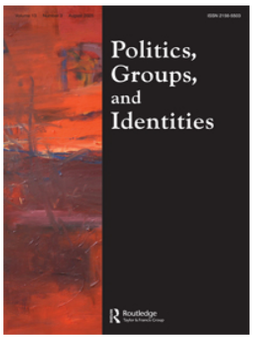

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Politics, Groups, and Identities

ISSN: 2156-5503 (Print) 2156-5511 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rpgi20

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To cite this article: Sydney Tran & Efrén Pérez (06 Oct 2025): Five out of six measures of identity and solidarity with U.S. people of color are equivalent across English and Spanish interviews, Politics, Groups, and Identities, DOI: 10.1080/21565503.2025.2564134

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2025.2564134

Published online: 06 Oct 2025.

POLITICS, GROUPS, AND IDENTITIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2025.2564134

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NOTE

Five out of six measures of identity and solidarity with U.S. people of color are equivalent across English and Spanish interviews

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ABSTRACT

As the US continues to racially diversify, researchers are increasingly investigating the prevalence of self-identification as – and feelings of solidarity with – people of color (PoC). Prior research establishes these concepts as related, but distinct, nodes in the identity-to-politics link among PoC. Yet the evidence for this pattern is exclusively from monolingual samples of English-speaking PoC. This raises serious questions about whether measures of identity and solidarity perform optimally across PoC who (do not) speak English. We evaluated the linguistic equivalence of six survey items designed to measure PoC identity and solidarity in a large, high-quality sample of English- and Spanish-speaking Latino adults ($N = 1269$). We assessed whether this item battery captures two concepts (*configural equivalence*), with similar meaning (*metric equivalence*), which enables valid comparisons across this language divide (*scalar equivalence*). Using a series of multi-group confirmatory factor analytic (MG-CFA) models, we find that five (5) of these six (6) perform equivalently across English- and Spanish-speaking Latinos: a key demographic among PoC.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 17 March 2025
Accepted 15 September 2025

KEYWORDS
People of color; PoC identity; PoC solidarity; measurement equivalence; multi-group factor analysis (MG-CFA)

Introduction

America's share of people of color (PoC) make up nearly 40% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2024), spurring efforts to grasp their politics. High-quality surveys estimate 45–58% of Latino adults identify as PoC (Pérez 2021; Starr and Freeland 2024). A heightened sense of PoC identity is known to trigger solidarity with other racially stigmatized groups, boosting support for pro-outgroup policies (Cortland et al. 2017). For example, as solidarity with other PoC increases, Latinos become more supportive of pro-Black policies (Pérez et al. 2024a; Pérez, Vicuña, and Ramos 2024b).

However, foreign-born Latinos are less likely to identify with the term PoC (Starr and Freeland 2024). This might stem from Latin America's more fluid conceptions of race and ethnicity, which allow racially mixed individuals to still identify as White

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(Joseph 2013). Some Latino immigrants bring these notions to the US, hindering allyship with other racially stigmatized groups (Barreto 2023). On the other hand, many Latino immigrants are racialized as "others" once in the US, with discrimination leading to stronger identification with pan-ethnic labels over Whiteness (Golash-Boza 2006).

While not every racially stigmatized person identifies strongly as a PoC, survey researchers must appraise items and related constructs to array individuals from lower to higher levels (Brown 2015). Prior work reveals individuals have few ready-made political opinions (Zaller 1992). Instead, individuals express opinions based on considerations that become mentally accessible when asked a question (i.e., *belief-sampling*) (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski 2000). Thus people can report meaningful opinions on unfamiliar topics by drawing on relevant considerations and associations in memory. For instance, Vicuña and Pérez (2021) find that the label *Latinx* boosts support for pro-LGBTQ policies, even among those who self-report being unacquainted with the term.

