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Imagined Homecomings: The Problem with Similarity among Ethnic Return Migrants in Spain

David Cook-Martín, Grinnell College

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Diasporic Homecomings
Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective
edited by Takeyuki Tsuda

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Popular and scholarly curiosity has recently been piqued by official policies that give a privileged migratory or citizenship status to individuals abroad because of presumed common origins with a granting state's people. The Aussiedler, or ethnic Germans, and members of the Jewish Diaspora are among the best known examples of people affected by these ethnic affinity policies (Joppke 2005; Levy and Weiss 2002), but, as Tsuda notes in the introduction to this volume, there are many other instances: Latin Americans descended from Italian, Japanese, and Spanish emigrants, ethnic Hungarians in Eastern Europe, descendants of the Irish in the Americas, and Estonian-descent West Siberians (Brubaker 1998; Corcoran 2002; Fox 2006; Kulu 1998; Rhi Sausi and García 1992; Tsuda 2003). Despite policymakers', hosts', and migrants' tacit assumption that ethnic affinity facilitates social and economic integration, a search of the literature reveals an expectations mismatch between new arrivals and natives in virtually every case. When anticipated opportunities and social acceptance do not materialize, ethnic return migrants and their hosts become frustrated with each other. They often reappraise supposed commonalities, and newcomers may return to their previous country of residence or move to another destination. In other instances these migrants find jobs but not the expected social welcome. Existing studies document a range of frustrated expectations and related consequences but fail to offer an explanation.

What accounts for the expectations gap between people legally and popularly presumed to enjoy considerable affinities and good prospects for mutual acceptance? Drawing on a study of Spanish-descent Argentines in Spain, we argue that contrary to conventional knowledge, the effect of perceived ethnic
resemblance varies across social contexts. It can be an asset for Spanish-descent Argentines looking for housing, access to education, friends, dates, or even a marriage partner in Spain, but it can be a liability in the labor market, where access to the first rungs of the occupational ladder is often reserved by employers for newcomers valued precisely because their work orientations differ from those of natives. A willingness to endure low wages and subpar working conditions in view of a potential economic and status payoff in the homeland—what social scientists have called a dual frame of reference—has made new immigrants appealing to employers. To the extent that ethnic return migrants are oriented primarily to the local economic and status structure, employers may not view them favorably and their access to entry level jobs may be hindered and/or they may be forced to compete with better positioned natives for skilled or professional jobs. Herein lies the problem of assuming that similarity offers benefits across the board.

In the next section we describe what we mean by ethnicity and how it can shape job market orientations and employers’ evaluation of prospective workers. We then explain the rationale for including two cases of ethnic return migration to Spain and delve into the historical and institutional bases of presumed commonalities. An analysis of these two cases is the empirical core of our argument. In a discussion section we compare key insights gleaned from the Spanish cases with observations from studies of ethnic Germans in Germany and Japanese-descent Brazilians in Japan. We conclude that ethnic return migrants’ orientations are shaped by the terms of the policies that give them access to the destination country’s labor markets and citizenship.

Ethnic Affinity, Job Market Orientations, and Tractable Labor

In this chapter we use the term *ethnicity* to refer to social relations premised on a “subjectively believed community of descent” or origins (Weber 1978: 387). This belief is based on, among other things, phenotype, customs, or memories of colonization and migration. However contrived the foundations of ethnicity, if people believe in them, they are real in their consequences (Thomas and Thomas 1928: 572). We use ethnicity, then, to analytically capture this subjective belief in common origins, associated relations, and putative affinity but not in reference to any substantial group (recall Tsuda’s introduction to this volume). In the case at hand, Spanish policies reflect a belief in common origins with (1) descendants of former colonial subjects that at times have been viewed as belonging to a state-transcending community of Hispanic nations and/or (2) descendants of Span-
ish emigrants to the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Ethnicity can be the means to effect monopolistic closure around scarce goods, in this instance Spanish (and European) labor markets, and social welfare resources. Ethnic affinity policies are laws and related official practices through which one state (e.g., Spain) gives prospective migrants living in other countries (e.g., Spanish-descent Argentines) a privileged migration or citizenship status based on perceived common origins. Ethnic return migrants—the beneficiaries of these policies—have access to much the same social and economic goods as their legally defined co-ethnics, at least on paper. Ethnic affinity laws are part of an official discourse to bring into existence the very distinctions they treat as natural and self-evident (Bourdieu 1991: 223). For instance, the legal category of emigrant returnee, which applies to people who may have never set foot in Spain and who have another nationality, represents a claim on these individuals by virtue of history and familial ties. It is analytically important to recognize that these policies and related categories are used by participants in struggles to define national insiders and, by default, outsiders and do not reflect obvious or “objective” distinctions.

State actors in developed economies are often caught between two competing impulses. On the one hand, maximizing social cohesion within a territorially circumscribed population is persistently emphasized and often entails state efforts to minimize difference. On the other hand, embeddedness in an economic system that relies on the availability of ever cheaper labor means that workers must often come from abroad. Ethnic return migrants appear to reconcile these contradictory impulses. They are more likely to share linguistic competencies, religion, customs, orientations, and possibly phenotype with natives, and they would presumably fill entry-level jobs not taken by natives, at least for a time. The tacit assumption of participants and observers is that ethnic affinity refers to similarities among natives and newcomers that traverse multiple social contexts and ease mutual acceptance among migrants and co-ethnic hosts.

