The demobilizing and radicalizing potentials of dual identity: how perceptions of identity incompatibility and the legitimacy of protest action mediate and moderate the associations between dual identification and protest intentions

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Abstract

This article examines the role of dual identification with a subgroup and the superordinate society in the politicization, radicalization, and demobilization of subgroup members. A survey was conducted among local Hong Kong citizens ($N=388$) who represent a regional majority embedded as a minority in the broader sociopolitical context (China). It was reasoned that dual identity is generally associated with either demobilization or normative politicization. However, when accompanied by a perceived incompatibility between the subgroup and supergroup identities, dual identity was expected to be associated with radicalization. Path analysis was used to examine the associations between dual identification and intentions to participate in political protests that may involve a confrontation with police (as a proxy of nonnormative protests) and those that may not involve such a confrontation (as a proxy of normative protests). The results indicate a demobilizing potential of dual identity, particularly in the absence of perceived identity incompatibility, and a radicalizing potential in the presence of an identity conflict. These associations were mediated by the perceived legitimacy of protest actions. The findings amend research on immigrant populations and contribute to the understanding of identity dynamics in intergroup contexts, especially where the perceived incompatibility between subgroup and supergroup identities is relatively high. The conclusion is that fostering balanced dual identities may reduce radical political action but may also affect overall protest participation.

Keywords Collective identification · Demobilization · Dual identity · Political participation · Protest · Radicalization

The combination of "identity" and "protest participation" has become a fruitful strand of research showing that identification processes influence collective protest behavior (Da Costa et al., 2023). Empirical studies have shown that individuals are more likely to participate in protests the more they identify with a group perceived as marginalized or maltreated (Gillan, 2020; Simon, 2011). This potential of "social" or "collective identities" to stimulate protest action stems from people's pursuit of positive identities; it is influenced by perceived similarities with others and the value attached to membership in the various groups to which one belongs (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Hence, individuals who identify more strongly as members of a particular group are often more willing to engage in collective action to promote the group's goals or standing. There is ample evidence for the effect of collective identification on collective behaviors considered normatively acceptable (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021). However, the effect of collective identification on nonnormative forms of collective action appears to be weaker and is potentially mixed (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Uysal et al., 2024). Although some studies found that nonnormative collective action is associated with stronger group identification, others suggest that a weak collective identification can predict

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radical protest action as individuals who strongly identify with their group may want to protect the group's image and avoid losing potential support from third parties (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Moreover, most research on the link between collective identification and collective action has examined Western samples. The limited evidence from other contexts indicates weaker associations between collective identification and collective action among non-Western samples (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021).

Furthermore, researchers have primarily examined the politicizing role of identification with a specific social movement, a marginalized group (usually an ethnic minority), or a larger social entity (e.g., the "nation"). However, some scholars argue that a politicized identity is essentially a "dual identity" that combines a subgroup identity and a more comprehensive identity (Simon & Ruhs, 2008), and others discuss situations when dual identifiers may disengage (Politi et al., 2020; Wenzel et al., 2007). Yet, research on dual identity and (de-)politicization is scarce, and its role in political radicalism has not been examined in non-Western societies (Echelmeyer et al., 2023).

This research addresses these gaps by examining the associations of a dual identification with politicization, radicalization, and demobilization (thus focusing on normative *and* nonnormative collective action) in a non-Western context. Politicization refers to the process by which individuals or groups assign political significance to issues or events and increasingly engage in political activism. Political radicalization happens when individuals or groups increasingly pursue extreme political goals (usually opposing the status quo) and/or adopt extreme, normatively unaccepted means to achieve their political goals. Whereas behaviors aimed at resolving conflicts by avoiding direct confrontation, hostility, or escalation are nonconfrontational, confrontational protests involve direct and hostile interactions where protesters aggressively challenge those who express opposing views or behaviors and where altercations with police are to be expected (Uysal et al., 2024). Finally, demobilization characterizes the reduction of or withdrawal from political activism.

The current study expands the cultural scope of models on the politicization of collective identities by examining these aspects and their links to dual identification using data from young local Hong Kong people regarding their willingness to support the anti-ELAB (Extradition Law Amendment Bill) social movement, a large anti-government protest movement in 2019/20. The analysis examines different forms of politicization and political radicalization, including the perceived legitimacy and intentions to engage in protest activities, adding novel insights into the moderating role of the perceived incompatibility between the components of

a dual identification (i.e., Hongkonger and Chinese). The findings contribute to understanding identity dynamics in intergroup contexts with high identity incompatibility, suggesting links between dual identities and demobilization, as well as associations with radicalization under the condition of perceived identity incompatibility.

Literature review

Dual identification and politicization

Individuals hold a dual identity when they identify simultaneously with a subordinate entity (e.g., an ethnic minority group) and a superordinate entity (e.g., society or the nation). Acknowledging the higher-level entity as part of one's identity has been theorized as essential to remaining within the normative limits of society, as one may view other groups non-adversarially while preserving collective action intentions to improve the situation of the (disadvantaged) ingroup (Klandermans, 2023; Lizzio-Wilson et al., 2022). In polarized contexts, such a dual identification may have both a politicizing and a pacifying effect, such that only political action within the normative societal limits will be pursued by members of the deprived ingroup (Simon, 2011; Simon & Grabow, 2010). In contrast, the absence of such a dual identification may encourage radicalization (Sageman, 2017; Simon, 2020).

However, most research on the politicizing effects of a dual identity has focused on immigrant populations, and the role of dual identity in political violence has been examined quantitatively only among minority groups in Western countries (Echelmeyer et al., 2023). For example, ethnic minority members in Germany who more strongly identified as both Turkish and German tended to be more politically active (Simon & Ruhs, 2008). Similarly, Latino immigrants in the U.S. reported stronger intentions to engage in protest activities the more they identified as Latino and American simultaneously (Wiley et al., 2014). Research on Muslim immigrants in European countries further showed that a dual identification with their religious group and the host country increased the probability of voting, and it neutralized the negative effect of identification with the country (Kranendonk et al., 2018). In addition, among ethnic group members in South Africa, dual identifiers were more likely to take peaceful political action than non-dual identifiers when maltreated (Klandermans, 2014).

The model of politicized collective identity (PCI; Simon & Klandermans, 2001) provides some insights as to why a politicized identity is a dual identity. According to the PCI, a dual identity with an aggrieved group (e.g., ethnic minority) and a larger majority group (e.g., society) in which

the aggrieved group is embedded will politicize in contentious situations when both group identifications are salient (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 2015). Hence, a fight for equal recognition of the subgroup within the superordinate entity may drive the politicizing effect of dual identity (Simon, 2020).

Dual identification, demobilization, and deradicalization

However, the politicizing effect of dual identification can be detrimental to the interests of another subgroup identity (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2014). In addition, a dual identity may weaken category salience and subgroup identification (Wright & Baray, 2012), and a more positive characterization of the outgroup due to a dual identity might undermine political mobilization (Verkuyten, 2018). Thus, dual identifiers who perceive both component identifications as relatively permeable or whose network comprises primarily majority outgroup members may be disinclined to engage in collective action (Politi et al., 2020; Verkuyten et al., 2019).