Based on these insights, we investigate self-identification as a PoC (PoC-ID) and PoC solidarity (PoC-S) – two critical variables in the identity-to-politics link (Lee 2008). PoC-ID is conceptualized as the degree to which the category, PoC, is central to one's sense of self. PoC-S reflects one's commitment to and behavioral coordination with a group (Pérez et al. 2024a). Despite the prevalence of these concepts in research on coalition-building, scholars have only validated measures of these concepts with samples of English-speaking PoC, casting doubts about whether one can meaningfully measure these items across interview languages. We report the first evidence on the validity of PoC-ID and PoC-S measures across Latinos who interview in Spanish or English.

One perspective from research on Latinos, language, and opinion (e.g., Pérez and Tavits 2022; Zárate, Quezada-Llanes, and Armenta 2024) is that measures of PoC-ID and PoC-S might capture constructs with different meanings across Spanish and English interviews. Existing scholarship indicates that dominance in one language over another is generally correlated with demographic variables. English-dominant Latinos tend to be younger, more educated, and US-born (Alfonso and Lonigan 2021). Thus English-dominant Latinos might possess stronger mental associations with PoC than their Spanish-dominant counterparts, since the term originated in the US (Pérez 2021). When Spanish-speaking Latinos hear the term, persona de color (i.e., PoC), it's plausible that measures using this term (a) pick up noise (because Spanish speakers are unfamiliar with this US-based label) (Brown 2015) or (b) tap into anti-Black attitudes given its strong association with African Americans (Pérez 2021).

Alternatively, it is possible there are no substantive differences in PoC-ID and PoC-S by interview language. Previous work shows bilingual individuals possess considerations in memory in both languages (Pérez 2016). However, research suggests bilinguals will primarily draw on the mental contents made salient by the language they are *assigned* or *choose* to interview in Lee and Pérez (2014). This implies that comparing opinion responses by interview language is valid because responses will be based on considerations activated by the interview language (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski 2000), even if considerations in the other language are co-activated but not prioritized (Pérez and Tavits 2022). Furthermore, if the label PoC circulates more widely in the US (Pérez 2021), then Latinos, regardless of interview language, might report comparable

levels of PoC-ID and PoC-S because they are both learning about these constructs in a US setting. Thus we might observe null differences in these constructs by language.

Both perspectives on PoC identity and solidarity are theoretically motivated. But assessing them requires psychometric evidence that measures of PoC-ID and PoC-S capture the same constructs, with the same meaning, across interview languages. Survey researchers consider these essential criteria to establish *prior to* analyzing mean levels in a variable(s) and/or estimating structural relationships in survey data (Brown 2015). Failure to validate this feature risks producing biased results and incorrect inferences (Davidov 2009).

This brief report supports the linguistic equivalence of PoC-ID and PoC-S measures. We analyzed six items designed to tap into these constructs in a national survey of Latino adults who interviewed in English or Spanish. We use multi-group confirmatory factor analyses (MG-CFAs) to establish that five of these six items perform as expected. These items capture both concepts (*configural equivalence*), with similar meaning across interview language (*metric equivalence*), which enables valid cross-linguistic comparisons (*scalar equivalence*) (Brown 2015). These findings reassure applied researchers that any (null) differences on these items by interview language are statistically and substantively valid, facilitating rigorous research on Latinos and PoC.

Theory and hypotheses

Testing for measurement equivalence is vital to quantitative research in heterogeneous settings involving comparisons between individuals. Without establishing equivalence, one cannot tell whether observed (null) differences in a construct are meaningful, rather than artifacts (Davidov 2009).

Tests of measurement equivalence involve specific hypotheses about indicators of a latent variable(s) (e.g., attitude) (Saavedra et al. 2023). Researchers estimate a series of MG-CFAs (Brown 2015), evaluating three hypotheses, progressively stricter in level of measurement equivalence across units:

(H1) *configural equivalence*: items have similar loading patterns across units, i.e., our six items tap PoC-ID and PoC-S across languages.

(H2) *metric equivalence*: items hold uniform meaning across units, i.e., our six PoC-ID and PoC-S items are interpreted similarly across languages.

(H3) *scalar equivalence*: mean differences between units are real, i.e., our six PoC-ID and PoC-S items display similar thresholds across languages.