Economic scholarship on migrants, however, suggests that similarity may actually be problematic in the work domain. Employers who hire for jobs commonly available to new arrivals expect a deferential disposition unlikely to be found among co-ethnics who share with natives social characteristics, expectations, and legal rights. Analysts have long argued that what makes migrants desirable as workers is their tendency to use a dual frame of reference to interpret their experience and orient their action (Massey et al. 1987; Piore 1979; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This dual frame consists of a willingness to accept low-status and poorly paid jobs in the receiving context in view of expected
financial and social status returns in the homeland. Employers interpret this disposition as deference, and it becomes part of their assessment of workers’ suitability for particular jobs. Employers also understand that natives oriented to the local status structure are unwilling to fill entry-level positions. Because migrants often think of the here and now in terms of the there and then, they also tolerate living quarters and everyday hardships they might not have endured in the homeland (Piore 1979). To be sure, migrants’ orientation to the context of settlement changes, but this is a process that unfolds over time.

So long as the supply of foreign tractable workers is steady, employers are likely to continue to hire them. Indeed, economic sociologists argue that, all things being equal, employers are likely to hire the same people today that they hired yesterday (Tilly and Tilly 1998: 195). However, if workers’ tractability in a particular sector is diminished in noticeable ways—say, through unionization—employers may replace them with a new category of workers. This is what has been happening, for instance, in the strawberry sector in southern Spain: Male Maghrebian workers who had harvested this “time-sensitive” product since the late 1980s became politically mobilized, and employers began to replace them with Eastern European and Latin American female workers touted as more reliable, deferential, and “better suited” to this delicate crop ("Inmigración en España," 2001; “Southern Europe,” 2002; cf. Pedreño Cánavas 2000). Tractability is of utmost importance to employers and, when it is threatened, they are likely to replace one category of newcomers with another composed of more deferential workers.

Ethnic return migrants have all the makings of less pliable workers. They have the same formal rights and privileges as their native hosts, access to similar jobs, and likely similar work expectations. Even when they do not, prospective hosts may assume that they do and conclude that they are unlikely to be compliant workers. Native employers do not, for the most part, want to hire ethnic kin to do the dirty, dangerous, and difficult (3D) jobs they have to offer at low wages; they prefer strangers. This is why we argue that, although ethnic similarity may suggest mutual acceptance in some domains, it is not necessarily so in the sphere of work.

Data and Methods

We support our argument by examining two case studies of Argentines whose migration to Spain has been facilitated by ethnic affinity policies. These are key cases because observers and participants alike generally assume a high degree of affinity between these migrants and their supposed Iberian kin and
expect that this affinity will facilitate mutual acceptance and ease the transition to Spain. These presuppositions are understandable given the historical, cultural, and organizational links between Spain and Argentina since the mid-nineteenth century. If anywhere, ethnic return migration should work here as conventionally anticipated.

To establish the baseline of conventional knowledge with its implicit expectation of mutual acceptance, we examine the discursive construction of the case of Spanish-descent Argentines and their hosts in Aguaviva, a small town in the rural Spanish region of Aragon. The analysis rests on a close interpretive reading of 257 articles compiled by us between 2000 and 2005 from the Spanish, Argentine, North American, and European press. We collected articles with specific references to ethnic return migration from Argentina to Spain and those that specifically referred to Aguaviva (a fifth of all items compiled). Our interpretive approach situates authors, characters, plot, and language in their respective local, regional, national, and supranational contexts, notes common assumptions, and contrasts implicit and changing claims about ethnic migrants. This case serves as a window onto the sometimes conflicting expectations of Spanish-descent Argentines and their co-ethnic hosts, as viewed by journalists from different national standpoints who take for granted the commonality between people in these categories and what this implies for mutual acceptance. Aguaviva is also a strategic site because it reflects broader Spanish and European concerns about declining populations and about immigration as a solution to demographic dilemmas.

To examine on-the-ground dynamics between natives and ethnic migrants, and in particular their mutual acceptance in a range of contexts, we turn to a qualitative account that draws on observations and interviews carried out between June 2001 and September 2003 among Spanish Argentines in Ría, a pseudonym for an industrial port city in Galicia, Spain. One of us (Cook-Martín) carried out fieldwork that consisted of a dozen intensive interviews with ethnic return migrants. Cook-Martín selected initial participants from a list of names given by three independent contacts in the community. In turn, these initial contacts each provided a list of other potential interviewees from which additional names were drawn with an eye for maximizing differences in participant characteristics and experiences. Fieldwork also included observations and less formal interviews with participants at work, home, and recreational venues (e.g., a local café patronized by Argentines and cultural events that attracted people who had lived in Argentina).
The selection of an urban locale (Ría) and a rural one (Aguaviva) allows us to rule out the possibility that the observed expectations mismatch is an effect of rural-urban differences among newcomers and natives. More importantly, it underscores that, although two distinct types of ethnicity are at work in these cases, they both shape expectations in remarkably similar ways. In Aguaviva the belief in common origins is sustained loosely by a narrative of hispanidad steeped in Spain’s history of emigration. Institutionally, this “historical legacies” flavor of ethnicity has informed Spanish immigration policies that contain preferential provisions for Latin Americans and, more recently, nationality policies that give preferential status to anyone who can support links to a Spanish parent or grandparent with official documentation (Reino De España 2002). In Ría ethnicity is conceptualized in terms of concrete kinship ties among newcomers and natives thanks to migration flows that linked Galicia and Argentina well into the 1970s. This conception is taken for granted if not validated by regional official policies for retornados (returnees) that offer assistance to Galician emigrants or their descendants. Thus a third methodological component of this study is an analysis of policies that reflect and shape relevant notions of ethnicity.