Research in what might be described as "secessionist contexts" indicates a pacifying—and possibly demobilizing—potential of a dual identity. For example, individuals with a stronger dual identification as Basque and Spanish were less likely to agree with the goal of independence (Williams, 2019). Similarly, dual identification with both Catalans and Spaniards was less strongly associated with a preference for secession than an exclusive Catalan identity (Guinjoan, 2022). Other research on the Catalonian case showed that radicalism may increase when identification shifts from a dual to a single or separatist identity (Pretus et al., 2023), and that heightened political conflict could lead to withdrawal from politics among dual identifiers (Hierro & Gallego, 2018). Evidence from Taiwan, an autonomously governed island seen by the mainland Chinese government as a breakaway province, supports this finding, as individuals who identified as both Taiwanese and Chinese were less willing to fight in a war between Taiwan and mainland China (Wang & Eldemerdash, 2023). Similarly, tertiary students in Hong Kong were less likely to endorse "radical" means when they identified as Hongkonger and Chinese than exclusively as Hongkonger (Ng, 2021).

Research on youth supplements these findings. For example, the salience of a dual identification as both a young person (subgroup) and a member of German society (superordinate group) negatively predicted sympathy for nonnormative political behavior (Paffrath & Simon, 2020). However, an exclusive identification with only young people was associated with more sympathy for radical political ends and means (Paffrath & Simon, 2020).

Research with ethnic minority groups provides possible explanations, suggesting that perceived discrimination may strengthen subgroup identification (Branscombe et al., 1999) and lead to disidentification with the superordinate category (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). This can undermine dual identification, as subgroup members may want to distance themselves from the superordinate group when the superordinate category is negatively valued (Wenzel et al., 2007). A consequence can be hostility toward majority members or other subgroups, potentially resulting in radical action. Conversely, dual identifiers might strive to maintain a positive identification with both their subgroup and the superordinate entity as long as the latter is positively valued (Wenzel et al., 2007), to which end they may avoid radical goals and confrontational means that could be perceived as harmful—especially in a context threatening their subgroup (Verkuyten et al., 2019).

Dual identification and radicalization: the role of identity incompatibility

The PCI model suggests a pathway from dual identification to peaceful protest action. However, collective identities have also been highlighted as particularly relevant when structural disadvantages or radical behaviors are concerned (Larson, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008). For example, when individuals project characteristics of their subgroup onto the superordinate entity, consensus about the superordinate entity's prototypical characteristics is required to avoid conflict and hostility that could cause radicalization (Wenzel et al., 2007).

Simon (2020) further reasons that an embedded dual identity might radicalize when society does not respond to the subgroup's demands for equality recognition, or in situations of identity confusion and when both component identifications are less permeable. This could lead to a sense of anomy and generate aggression (Stonequist, 1935), potentially leading to controversial forms of politicization. Indeed, minority members who identified more strongly as Turkish German or Russian German showed more sympathy for radical political action when both component identifications were perceived as incompatible (Simon et al., 2013). Such an identity conflict may produce inner tension that encourages (temporarily) accepting nonnormative means in the fight for the subgroup's equal recognition.

The role of legitimacy beliefs

While having sympathy for radical action does not imply a willingness to adopt these means, it might indirectly raise active support for radical political participation. The perceived legitimacy (or morality; Agostini & van Zomeren,

2021) of behavior provides a justification for engaging in protest action, which may be particularly relevant when a movement is controversial or adopts radical forms of action (e.g., the destruction of property). The reason is that (sub-) group norms, rather than the norms of society at large, matter for what is considered "radical" and, therefore, may be more influential in determining radical collective action (Smith et al., 2020; Uysal et al., 2024).

Consequently, individuals identifying with groups whose norms favor radical behaviors may consider these acts more legitimate to achieve the group's goals. These legitimacy beliefs may be associated with the extent to which group members consider performing radical actions. A study of Spanish citizens indeed found that the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action predicted the readiness to engage in these activities in the future, while there was no direct effect of the perceived legitimacy of authorized protests on the readiness to attend authorized demonstrations (Zlobina & Gonzalez Vazquez, 2018). Although empirical research is scarce, it can be reasoned that if dual identifiers sensing an incompatibility between both component identifications endorse (radical) subgroup norms, then this endorsement might indirectly relate to a stronger willingness to engage in controversial, radical behaviors.

Hong Kong, protests, and dual identification

Most research on the associations between collective identification and collective action has focused on Western samples (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021), and research on dual identity, politicization, and political radicalism is particularly scarce (Echelmeyer et al., 2023). This research focuses on a non-Western context, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (HKSAR), to examine how dual identity is associated with demobilization and radicalization, including the perceived legitimacy of protest action and intentions to engage in confrontational and nonconfrontational protests. Examining these associations in the context of Hong Kong can strengthen evidence on core motivations in collective action; it also may uncover cultural variations in the associations between collective identities and collective action. This can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of protest dynamics and expand the cultural scope, robustness, and generalizability of psychological theories of collective action (van Zomeren, 2019).

Hong Kong and the anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill (anti-ELAB) movement

The HKSAR has more autonomy than other Chinese provinces, but movements articulating localized identity and participatory citizenship grew in post-handover Hong Kong

as the growing influence of the mainland government over Hong Kong issues raised perceived threats to Hong Kong identity (Jackson, 2019; Xia, 2016). When the HKSAR government, in 2019, planned to introduce an amendment to a bill that would have allowed extradition to several jurisdictions, including the Chinese mainland (Legislative Council of the HKSAR, 2019), it prompted mass demonstrations demanding the bill's abandonment. The anti-ELAB protests quickly transformed into an anti-government movement and subsequently turned into a spiral of police repressive action, political authoritarianism, and militant protests lasting until 2020 (Cheng & Yuen, 2023). The call to withdraw the bill was amended early with demands focusing on repressive politics and police tactics.

Many protesters were young adults, and a majority had experienced some form of tertiary education (Lee et al., 2019). The strong presence of young people at the anti-ELAB protests reflects their longstanding dissatisfaction with the political system and persisting concern about Hong Kong's future (Lam-Knott, 2019). Emerging discourses about local culture and identity in Hong Kong accompanied a rising dissatisfaction with the political system and youth's increasing willingness to challenge political authority and sympathize with radical protest tactics (Lam, 2018; Ma, 2020). Moreover, a localist orientation was associated with positive attitudes toward the anti-ELAB movement, and anti-mainland sentiments predicted action for the movement (Wong et al., 2024).

Collective identification in Hong Kong

Although Chinese and Hong Kong identifications were initially relatively compatible after the return of Hong Kong to China, both identifications have grown increasingly distinct (Steinhardt et al., 2018). Several social movements and protests against government initiatives emerged, leading to a rise in "localism" (Ku, 2019; Veg, 2017). The discontent culminated in the Umbrella Movement that unsuccessfully claimed universal suffrage in 2014, increasing the political opposition between the Chinese and Hong Kong identities as "pro-Beijing" versus "pro-democracy" (Chan et al., 2021). In response to the perceived threat of "mainlandization", local individuals' Hong Kong identification and their intent to engage in political activism strengthened (Chan et al., 2021).

Although identification as Chinese was in decline and Hong Kong identification strengthening, a mixed or dual identification (e.g., as Hongkongese but also Chinese) remained at relatively high levels (with ups and downs contrasting the development of identification with only Hong Kong; The Chinese University of Hong Kong [CUHK], 2016; Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute [PORI],

2024). However, the overshadowing of a local Hong Kong identity over a Chinese identity has been particularly dominant among young adults (Steinhardt et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2021), among whom a dual identification as Chinese and Hongkonger has declined markedly compared to older generations since 2014 (PORI, 2024). Instead, young people were much more attached to their local identity, tended to disidentify as Chinese, and viewed the Chinese identity promoted by the mainland Chinese government as incompatible with the local Hong Kong identity (Cai et al., 2022).

