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ARTICLE

Material Interests, Identity and Linked Fate in Three Countries

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Abstract

This article examines the theoretical connections between identity and linked fate, extending the latter concept across three countries and four types of (potential) identity groups. This belief, that what happens to one's ethnic group, religious group, region, or class shapes one's own life chances, is an understudied middle ground between ideational and material drivers of political attitudes. The study uses experimental and observational analyses to show that the strength of individuals' beliefs in linked fate and that belief's consequences vary in systematic and predictable ways. From the very material effect of labor market uncertainty to the highly ideational effect of regional identity, linked fate is a cognitive bridge between two very different kinds of social–psychological experiences that can (and should) be applied across a wide range of countries and groups.

Keywords: public opinion; linked fate; ethnicity; regionalism; class; redistribution

Groups are fundamental to politics in any unit bigger than a household. Understanding who wants what, who will get what and who will pay what requires thinking about aggregations of people with similar characteristics. These groups shape our perceptions (Enos 2017; Hartmann et al. 2011; Operario and Fiske 2001), and those perceptions drive our choices.

Voters experience the world not as atomistic individuals, but as people nested within groups. Thus their perceptions about policies that take resources from some people and give them to others will be colored by those group memberships. A manual laborer in London who sees the world in class terms is more likely to vote for the left, while that same person seeing herself as English might prefer a more conservative party. How she responds to this tradeoff across identity categories will depend on a wide range of social and material factors.

In this article, I argue that the concept of linked fate, drawn from the literature on racial and ethnic politics and primarily used in the United States, can help us understand ethnicity, religion, class and region as overlapping, sometimes complementary, sometimes competing identities that will inform a broad set of political beliefs. Linked fate, though clearly tied to identity, is also a distinctly material belief. This ties it to material politics in a fundamental and predictable way. Rather than attempting to decide the debate between culture and economics as the key determinant of political behavior in favor of one side or the other, this article bridges the divide with a concept that is at once cultural and economic, identity driven and materially based.

I use the results of a recent survey that extends our measurement of linked fate to new contexts and includes careful measures of relevant predictors and an embedded experiment, which allows me to explore a wide range of sources of linked fate. I conclude by examining the impact of linked fate on redistributive attitudes. The results suggest that linked fate is a useful concept for studying

a variety of countries and group types, and should be measured more often and included in our theories of cleavages and redistributive politics.

Linked Fate as a Bridge

Linked fate – the belief that what happens to your group affects what happens to you personally – is an idea that allows us to think about attitude formation in a way that simultaneously bridges two common dichotomies in the political behavior literature. The first dimension on which linked fate serves as a middle ground (and the focus of this article) is the disagreement over the role of interests and ideas. Many studies of redistributive attitudes in particular and political behavior more generally attempt to distinguish between ideological and material sources. Some argue that attitudes toward the welfare state are driven by culture, identity or beliefs (Klor and Shayo 2010; van Oorschot 2006), while others maintain that the best predictor of a person's attitude toward state interventions is how those interventions would affect their bank account (Iversen and Soskice 2001; Owens and Pedulla 2014; Rehm, Hacker and Schlesinger 2012). Those who combine these two often do so by arguing that different people take different approaches (De La O and Rodden 2008; Solt 2011) or that people think about various kinds of redistribution in different ways (Cavaillé and Trump 2014).

This article bridges these two approaches in a different way. I argue that linked fate is material, social and ideational. This is true both because the same social processes that build up linked fate also build up identity, and because identification with a group makes that group more salient. Linked fate is a socially produced belief in the sense that some people are told by those around them that their individual fate is determined by their own choices or luck, whereas others will hear arguments about discrimination, intergroup inequalities, and the importance of solidarity that will produce and reinforce their sense of linked fate. This almost certainly begins when people are young, as family, friends and social organizations introduce political conversations in ways that are structured by their own understandings of linked fate. This focus on group differences is reinforced or undermined every time the media, politicians, bureaucrats, and other elites discuss the economy or politics in ways that emphasize or downplay particular cleavages.

Secondly, and closely related to the material–ideational dichotomy,[1] a long line of research has sought to determine whether people form their understanding of politics and make their voting decisions based on individual or national concerns. Researchers have examined this distinction in the sources of attitudes and behaviors such as economic voting support for immigration and support for redistribution (Curtis 2014; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Malhotra, Margalit and Mo 2013). Attempts to bridge this divide have highlighted the importance of considering conditions for intermediate groupings such as neighborhoods (Enos 2017), local areas (Ansolabehere, Meredith and Snowberg 2014; Newman, Johnston and Lown 2015), regions (Tucker 2006), industries or occupations (Dancygier and Donnelly 2013; Rehm 2016), and ethnic or racial groups (Chandra 2006; Hajnal and Trounstine 2014).

Linked fate serves as a new way to think about the individual–national dichotomy. By focusing on the relationship between a group and the individual members of that group on the one hand, and relationships between groups on the other, linked fate directs our attention to the fact that much of politics may be driven by group phenomena that have individual consequences. In other words, if some people think their fates are linked to those of their group(s), we would expect to see many of them tying their attitudes toward redistribution to those groups. Since those groups are, by definition, aggregates of individuals, people who do that will appear to survey researchers to be taking a more sociotropic approach. Ansolabehere, Meredith and Snowberg

[1]While it is not the case that all egotropic arguments are material and all sociotropic arguments are ideational, there is a clear relationship between these dimensions. There is a reason egotropic voting is also called 'pocketbook' voting.