The Foundations of Ethnic Affinity

More than a century of substantial migration between Argentina and Spain, related cultural and organizational links, and legal mechanisms have sustained the widely held assumption of common origins. As part of a larger wave of European migration, 3.17 million Spaniards migrated to Argentina between 1857 and 1975 and just over half remained. The people who moved back and forth between the two countries built the networks characteristic of most migrations (Tilly 1990). These included hometown and/or mutual assistance associations that were especially prevalent among Galicians—more than 45 percent of Spanish migrants to Argentina (Álvarez Silvar 1997). By the 1920s there was a sufficient number of associations to justify a Federation of Galician Societies (FGS) (Fernández Santiago 2001). These associations not only met migrants’ material and cultural needs in Argentina but also linked them to sending areas and channeled crucial resources to the homeland. In recent years associations have served as sources of homeland information for those interested in the possibility of migrating to Galicia. In Buenos Aires the FGS has continued to bridge the cultural and political lives of its members and Galicians in the homeland. In fact, it was through an FGS-sponsored radio
The possibility of reclaiming Spanish citizenship a generation or more after the last emigrants arrived in Argentina speaks to the tenor of legal mechanisms developed under particular circumstances. Specifically, migration between Argentina and Spain coincided with nation-state building and consolidation processes in each country. Central to these processes were efforts to constitute national populations by identifying people as members subject to official administration and by gaining people’s allegiance to a *patria*. Vastly underpopulated, Argentina faced the challenge of attracting people to feed labor demand and to call its own; Spain had to make Spaniards out of a highly mobile and diverse population. Migration and nationality law were concrete mechanisms through which these countries competed over the same migrants and their children. The outcome of these struggles has been a pattern of ethnic affinity policy, as defined earlier.

Argentine expressions of this policy pattern include long-standing dual nationality agreements and official preference for Spanish migrants, especially in the inter- and postwar years (Cook-Martín 2008). Dual nationality agreements have allowed citizens of Argentina and Spain to maintain legal affiliations with both countries without the effects of conflicting citizenship obligations. Commercial and migration treaties have made possible the entry of Spaniards on privileged terms, especially since the 1940s (Quijada Mauriño 1989). Spanish manifestations of ethnic affinity policy include right of blood (jus sanguinis) nationality laws and, more recently, central-state and regional migration policies. Since the nineteenth century, the Spanish Civil Code has conferred citizenship to the children of Spaniards5 regardless of birthplace, provided that prescribed administrative procedures were carefully followed. Modifications to the code introduced in 2002 have made nationality provisions even more expansive toward the descendants of Spaniards (Reino de España 2002).

Since its inception, Spanish immigration law has included positive preferences for “Ibero-Americans,” other former colonials, historically wronged communities, and citizens of strategic regions (Reino de España 1985). Despite a recent convergence toward a liberal-democratic norm, with its emphasis on universalistic admissions criteria (Joppke 2005), some positive preferences persist in the most recent iteration of Spanish immigration law (Reino de España 2003).6 More important, preferences have migrated to nationality law and are still operative in immigration administrative practices.
Flows and stocks of immigrants in Spain support this last point. Although the supply of North African migrants is plentiful, it is the stock of Latin Americans that has grown fastest in Spain over the last five years. Until recently, Moroccans and other North Africans have constituted the main contingent of migrants to Spain. In 2003 Moroccans accounted for just over 20 percent and all Africans for just over 26 percent of immigrants in Spain (Reino de España 2004). However, recent figures show that registered Ecuadorans, documented or otherwise, have surpassed Moroccans as the largest group of foreigners in Spain. The total number of foreigners in Spain was estimated at 2.6 million in 2003, or 6.2 percent of the total population. According to these data, Ecuadorans and Colombians account for almost one-fourth of all foreigners in Spain. Spanish social security data show that Ecuadorans number almost 250,000 registered workers, and Colombians approximately 130,000 (Reino de España 2005). The most recent and comprehensive study of the Argentine-born in Spain shows that they number just over 250,000 (Actis and Esteban 2006). The population has been historically undercounted because of their privileged legal status and administrative treatment.

Notwithstanding the universalistic cast of immigration law, preferential treatment of Spanish-descent Latin Americans in nationality law and actual administrative practice—at the “border” and in the implementation of “regularization” programs—has resulted in an immigrant population that models Spanish ethnic preferences (Cea d’Ancona 2004; Cook-Martín 2002; Izquierdo Escribano et al. 2002; Retis 2003; Solé and Parella 2003). In a fascinating policy shell game driven largely by European Union (EU) pressures, positive preferences for Latin Americans—especially those from former emigrant-receiving areas in South America—have shifted from one legal domain to another. Because nationality policies constitute a back door to membership in EU member polities, however, pressure is mounting to change them (Zincone 2006).