Previous research on collective (non-dual) identifications in Hong Kong has also shown that university students with a relatively weak Hong Kong identification were more likely not to engage in or intend to engage in the Umbrella Movement of 2014 (Chan et al., 2017). Students who reported a strong Hong Kong identification and those with a relatively low Chinese identification, as well as students who identified strongly as Chinese and also relatively strongly with Hong Kong, were more likely active in the Umbrella Movement (Chan et al., 2017). Higher levels of social movement participation among strongly locally identified individuals have also been reported in other studies (Kan et al., 2025).

Current study

This study goes beyond prior research by examining the pacifying, politicizing, and radicalizing potential of dual identity among local Hong Kong youth. In this context, the local majority (albeit perceived as marginalized) is embedded in a broader context whose majority population forms the minority in said local context. This setting can expand the cultural scope and contribute to the robustness and generalizability of psychological research findings on politicized collective identities. The central research question is: How is dual identification associated with politicization, demobilization, and political radicalization, particularly in the presence or absence of perceived identity incompatibility?

The analysis compares the identified associations with nonconfrontational (e.g., attending a peaceful protest march) and confrontational (i.e., joining a protest activity involving a confrontation with the police) political protests. It advances prior research by linking dual identity with intentions to participate in both types of protest action and by bringing in the perceived legitimacy of normative (i.e., widely considered socially acceptable) and nonnormative (i.e., socially less accepted) political behaviors as potential mediators. In particular, the insights from this study further our understanding of the conditioning role of the (perceived) incompatibility between the component identifications defining dual identity in those associations.

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical framework, it can be hypothesized that a local Hong Kong identification is positively associated with protest action, and an identification as Chinese may have the opposite association, given anti-mainland tendencies in the anti-ELAB movement (Vukovich, 2022).

Hypothesis H1a: Local Hong Kong identification is positively associated with intended *(i)* nonconfrontational and *(ii)* confrontational protest action.
Hypothesis H1b: Identification as Chinese is negatively associated with intended *(i)* nonconfrontational and *(ii)* confrontational protest action.

The changing patterns in (rising) local and (declining) dual identification among youth in Hong Kong question whether a dual identification as both Chinese and Hongkonger would be linked to politicization (i.e., dual identifiers tend to be more concerned with and engaged in political activism) or rather demobilization (i.e., dual identifiers limit or avoid participation in the social movement). However, given the pacifying effects reported in the literature, it is hypothesized that dual identity is negatively associated with the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest behaviors and with intended confrontational protest. This reasoning aligns with research suggesting that dual identifiers in Hong Kong are more moderate (Masood et al., 2024).

Hypothesis H2a: Dual identification is negatively associated with the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest behaviors.
Hypothesis H2b: Dual identification is negatively associated with intended confrontational protest behavior.

The analysis further examines whether legitimacy perceptions mediate the association between dual identification and behavioral intentions. Following prior research (Zlobina & Gonzalez Vazquez, 2018), it can be expected that only the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative actions is associated with intended (confrontational) protest participation. Hence, the hypothesized (negative) association between dual identity and intended confrontational protest should be (at least partially) mediated via the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action. Whether normative legitimacy perceptions also act as a mediator will be explored.

Hypothesis H3a: The perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action is positively associated with intended confrontational protest participation.
Hypothesis H3b: The perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action mediates the association between dual identity and intended confrontational protest.

Finally, it is examined whether perceived identity incompatibility moderates the associations of dual identification with the perceived legitimacy of protest action and with intended movement support. A state of anomy, as reflected by identity conflict, may be less relevant in predicting normative variables but could yield a radicalizing effect. Hence, dual identification may be positively associated with the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action when accompanied by the perception that the Chinese and Hong Kong identities are incompatible. Such a moderated association is also expected for confrontational protest intentions, mediated via the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative behaviors.

Hypothesis H4a: Perceived identity incompatibility moderates the association of dual identity with *(i)* the perceived legitimacy of normative action and *(ii)* intended nonconfrontational protest action.

Hypothesis H4b: Perceived identity incompatibility moderates the association between dual identification and the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action such that dual identity is positively associated with these legitimacy perceptions when both component identifications seem incompatible.

Hypothesis H4c: The perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action mediates the interaction between identity incompatibility and dual identification with respect to confrontational protest intentions.

Methods

Participants

The sample was drawn from a four-wave panel survey of students from two local universities who first participated in an online survey about digital citizenship as freshmen in 2019. The two universities account for over 30% of the total undergraduate student population at all eight public universities in Hong Kong (University Grants Committee [UGC], 2023). In the current analysis, the focus was on the second-wave data, as the mediators and outcomes were measured in 2020 when the students were in their second year. The data were collected before a national security legislation was implemented, and all respondents gave informed consent before completing the survey.

Responses from $N = 388$ students of local (Hong Kong) origin were available for analysis (excluding students of nonlocal origin and invalid or incomplete responses). Chi-square and independent samples t tests showed no significant response bias among respondents who participated in 2020 and those who did not (ps > 0.05). Weights were calculated based on the actual student population at each university, and the weighted data included 49% female and 51% male students between 18 and 23 years (cf. Table 1; for details about the procedures, see Reichert et al., 2020).

Measures

Outcomes

Both dependent variables were measured toward the end of the questionnaire (1 = "Certainly not" to 4 = "Certainly yes"). One item measured students' *intention to participate in confrontational protests* to support the anti-ELAB social

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and reliabilities

	Mean / Frequency[a]	Standard Deviation	Reliability (Coefficient α)
Age	20.07	0.62	–
Gender (female)	49%	0.50	–
Chinese identification	2.47	1.05	0.93
Hong Kong identification	4.29	0.72	0.89
Dual identification	2.23	1.00	0.57[b]
Identity incompatibility	2.65	1.16	–
Political satisfaction	1.87	0.76	0.76
Socioeconomic satisfaction	3.02	0.68	0.72
Collective efficacy	3.09	0.90	0.80
Previous participation	82%	0.37	0.87
Normative legitimacy	3.66	0.48	0.72
Nonnormative legitimacy	2.25	0.70	0.90
Intended movement support	3.03	0.88	–
Intended confrontational protest	2.07	0.87	–

[a]Means for continuous and ordinal variables and frequencies for binary items (with *SD*s based on the binary score)

[b]Pearson correlation between both indicators

movement in the future: "Would you consider participating in a protest activity that may involve a confrontation with the police?" (*Mdn* = 2.00). Another item measured the broader *intention to engage in activities* to support the movement: "Will you do anything else to support the social movement in the future?" (*Mdn* = 3.00). This latter intention can be referred to as *nonconfrontational movement support*, as confrontational collective action involves conflict between protesters and the police and a realistic threat of altercations with police or legal sanctions resulting from protest activism (Uysal et al., 2024). Notably, one of the movement's five key demands explicitly targeted police conduct (i.e., alleged police violence), and two of the five demands focused on the consequences of police arrests (Civil Human Rights Front, 2019). Police had even entered university premises that students used to consider as safe spaces (Fiedler et al., 2022). Hence, the former item was a clear indicator of readiness to engage in confrontational activism, used as a proxy of intended nonnormative protest action. In contrast, the latter item can be interpreted as a question about intended engagement in nonconfrontational activities (as a proxy of willingness to engage in normative protest action).

