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Introduction: Identity Formation and Migration Focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract: This is an introduction by coeditors to the articles published in this issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge.* The journal issue focuses on the complexity of identity formations experienced by migrants in the world-system, with a regional focus on Latin America and the Caribbean which have been at the heart of many recent scholarly debates in migration studies and the subsequent emergence of transnationalism. The current issue can be therefore understood as an attempt to establish an intellectual dialogue between different academic disciplines, as well as theoretical perspectives.

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The focus on large scale migratory developments by substantial numbers of people in the last couple of decades, which some refer to as the age of globalization, has not only re-energized earlier pre-1945 discussions about immigration, assimilation, generational change and socioeconomic implications for migrants as well as states of origin and destination, but raised new questions about migrants' self-awareness and (re)production of their own iden-

Terry-Ann Jones is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Fairfield University, with primary teaching responsibilities in the International Studies Program. Professor Jones is actively involved in the Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Black Studies programs and serves on the advisory boards of both. Her areas of research and teaching interest are in international migration, particularly between Latin America and the Caribbean and North America. Her previous research compared Jamaican immigrants in the metropolitan areas of Miami and Toronto, and was published in her book, *Jamaican Immigrants in the United States and Canada: Race, Transnationalism, and Social Capital*, in 2008. Professor Jones is currently doing research on temporary labor migration in Brazil, particularly among sugar cane workers who travel from Brazil's northeast to the central and southeastern regions. The role of migration as a livelihood strategy among both domestic and international migrants is central to this research. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Miami, School of International Studies in 2005. **Eric Mielants** is Associate Professor in Sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences at Fairfield University and Research Associate of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris. He is the author of *The Origins of Capitalism and the Rise of the West* (Temple University Press, 2007). Most recently he co-edited *Caribbean Migration to Western Europe and the United States* (Temple University Press, 2009) and *Mass Migration in the World System* (Paradigm Press, forthcoming).

tities, be they ethnic, racialized, national, regional or gendered. How migrants constitute a self, maintain and reproduce an identity as being part of a diaspora, has especially been relevant in the Caribbean and Latin America. While it is widely understood that the experiences of migrants from this region can greatly vary depending on a variety of factors, many of these factors are particular to the migrants *themselves* (nationality, socioeconomic class, race, and gender, for example). However, the role of the *receiving context* also greatly affects the migrants and their communities.

Among the various themes of this issue is the importance of context, as illustrated through the use of comparisons, and the application to the domestic migration context of theoretical approaches commonly used to explain international migration. The receiving context is not merely a factor in the migration process; it determines to a large extent what in the literature on migration and transnational identity is sometimes referred to as the 'mode of incorporation' of immigrants. The incorporation of migrants into their host communities—whether they are a desired or involuntary destination—is a feature of the sometimes-circular process of migration. The incorporation process cannot be separated from the migrants' potential socioeconomic mobility over many years, if not entire generations, as immigrants transform themselves and are being transformed into minorities.

Another theme that emerges among these papers is that of integration, or in the case of deportees—a very specific group of immigrants—reintegration. A crucial aspect of incorporation is identity formation, often central to migration research and highlighted in a variety of ways in the papers. Plaza explores the use of technology in identity formation among second generation West Indians, while Audebert takes a geographic perspective, emphasizing the relevance of residential concentration among immigrant communities. Harrington et al., on the other hand, examine the intersection of identity with violence. The papers use different approaches to underscore concerns that are relevant to a wide range of migrant populations. While there is some emphasis on migration among Jamaicans, Haitians, and Brazilians, the approaches of the articles that follow hold broader theoretical implications for other international migrants.

In her article, Jones uses international migration frameworks to discuss the experiences of temporary, migrant, Brazilian sugar cane workers who move from the northeast to the center-south of Brazil. Among the many parallels between the domestic and international experiences are the often-traumatic family dynamics that accompany seasonal migration, poor living and working conditions, and discrimination. While international migrants have the unique experiences of being uprooted (or uprooting themselves) and transplanted (or transplanting themselves) into a foreign society, their understanding of the process does not differ much from that of Brazilian domestic migrants, or those in other large countries where cultural and socioeconomic differences abound.

Prest et al. examine the potential role of Jamaicans and Haitians in the Diaspora in conflict resolution and peace building in their home countries. The nature and scope of the political and economic landscape that contribute to each country's volatility are discussed, as well as the appropriateness of defining them as countries of conflict and what this might imply for the construction of minorities' self-identity. They find that, given some degree of political access in the home countries, the Jamaican and Haitian diasporas are able to wield considerable power in the reduction of conflict and violence. Although there are a number of complex ways in which members of the Jamaican and Haitian diasporas are able to contribute to their home coun-

tries, among the basic channels are economic support and political pressure. Economic support is transferred in the form of remittances, while political pressure can be exerted from abroad without the fear of repercussions.

Plaza provides an analysis of the ways in which the Internet, via the construction of different web sites, sustains a fluid Caribbean transnational identity among second generation Caribbeans in Canada, the US as well as the UK. His research explores the ways in which second generation Caribbean students construct identities that are uniquely theirs. These identities are rooted in cultural norms that are derived from the homeland, yet represent a hybrid that is characteristic of diasporic culture. Although they are familiar with the norms, values, and culture of their or their parents' country of birth, they experience the world through the context in which they live, that is the destination country. Through his analysis of Caribbean student organizations' websites, Plaza illustrates how second generation students manage to negotiate the home and destination countries.

In his contribution, Audebert analyzes the issue of ethnicized constituencies and explores the connection between the residential concentrations of immigrant groups, in this case West Indians, and the making of a political power base distinct from other immigrant groups and from native Blacks. Audebert applies a double comparison, focusing on Jamaicans and Haitians in the metropolitan areas of South Florida and New York. Within the context of immigrant communities, Audebert explores the relationship between ethnicity, residential settlement and political empowerment. He finds that at the national level, West Indian political interests become subsumed within those of African Americans. It is at the local or metropolitan levels that political representation becomes more distinctively linked to national identity.

Drotbohm looks at the issue of crime, the constructions of "otherness" and the project of migration as it relates to Haitians at home and in the Diaspora at large. She explores the different perspectives of Haitian parents and their children with regard to the parents' migratory project and the eventual destruction of that project when delinquent children are deported, and the separate meanings that deportation holds for different generations.