Data

We test the equivalence of six items appraising PoC-ID and PoC-S across interview language. We fielded these items as part of the 2024 Survey Panel of People of Color (SPPoC) – a 10-minute, national, three-wave panel survey of Asian, Black, and Latino adults ($N = 3400$), administered by AmeriSpeak (Pineau et al. 2019). We use SPPoC's Wave 1 Latino sample ($N = 1296$). Respondents chose to interview in English ($n = 1075$) or Spanish ($n = 194$), providing rich linguistic variation and statistical power for equivalence testing. Latinos reported an average age of 46.31, with 35.22% holding a

bachelor's degree or higher, 60.99% female, and 29.63% foreign-born. Those interviewed in Spanish were older and had lower education and income than English interviewees – only 6.19% were aged 18–29 (vs. 16.37%), 41.24% earned under $$30,000 (vs. 24.28%), and 19.10% had less than a high school education (vs. 5.77%).

Prior work (Pérez et al. 2024a) finds that measures of PoC-ID and PoC-S perform equivalently across PoC who interview in English. Thus we developed a preamble to measure our PoC items across Latinos who interviewed in English or Spanish (Table 1).

We produced these items in English and translated them into Spanish to achieve *functional equivalence*, optimizing the degree to which items are similarly understood across interview languages (Jacobson, Kumata, and Gullahorn 1960). We pre-tested our translated items on English/Spanish bilinguals ($n\sim20$) and found no remaining issues. The goal of these translations is *not* to produce items that are exact and literal, which can produce erroneous or unorthodox translations (Brislin 1970). Instead, the goal is to allow some differences in item wording (i.e., measurement error), while achieving a shared understanding across interview languages, with psychometric tests, like MG-CFAs, confirming whether such translations are valid. Thus it is an empirical question whether the translated items – despite any perceived nuances in translated items – perform in a functionally equivalent way across interview languages (Davidov 2009).

Method

Using MG-CFA, we first model our indicators as measures of two latent variables. If the pattern of loadings is similar across interviews, *configural* equivalence is achieved, i.e., our items capture PoC-ID and PoC-S across Latinos interviewing in English or Spanish. Second, we fix this *configural* model's loadings/thresholds to equality to test for *metric* and *scalar* equivalence. *Metric* equivalence implies the items are similarly understood across interview language. *Scalar* equivalence suggests any mean differences

Table 1. PoC identity and solidarity items by interview language.

English [*Spanish*]	
Preamble [Preámbulo]	
"The first group is people of color, which includes Black people, Asian people, and Latino people" ["*El primer grupo es de personas de color, que incluye personas negras, asiáticas y latinas*"]	
PoC identity	PoC solidarity
Important ID: "The fact that I am a person of color is an important part of my identity" ["*El hecho de que yo soy una persona de color es una parte importante de mi identidad*"]	**Feel bond:** "I feel solidarity with people of color" ["*Yo siento solidaridad con las personas de color*"]
Think about: "I often think of myself as a person of color" ["*A menudo yo pienso en mi mismo/a como una persona de color*"]	**See allies:** "The problems of Black, Latino, Asian, and other people of color are similar enough for them to be allies" ["*Los problemas de los negros, latinos, asiáticos y otras personas de color son lo suficientemente similares como para que sean aliados*"]
Other things (R): "Other things about me are more important than being a person of color" ["*Otras cosas sobre mi son más importantes que ser una persona de color*"]	**Common fate:** "What happens to people of color in this country has something to do with what happens in my life as a Latino person" ["*Lo que le ocurre a las personas de color en este país tiene algo que ver con lo que ocurre en mi vida como una persona latina*"]

Note: Items were on a scale from 1–5 or 1–7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). R = reverse-worded.

in items are free of linguistic artifacts. Since our data are ordinal and categorical, our tests of *metric* and *scalar* equivalence occur in tandem (Brown 2015).