Independent variables

While different terms have been used to refer to Hong Kong or Chinese identifications, such as social or collective identity (Chan et al., 2017; Masood et al., 2024), ethnic or ethnocultural identity (PORI, 2024; Kobayashi, 2020), or local vs. national identity (Chen & Zheng, 2022; CUHK, 2016; Kan et al., 2025), these studies usually adopted the same categorical item to measure whether respondents identified as "Hongkonger" / "Hongkongese", as "Hongkonger in China" / "Hong Kong Chinese" / "Hongkongese but also Chinese", as "Chinese in/from Hong Kong" / "Chinese Hong Konger" / "Chinese but also Hongkongese", or as "Chinese" (plus "Other"). However, "the categorical one-item measure has significant validity problems" (Steinhardt et al., 2018, p. 268), as Hong Kong and Chinese identifications are distinct attitudes rather than opposites (Steinhardt et al., 2018). Thus, some scholars have measured identity strength, often by using one item for each component identification (Cai et al., 2022; Steinhardt et al., 2018). While such distinct one-item ordinal measures may be more valid than the one-item categorical measure, their reliability is often low. Therefore, multiple items were used in this study, adapted from validated scales measuring various forms of collective identity in other contexts (Simon et al., 2013; Simon & Ruhs, 2008).

Specifically, collective identifications were measured early in the questionnaire by asking students to indicate

their agreement with different statements (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree"). The items for each collective identification were averaged to form reliable scales. *Hong Kong identification* (e.g., "I feel strong ties with Hong Kongers") and *Chinese identification* (e.g., "I feel strong ties with Chinese people") were measured by four identical items each (except for their reference to either Hong Kong or Chinese people, respectively). In addition, *dual identification* with both Hong Kong and China was measured using two additional items (i.e., "Sometimes I feel more as a Chinese and sometimes more as a Hong Konger—it depends on the situation" [compartmentalization] and "I feel at home with the culture of Mainland China as well as that of Hong Kong" [blending]). This measurement strategy has been shown to be superior to other approaches to measure dual identification, such as using a multiplicative term of the two component identifications (Simon & Grabow, 2010; Simon & Ruhs, 2008). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed an excellent fit of the three-factor collective identity model (χ^2/df = 1.71, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.03).[1]

Moderator

Identity incompatibility between both component identifications was measured similarly to other research (Simon et al., 2013). Students responded to the item, "I have the feeling that one can only be either a Hong Konger or a Chinese, but not both" (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree").

Mediators

Placed in the second half of the questionnaire and well before asking students about their action intentions, several items measured students' perceptions of the legitimacy of normative and nonnormative protest actions (1 = "Highly illegitimate" to 4 = "Highly legitimate"). The responses were averaged for each type. Three items were used to measure the perceived *legitimacy of normative political action* in support of the anti-ELAB movement (e.g., attending authorized demonstrations or assemblies), and the perceived *legitimacy of nonnormative action* (e.g., occupying property or land) was captured by six items. A two-factor CFA indicated an adequate fit of this measurement (χ^2/df = 3.43, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.05).[2]

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

[2] Modification indices suggested adding two residual correlations among items measuring the legitimacy of nonnormative action.

Additional predictors and control variables

Collective identities have been theorized to form with or around grievances and collective efficacy (i.e., the confidence that one's group can achieve its goals together), and all three may predict collective action or action intentions (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Fiedler et al., 2022; Reichert et al., 2024; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Hence, proxies of grievances and a measure of collective efficacy were included in the analysis as additional predictors. *Collective efficacy* was measured as the average of respondents' agreement with three items (e.g., "If the people in Hong Kong acted as a group, they could achieve their political goals;" 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree").

Grievances were operationalized through items measuring the extent of students' satisfaction with the socioeconomic and political context in Hong Kong (1 = "Extremely dissatisfied" to 5 = "Extremely satisfied"), and the responses for each type were averaged. *Political satisfaction* was measured using three items (e.g., satisfaction with Hong Kong's "political development"), and *socioeconomic satisfaction* was captured by five items (e.g., satisfaction with Hong Kong's "economic development"). A two-factor CFA yielded adequate model fit (χ^2/df=3.16, CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.08, SRMR=0.04).

In addition, gender and age differences have been found in individual identification, social identities, and protest action (e.g., Bhui et al., 2014; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Reichert, 2021; Stewart & Newton, 2010). Hence, students' gender (1 = "male," 2 = "female") was included as a control variable, and their age, measured in years and months, as a covariate. Finally, prior participation in seven protest behaviors to support the anti-ELAB movement (e.g., attending a mass demonstration, forwarding online messages), coded as a binary variable (0 = "no participation," 1 = "participation in at least one activity"), was also included to control for the potential influence of prior participation in the anti-ELAB movement. Including prior participation was considered relevant as political participation generally tends to correlate with forms of collective identification and because prior participation may influence subsequent legitimacy perceptions and future protest intentions (Fiedler et al., 2022; Passy & Giugni, 2000).

Analysis

All analyses were conducted in Mplus (version 8.6; Muthén et al., 2016; Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) using maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors, except for assessing mediated paths, which were examined using 1,000 bootstrap resamples and maximum likelihood estimation. In the first step, a path model was estimated to examine the direct associations of the independent variables with the mediator and outcome variables. Linear regression was used to predict perceived legitimacy, and intended participation was modeled through ordinal logit regression. Secondly, bootstrapping was used to assess the indirect associations between collective identities and intended behavior. In a third step, the interaction between dual identification and identity incompatibility, reflecting "identity conflict," was analyzed for the mediator and outcome variables by adding it to each regression in the path model. The interaction term was computed as the product of both mean-centered variables involved. A moderated mediation analysis was conducted for statistically significant interactions using bootstrapping. Weights were applied in all analyses, and statistical significance was established when $p < 0.05$.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the descriptive information and reliabilities of all variables and their bivariate correlations, respectively. Legitimacy perceptions and behavioral intentions correlated positively with each other, with local Hong Kong identification, and with perceived identity incompatibility. The Chinese and dual identifications were negatively associated with both legitimacy perceptions and protest intentions, providing an initial indication for a possibly demobilizing role of dual identification. Furthermore, Hong Kong identification was negatively correlated with dual identification, while Chinese identification was positively correlated with dual identification. Hong Kong and Chinese identifications were negatively correlated with each other. In addition, both tests for proportional odds[3] were nonsignificant (ps≥0.061). Thus, ordinal logistic regression analysis was feasible, and the regression coefficients can be interpreted as the same for each level of every outcome. The results of the path regression model are summarized in Table 3.

Predictors of the perceived legitimacy of protest action

Neither age nor gender significantly predicted the perceived legitimacy of protest action. However, the perceived legitimacy was higher among students who reported previous

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[3] The test for proportional odds was used to examine whether the relationship between each pair of outcome values and a set of predictors was consistent across all levels of the outcome variable(s), which is an assumption for estimating ordinal logistic regression models (Liu et al., 2023).