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(2014) refer to their approach as a 'mecro-' level argument, and linked fate is a logical outcome of such processes, mixing in an element of intergroup comparisons.

Linked Fate as a General Concept

The classic description of linked fate comes from Dawson (1994), who argued that many African Americans use it as a heuristic, evaluating policy and political actors using the effect of the policy on (or position of) the actor toward the group as a whole, rather than more individualized effects. In other words, many African Americans, seeing their own interests bound up with those of the group, simplify politics and policy by thinking of them as acting on the group.

One does not, of course, have to limit the idea to African Americans; scholars have extended the idea to whites, Hispanics, Asians women and sexual minorities in the United States (Dawson 2009; Sanchez and Vargas 2016; Schildkraut 2017; Stout, Kretschmer and Ruppanner 2017; Moreau, Nuño-Pérez and Sanchez 2019).[2] One could argue that this focus on the United States is natural, given the huge importance of institutionalized racial differences in US history, which may make the perception that politics and economics are group-based arenas more prominent. However, scholars of comparative politics have always emphasized the importance of ethnic and regional cleavages in structuring politics in democratic societies (Chernyha and Burg 2012; Dunning and Harrison 2010; Habyarimana et al. 2009; Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Moreover, everything we know from social psychology tells us that group formation and group-level thinking plays a huge role in social interactions (Brown 2000; Hogg 2011; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Groups form easily and regularly. Stereotypes and identity heuristics appear to be a natural human response to encountering others. This suggests that people in many countries are likely to think of their own interests as being linked with those of their co-ethnics and neighbors.

Most prominent in the comparative politics literature is the idea that class has structured politics in many countries for decades (Anderson and Heath 2002; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The left has long believed that the construction of class consciousness is necessary for political mobilization around redistributive goals (Lenin 1902; Przeworski and Sprague 1986), and the extent to which this identity has become salient is widely seen as a key determinant of political outcomes (Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993).[3] Whenever a person identifies as a member of a class, she is likely to see her fate as linked to that class.

Like Ansolabehere, Meredith and Snowberg (2014), I argue that individual fates are linked to those of many different larger groups. That is, there is a material basis underlying the idea of linked fate, and while that idea is socially – and often strategically – constructed, it is based on real economic patterns. The extent of the link varies at the individual, group and national levels. Theorizing that variation requires combining both material and social dynamics.

Linked Fate along Four Dimensions

Theorizing how members of different types of groups are likely to see their own interests as tied to those of the group requires considering both the reality of the group-interest/individual-interest link and the social processes that produce the perception of a link. In this article, I examine four different types of groups: (1) race or ethnicity, (2) religion, (3) region and (4) class. These group types share two basic characteristics. First, they are much larger than, for instance, families or

[2]There are a few exceptions to this focus on the United States, including a fascinating examination of linked fate among Muslims in the Netherlands and Germany (Verkuyten 2017).

[3]Especially when examining class politics, the concept of linked fate can be confused with solidarity. They are closely related ideas, but they are distinct: solidarity implies both a sense of shared interest and a concern for others, while linked fate is simply the recognition of shared interests.

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neighborhoods but smaller than countries. Secondly, as salient categories that shape social networks, they mix material and ideational content.

Race, Ethnicity and Religion

Following prior studies on linked fate, I first examine race, ethnicity or national origin. Each Western society has its own distinct history of ethnic or racial discrimination, institutionalization and categorization. However, these differing histories share, to some degree or another, some basic patterns. In most countries, ethnic inequality is one of the most visible forms of social inequality. Levels of discrimination vary, but it is an important factor in many people's lives. Similarly, there is no doubting that ethnicity is closely tied to economic outcomes in most countries.

However, the extent to which such inequality is politically salient likely varies by country. Segregation levels vary, and participation in ethnic organizations is often fairly low. Thus, mobilization around ethnicity often takes place within the political realm, and political dynamics can increase or decrease the salience of a particular group. In the UK, Germany and Canada, ethnic diversity is a frequent topic of political controversy, and so I expect membership in ethnic groups to be highly salient for many people.

Religion sits in an interesting theoretical space, as both a set of (more or less) shared world views that might tie co-religionists together and, more prosaically, an ethnic marker. In Appiah's (2018) terms, religions are both 'creed' and 'community'. To the extent that adherents of a particular religion share an approach to life, it is certainly the case that what happens to the group is predictive of what happens to individuals.

However, at least in the relatively secularized countries under study here, religion's primary role is probably as simply an alternative way to measure ethnicity. Protestants in Germany are overwhelmingly of German ethnicity, while Muslims are overwhelmingly not. Similar ethnic inferences can be drawn from religious attachments in both the UK and Canada.[4] Among active participants in religious organizations, religion is likely to be even stronger than other ethnic markers, since a person who regularly attends services has the salience of the group identity reinforced on a regular basis.

Region

Regionalism has a long history of being tied to a person's interest, and it is easy to see how people might come to believe that their own interests are linked to the economic performance of their region. Labor markets are, after all, a primarily local phenomenon, even if inter-regional or transnational migration does serve as a potential dampener on this relationship.

Other markets are also highly local. An Albertan restauranteur depends on the health of the oil fields less than a derrick builder, but her income probably still drops when global oil prices fall. A London homeowner's wealth probably increases substantially when the city (and the City) is doing well. And, of course, like ethnicity and religion, region is a marker for other commonalities, some of which may be directly and predictably tied to economics, while others may have a more opaque, but nevertheless strong, relationship with a person's economic fate.