Results

We examine the raw correlations between our PoC-ID and PoC-S items by interview language. Table 2 reveals positive and robust correlations between items targeting a specific concept (as well as all items), suggesting these items capture two independent but related concepts. Although unexpected, our reverse-worded item, *Other things*, performs sub-optimally among English-interviewing Latinos, displaying a positive but weak correlation with other items intended to measure PoC-ID (*r*s .084 –.151). This aligns with work showing that reverse-worded items can perform poorly in online settings because they can capture extraneous variance unrelated to the latent variable of interest (Wong, Rindfleisch, and Burroughs 2003). We remove it from further analysis.

We then estimate our *configural* equivalence model, testing whether the loading patterns for our five items are similar across interview language. Table 3 shows *configural* equivalence is met with a CFI (.987) and TLI (.967) near 1.00, and an RMSEA in a good range (.081, 95% CI [.058, .106]). The SRMR (.026) also indicates a trivial amount of residuals, suggesting it reflects the variance–covariance matrix used as input.

All item loadings are large and statistically reliable, alleviating concerns that our Spanish translation fails to capture these two variables. If these items failed this validity test, we would have observed poorly fitting models and low and imprecise factor loadings, yet we observe the opposite. For instance, among English-interviewing Latinos, a one-point increase in latent PoC-ID increases agreement with *PoC-Think* by nearly a point (.910, SE = .045, $p < .001$). Among Spanish-interviewing Latinos, a one-point increase in latent PoC-ID boosts agreement with *PoC-Think* by roughly a point (1.012, SE = .127, $p < .001$). Hence, our five-item battery effectively taps into its respective concepts, despite some variability in the exact size of item loadings across interviews.

Next, we evaluate *metric* and *scalar* equivalence by testing whether this variability in loadings and thresholds across interview language can be statistically ignored by constraining to equality the item loadings/thresholds in Table 3 across interview language. If this more parsimonious model's fit worsens compared to our *configural* model, we will reject claims that our items have similar meaning (H2) and enable valid cross-language comparisons (H3).

Table 4 displays our model fit statistics. For transparency, we report the change in chi-square, which is over-powered to detect trivial differences in large samples like ours

Table 2. Correlations between PoC-ID and PoC-S items by interview language.

	Important ID	Think about	Other things (R)	Feel bond	See Allies	Common fate
Important ID	–					
Think about	.646/.541	–				
Other things (R)	.151/.541	.083/.331	–			
Feel bond	.454/.359	.400/.247	.089/.281	–		
See allies	.307/.286	.300/.344	.083/.259	.533/.329	–	
Common fate	.450/.247	.425/.303	**.017**/.237	.553/.165	.479/.445	–

Note: Entries are correlations between items for English/Spanish interviews. All correlations are reliable at the 5% level or better, unless bolded. R = reverse-worded.

Table 3. MG-CFA results for configural equivalence.

	English	Spanish		English	Spanish
Imp. ID	**1.000**	**1.000**	**Feel bond**	**1.000**	**1.000**
T1	*−1.236*	*−1.262*	T1	*−1.567*	*−1.558*
	(0.068)	*(0.167)*		*(0.085)*	*(0.205)*
T2	*−0.845*	*−0.980*	T2	*−1.089*	*−1.284*
	(0.063)	*(0.144)*		*(0.065)*	*(0.174)*
T3	*−0.629*	*−0.709*	T3	*0.059*	*−0.194*
	(0.061)	*(0.141)*		*(0.057)*	*(0.137)*
T4	*−0.061*	*0.176*	T4	*0.931*	*0.511*
	(0.057)	*(0.134)*		*(0.062)*	*(0.138)*
T5	*0.281*	*0.561*	**See allies**	**.822**	**1.328**
	(0.057)	*(0.133)*		**(.042)**	**(.288)**
T6	*0.861*	*1.004*	T1	*−1.490*	*−1.113*
	(0.062)	*(0.152)*		*(0.081)*	*(0.158)*
Think about	**.910**	**1.012**	T2	*−0.846*	*−0.646*
	(.045)	**(.127)**		*(0.071)*	*(0.146)*
T1	*−1.099*	*−0.891*	T3	*0.067*	*0.544*
	(0.065)	*(0.138)*		*(0.057)*	*(0.131)*
T2	*−0.577*	*−0.349*	T4	*0.937*	*1.390*
	(0.056)	*(0.131)*		*(0.067)*	*(0.146)*
T3	*−0.316*	*−0.112*	**Common fate**	**.933**	**1.257**
	(0.056)	*(0.131)*		**(.044)**	**(.250)**
T4	*0.290*	*0.733*	T1	*−1.197*	*−0.798*
	(0.057)	*(0.142)*		*(0.074)*	*(0.159)*
T5	*0.626*	*1.131*	T2	*−0.587*	*−0.261*
	(0.059)	*(0.166)*		*(0.061)*	*(0.135)*
T6	*1.118*	*1.660*	T3	*0.343*	*0.403*
	(0.068)	*(0.182)*		*(0.057)*	*(0.141)*
			T4	*1.211*	*1.296*
				(0.065)	*(0.163)*
CFL/TLI	0.987/0.967				
RMSEA [90% CI]	0.081 [0.058, 0.106]				