Table 2 Bivariate correlations among all variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age													
2 Gender (female)	-0.02												
3 Chinese identification	0.01	0.08											
4 Hong Kong identification	-0.04	0.04	-0.31***										
5 Dual identification	0.00	0.06	0.71***	-0.32***									
6 Identity incompatibility	0.03	-0.07	-0.50***	0.31***	-0.41***								
7 Political satisfaction	-0.01	0.03	0.56***	-0.28***	0.51***	-0.30***							
8 Socioeconomic satisfaction	-0.10*	0.01	0.34***	-0.08	0.30***	-0.23***	0.54***						
9 Collective efficacy	0.07	0.04	-0.11*	0.38***	-0.09	0.23***	-0.02	0.12*					
10 Previous participation	-0.03	0.03	-0.35***	0.43***	-0.27***	0.24***	-0.33***	-0.09	0.26***				
11 Normative legitimacy	-0.03	-0.02	-0.43***	0.46***	-0.44***	0.25***	-0.48***	-0.21***	0.28***	0.52***			
12 Nonnormative legitimacy	-0.01	-0.10	-0.61***	0.40***	-0.47***	0.39***	-0.41***	-0.20***	0.26***	0.41***	0.45***		
13 Intended movement support	0.08	0.02	-0.48***	0.52***	-0.44***	0.37***	-0.47***	-0.17***	0.31***	0.54***	0.58***	0.58***	
14 Intended confrontational protest	-0.01	-0.00	-0.48***	0.41***	-0.40***	0.41***	-0.33***	-0.13*	0.23***	0.40***	0.34***	0.56***	0.56***

Note. Pearson correlations (between continuous variables), point-biserial correlations (between a continuous and a dichotomous variable), and Spearman correlations (involving an ordinal variable). $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

participation in the anti-ELAB movement. Students also perceived either form of protest as more legitimate the more they thought collective action to be effective. Additionally, more politically dissatisfied students perceived normative protest action as more legitimate.

Regarding collective identifications, normative and non-normative protest actions were perceived as more legitimate the more the students identified as Hongkongers. A stronger Chinese identification was associated with lower nonnor-mative legitimacy perceptions. In addition, a stronger dual identification was related to perceptions of normative pro-test action as less legitimate. However, dual identification was not significantly associated with the perceived legiti-macy of nonnormative protest in the path analysis (contra H2a).

Predictors of protest intentions

Unsurprisingly, students who had already been active sup-porters of the anti-ELAB movement in the past were more likely to intend future participation of either kind to sup-port the movement. Additionally, older students were more willing to support the anti-ELAB movement in the future through nonconfrontational activities. Similarly, students were more likely to intend nonconfrontational participation to support the movement the more they were dissatisfied with the political situation. Neither socioeconomic satisfac-tion nor collective efficacy was a significant predictor of behavioral intentions.

Among the identity variables, distinct direct associations appeared. On the one hand, only Hong Kong identification was significantly and positively associated with intended nonconfrontational movement support (pro H1a-i). Chinese identification did not significantly predict nonconfronta-tional protest intentions in the path analysis (contra H1b-i). On the other hand, students were significantly more will-ing to participate in confrontational protests in the future the more they identified as Hongkonger (pro H1a-ii), the less they identified as Chinese (pro H1b-ii), and the more they felt these two identities were incompatible. Dual iden-tification had no significant direct association with either outcome (contra H2b).

Finally, students were more likely to report being willing to support the social movement through nonconfrontational protest behaviors if they perceived protest activities to achieve its goals as legitimate. Yet only the perceived legiti-macy of nonnormative protest behaviors was a significant and positive predictor of intended confrontational protest behavior (pro H3a).

Table 3 Path model results of linear and ordinal regression analyses

| | Mediators: Perceived Legitimacy[c] | | | | | | | | Outcomes: Intended Participation | | | | | | | |
| | Normative Action | | | | Nonnormative Action | | | | Support Movement | | | | Confrontational Protest | | | |
	B	SE	p	β	B	SE	p	β	B	SE	p	OR	B	SE	p	OR
Age	−0.01	0.03	0.633	−0.02	−0.01	0.04	0.813	−0.01	0.61	0.17	<0.001	1.84	−0.04	0.18	0.834	0.96
Gender (female)	−0.03	0.04	0.485	−0.06	−0.10	0.06	0.084	−0.14	0.26	0.24	0.281	1.30	0.13	0.21	0.541	1.14
Hong Kong identification	0.11	0.03	0.001	0.17	0.12	0.05	0.031	0.12	0.67	0.22	0.002	1.96	0.52	0.22	0.017	1.68
Chinese identification	−0.02	0.03	0.490	−0.04	−0.29	0.04	<0.001	−0.44	−0.13	0.20	0.534	0.88	−0.34	0.16	0.037	0.71
Dual identification	−0.08	0.03	0.002	−0.17	−0.01	0.04	0.755	−0.02	−0.05	0.17	0.773	0.95	−0.06	0.14	0.680	0.95
Identity incompatibility	−0.03	0.02	0.079	−0.07	0.03	0.03	0.399	0.04	0.16	0.13	0.204	1.17	0.31	0.12	0.010	1.36
Political satisfaction	−0.16	0.04	<0.001	−0.26	−0.05	0.05	0.354	−0.05	−0.59	0.23	0.012	0.56	−0.07	0.20	0.725	0.93
Socioeconomic satisfaction	0.00	0.04	0.974	0.00	−0.00	0.06	0.972	−0.00	0.26	0.21	0.231	1.29	0.12	0.18	0.496	1.13
Collective efficacy	0.07	0.02	0.001	0.14	0.10	0.04	0.010	0.13	0.26	0.16	0.101	1.30	0.11	0.15	0.471	1.11
Previous participation	0.37	0.07	<0.001	0.77	0.27	0.09	0.001	0.39	1.94	0.40	<0.001	6.93	1.21	0.42	0.004	3.34
Normative legitimacy									1.49	0.32	<0.001	4.45	−0.17	0.33	0.604	0.85
Nonnormative legitimacy									1.14	0.34	0.001	3.14	1.18	0.26	<0.001	3.24
Intercepts[a]	3.57	0.62	<0.001		2.35	0.99	0.017									
Threshold 1[b]									20.60	3.68	<0.001		3.78	3.87	0.329	
Threshold 2[b]									23.32	3.77	<0.001		6.49	3.87	0.094	
Threshold 3[b]									27.19	3.82	<0.001		8.80	3.88	0.022	
R^2	0.46				0.46				0.67[d]				0.49[d]			

Note. The coefficients shown include unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and their standard errors (SE), as well as the standardized regression coefficients for linear regression models (β) and odds ratios (OR) for ordinal outcomes

[a] Intercepts are reported for continuous mediators (no standardized coefficients)

[b] Thresholds are reported for ordinal outcomes (no standardized coefficients)

[c] The model-based correlation between both mediators is significant ($r = 0.10$, $p = 0.049$)

[d] R^2 refers to the underlying continuous latent response variable

Fig. 1 Conditional association of dual identification with perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action across the spectrum of identity incompatibility. *Note.* The dashed lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval, respectively
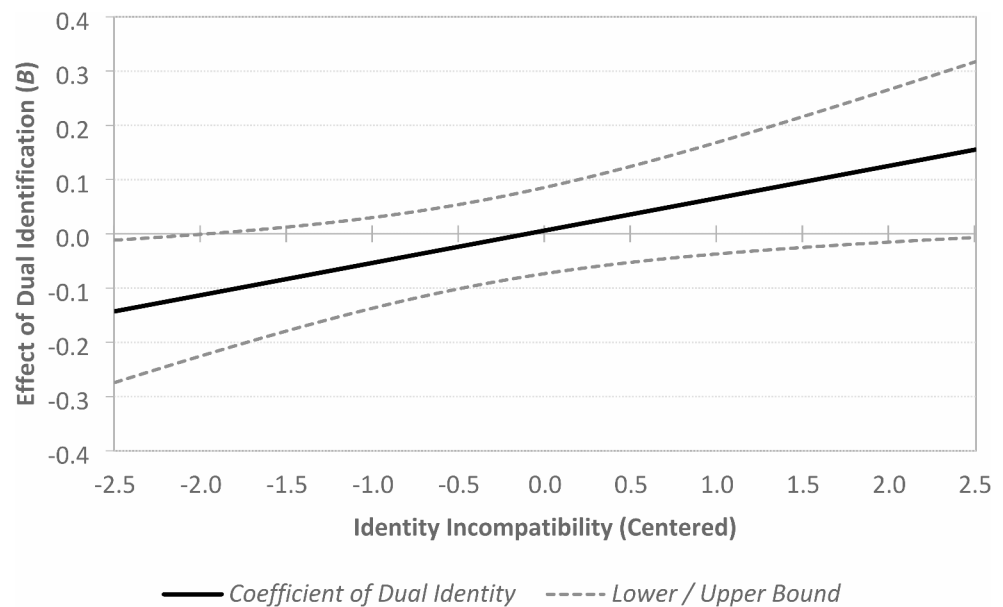
Indirect associations between collective identities and protest intentions