Class

Finally, class is the quintessential form of economically predictive group membership. The first paragraphs of the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 1964[1848]) lay this out rather

[4]There is, of course, variation in this. For instance, Catholics in all three countries are somewhat ethnically diverse and Muslims in all three include a mix of Turkish, South Asian, South East Asian and Arab origins.

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colorfully, but one does not have to be a Marxist, or even on the left, to believe that class matters to individual outcomes. Social mobility exists, but even across generations, it is notably limited (Corak 2013; Gugushvili, Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2017; Maas and van Leeuwen 2016). We know that class identity can shape other political attitudes,[5] and if people self-identify as being a member of a particular class, they almost certainly see their own interests as being related to those of the class.[6]

Linked Fate's Three Bases

Some people see their fate as deeply tied to the fates of other members of their groups, but other people do not. This variation comes from a variety of sources. To develop a theory of linked fate that bridges the material–social–ideational axis, and to derive testable hypotheses from that theory, this section develops five arguments about the sources of linked fate.

Linked Fate's Material Basis

The simplest rational determinant is the extent to which individuals think their own fate is determined by factors beyond their groups, either individual or national. For instance, if the fate in question is an individual's future income, job security ought to reduce perceptions of linked fate. A tenured Canadian university faculty member who is Sikh will have less reason than her Sikh students to think that her interests are bound up with those of other Sikhs, even if her social network, like theirs, is disproportionately Sikh. She can rest secure in the knowledge that her income next year will be more or less the same as it is this year, while they face an uncertain job market. There is little likelihood that she will be leveraging her social network to seek a new position after being let go by her employer.[7]

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who feel less secure in their jobs will express a stronger belief that what happens to others in the groups of which they are members matters for their own lives.

This hypothesis is particularly crucial for the argument that linked fate is driven, in part, by material concerns. As discussed above, identity, solidarity and linked fate are all inter-related, but there is little reason to think that a more abstract phenomenon like identity would be strongly affected by labor market uncertainty. However, the material importance of a person's group should be increased by that uncertainty.

Linked Fate's Social Origins

It is commonplace for union rhetoric (at least for many unions) to emphasize the importance of class in society (Ahlquist and Levi 2013; Donnelly 2016; Iversen and Soskice 2015; Watts 2002). We might therefore expect union members to be more likely to see their own fate as being tied to that of the working class than similarly situated non-members. This would be less likely to extend to those in the middle or upper classes, as (at least among activist unions) the emphasis is usually on working-class identities.[8]

While trade unions have historically provided labor market security (Anderson and Pontusson 2007), and perhaps thereby decreased the importance of group interests more generally relative to

[5]See, for instance, Cramer Walsh, Jennings and Stoker (2004).

[6]This argument is closely related to the social mobility argument made by Lupu and Pontusson (2011).

[7]The reverse implication for upward mobility is also valid (if Sikh incomes rise, she is unlikely to leave her position for a job she finds through her ethnic networks), but the data used below do not measure the prospects of upward mobility.

[8]This is probably less true in North America than in Europe, as in the former, a large majority of people consider themselves to be middle class.

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individual outcomes, the rhetoric of working-class solidarity that is common to many parts of the labor movement probably operates in the opposite direction.

Hypothesis 2: Union membership is associated with higher levels of working-class linked fate.

If group participation does affect perceptions of linked fate, it seems likely that this is a combination of long-term, stable reinforcement of predispositions and short-term salience (Zaller 1992). Whereas psychologists working in the minimal-group paradigm (Tajfel and Turner 1986) might emphasize that identities can be created or shifted quickly, sociologists might focus on a somewhat bigger picture or slower-moving dynamics that construct identities (Brubaker 2004; Hechter 1973). Nevertheless, there is general agreement that identities can be shaped by context, and it is likely that linked fate, as an idea that is grounded in identity, will be similarly malleable.

One way to shift the salience of a particular group identity in the short term is to discuss it in a priming exercise.[9] Simply asking a survey respondent about their linked fate with a particular group probably raises the salience of that group a bit. A stronger prime, though, can be constructed by raising the topic of between-group inequality, which comes close to making the argument that fates are linked. If frequent conversation about the differences between groups can heighten public perceptions of linked fate, it may be possible to do this in a survey setting using the same kinds of arguments that we see in political campaigns.

Hypothesis 3: Raising the salience of ethnic (regional) inequality increases perceptions that what happens to one's ethnic group (region) matters for one's own life.

Similarly, while religious rhetoric may be less frequently focused on how what happens to some members of a religion affects others, that is nevertheless a common refrain for some groups. More broadly, though, membership and (especially) regular attendance at a congregation can be seen as a proxy for the share of a person's social network that is the same religion as them. A person who regularly attends services regularly interacts with other people of the same religion, and that interaction itself is likely to strengthen perceptions that what happens to one's co-religionists matters for one's own life.

Hypothesis 4: People who attend religious services more frequently express a stronger perception that what happens to others who share their religion matters to them.

Both of these point to the role of social networks and to the social construction of beliefs about groups' impact on people. That construction takes place both peer to peer (Mendelberg, McCabe and Thal 2017; Thal 2017) and through opinion leaders (Steenbergen, Edwards and de Vries 2007; Zaller 1992).

Linked Fate's Ideational Sources

Though linked fate is conceptually distinct from identity, the idea that groups of which one is a member shape one's own life chances is closely linked to identification with such groups. It therefore seems likely that those who more strongly identify with a group will see their interests as more linked with that group. One particularly important and well-studied kind of identity in all three of the countries under study here is region. This is closely related to, but distinct from, the idea of rural consciousness (Cramer Walsh 2012).

