between Democrats and Republicans.

5. Limitations and future directions

The present study is not without its limitations. First, we compared only four short-form measures of conspiracist ideation. It is possible that other measures would have performed better than those tested here. Second, it is possible that the samples of Democrats and Republicans recruited from Prolific are not representative of all Democrats and Republicans. We encourage future work to recruit Democrats and

[11] We opted to use fixed measurement invariance thresholds because they are those that have traditionally been used. Nevertheless, dynamic measurement invariance thresholds (McNeish, 2025), which take into account the specific characteristics of one's data and models, are provided in the Supplementary Material. As when using the alternative measure of political orientation, the conclusions that can be drawn from the results are the same regardless of which set of thresholds is used, save for the GCB-5 also achieving strong and strict factorial invariance when using the dynamic measurement invariance thresholds.

[12] Although it was not a focus of the present study, we found that Republicans scored substantially higher on the GMC than Democrats ($t(673.90) = 13.08$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.00$), which aligns with prior work on political differences in conspiracist ideation.

Table 3
Fit statistics when constraining (1) items to factors (configural invariance), (2) factor loadings (metric invariance), (3) item intercepts (strong factorial invariance), and (4) residual variances (strict factorial invariance) across the two major US political parties for each of the four short-form conspiracist ideation measures.

Scale and test	Fit							Change in fit						Conclusion
	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA 90 % CI	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p*	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	ΔSRMR	
General Measure of Conspiracism														
Configural	67.439	10	<.001	0.972	0.129	[0.101, 0.159]	0.033							Invariant
Metric	75.324	14	<.001	0.970	0.113	[0.088, 0.138]	0.042	7.885	4	.096	−0.002	−0.016	0.010	Invariant
Strong Factorial	79.749	18	<.001	0.970	0.100	[0.078, 0.123]	0.043	4.425	4	.352	0.000	−0.013	0.001	Invariant
Strict Factorial	100.663	23	<.001	0.962	0.099	[0.080, 0.119]	0.046	2.914	5	.001	−0.008	−0.001	0.003	Invariant
Generic Conspiracist Beliefs Scale - 5														
Configural	13.798	10	.182	0.997	0.033	[0.000, 0.072]	0.016							Invariant
Metric	24.040	14	.045	0.992	0.046	[0.007, 0.076]	0.041	1.242	4	.037	−0.005	0.012	0.025	Invariant
Strong Factorial	45.131	18	<.001	0.980	0.066	[0.042, 0.091]	0.051	21.091	4	<.001	−0.013	0.021	0.009	Non-Invariant
Strict Factorial	68.644	23	<.001	0.966	0.076	[0.056, 0.097]	0.056	23.513	5	<.001	−0.014	0.010	0.005	Non-Invariant
Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire														
Configural	31.152	10	.001	0.984	0.078	[0.048, 0.110]	0.023							Invariant
Metric	46.186	14	<.001	0.976	0.082	[0.056, 0.108]	0.046	15.033	4	.005	−0.008	0.003	0.023	Invariant
Strong Factorial	67.985	18	<.001	0.962	0.090	[0.068, 0.113]	0.056	21.800	4	<.001	−0.013	0.008	0.011	Non-Invariant
Strict Factorial	106.149	23	<.001	0.937	0.102	[0.083, 0.122]	0.062	38.164	5	<.001	−0.025	0.013	0.006	Non-Invariant
American Conspiracy Thinking Scale														
Configural	34.279	4	<.001	0.978	0.148	[0.105, 0.196]	0.023							Invariant
Metric	39.597	7	<.001	0.976	0.116	[0.083, 0.153]	0.036	5.317	3	.150	−0.002	−0.032	0.013	Invariant
Strong Factorial	56.361	10	<.001	0.966	0.116	[0.088, 0.146]	0.051	16.764	3	.001	−0.010	0.000	0.015	Non-Invariant
Strict Factorial	73.486	14	<.001	0.956	0.111	[0.087, 0.137]	0.068	17.125	4	.002	−0.010	−0.005	0.018	Non-Invariant

Note. CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

Republicans from other, potentially more generalizable sources. Third, we considered only the two dominant political parties in the US. Other parties exist in the US (as does a substantial population of unaffiliated or politically disengaged individuals), and it is yet unclear whether the measures tested here could provide defensible comparisons among those groups. Fourth, and relatedly, it is unclear whether we would find similar results for liberal and conservative parties from other countries. For example, just because we found that the GMC achieved strict factorial invariance between samples of Democrats and Republicans in the US does not mean that it would achieve strict factorial invariance between samples of *New Democratic Party* voters and *Conservative Party of Canada* voters in Canada. We encourage future work testing the measurement invariance of these measures across political parties in other countries.

6. Conclusion

Comparing the levels of conspiracist ideation between Democrats and Republicans is of much interest to conspiracist ideation researchers, but such comparisons require scales that are measurement invariant. In the present study, we tested the invariance of four short-form conspiracist ideation measures. The results indicated that the GMC provides the greatest number of defensible comparisons between Democrats and Republicans, followed by the GCB-5, CMQ, and ACTS. This finding provides valuable information for researchers working at the intersection of conspiracist ideation and political belief.

Open practices

The preregistration for the present study is provided at https://osf.io/d6e7n/?view_only=c384abd8dc734c118262fe608837ef66. The materials, data, and analytic code are provided at https://osf.io/szkyw/?view_only=3d44c64d82ed4fe3934924c3d73d0e5d.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Cameron S. Kay: Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Joshua Hart:** Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests: CSK: The first author of the present manuscript developed one of the scales evaluated here. There is currently no way for the author to profit financially from this scale, and they do not intend to ever change this arrangement. JH: The second author declares that they have no known

competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2025.113365.

Data availability

The preregistration, data, and analytic code for the study are provided at https://osf.io/szkyw/.

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