Note: One item per latent variable is fixed to 1.000 to identify the model. The correlations between both latent variables are .485 (among English interviews) and .310 (among Spanish interviewees).

Table 4. Tests of configural, metric, and scalar equivalence: PoC-ID and solidarity items.

	Configural equivalence	Metric equivalence	Scalar equivalence
CFI	.987	.972	
TLI	.967	.980	
RMSEA [90% CI]	.081 [.058, .106]	.063 [.050, .076]	
ΔX^2 significant?	–	$p < .001$	

(Brown 2015). Going from our *configural* to our *metric/scalar* model, our TLI, RMSEA, and CFI remain in a very desirable range. Thus our five items are similarly understood and enable valid comparisons by interview language. For example, the latent mean differences in these constructs by interview language, measured in standard deviation units, provide the cleanest, error-free estimate of these quantities (Brown 2015). We find no difference in latent PoC-S levels by interview language ($\Delta = -.152$, SE = .104, $p < .144$) and a small but reliable gap in latent PoC-ID levels, with Spanish interviewees displaying less self-identification as a PoC ($\Delta = -.203$, SE = .090, $p < .024$). The presence of relatively weaker PoC-ID among Latinos who interviewed in Spanish is consistent with our earlier discussion about the origins and dissemination of the category, people of color, in the United States.

Table 5. Equivalence tests of PoC-ID and PoC-S by nativity status.

	Configural equivalence	Metric equivalence	Scalar equivalence
CFI	.988	.981	
TLI	.971	.986	
RMSEA [90% CI]	.080 [.057, .106]	.055 [.041, .069]	
ΔX^2 significant?	–	$p < .001$	

Sensitivity analysis

While our MG-CFAs indicate PoC-ID and PoC-S equivalence across interview language, one might have concerns about the relatively small sample of Spanish-interviewing Latinos ($n = 199$). Hence, we conducted a sensitivity analysis using nativity status because it is robustly associated with interview language choice. Specifically, Latinos who interview in Spanish are more likely to be foreign-born, while English interviewees are more likely to be US-born. This approach nearly doubles the number in our comparison group (i.e., 385 foreign-born Latinos versus 874 US-born Latinos). Table 5 reveals that our PoC-ID and PoC-S items also perform equivalently across foreign-born and US-born Latinos.

Conclusion

Our paper tested the measurement equivalence of six items designed to appraise PoC-ID and PoC-S across English and Spanish interviews. We found that five of these items perform as expected, assuring researchers these measures capture meaningful quantities and differences across this language divide. We detected no meaningful differences in reported levels of PoC-S across interview language, but a small and reliable difference in PoC-ID, with Spanish interviewees reporting lower levels. Since Latinos who interview in Spanish tend to be foreign-born, this pattern is consistent with a view that these Latinos are still learning about being a PoC in the US. This evidence frees applied researchers from concerns that these measures of PoC-ID and PoC-S perform sub-optimally across interview language among Latinos, thereby facilitating future work with these items in settings where Latinos are present.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Russell Sage Foundation [grant number G-2304-43222].

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