[9]See, for instance, Mendelberg (2008a), Mendelberg (2008b) or Kuo and Margalit (2012).

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Most regions as I defined them below have a mix of urban and rural areas,[10] but if a region is substantially more or less urban than the country as a whole, it is easy to see how the sense of identity in that region may be tied to an attachment to a rural or urban identity. Thus, even residents of the cities and towns of the Midlands in the UK might think of themselves as 'rural' in contrast to London. To the extent that this is the case, we can think of regional linked fate as the consequence of mobilization around that identity, and against the 'citizens of nowhere' as May (2016) famously described her London-centric opponents.

Regional identity also includes nationalist or secessionist identities. Québec, Scotland and, to a lesser extent, Wales[11] have substantial minorities that would prefer to see their respective regions secede. This is a form of identity that imagines a much stronger community (Anderson 1983) within the region than the country as a whole. Thus it would not be surprising if they lead those people to see their fates as closely tied to those of the whole region.

All of these forms of identity are rooted in ideas of the region. They are, fundamentally, cultural and non-material. However, they can also be seen as a proxy for both the salience of the region in a person's world view and a reluctance to move out of the region if it were to experience an economic shock. Cultural barriers (including, especially, language) can make it much more difficult for people raised in one region to move to another and find work. Since such a move is one way to detach one's own interests from that of the region, this makes even this primarily ideational driver of linked fate somewhat tied to material circumstances. From both an ideational and material framework, then, it is likely that there is a close tie between regional identity and linked fate.

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who more closely identify with their region will express a stronger belief that what happens to others in the region matters for their own lives.

Considering all of these arguments together, we have a range of hypotheses about the sources of linked fate perceptions that include the highly materialistic and the highly ideational, and many points in between. Table 1 organizes the arguments for these sources along this dimension. That we can make a plausible case for hypotheses across this spectrum suggests that, *a priori*, there is reason to believe that linked fate is a cognitive process that bridges these two types of inputs.

Non-Belief in Linked Fate

In addition to the inverse of each of the positive influences on linked fate I have identified here,[12] it is worth thinking about some of the other factors that might lead people to avoid thinking of their fates as closely linked to those of their groups. Perhaps the most significant is an ideological or psychological commitment to a belief in a just world (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Lerner and Miller 1977) or meritocracy (Newman, Johnston and Lown 2015).

If people are convinced that effort, intelligence or other individual-level factors drive economic outcomes, they are unlikely to express agreement with the group-oriented idea of linked fate. This suggests that there is some reason to believe that linked fate is associated with left-leaning positions on the welfare state. This would accord well with some of the work on the role of linked fate

[10]Strictly speaking, the only exceptions to this are the Greater London Area and the city-states of Bremen, Berlin and Hamburg.

[11]Northern Ireland is, as always, a special case. The unionist majority often downplays the regional identity, preferring to emphasize an all-UK identity. Yet the nationalists generally would like their interests to be more closely tied to all thirty-two counties on the island. Thus neither wants to see their interests as particularly tied to that region, though in a practical sense, it is clear that they are. Of the forty residents of Northern Ireland included in the data below, none say that what happens to the region has no effect on what happens to them.

[12]For example, a professor with a lifetime contract, with no reasonable fear of losing her job, is unlikely to see her interests as tied to those of other members who share her ethnicity.

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Table 1. Hypotheses, ordered from most grounded in material concerns to most grounded in ideational concerns

	Determinant of linked fate	Hypothesis
Material/individual	Uncertainty	1
	Class appeals (union membership)	2
Mixed/social	Inequality appeals (priming)	3
	Religious appeals (religious attendance)	4
Ideational/national	Regional identity	5

in African American politics, where it is associated with opposing Ronald Reagan (Dawson 1994, 126) and George Bush (Dawson 2009, 196) and with supporting redistribution (Dawson 1994, 193).

Empirical Approach

The claim that many individuals, in many times and places, see their interests as linked to collectives such as region, ethnicity, religion or class is well documented, but few studies measure the extent of this belief in a way that allows comparison across countries and types of groups.[13]

The first step of the empirical section of the article, then, is to extend the measurement of linked fate to new countries. By looking outside the United States, we can better understand the extent to which this idea is driven by the unique racial politics of the United States and to what extent it is a more universal phenomenon, as suggested by its connection to social identity theory. Below, I measure linked fate in the UK, Canada and Germany using a standard question, asked about four different types of groups.

The second step is to test whether individual-level variation in job security shapes linked fate. If it does, then we can conclude that linked fate is, at least partially, an economic phenomenon. The third step examines whether group memberships and engagement increase perceptions of linked fate. To do this, I use both observational and experimental measures of the salience of particular group memberships. The fourth step is to show that even a highly cultural factor, regional identity, is closely related to linked fate.

Having covered the material–cultural axis, I then extend the analysis to examine the effect of linked fate on redistributive attitudes and describe some of the ways that linked fate might affect politics more broadly.

Data

The data for this analysis come from a three-country online survey. Respondents were recruited through Qualtrics using quotas on gender, education, and broad definitions of ethnicity and region.[14] All analyses below use raked weights designed to make the data representative of the adult populations of the three countries on age, education, migration background, language and more fine-grained measures of ethnicity and region.[15] The questionnaire asked a variety of political and demographic questions, and the linked fate measure came near the end of the survey.

The measure of linked fate took the following form:

[13]One key exception to the latter is Gay, Hochschild and White (2016), who also provide a good review of additional groups that have been studied using the linked fate concept.