Local and regional-level migration policy also evidence positive preferences. The cases described in this chapter illustrate two patterns of ethnic affinity policy applied at the subnational level. In the first pattern, municipal governments leverage the privileged migration status available to Spanish-descent foreigners through aggressive recruitment in culturally Spanish enclaves abroad. Local governments from Spain use what had been largely dormant associational ties to get the word out to prospective eligible migrants and to select according to other criteria (age, familial status, skills). Municipal-level governments work within existing central-state laws but accentuate selectivity according to local
needs and preferences and even organize associations of governments with these objectives.

In the second pattern, regional governments design laws and related official practices to facilitate co-ethnic “return.” Often the prospective beneficiaries are considered citizens by other states and do not necessarily identify affectively with the ancestral homeland in question. Policies of the Autonomous Region of Galicia, discussed later, are an example of this second pattern. Like central-state policies, the legal right of return is supported by invoking a historical-cultural rationale. However, the argument is specific to a Galician history of emigration and is associated with access to material and symbolic resources. The symbolic resources include officially sanctioned identification with Galicia (Parlamento de Galicia 1983), and the material resources are resources for returning emigrants (Conseillo de Emigración 2006). In this case ethnic selectivity is bolstered by regional government institutional, financial, and organizational resources.

This brief overview underscores the historical and institutional bases of a widespread presumption of affinity among Spaniards and Latin American migrants, especially Argentines. In the following sections we demonstrate the shortcomings of the underlying family-resemblance-facilitates-integration rationale, particularly as Spanish-descent Argentines try to break into labor markets in Spain.

**Aguaviva: Frustrated Expectations and Ethnic Redefinitions**

A small town located midway between Madrid and Zaragoza, Aguaviva has gained notoriety since the turn of the millennium as the site of an innovative program to fight depopulation through selective recruitment of Spanish-descent migrants in South America. Its experiment with immigration by design has received considerable attention from the Spanish, European, and Argentine press because it resonates with broader concerns of European states perceived to be in demographic decline or in a so-called second demographic transition (Kligman 2005; Pérez Leira 2002) and concerns of relatively new, economically ailing emigration countries such as Argentina (Actis and Esteban 2006; Lattes et al. 2003). The Aguaviva story is captivating precisely because it purports to be a win-win encounter of sending and receiving country needs. From the sending country viewpoint, under- and unemployed citizens are able to access European labor markets and perhaps even send remittances (Calvo 2005). From the receiving country perspective a diminishing population is replenished with people who make possible the reproduction of European pollities and economies. The
crucial point is that these newcomers presumably bear a family resemblance to natives and are therefore thought more likely to fit in easily. Tacit in this understanding is a comparison with other prospective migrants who are linguistically, religiously, racially, and culturally more distant from the native norm and thus less amenable to integration (Gil Araujo 2004). Thus the selective immigration program undertaken by Aguaviva is newsworthy because it is a proactive and innovative approach to dilemmas faced by European receiving and Latin American sending states, not because of its exceptionality.

Contrary to expectation, however, family resemblance has not ensured relatively easy acceptance. Many Spanish-descent Argentines recruited to Aguaviva have shunned the jobs and accommodations offered to them. Native hosts, on the other hand, have been happy with the demographic replenishment but have questioned newcomers’ work ethic and have compared them to Romanian immigrants who unexpectedly met and exceeded local hopes. For observers and participants this has been a puzzling turn of events that motivates print media narratives. To explain this outcome, we review the Aguaviva case in detail and make the argument that ethnic affinity varies in the extent to which it eases mutual acceptance across social contexts.8

By the late 1990s, Aguaviva’s mayor, Luis Bricio, had concluded that, absent drastic measures, small towns like his would disappear within a generation. Aguaviva had the lowest birth rate in a country with the lowest birth rate in the world (Álvarez Álvarez 1999; Carricart and Litvak 2000; Fernández Cordón 2001). With other mayors from his region, Bricio founded the Spanish Association of Municipalities Against Depopulation (AEMCD), of which he has remained president. The objectives of the AEMCD were to foster economic development while promoting selective immigration (Bricio Manzanares 2004). Concretely, towns would sponsor preferably large Latin American families of Spanish descent. Interest settled especially on Argentina because many of its Spanish-descent citizens had begun to apply for Italian or Spanish citizenship in the wake of economic crisis. Migrants would enter a contract with each municipality, committing to stay for a period of five years. For their part, municipalities would front relocation costs and provide housing and work.

In July 2000 Bricio traveled to Argentina to select a dozen pioneer families. Working through local chapters of the Spanish conservative Partido Popular in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Mar del Plata, he announced several blue-collar openings for couples younger than age 40 with at least two children (Carricart and Litvak 2000; Monserrat 2000). Bricio appeared on a local radio program,
Galicia Oxe, and at least two large media outlets picked up the story. The widely disseminated announcement received an overwhelming response, and within two days the Partido Popular offices processed the inquiries of more than 5,000 people (Ortega 2001). By April 2001, 10 Argentine and 2 Uruguayan families had settled in Aguaviva, adding 34 children to the local primary school with a previous enrollment of 50 children. They were mostly from middle-class urban backgrounds, and many had managed small businesses during the most recent economic crisis in Argentina. The families arrived with much fanfare, and rosy assessments of Bricio’s initiative were the order of the day. Newcomers to Aguaviva celebrated their good fortune and the generosity of their hosts in multiple interviews with the Spanish and Argentine press. It seemed that there had been a happy meeting between the demographic needs of rural Spain and the economic needs of Spanish-descent Argentines. Subsequently the repopulation program was expanded to include families from other Latin American countries and Eastern Europe, primarily Romania. In all, about 25 families arrived in Aguaviva, raising its total population to more than 700 people (“Aguaviva,” 2005) and doubling its school-age population (Daly 2003).

