



## Review

# Development and validation of a scale of support for violence in the context of intergroup conflict (SVIC): The case of violence perpetrated by Mapuche people and the police in Chile



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## ABSTRACT

We develop and validate a scale that measures support for violence in the context of an asymmetrical intergroup conflict between the Chilean state and the largest ethnic minority group in Chile, the Mapuche people: the scale of Support for Violence in an Intergroup Conflict (SVIC). The proposed scale has two dimensions that capture the perceived acceptability of violence carried out in both directions: support for violence carried out by radical Mapuche activists and support for violence carried out by the police in the name of the Chilean state. We validate the scale in a survey conducted using two independent samples: a sample of Mapuche ( $n_1 = 199$ ) and a sample of non-indigenous Chilean respondents ( $n_2 = 195$ ). We test measurement invariance of the scale and find evidence that it is a valid instrument across both samples. Furthermore, findings suggest that the scale has discriminant validity, i.e., it correlates weakly with aggressiveness; as well as convergent validity, i.e., support for violence carried out by Mapuche activists correlates positively with Mapuche identification and negatively with Chilean identification, and the reverse is true for support for violence carried out by the police. We finish by highlighting the importance of measuring support for violence in the context of an asymmetrical intergroup conflict considering violence carried out by the different parties involved in the conflict, as well as the importance of validating the scale considering samples of representatives of both parties.

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## 1. Introduction

During the last century, violent intergroup conflicts among different ethnic groups, as well as between ethnic minority groups and national states, have been commonplace in different parts of the world (e.g., [Lustick, 1996](#); [Mays, Bullock, Rosenzweig, & Wessells, 1998](#)). In particular recent incidents in Ferguson, Staten Island and North Charleston in the United States have raised attention to the extent and impact of excessive use of force in the policing of minority communities ([Baker, 2015](#)). In Chile, the long conflict between the largest ethnic minority group, the Mapuche people, and the Chilean state has become increasingly violent in recent years (e.g., [Carruthers & Rodríguez, 2009](#)). The social sciences have long been interested in understanding why people either condemn or tolerate such expressions of intergroup violence (e.g., [Duncan, 1976](#); [Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005](#)). Understanding individuals' attitudes toward violence is important because individuals who favor violence are more likely to engage in violence themselves (e.g., [Markowitz, 2001](#)).

While a number of studies have proposed scales to measure attitudes toward violence in general (e.g., [Anderson, Benjamin, Wood, & Bonacci, 2006](#); [Blumenthal, 1972](#); [Markowitz, 2001](#); [Velicer, Huckel, & Hansen, 1989](#)) to our knowledge only one scale has been developed to measure attitudes in the context of intergroup conflict. [Henry et al. \(2005\)](#) measured support for anti-Arab and anti-Western violence. A number of studies have measured attitudes toward police use of force, finding more critical attitudes among minority group members (e.g., [Jefferis, Butcher, & Hanley, 2011](#)), women ([Johnson & Kuhns, 2009](#)) and those with higher levels of education ([Arthur & Case, 1994](#)). However, none of these studies has focused on police use of force in the context of intergroup conflict and, more specifically, in situations where force is carried out in the name of a dominant majority against an ethnic minority that strives for social change.

Measuring people's support for violence in an intergroup context is a complex matter: attitudes depend on the specific conflict that is being addressed and on the intergroup implications of violence. First, violent strategies used by social groups in different conflicts are likely to be specific to the history of that conflict. Hence, scales that measure attitudes toward violence need to be tailored for each conflict in particular. Second, violent conflicts often involve bidirectional applications of violence. Crucially, people favor different types of intergroup violence depending on its goal ([Blumenthal, 1972](#); [Henry et al., 2005](#); [Jackson, Huq, Bradford, & Tyler, 2013](#)). While intergroup violence has often been understood as a means of maintaining status quo by majority or dominant group members, for instance in the form of police repression (violence for social control), violence can also be used by minority or subordinate groups to resist domination and promote social change (violence for social change) ([Tajfel, 1981](#)). We argue that situations where violence is carried out in both directions require scales to measure attitudes toward both types of violence (see [Henry et al., 2005](#)).

The aim of the current paper is to develop a scale that measures support for violence in the context of the current intergroup conflict between the Chilean state and the Mapuche people. Radical Mapuche activists often use violence against the police, as well as against the property of private companies and landowners, to claim for rights to ancestral land. Police officers, on the other hand, often exert excessive force against Mapuche people to dissolve demonstrations or raid communities ([Carruthers & Rodríguez, 2009](#); [Mella Seguel, 2007](#)). While a growing interest exists in understanding the conflict between Mapuche people and the Chilean state (e.g., [Carruthers & Rodríguez, 2009](#); [Mella Seguel, 2007](#)), no scale has been developed to measure people's support for violence. In this article we develop and validate a scale composed of two separate dimensions: support for violence carried out by Mapuche activists and support for violence carried out by the police. The development of the scale draws on a survey conducted in the southern city of Temuco, Chile (where the largest proportion of Mapuche people live) to two different samples: a sample of people who self-identified as Mapuche ( $n_1 = 199$ ) and a sample who self-identified as non-indigenous Chileans ( $n_2 = 195$ ).

The relevance of the current paper is twofold. First, we provide a short instrument that can be used in public opinion surveys or experimental settings to study people's support for violence carried out by Mapuche activists or by police officers in Chile. Second, we provide a scale that measures support for violence that can be adapted to other asymmetrical intergroup conflicts involving ongoing tensions between different ethnic groups and the state.

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