[14]The challenges of generalizing from online samples to larger populations are well discussed in Mutz (2011), Hays, Liu and Kapteyn (2015), and Mullinix et al. (2015).

[15]For more details on both recruitment and weighting, see the Appendix.

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How much do you think what happens to [group] people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?

- Not at all
- Not very much
- Some
- A lot

For ethnicity, religion and region, the group was determined directly from responses to standard demographic questions, tweaked only to fit grammatically. Religion included a 'non-religious' category, and both ethnicity and religion allowed for 'other' to be filled in with a respondent's own typed response. To determine a respondent's class, the survey pre-defined 'working class', 'middle class' and 'affluent' codings based on income.

This question form is a slight simplification of the two-step version often used in the United States, which often begins by asking 'Do you think…' rather than 'How much…' and proceeds to ask how much only if respondents say yes (Gay, Hochschild and White 2016; Sanchez and Vargas 2016). The likely effect of this is to modestly increase the share that responds 'Not very much,' relative to asking the question with the two-step method.[16]

Prior to the measurement of linked fate, respondents were presented with a priming experiment, in which they were given one of three arguments, and then asked to agree or disagree (on a seven-point Likert scale) with the statement that 'the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels, even if that means raising taxes'. The arguments were that some people:[17]

- say that inequality is too high
- say that ethnic minorities have a much tougher time getting hired for a job, or
- say that it is easier to get ahead for a person in Toronto or Vancouver than elsewhere in Canada

In Germany, the comparison was to Munich and Berlin.[18] The first statement is treated as a control condition, as it does not raise the salience of any particular group. The other two conditions are relatively strong primes concerning the salience of group inequalities, coming a few minutes before the measurement of linked fate. This provides an opportunity to investigate the extent to which discussions about inequality can raise the salience of particular groups in order to shift perceptions of linked fate. If the primes shape feelings of linked fate, it seems likely that careful politicians or interest groups could shape the attitudes of their core constituents by emphasizing some identities over others.

Results

Figure 1 shows the means (treating the four categories as a 1–4 scale) of responses to the linked fate question across all three countries and across all four types of group. The most notable

[16]Consider, for instance, someone who has not seen the two-step question before, sees a yes/no question, and chooses to convey a minimal effect with 'No', not knowing that they could follow up with 'Yes' and then 'Not very much'.

[17]The experiment also varied the source of the argument (some people/business leaders/experts/etc.) and the overall context (by introducing the question with a control condition or a statement about one or another threat to the economy). The effects of those treatments on support for redistribution are explored in a companion piece Donnelly (2019). More details are included in the online appendix.

[18]In the UK, due to a programming error, the regional argument compared people to Toronto or Vancouver, and so those respondents have been dropped below.

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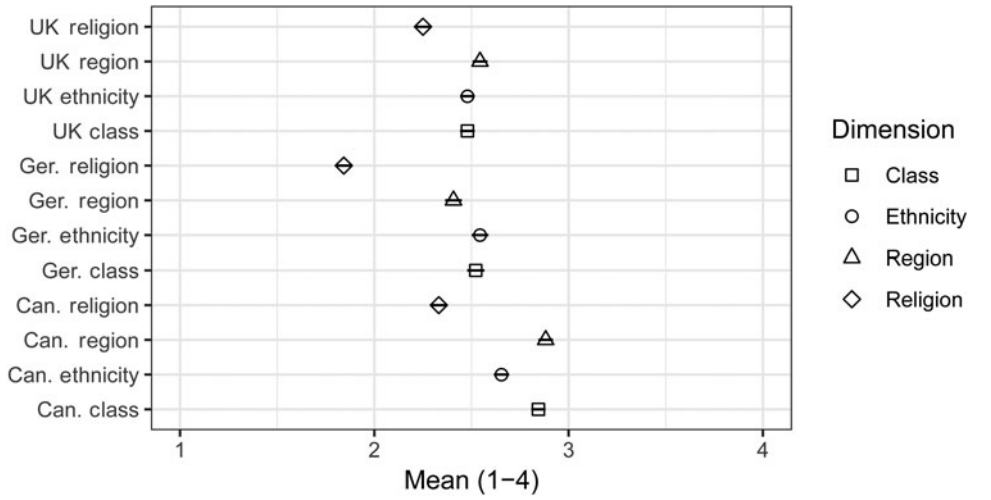

Figure 1. This shows the (weighted) mean and confidence interval for the linked fate measure across country and type of group

pattern is the relative unimportance, in all three countries, of religion. Canada also stands out as the country in which the other three dimensions are all rated as quite important.[19]

The relative unimportance of religion is largely driven by the fact that the non-religious and adherents of dominant religions in these three countries express substantially lower perceptions of linked fate than do others. Religious minorities put much higher ratings on those identities. Excluding very small groups for which the survey lacks sufficient numbers, the groups with the highest levels of linked fate in their respective countries are Jewish Canadians and Muslim Britons and Germans.

The Material Origins of Linked Fate

Hypothesis 1 suggests that as individuals become less certain that they will keep their jobs, they should put more weight on the likelihood that their interests are tied to those of their groups. I test this hypothesis using answers to a question in the survey that asks (after asking about employment status, and targeting only those who are employed):

> And how likely are you to lose your job in the next year?
>
> - Very unlikely
> - Somewhat unlikely
> - Somewhat likely
> - Very likely
> - Certain

Tables 2–4 show the results of regressing the linked fate measures on this (subjective) likelihood of job loss, along with demographic controls[20] and group fixed effects.[21] They show that, across

[19]It might be that the definitions of the categories better map onto identities in Canada than in Germany or the UK, but that German regional identity (measured using the same categories) is slightly stronger than in Canada, so it is unlikely that this explains the entire cross-national difference.