Despite the auspicious beginnings of the Aguaviva initiative, half the Argentine families had left or were considering leaving within a year of arriving. They all had Argentine and Spanish nationality, which allowed for movement within the European Union. Most claimed that Aguaviva had not met its promises of providing adequate housing and, especially, work. New arrivals felt entitled to the same treatment as natives, for which they adduced two entwined rationales. The first was historical. Newcomers invoked narratives of aid rendered by Argentina to Spain’s past emigrants, including their own ancestors, to imply that contemporary Spaniards maintained an outstanding debt with Argentina that could be repaid by giving its citizens a comparable hand. Jorge López (age 40, laid off as a technician with 3M in Buenos Aires) held that “my grandfather left Spain because he was going hungry. And he arrived in Argentina looking for a better life. Now, history repeats itself, but the other way around” (Carricart and Litvak 2000: 2).

The second rationale for treatment on a par with natives was legal. Because many migrants had or were in the process of acquiring dual Argentine and Spanish citizenship, they felt entitled to the same rights and privileges as other Spaniards. Therefore dual nationals were not willing to take menial, dangerous, or poorly paid jobs just because they offered nominally more compensation than those available in Argentina. When access to other jobs proved problematic, newcomers felt duped. For instance, several participants in the
repopulation program complained that the jobs they had been promised before coming to Aguaviva required Spanish certifications, such as a commercial driver’s license, at a significant cost. Unable to complete the coursework and pay the fees, they were forced to consider jobs at the local sandpit that were from their perspective underpaid and dangerous (Monserrat 2002; Webster 2001). In addition, most newcomers came from urban contexts and thought that the housing supplied by locals was substandard and lacking in basic amenities.

The townspeople shared with Spanish-descent migrants a sense of cultural affinity and the expectation that it would facilitate the settlement process. “If it were simply a matter of finding workers,” Mayor Bricio had said of his program, “we wouldn’t have travelled so far to find Hispano-Argentines (Carri-cart and Litvak 2000: 2). Indeed, as mentioned, many migrants from other parts of Latin America and from North Africa were available for employment in Spain (see Gil Araujo 2004). “But it’s a matter of finding people who will come to Aguaviva with the intention of staying forever,” Bricio continued. “For this, the capacity to integrate and adapt to our customs are key, so the natural candidates should be the descendants of Spaniards.” From the community’s perspective it was important to find the right kind of workers: those similar to Aguaviva’s residents and who could presumably reproduce their way of life. Moreover, townspeople underscored their willingness to settle a historical debt with Argentina, a country that in the past had dealt generously with Spain by receiving its emigrants.

However, when it came to work and housing, Aguaviva natives held the same expectations of Spanish-descent Argentines as they did of immigrants generally, a point amply illustrated by frequent comparisons with Romanian immigrants. After the municipality sued several newcomers who left Aguaviva allegedly in breach of contract, the mayor left no doubts about native work expectations: “[We brought them] not to be princes, but to work and earn a living” (“Aguaviva,” 2005). When newcomers refused to do available work, their moral orientation was called into question. In interviews shortly after the arrival of Spanish-descent Argentines, the mayor noted that the Latin Americans had “a different concept of work” than local residents (Webster 2001: 24). In this and other interviews, natives invariably contrasted Romanian and Argentine migrants and presented the Romanians as examples worthy of emulation. Locals observed that despite religious and linguistic differences, Romanian immigrants were “more like us” than the Latin American newcomers.
in their ethic of hard work and modest expectations (Daly 2003; Voss 2003). Indeed, Romanians’ willingness to do hard manual labor and to live in what their urban-origin Argentine counterparts considered substandard housing emerged repeatedly in native narratives. Interestingly, however, the jobs and homes alluded to by natives were ones they were not filling or inhabiting. The upshot of the Argentine-Romanian comparison is that, although natives were willing to overlook linguistic and religious differences, they were less forgiving with unmet expectations in the occupational realm and reassessed the “real” bases of affinity accordingly.

In this reassessment cultural affinity was not discarded but rather moved down the list of factors likely to enhance natives and newcomers’ mutual acceptance (Bricio Manzanares 2004). Status as a Spanish national allows prospective migrants to make the first cut, but their disposition toward work and possession of skills to match available jobs head the list of favorable factors. Family size, rural origins, and a disposition for “peaceful coexistence” follow as other criteria considered important in the aftermath of Aguaviva’s first experience with selective immigration. Mayor Bricio and town residents have come to advocate a more exhaustive vetting process at the point of origin that pays particular attention to skills and work disposition.