Table 3 shows that a stronger dual identification was associated with lower levels of the perceived legitimacy of normative protest action and that dual identification had no significant direct association with intended protest behavior. The mediation analysis subsequently revealed a negative association of dual identification with nonconfrontational protest intentions, mediated through the perceived legitimacy of normative protest action ($B = -0.12$, $SE=0.05$, $p=0.021$). However, given the nonsignificant path from dual identification to the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action, there was also no indirect association concerning intended confrontational protest behavior ($B=0.01$, $SE=0.03$, $p=0.66$; contra H3b).

Supplementary analyses further revealed that the positive association of Hong Kong identification on nonconfrontational movement support was partially mediated via the perceived legitimacy of normative protest action ($B=0.17$, $SE=0.07$, $p=0.010$). The negative association of Chinese identification with intended nonconfrontational movement support was mediated through the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action ($B = -0.34$, $SE=0.11$, $p=0.003$). On the other hand, a partial mediation was identified for the association between identification as Chinese with intended confrontational protest action via the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative movement support ($B = -0.34$, $SE=0.09$, $p<0.001$).[4]

Interactions between dual identification and identity incompatibility

No significant interaction was identified for intended nonconfrontational ($B=0.05$, $SE=0.13$, $p=0.67$, $OR=1.06$; contra H4a-ii) and confrontational social movement support ($B = -0.06$, $SE=0.11$, $p=0.54$, $OR=0.94$). Similarly, the interaction was nonsignificant for the perceived legitimacy of normative protest action ($B=0.01$, $SE=0.02$, $p=0.71$, $\beta=0.02$; contra H4a-i).

However, a significant interaction appeared in the regression of the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action ($B=0.06$, $SE=0.03$, $p=0.019$, $\beta=0.10$). This result can explain why dual identification was not significantly associated with this mediator in the path analysis, despite a significant bivariate correlation. A closer inspection showed a negative association between dual identification and nonnormative legitimacy at below-average identity incompatibility and a positive association at above-average identity incompatibility, respectively. The change in the size of the regression coefficient of dual identification at different levels of identity incompatibility is plotted in Fig. 1. The graph shows that the association of dual identification with the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action approached statistical significance along reasonably low and reasonably high levels of identity incompatibility, reaching significance at extreme levels of identity incompatibility (partial support for H4b).

A moderated mediation model was subsequently estimated using the bootstrap procedure. This analysis showed that the associations between dual identification and intended

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[4] Incidentally, collective efficacy was indirectly associated with students' intention to support the anti-ELAB movement via the perceived legitimacy of normative protest behaviors ($B=0.11$, $SE=0.04$, $p=0.011$). Additionally, collective efficacy was indirectly associated

with intended confrontational protest action through the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative behaviors ($B=0.11$, $SE=0.05$, $p=0.036$).

Fig. 2 Illustration of the mediated moderation model of the associations of dual identification with intended protest actions. *Note*. The pathway on the top shows the association of dual identification with intended nonconfrontational protest action as mediated by the perceived legitimacy of normative protests, and the pathway at the bottom shows the association of dual identification with intended confrontational protest action as moderated by identity incompatibility and mediated by the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protests. The diagram presents the simplified model without statistical control variables and covariates. Solid lines represent significant direct paths, dashed lines reflect mediated paths (simple mediation for the mediator normative legitimacy and moderated mediation for the mediator nonnormative legitimacy), and dotted lines show insignificant direct paths that are, however, moderated by identity incompatibility. The minus sign ("–") indicates negative (direct or indirect) associations, and the plus sign ("+") indicates positive (direct or indirect) associations. For interactions, the first symbol shows the association at low (or very low) levels of identity incompatibility, and the second symbol shows the association at high (or very high) levels of identity incompatibility

protest action were mediated by the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative movement action, but these indirect associations were conditional on identity incompatibility (pro H4c; see also Fig. 2). On the one hand, the index of moderated mediation[5] was shy of significance regarding intended nonconfrontational support for the anti-ELAB movement ($\omega = 0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.072$). On the other hand, a significant moderated mediation was found for intended confrontational protest action ($\omega = 0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.044$). These results indicate that the association between dual identification and intended protest action, especially confrontational protest, was indirect and mediated by the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative social movement action. Importantly, this indirect association was negative at low and positive at high identity incompatibility: Stronger dual identification predicted weaker protest intentions at low identity incompatibility, and it predicted stronger protest intentions at high identity incompatibility—both mediated via the association of dual identity with the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action at the respective levels of identity incompatibility.

Supplementary analyses

The relatively weak (though significant) interaction between dual identification and identity incompatibility spurred supplementary analyses to examine alternative identity dynamics, which are reported in more detail in the electronic Supplementary Materials. On the one hand, whether identity incompatibility moderated the Hong Kong and Chinese identifications was examined. The supplementary analyses revealed a significant interaction between identity incompatibility and Chinese identification concerning the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action. The negative association between Chinese identification and nonnormative legitimacy weakened with higher levels of identity incompatibility.

On the other hand, including control variables and covariates may have obscured potential associations of the

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[5] The index of moderated mediation, ω, quantifies how much the indirect association changed depending on the level of the moderator (Hayes, 2015).

collective identification variables with the mediator and outcome variables (York, 2018). Therefore, the robustness of the findings without those variables was examined, yielding generally greater estimated coefficients, such that some associations reached significance. For example, when all controls were removed, the interaction between Chinese identification and identity incompatibility in the regression of intended nonconfrontational protest action was significant.

Moreover, the interaction between dual identification and identity incompatibility in the prediction of the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest action was stronger without statistical controls. In these analyses (visualized in the Supplementary Materials), dual identification was more clearly negatively associated with nonnormative legitimacy at (reasonably) below-average identity incompatibility, and this association was more visibly positive at (reasonably) above-average identity incompatibility. As a result, the indices of moderated mediation were also significant for both outcomes. The resulting indirect and moderated associations for dual identification are diagrammatically depicted in Fig. 2.

Discussion

The current study addresses several gaps in the literature by examining the demobilizing, politicizing, and radicalizing potential of dual identification outside the context of immigrant populations in Western societies. By studying dual identity among local Hong Kong youth, a non-immigrant regional majority group representing a minority within a broader Chinese context, this research expands the cultural scope of social psychological models on collective action. It adds to their robustness and generalizability while indicating that the cultural context is relevant to understanding the collective action potential of collective identities. The findings highlight the need to make psychologically relevant the cultural context and understand the value attached to different collective identities in culturally different (non-Western) settings (Tavitian-Elmadjian & Bender, 2021; van Zomeren, 2019).