[20]For these and the models below, the online appendix includes versions of these models without demographic controls and without survey weights. The results are broadly consistent with those presented here.

[21]Since income determines class in these data, there are no fixed effects in the class models.

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Table 2. Effect of job uncertainty on linked fate, UK

	Ethnicity 1	Religion 2	Region 3	Class 4
Likelihood of job loss	0.07***	0.12***	0.09***	0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Group FE	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Observations	1,233	1,230	1,232	1,232
R^2	0.04	0.13	0.05	0.04

Note: the table shows the results in the UK of regressing a five-category linked fate measure on a five-category likelihood of job loss measure, while controlling for age, income, education, marital status and being a member of a union, as well as fixed effects for each ethnicity, religion and region in their respective models. The sample is restricted to employed respondents, as the likelihood of job loss was not asked of those who were not employed. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 3. Effect of job uncertainty on linked fate, Germany

	Ethnicity 1	Religion 2	Region 3	Class 4
Likelihood of job loss	0.08***	0.04	0.04	0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Group FE	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Observations	1,327	1,321	1,326	1,324
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.05	0.03

Note: the table shows the results in Germany of regressing a five-category linked fate measure on a five-category likelihood of job loss measure, while controlling for age, income, education, marital status and being a member of a union, as well as fixed effects for each ethnicity, religion and region in their respective models. The sample is restricted to employed respondents, as the likelihood of job loss was not asked of those who were not employed. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

the twelve coefficients, eleven are in the expected direction and seven are highly significant. This relationship is strongest in the UK, but is present in all three countries, and there are no clear patterns regarding which type of group is most strongly influenced by employment uncertainty.[22]

As individuals become more concerned about their job security, they are more likely to perceive their own fate as being tied to a larger group. This is strong evidence of two things. First, it suggests that linked fate is (partly) about income. That is, when survey respondents are answering the linked fate question, they are considering 'fate' to include economic fate. Secondly, these results suggest that cross-individual differences in linked fate are driven (again, in part) by rational observations about the world and one's place in it.

The Social Origins of Linked Fate

Turning to the effects of group membership and participation, Hypothesis 2 suggested that unions work to activate working-class identity. We should therefore see stronger class-linked fate among respondents in unions than those not in unions. Table 5 shows the results of regressing working-class-linked fate on union membership, restricting the sample to only those asked

[22]The finding that labor market uncertainty is positively associated with linked fate partially contrasts with the work of Dawson (1994). Explaining this variation would require additional data to make more direct comparisons, and future research should pursue this question, perhaps looking at the role of education and the politicization of African American identities. See Appendix E for models that use low income as an alternative measure of economic uncertainty.

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Table 4. Effect of job uncertainty on linked fate, Canada

	Ethnicity 1	Religion 2	Region 3	Class 4
Likelihood of job loss	0.06*	0.13***	0.05*	−0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Group FE	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Observations	1,150	1,150	1,150	1,150
R^2	0.05	0.15	0.04	0.03

Note: the table shows the results in Canada of regressing a five-category linked fate measure on a five-category likelihood of job loss measure, while controlling for age, income, education, marital status and being a member of a union, as well as fixed effects for each ethnicity, religion and region in their respective models. The sample is restricted to employed respondents, as the likelihood of job loss was not asked of those who were not employed. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 5. Effect of union membership on working class linked fate

	All 1	Canada 2	UK 3	Germany 4
Union	0.05	0.13	0.28**	−0.05
	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.15)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Observations	1,613	634	510	469
R^2	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.04

Note: the table shows the results in three countries of regressing a five-category class linked fate measure on union membership, while controlling for age, income, education and marital status. The samples are restricted to respondents whose income placed them in our definition of working class (and so they were asked about linked fate with reference to the working class). *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

about working-class-linked fate.[23] It shows that this only seems to work in the United Kingdom. In Canada the coefficient is in the predicted direction but insignificant, while in Germany the coefficient is in the opposite direction. Becher and Pontusson (2011) estimate that about three-fifths of the union movements in both the UK and Germany fall above the median household income (among the highest shares in Western Europe), suggesting that the differences in the effect of union membership on the sense of working-class-linked fate across countries must be driven by something other than simple structural differences in who joins unions.

One possibility, which should be explored in future research, is that UK union rhetoric has long been much more class based than similar rhetoric in other countries, and that this has led only people with strong working-class-linked fate to join unions.

To test Hypothesis 3, we use the embedded taxation priming experiment, which randomized the argument for redistribution by highlighting inequality, ethnic inequality or regional inequality. The results in Table 6 are somewhat supportive of this hypothesis. People who are reminded of ethnic inequalities in the labor market are more likely to say that their fate is linked to their co-ethnics in the UK, and the regional prime predicts regional linked fate strongly in Germany and somewhat more weakly in Canada.

Table 7 shows that these effects are primarily driven by minorities. That is, the coefficients are more positive when excluding white Canadians, ethnically German Germans and white British UK respondents, and excluding those regions highlighted as relatively rich in the regional prime. This is particularly true for the ethnic prime in Canada, which goes from small and insignificant to quite large and significant. The coefficients on ethnicity in the UK and region in Germany effectively double when excluding the privileged groups.