According to Bricio “integration doesn’t depend on the language, nor is it guaranteed by a shared Spanish heritage. . . . *What really matters is the work ethic and that the skills they come with match the sort of jobs we can offer here*” (emphasis added; Voss 2003: 2). In this reconsideration of factors likely to facilitate integration, the limits of similarity are implicitly recognized. The point is not that newcomers should be like natives linguistically or culturally but that they should match available jobs both in skills and in a disposition to do them, as perceived by native employers. It is all well and good to prefer people who speak the same language, worship at the same altar, and share historical experiences of solidarity, but these do not make for desirable workers. As the evaluation of Romanians suggests, what constitutes a good or desirable worker is a willingness to do jobs that natives are not doing. Notwithstanding natives’ moral discourse about work orientation, they actually share with their Argentine brethren an aversion to the types of jobs now filled by Romanians. The “problem” from a work perspective is not that they are different in their attitudes toward particular jobs but that they are too similar.

If this interpretation is correct, then selecting migrants who are like their prospective hosts in every respect would not help and could hinder the matching
of ethnic return migrants to jobs generally available to newcomers, unless, as we argue in another section, some basis exists for limiting labor market expectations. To probe this claim further, in the next section we recount the experience of Spanish-descent Argentines in Ría, a pseudonymous city in the ancestral homeland and traditional emigrant-exporting region of Galicia. Ethnic return migrants in this instance more closely resemble natives along several dimensions, and from a conventional perspective this would suggest better integrative prospects. And yet, although well received in most social contexts, these migrants have encountered significant problems in their job search.

**Galicia: Better a Stranger Than a Distant Cousin?**

The outcome of the Aguaviva story was not simply an artifact of rural-urban differences among migrants and their hosts, as some actors and observers argue. The people interviewed in Galicia shared natives’ urban origins and had family ties to Galicia, arrived in a context with long-standing institutional links with Argentina, and benefited from subnational government policies favoring returnees. Despite this advantageous convergence of factors, Spanish-descent Argentine migrants to Galicia often found their expectations and aspirations at odds, if not in direct conflict, with those of natives, especially in the occupational domain.

The urban origins alluded to earlier really subsume several dimensions of possible commonality among immigrants and hosts: educational profiles, the closeness of worker-job match, and infrastructural expectations. Interviewees had similar educational attainment or skills as their hosts (Algañaraz 2006). Those with some university and professional aspirations in particular competed with similarly trained but locally credentialed natives and faced the most difficulties in finding jobs that matched their formal training and professional aspirations. Skilled workers were in greater demand but had to contend with locals whose nationality and papers were never in question. A study commissioned by the Xunta de Galicia found that, although almost 35 percent of Galician-descent Argentines had a college education that prepared them for the professions, the demand in Galicia was for skilled workers (Heguy 2003). In terms of infrastructural expectations, newcomers from large cities such as Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Santa Fe were likely to find housing, transportation, and a cultural life comparable to those in Argentina. In addition to having urban profiles in common with Galicians, those interviewed often had parents and grandparents who hailed from Galicia and even Ría. Thus returnees frequently had kinship
ties to natives, even if distant, and so the metaphor of relatives fallen on hard times had more literal underpinnings in Ría than in Aguaviva. A kinship network was important in helping ethnic migrants find housing or a job, although the job offers were less frequent than one might expect because native relatives were often elderly and disengaged from the labor market or had to worry about their own children’s placement. At an affective level newcomers were able to connect with the place reminisced about by their parents or grandparents. This is in sharp contrast to the experience of newcomers to Aguaviva, whose links were relatively more contrived.

As mentioned, a sense of affinity among Spanish-descent Argentines and native Galicians is aided by historical, institutional, and organizational links to Argentina. The historical legacies of migration to Argentina and other Latin American countries pervade many aspects of Galicia’s contemporary, social, and political life, so that a sense of connections to retornados is robust compared to what one might find in a place such as Aguaviva, which experienced emigration but no significant return migration. The names of city streets and businesses, schools, and cultural institutions founded with past remittances from Argentina and Cuba, the influence of Galician voters abroad as reported in the local media, and the recognition of emigrant intellectuals as architects of regional identity serve as reminders of Galicia’s emigration history and its ties abroad. A sense of connection to returnees is also nurtured by the activities of associations, some with a long tradition of fostering ties to Galician communities abroad and some new. From an institutional perspective the government of Galicia has defined the very category of returnee and has developed policies and administrative structures to serve eligible individuals (Xunta de Galicia 1981). These regional policies operate within the framework of central-state counterparts but dedicate financial and organizational resources to those who avail themselves of Spanish citizenship and to immigration preferences for emigrants and their descendants. The Consellería de Emigración is the administrative entity that coordinates official and nongovernmental organization support for returnees. In fiscal year 2006 the regional government allocated 17 million euros to programs for return migrants, including monies to fund job placement, housing, and education (Conseillo de Emigración 2006). The most recent institutional development has been the proposed passage of a new Statute of Citizens Abroad, which would recognize rights and privileges for the estimated 1.5 million Spaniards abroad, including those of just over 900,000 Galicians (Abejón 2006; Reino De España 2006).
It stands to reason, given these linkages, that the arrival of Spanish-descent Argentines would be viewed rather like a homecoming and that their acceptance would be unproblematic. And indeed, ethnic return migrants are portrayed sympathetically in the press as co-ethnics returned from a long sojourn abroad (e.g., “Ana Martínez,” 2005). For their part, ethnic return migrants report a sense of being accepted by native Galicians. Sofía (age 40, a registered nurse from Córdoba, Argentina) relates that she encountered some initial reserve among Galicians, but she attributes this to a general distrust of outsiders, including Spaniards from other regions. She cites as an example of Galician hospitality the child care assistance received from neighbors when she and her husband first arrived from Argentina in 1990. Other Spanish-descent Argentine youths and their native peers tell of the popularity of Argentines on the local party scene and in local football clubs.