Most previous work has highlighted dual identification as pacifying or normatively politicizing (Hierro & Gallego, 2018; Sageman, 2017; Simon, 2011; Wang & Eldemerdash, 2023). The findings from the current study partly support these associations in a context with high perceived identity incompatibility, highlighting links to demobilization but also identifying associations with radical outcomes previously identified only among immigrant samples (Simon et al., 2013). Finally, this study reveals the role of legitimacy perceptions in linking collective identities to (intended) collective action.

Collective identification and the legitimacy of protest

In line with previous research, there was a positive association between identification with the aggrieved subgroup and mobilization, potentially even radicalization (Guinjoan, 2022; Simon et al., 2015; van Zomeren et al., 2008). At the same time, identification with the superordinate group was associated with deradicalization, which aligns with studies in secessionist contexts (Guinjoan, 2022) and is sensible given anti-mainland tendencies in the anti-ELAB movement (Vukovich, 2022). The association of Chinese identification was mediated through decreased legitimacy perceptions, suggesting that the perceived legitimacy of protest actions given one's collective identity is more proximally related to demobilization.

Interestingly, the perceived legitimacy of normative protest action was significantly related to intended nonconfrontational protest action, which contrasts with other research that only found an association between the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative action and the readiness to engage in nonnormative behaviors (Zlobina & Gonzalez Vazquez, 2018). However, the current analysis supports the latter finding of that study; it further shows that the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest behaviors predicts intended *nonconfrontational* protest action, an association not previously examined. The perceived legitimacy of behavior likely rationalizes subsequent (intended) participation, thus shaping how people view protest tactics. The findings tentatively indicate that nonconfrontational protest participation may be more likely when protest tactics are seen as legitimate. It is also possible that some initially "nonnormative" activities were considered relatively "moderate" at later stages of the anti-ELAB movement when its demands and protest tactics had become more radical (cf. Lee, 2020; Reichert et al., 2024), thus potentially explaining the positive link between nonnormative legitimacy and nonconfrontational protests in the specific Hong Kong context. Importantly, though, legitimacy perceptions are mediators linking collective identifications to protest intentions.

Dual identification and identity conflict

The findings show that dual identification is only indirectly associated with intended protest participation via the perceived legitimacy of normative or nonnormative action. Thereby, dual identification is linked to demobilization and—at low perceived identity incompatibility—even deradicalization. Although this result contrasts insights

from immigrant populations that dual identities politicize within normative boundaries (Klandermans, 2023; Simon, 2011), it is plausible that dual identifiers may try to balance both component identifications. By highlighting the positive characteristics of the superordinate identity, a dual identity may keep the subgroup identity in balance, which is associated with demobilization and deradicalization (Sageman, 2017; Wright & Baray, 2012). In a highly politicized conflictual situation, acknowledging that the superordinate entity is part of one's identity puts the individual in a loyalty conflict (Verkuyten, 2018). Hence, in a context where the superordinate entity is perceived as the "enemy" and the protest movement aims to renounce the superordinate identity (i.e., the opposite of ingroup projection; Wenzel et al., 2007), identifying with both groups may threaten dual identifiers' identity and encourage their withdrawal from politics (Verkuyten et al., 2019). Alternatively, respondents might have used dual identification as a performative strategy to express their Chinese identity and avoid stigmatization[6]—this possibility is discussed in the next subsection.

However, novel insights from this study indicate that the associations between dual identification and demobilization and deradicalization may be limited to individuals who consider both component identities compatible. A dual identity may be associated with radicalization if burdened with identity conflict (Simon et al., 2013), as subgroup members may find it more legitimate to protest nonnormatively, thus justifying intentions to participate in radical political action. This could be due to the heightened salience of one's ingroup identity resulting from the political struggle and a feeling of anomy due to the contention of the subordinate with the superordinate identity (Stonequist, 1935).

This study also adds to prior research the empirical insight that identity conflict is indirectly associated with intended confrontational protest. Noteworthily, this association appears to apply equally in structurally different contexts. On the one hand, identity conflict seems to raise sympathy for radical action among dual-identifying migrants in situations reflecting a politicized struggle for "equality recognition," where subgroup members strive for recognition "as a different equal" and "offer to integrate oneself into society" (Simon, 2020, 154 f.). On the other hand, the results from the current study indicate a similar relationship in a context where one group strives for more autonomy from the larger society. In this situation, the objective is not recognition as an equal but recognition, preservation, or reinforcement of differences between the subordinate and the superordinate entities. While existing theories consider struggles for superiority recognition (Simon, 2020), such conflicts are driven by the subordinate identity with the goal of not being

constrained by the superordinate collective. This explanation can rationalize the results for Hong Kong identification, but not that dual identity may be linked to radicalization in a conflict that is not a struggle for *equality* recognition. The people in Hong Kong have had more liberties and autonomy than mainland Chinese. Hence, relations previously thought to be separate may be mixed in the way how dual identification is associated with radicalization.

For example, the current results could suggest that frustration over broken promises of greater autonomy and universal suffrage, combined with identity confusion and the fear that a superordinate identity might be imposed to constrain the subordinate identity, represents a third link connecting an embedded dual identity to radicalization. The issue of identity confusion is particularly visible in contexts such as Hong Kong, where an earlier balance of subgroup identification and identification with the superordinate entity has turned into a dominant local Hong Kong identity, especially among younger generations—a process that began already before the anti-ELAB social movement (Cai et al., 2022). This development may highlight a loyalty conflict for subgroup members with a balanced dual identity as increasing numbers of other subgroup members approach an extreme subgroup identification. The psychological justification of nonnormative protest action and the related engagement in confrontational behaviors may be a way for dual identifiers to demonstrate their loyalty to these subgroup members.

Dual identification and identity dynamics

Besides the possibility that dual identifiers fail to balance both component identifications, as discussed in the previous subsection, it is also possible that the meaning and utility of a "dual identification" in the conflict setting of Hong Kong differs from other contexts. Cultural minority individuals who compartmentalize their subgroup identification and their identification with the superordinate entity (instead of blending both) are more likely to prefer to retain the norms of their subgroup (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Although the present study measured dual identification through both blending and compartmentalization, its strong correlation with Chinese identification could indicate that compartmentalization may dominate among dual identifiers. The dominant component identification in dual identifiers might influence the association with political activism, linking it to depoliticization when the Chinese component identification dominates and to radicalization among dual identifiers who feel more strongly as local Hongkongers. Dual identification's negative correlation with local Hong Kong identification and its strong correlation with Chinese identification may suggest that dual identifiers adopted compartmentalization and that the anti-ELAB social movement

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foregrounded their Chinese component identification. These correlations align with the Ingroup Projection Model, according to which identification with a superordinate entity weakens when this group is negatively valued (Wenzel et al., 2007).

However, instead of dual identifiers renouncing their superordinate (Chinese) identity, a possibility discussed in the previous subsection, they might use dual identification as a performative strategy to express their Chinese identity and avoid stigmatization, particularly considering the conflict setting in Hong Kong. In the years before the anti-ELAB movement, dissatisfaction with the mainland Chinese government grew in Hong Kong, and fewer people identified as both Chinese and Hongkonger (Cai et al., 2022; PORI, 2024). Local Hong Kong identification strengthened (Chan et al., 2021; Steinhardt et al., 2018), and signs of Chinese disidentification appeared among young people (Cai et al., 2022). Considering the dissatisfaction with the political situation and the lack of perceived responsiveness from the mainland Chinese government (Lam-Knott, 2019), identification with Hong Kong and disidentification as Chinese likely increased (Branscombe et al., 1999; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009), marginalizing Chinese and dual identifiers. Hence, compartmentalization might allow Chinese identifiers to use dual identification to avoid discrimination, as a Chinese identity might be stigmatized if not expressed in combination with a dual identification.