[23]Respondents were only asked about working-class-linked fate if their household income was less than €22,000, £18,000 or $40,000 in Germany, the UK and Canada, respectively. Higher-income respondents were asked about linked fate with middle-class or affluent people.

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Table 6. Effect of inequality prime on linked fate

	Ethnicity			Region	
	Canada 1	UK 2	Germany 3	Canada 4	Germany 5
Ethnic prime	0.05	0.11**	−0.05		
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)		
Regional prime				0.08*	0.12**
				(0.05)	(0.05)
Observations	1,281	1,313	1,300	1,353	1,293
R^2	0.001	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.004

Note: the table displays the impact of priming ethnic or regional inequalities on perceptions of linked fate. The ethnic models include only those respondents who received the ethnic prime or the control prime (inequality only) and the regional models include only those who received the regional prime or the control prime. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 7. Effect of inequality prime on linked fate (out-groups only)

	Ethnicity			Region	
	Canada 1	UK 2	Germany 3	Canada 4	Germany 5
Ethnic prime	0.27**	0.22**	0.01		
	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.18)		
Regional prime				0.15**	0.19***
				(0.06)	(0.06)
Observations	262	351	144	704	1,016
R^2	0.002	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01

Note: the table displays the impact of priming ethnic or regional inequalities on perceptions of linked fate. The samples exclude ethnic-majority members (whites/white British/Germans) and residents of the advantaged regions (Ontario and British Columbia/Bavaria and Berlin. Note that the ethnic models include only those respondents who received the ethnic prime or the control prime (inequality only) and the regional models include only those who received the regional prime or the control prime. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 8 examines Hypothesis 4, which argued that religious participation would increase the strength of the belief that a person's interests are tied to those of co-religionists. The test is restricted only to people who identified as adherents of a religion and uses a four-category measure of the frequency of attendance at religious services,[24] which is treated as continuous. As predicted, attendance has a very strong positive impact on linked fate. The effect is quite consistent in the pooled sample and across the three countries.

This could, of course, be the result of people with strong religious linked fate attending services more frequently, rather than attendance driving their sense of linked fate. Most likely, both phenomena are present here, but the data do not allow us to tease it out in any direct way.

The Identity Origins of Linked Fate

Hypothesis 5 argued that people who more strongly identify with their region (relative to their country) are likely to see their fate as more strongly linked to those of their neighbors. This is clearly supported by the results in Table 9. Regional identification measured using a Moreno scale[25] (Guinjoan and Rodon 2016; Moreno 2006) strongly predicts a sense that one's own interests are tied to those of the region.

[24]The question asked respondents to exclude weddings and funerals, and the possible responses were 'Never', 'A few times per year', 'About once a month' and 'More than once per month'.

[25]This is a five-category scale that forces respondents to trade off a national identity with a regional one. Higher values indicate placing more identity in the region (province, land or UK regions/countries) at the expense of the larger state.

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Table 8. Effect of religious attendance on religious linked fate

	All	Canada	UK	Germany
	1	2	3	4
Religious attendance	0.33***	0.28***	0.33***	0.36***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Religion FE	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Observations	3,658	1,272	1,209	1,177
R^2	0.21	0.21	0.24	0.17

Note: the table shows the results in three countries of regressing a five-category religious linked fate measure on a four-category religious attendance measure, while controlling for age, income, education, marital status, and being a member of a union, as well as fixed effects for each religion. The samples are restricted to respondents who identified a religious affiliation. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 9. Effect of regional identification on linked fate

	All	Canada	UK	Germany
	1	2	3	4
Regional ID	0.06***	0.11***	0.04**	0.05**
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Demographic controls	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Region FE	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Observations	5,587	1,926	1,857	1,804
R^2	0.08	0.04	0.05	0.04

Note: the table shows the results in three countries of regressing a five-category regional linked fate measure on a five-category Moreno-style regional identity measure, while controlling for age, income, education, marital status and being a member of a union, as well as fixed effects for each region. *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Downstream Effects of Linked Fate

If linked fate is both material and cultural, it ought to drive preferences for many policies, including redistribution.[26] Theories of redistributive attitudes come in many forms, but material interests – both now and in an uncertain future – often play a major role (Iversen and Soskice 2001; Margalit 2013; Marx 2014; Moene and Wallerstein 2001; Owens and Pedulla 2014). Perhaps most relevantly for this article, Rehm (2009) argues that we should think of individual preferences for the welfare state as a desire for insurance against a loss of income as a result of unemployment, disability or retirement. A person who feels their interests are bound to those of a poor group should anticipate a larger likelihood of need and therefore want a larger welfare state.

Similarly, to the members of a rich group who feel tied to that group, membership in the group should serve as a substitute for the welfare state and increase their (perceived) likelihood of upward mobility. This would lead to a decrease in support for redistribution, as taxes are more likely to bite and benefits are less likely to flow to them.

Hypothesis 6: Members of poor groups with high levels of linked fate will express higher demands for redistribution.

Hypothesis 7: Members of rich groups with high levels of linked fate will express lower demands for redistribution.

To test these hypotheses, I examine answers to the tax question as a function of linked fate separately among relatively high-income and relatively low-income groups. This allows for clean tests

[26]These data do not include measures of other relevant policy preferences. Future work should consider the effects that linked fate might have on preferences for descriptive representation and other policies more toward the ideational/symbolic end of the spectrum.