However, in the realm of work, the assessments are more negative. The dedication of resources to facilitate returnees’ labor market integration attests to the regional government’s preoccupation with employment problems observed among Latin American returnees (Conseillo de Emigración 2006; Pérez Leira 2002; “Los retornados,” 2004). Local media have also given wide coverage to returnees’ downward occupational mobility (“Ana Martinez,” 2005). In field interviews, Spanish-descent migrants report a range of problems in the occupational sphere. A salient complaint concerns job aspirations that overlap with those of other Spaniards. For instance, Manolo (late 20s, a student and unemployed former hotel worker) wants to find work in “administration or marketing” but has been unsuccessful since arriving two months earlier. He is part of the 23 percent of returnees who are the foreign-born children and grandchildren of Galicians and who have Spanish citizenship (“Vigo estudia el perfil,” 2003). As a citizen, he thinks he should have access to the same jobs and pay as any other Spaniard. To date, the jobs offered to him are ones he considers below his abilities, experience, and pay expectations.

On the other hand, natives tacitly expect that newcomers should gratefully take available unskilled and semiskilled jobs at modest wages, because even highly skilled and credentialed native workers have had to migrate to other parts of Spain and Europe in search of work. Marisa (age 35, an employer and daughter of a prominent Galician leader in Buenos Aires) worries about the cavalier attitude of many returnees who, like Manolo, have a disposition ill-suited to someone in search of work. Some newcomers even tell demeaning jokes about their hosts and prospective employers. In her view this does not
bode well for Argentine job seekers. In her assessment of Spanish-descent mi-
grafts the comparison is to other immigrants willing to humbly accept the op-
portunities offered to them and to Galicians who, as past emigrants, sacrificed
abroad in order to make a better life for themselves and their families at home.

And yet, when ethnic migrants are willing to do jobs for which they are
overqualified, employers sometimes make assumptions that exclude them
from these positions. For example, Claudio (mid-20s, a truck driver and son
of Galician emigrants) and his brother-in-law, Juan (mid-20s, a truck driver
who is married to a Galician), are desperately seeking employment at a local
union office and tell of their dilemma. On the one hand, because they have not
yet received their national identification cards, employers are reluctant to hire
them for highly regulated driving positions when there are other fully docu-
mented drivers. On the other hand, employers are unwilling to hire them for
less qualified work once they learn that Claudio and Juan are Spanish citizens.
A local union representative who helps place workers like Juan and Claudio
believes that employers assume that as Spaniards, such workers will not really
be willing to do unskilled, poorly paid jobs. Thus workers' own aspirations and
employers' notions of who is suited to what jobs can effectively frustrate ethnic
migrants' job search.

One alternative for Spanish-descent migrants is to enter an emerging ethnic
employment niche. Pablo (age 55, a bartender) tells of returning to Ria after
45 years in Buenos Aires and not being able to find steady employment. He is
eligible for some government assistance but is making ends meet by tending
bar in a café that caters mostly to Argentine expatriates. As an older returnee,
it is unlikely that employers will select him for entry-level positions, and he
does not have the educational credentials to fill skilled or professional open-
ings. However, the commercial sector that serves immigrants is still relatively
small and is unlikely to offer jobs attractive to most ethnic migrants.

For the most part, ethnic return migrants face barriers to entering the local
labor market because of expectations that overlap or clash with those of na-
tives or because of employers' notions of which prospective workers disposi-
tionally fit what jobs. The employment history of Sofia, the Spanish-descent
migrant mentioned earlier, clearly illustrates these hurdles and in particular
the crucial difference that citizenship status can make in workers' and employ-
ers' dispositions and job-matching processes. Although a registered nurse in
Argentina, Sofia was hired as a nurse's aide at the local hospital, and for a few
years she worked off the books. She had not revalidated her Argentine degree,
and the hospital was content to have her work at lower pay. At the time she was not a Spanish citizen. When she applied for residency papers, the hospital issued a contract for the authorities confirming contributions to the social security system on Sofia’s behalf. They then deducted this money, which they were contributing for native workers, from her salary each month. Sofia felt there was no alternative and thought it part of paying one’s dues in a new country. Once a Spanish citizen, she was no longer dependent on the hospital’s contracts to show continuous employment, a requirement for the periodic renewal of residency permits, and felt entitled to better pay, something that the hospital resisted. Sofia eventually went on disability leave and then was laid off, but she received unemployment benefits from the government. By this time, her husband had become captain of a merchant marine ship and they were able to make ends meet. She continued to work for local hospitals on a part-time basis because they would not hire her full-time to avoid paying benefits. Ironically, the change in expectations that accompanied Sofia’s change in citizenship status put her in a precarious employment position.

The consensus among the Spanish-descent migrants we interviewed was that formal citizenship did not translate into the substantive rights they envisioned for themselves in the job market. Aspiring to the same jobs as their co-ethnic hosts, they became frustrated with settlement in Ría. Galicians found these expectations unrealistic and arrogant. To the extent that newcomers were not willing to do entry-level jobs, they were cast as undesirable workers. On the other hand, newcomers felt that even when they were willing to do low-paying and low-status jobs, employers were likely not interested or thought that these jobs were beneath newly arrived co-ethnics. It was the legally defined similarity of Spanish-descent Argentines that underlay the expectation of landing native jobs and hindered the maintenance of a dual frame of reference, which in turn led to employers’ categorization of newcomers as workers ill-suited to available positions.