The changing associations of the Chinese and dual identifications with nonnormative legitimacy at increasing perceptions of identity incompatibility could indicate feelings of anomy due to the conflict between the superordinate (Chinese) and subordinate (Hong Kong) identities (Stonequist, 1935). It is not clear whether dual identifiers in the Hong Kong conflict setting would experience strong identity conflicts, as only a minority of respondents with strong dual identification reported above-average identity incompatibility in this study. Still, this supports the idea that dual identification may be used as a performative strategy to avoid stigmatization in Hong Kong's political context, especially during the anti-ELAB movement and the hostilities against mainland Chinese (Wong et al., 2024).

If respondents primarily adopted compartmentalization and dual identity was dominated by Chinese identification, it raises the question of whether dual identifiers who blend identities perceive stronger conflicts when both identities are seen as incompatible. While blended dual identifiers may view both identities as essential such that identity incompatibility is less common and demobilization is more likely, stronger identity conflicts and radicalization may happen when they perceive both component identifications as incompatible. Future studies could explore when dual identifiers adopt compartmentalization versus blending in

politically tense conflicts and whether these strategies influence the associations of dual identification with demobilization and political radicalization.

Limitations and future directions

While contributing in various ways to better understand how dual identity relates to different forms of collective action in a non-Western context, this research also has some limitations. First, the findings may not represent the entire Hong Kong student population. Still, the weighted data are representative of second-year students at the two institutions, which account for over 30% of all undergraduate students at public universities in Hong Kong (UGC, 2023).

Second, the analysis examined a cross-section of a longitudinal dataset because key variables were only measured once. Although the order of questions in the questionnaire was appropriate to test the hypothesized model, longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future, possibly in alternative sociopolitical contexts (e.g., Spain or Taiwan). Such studies could also examine the role of other variables in these processes more deeply, including, for instance, collective efficacy, moral convictions, or the perceived reasonableness of moderate and radical protest actions (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019; Zhu & Chou, 2023). More importantly, longitudinal research should illuminate potential feedback processes between collective identities, legitimacy perceptions, and political action. While collective identities can stimulate protest action, protest participation should also feed back (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). For example, the anti-ELAB protests may have foregrounded the Chinese identity component, accelerating the decline of the Hong Kong identity among dual identifiers. The correlations between earlier protest participation and ("present") collective identities were significant (Table 2), lending initial support for feedback processes. Future studies using several relatively short time intervals between measurement occasions in protest settings could help to understand better potential feedback processes between dual identification, politicization, demobilization, and political radicalization.

Third, the simple effects in the moderated regression analysis were marginally significant at reasonable levels of identity incompatibility, and the indices of moderated mediation were either significant or marginally significant. Still, the results from these analyses are noteworthy because of the statistical difficulty of detecting interaction effects with continuous variables in nonexperimental research, making it hard for interactions and simple effects to reach full significance (McClelland & Judd, 1993).[7] Experimental stud-

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[7] A sensitivity power analysis using G*Power (Version 3.1.9.7; Buchner et al., 2020) and assuming statistical power of 0.80 indicated that

ies might be an alternative, but it is ethically problematic to induce identity conflict for research purposes.

Fourth, respondents indicated their readiness to engage in protest activities that may involve a confrontation with the police and in activities that unlikely would involve such a confrontation, used as indicative of nonnormative versus normative activism, respectively. However, it is possible that some respondents also thought of nonnormative activities that would not involve police. Thus, the results pertaining to this outcome refer to intended nonconfrontational action, which for some respondents might include nonnormative in addition to normative political activities. Future studies should examine this possibility further by separating normative from nonnormative nonconfrontational action intentions to examine in more depth whether the perceived legitimacy of nonnormative protest activities is generally positively associated with both confrontational *and* nonconfrontational political activism, as suggested by the current study findings.

Moreover, future research should also examine the outcomes of collective action. How do nonconfrontational and confrontational protests cement or diminish collective identifications? What are the consequences of unsuccessful activism for collective identification, future political participation, and radicalization? Under which conditions does the radicalization of a social movement lead or not lead to withdrawal by its supporters (Feinberg et al., 2020; Fiedler et al., 2022)? How do the outcomes of collective action differ between confrontational and nonconfrontational protest action (Zhu et al., 2022), and does identity conflict moderate these associations?

Finally, norms form in groups and through contact with others (Smith et al., 2020), which might influence processes of identification, efficacy beliefs, and social movement participation (Fiedler et al., 2022; Politi et al., 2020). Social network analysis can be a particularly useful method for providing further depth to the findings from this study. For example, it could examine whether individuals with a strong dual identification and low identity incompatibility tend to be surrounded by relatively fewer individuals with a strong local identity compared to dual identifiers with high levels of identity incompatibility. It could also be explored whether visits facilitating positive interactions with mainland Chinese residents can reduce identity conflict among dual identifiers. Future studies should also examine the role of hostile feelings in linking (dual) identity to (aggressive) collective action (Su et al., 2023), given that mainland Chinese tend to experience hostility in Hong Kong.

the minimum detectable effect size corresponds to a standardized regression coefficient outside the interval [-0.09, 0.09] for the interaction analysis.

Conclusion

This study indicates that a politicized identity is not necessarily a dual identity, as argued by the PCI (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The findings highlight the links between dual identification and pacifying, even demobilizing outcomes when both component identities are compatible. They further show that dual identification is associated with radicalization—such as stronger perceptions of the legitimacy of protest action, especially radical protests, and thereby indirectly linked to a higher risk of confrontational political action—when its component identifications are perceived as incompatible. The results also suggest that ingroup identification and identification with the superordinate identity are associated with politicization and deradicalization, respectively.

These insights have as much relevance for diverse societies as for federal states, especially for contexts where regional communities strive for more autonomy from a national government. The findings expand the cultural scope of social psychological models beyond Western samples; they may have particular relevance for East and Southeast Asian societies where civil society is usually geared more toward social harmony and mediation (Kennedy & Fairbrother, 2004). The results also demand future research to more closely examine the dynamics between collective identifications, legitimacy perceptions, and protest action. Understanding which identity (component) is positively or negatively valued or perceived as threatened matters in understanding how collective identities inform collective action and demobilization (Tavitian-Elmadjian & Bender, 2021; Wenzel et al., 2007).

The current study also underscores the need to understand the social, structural, and cultural conditions behind the politicization and demobilization of collective identities. Collective identities must be made psychologically relevant in the specific cultural context (van Zomeren, 2019). This includes understanding the interplay between dual identification and perceived identity (in-)compatibility, and how and when their interaction relates to radicalization or demobilization. Fostering a balanced and healthy dual identity may be conducive to nonradical outcomes, but it also bears a potential for demobilization and, by extension, depoliticization. Future research should probe the demobilizing and radicalizing potentials of dual identities in diverse cultural settings and other intergroup contexts with high perceived incompatibility.

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Data availability The anonymized survey data will be made publicly available through the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in accordance with its guidelines and the requirements specified by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data five years after conclusion of the research project.

Declarations

Ethical approval This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Hong Kong. All participants gave informed consent before participating in this research.

Competing interests The author declares that he does not have any conflict of interest.

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