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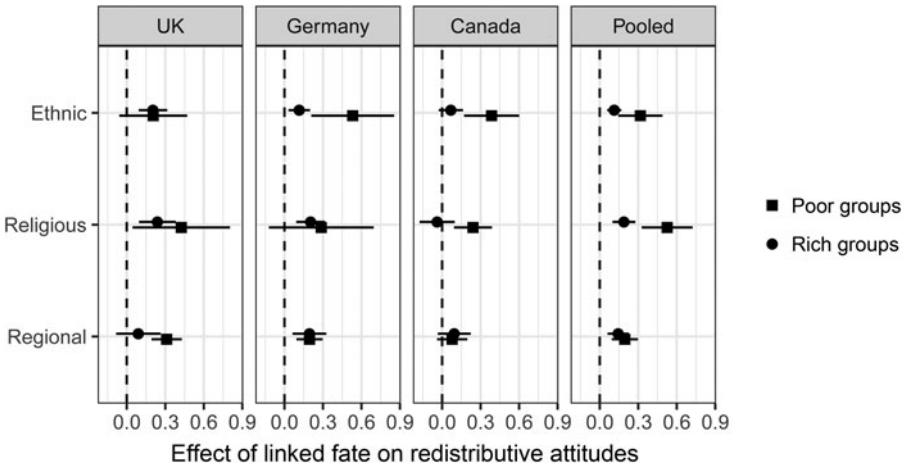

Figure 2. This shows effect of a one-unit change in linked fate on redistributive attitudes
Note: all models are OLS regressions controlling for age, gender, marital status, education, income, likelihood of job loss, union membership, the treatment condition, and group/region fixed effects. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals.

of Hypotheses 6 and 7, though they are observational, rather than experimental. That is, while the prime is randomized, the independent variable I am interested in (linked fate) is an individual characteristic that is only partly determined by the prime.[27] Therefore, the models below control for the primes and for other individual demographics that might be associated with both linked fate and redistributive preferences, including age, gender, education, marital status, income, union membership and job uncertainty.

Figure 2 shows results that are consistent with the argument that members of poor groups[28] who feel a stronger sense of linked fate will be more supportive of measures to reduce income differences. Among models subset to include poor groups only (square points), all forms of linked fate are positively related to redistributive attitudes, and of the twelve estimates, ten are significantly different from zero.

The effects among relatively rich groups (circular points) are generally smaller, but not in the negative direction that was predicted by Hypothesis 7. I had expected that members of rich groups, believing that their group (and therefore their likely future selves) would be negatively impacted by redistribution, would oppose redistribution more when they saw that link as stronger. This suggests that while material, linked fate may be seen as an insurance mechanism and not associated with upward mobility. Alternatively, it could be that in the case of majority ethnic groups (treated as rich here) such as Germans, respondents might think of their group as the default, and therefore as the average. People who express a belief in linked fate are therefore expressing a belief that they are likely to revert to the mean. Future research should explore this issue in more depth, perhaps by oversampling extremely wealthy groups or examining countries in which intergroup inequalities are even starker than they are in these countries.

Discussion

If, as Achen and Bartels (2016) argue, 'group ties and social identities are the most important bases of political commitments and behavior', can individual material interests still shape

[27]One might be tempted to use the prime as an instrumental variable proxying for linked fate, but it would be hard to justify the exclusion restriction, since these primes might influence linked fate but also affect redistributive preferences through other channels, such as altruism or partisan associations.

[28]See the online appendix for a list of which groups and regions are treated as poor and which are treated as rich in each country.

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attitudes? In this article, I have argued that the perception that one's interests are tied to those of the groups of which one is a member is an important driver of politics. I argued that those perceptions come from a combination of observations individuals make about the world around them, discussion and socialization by their social networks and opinion leaders, and their core ideas about who they are. This combination of material, social and ideational helps bridge the gap between purely individual egotropic models of political behavior and broader altruistic or sociotropic models. Groups are a part of every society, and so we should expect them to matter for politics.

The results above demonstrate the utility of the concept of linked fate as a driver of political opinion formation. This belief is associated with predictable characteristics and attitudes, and is a plausible mechanism that helps explain why groups differ in their politics, even after we account for individual characteristics. There are other potential sources of linked fate, and future research should consider the role of individualist ideologies, belief in a just world, and personal experiences of discrimination as fruitful ways of situating this cognitive process in the social world.

Together, these observational and experimental findings suggest that linked fate comes from identity and ideas, but also from material conditions. That is, people who express a strong belief in linked fate do so in ways that are broadly consistent with their economic interests. The finding that linked fate is closely tied to, but distinct from, identity makes it a concept that, if well measured, opens up a wealth of potential research questions. Scholars thinking about inter-regional redistribution would do well to consider, at the individual level, how perceptions of regional linked fate drive politics. Similarly, research into ethnic diversity and redistribution or immigration and welfare states would do well to incorporate measures of linked fate into their toolkit, as they would help clarify the relationship between social structures and individual attitudes.

The results, especially those in Figure 2, suggest that if respondents see their interests as tied to those of their group(s), it affects their preferences. This is particularly important for scholars looking to disentangle interest-based drivers of certain preferences or behaviors from sociocultural drivers. At the very least, it suggests caution in assuming that income, age and education are sufficient for measuring (perceived) interests. More broadly, it suggests that even psychological processes that are clearly cultural in nature, such as group identity, may affect other attitudes *through* perceptions of interests. If that is the case, those perceptions must be incorporated both theoretically, by breaking down the hard distinction between ideational, social and material factors, and empirically, by explicitly measuring perceptions of linked fate.

Supplementary material. Data replication sets are available in Harvard Dataverse at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/U1JEC0 and online appendices at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123419000589.

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