Shades of Similarity and Difference

A fundamental insight gleaned from this and other studies in this volume concerns the critical role of state membership and mobility policies in shaping the terms on which ethnic return migrants and natives approach the labor market, a crucial sphere of integration. Indeed, a comparison with other instances of ethnic return migration shows that the fit between native and newcomer work expectations varies according to the extent that official policies foster or hinder
a dual frame of reference. Exemplars of the East Asian and Western European patterns described by Tsuda in the introduction and conclusion of this volume support this point.

It is precisely the contour of immigration and citizenship policies in each instance that accounts for the differential labor market outcomes and suggests as a possible mechanism the impact of these laws and associated official practices on expectations brought to job-matching encounters. If these policies foster a dual frame of reference, ethnic return migrants are likely to successfully enter the job market; but if the policies hinder a dual orientation, migrants are likely to have trouble finding work. The Japanese government grants nikkeijin a preferential but still temporary migratory status and does not easily confer citizenship, even to co-ethnic newcomers. In addition, Japanese-descent workers are recruited abroad and come with a time-limited contract that carefully dictates the terms of work and residence. Indeed they are referred to as dekasegi, or temporary migrant workers (Tsuda 2003). Residential segregation of newcomers further accentuates distinctions between natives and newcomers. Combined, these factors sustain a dual frame of reference among Japanese-descent migrants that makes them willing to endure downward mobility in view of a material and status payoff in the sending country and thus more exploitable and desirable as workers. By contrast, ethnic Germans have the same rights and privileges as any other German. Although the number of people classified as ethnic Germans eligible for entry and citizenship has declined significantly over the last 15 years, those who have entered in the past have the same rights as their co-nationals and access to language training, job placement assistance, and welfare benefits (Oezcan 2004). By definition, Aussiedler policy fosters an orientation toward the German economic and status system. We posit that this orientation makes ethnic newcomers less like other immigrants willing to do 3D jobs and hence less pliable or exploitable from the perspective of native employers. In sum, it is the content of policies that shapes the labor market insertion of ethnic return migrants.

Conclusion
The analytic upshot of this chapter is that students of ethnic return migrations should uncover rather than take for granted what officially defined commonalities portend for the mutual acceptance of natives and newcomers. As we have shown, vague presumptions of similarity and implied social acceptance are inconsistent especially with actual experiences in the world of work. To take
state-generated claims of affinity for granted not only gives scientific legitimacy to official visions of how the social world is parsed but also hinders knowledge about how and why states make such claims and with what consequences. An exclusive focus on the positive preference for co-ethnic migrants, for instance, may elide a tacit exclusionary flip side. In Spain, the dark side of ethnic affinity policies has been the replacement of North African migrants with Latin Americans. Another example includes taking at face value participants’ reappraisals of ethnic affinity in the wake of conflicting expectations. Although these reassessments may contain accurate insights—Mayor Bricio’s recognition that newcomers should be well suited to locally available jobs—they are simply new chapters in an ongoing struggle of who will be categorized into what class of people and to what ends. Reinterpretations of affinity are not adjustments of group definitions to more accurately reflect the boundaries of real entities. Ethnicity is, after all, about relationships, not substances (Bourdieu 1985). Analysts would do well to remember this as they interpret conflicting or unmet expectations born of the mismatch between formal and substantive rights and obligations.

Notes

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1. On the historical meaning of hispanismo and hispanidad, see Balfour (1996), Diffie (1943), Gomez-Escalonilla (1991), and Rein (1991). See also Joppke’s (2005: 114–117) more recent discussion with specific reference to this ideology’s effect on nationality law.

2. The dual frame of reference concept has also been used productively by anthropologists and sociologists to explain differences in educational achievement between natives and newcomers (Ogbu 1990; Reese 2001; Suarez-Orozco 1987; Waters 1999).
3. This selection strategy begins with independent points of entry that serve as sources for a lengthening chain of referrals. The limit on the number of selection iterations can be determined theoretically (Charmaz 2001; Gaskell 2000) as well as statistically (Heckathorn 2002).

4. Thanks to Christian Joppke for encouraging us to draw out this distinction.

5. Until 1982, Spanish nationality was transmitted to the children of Spanish men. Gender-neutral nationality provisions were made retroactive in 2002 (Cook-Martín 2006).

6. Although these are minor and consist of exemptions from work permit fees.

7. Similar practices are at work in the Italian case and are the subject of ongoing examination by Cook-Martín.

8. After reviewing an early draft of this chapter, Garcia (2007) conducted summer field research in Aguaviva and confirmed the conclusions reached through our “once-removed” analysis.


10. The Xunta de Galicia is the regional government organization. Galicia is one of seventeen autonomous communities in Spain and one of four regions with special provisions of autonomy.

11. “Return migration” to Spain comes not only from the Americas but also from other European countries and North Africa (Rogers 1985; Vilar and Vilar 1999a, 1999b).

12. For a list of nongovernmental organizations that serve return migrants, see Fundación Galicia Emigración (http://www.fundaciongaliciaemigracion.es/funCastellano/noticia.php?idNoticia=12).

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