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# Congolese Cultural Landscapes, Transnational Networks, and Identity Formation in Milwaukee

Claire Marie Reuning  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

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CONGOLESE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, AND  
IDENTITY FORMATION IN MILWAUKEE

by

Claire M. Reuning

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in Geography

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2013



**ABSTRACT**  
CONGOLESE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS, AND  
IDENTITY FORMATION IN MILWAUKEE

by

Claire M. Reuning

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013  
Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Rina Ghose

Following national trends, between 2000 and 2010, the city of Milwaukee's foreign-born African population doubled. Previous research attributes this population growth to various socio-economic and political factors on the African continent, the United State's implementation of the Diversity Visa Lottery (DVL) program, and perceived economic opportunities. Applying a mixed methods approach, I analyze the spatial distribution of foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County to contextualize a case study of people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) worshipping at Milwaukee's International Lutheran Church of Zion (Zion Church). Using information gathered from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, census and demographic data, I deconstruct the densely scaled networks and cultural landscapes connecting the DRC and Milwaukee. By following the migration paths of DVL winners and refugees I demonstrate the vital role that thematic and territorial networks at Zion Church play in fostering transnational Congolese identities in Milwaukee. Transnational theory maintains that transnational migrants purposefully build active socio-cultural, political, and economic networks that cross the boundaries of a person's country of origin and host country; daily life occurs in both home and host countries as transnational networks shrink the perceived distance between places. Transnational networks also are influential in the creation of cultural

landscapes. Cultural landscapes, either physical (e.g., a building or neighborhood) or conceptual (e.g., a cultural tradition), are organizational tools used by geographers to understand how groups build strong socio-spatial boundaries through their actions, beliefs, and culture. Despite being relatively hidden, Congolese worshippers at Zion Church are constructing intricate cultural landscapes at the building they worship in through the rituals of their church service, the expectations of community participation, and the processes of marriage. These different networks contribute to the formation of a group identity specific to worshippers at Zion Church. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on African migration to the United States. The mixed methods approach visually illustrates spatial distribution which in conjunction with ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and a textual analysis of cultural symbols, offers a rich description of the early processes of community building for an African community in a mid-sized American city.

*Key Words: Immigration, Cultural Landscapes, Transnationalism, Networks, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Diversity Visa Lottery (DVL)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

International Institute of Wisconsin (IIW)

International Learning Center (ILC)

International Lutheran Church of Zion (Zion Church)

Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS)

Milwaukee Area Refugee Consortium (MARC)

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC)

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)



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When you come here, you're going to find my mark.  
I like Milwaukee.

—Jules, Diversity Visa Lottery winner

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Milwaukee, like most cities in the United States, has a unique immigration story. The remnants of old beer breweries, corner bars, and the steeples of Catholic churches have left indelible marks on the city's landscape and capture the spirit of the Germans, Italians, and Poles of the nineteenth century. The cultural legacies of these ethnic groups are alive and well each Friday night at fish fries across the city or during the summer cultural festivals that Milwaukeeans flock to so they may eat their fill of schnitzel and cannoli or dance a whirling polka. At the same time Milwaukee celebrates its roots, the city has flung open its doors to newer immigrant groups. Crossing the bridge to Historic Mitchell Street on Milwaukee's Southside is akin to crossing into a small corner of Latin America. Among the pulsing rhythms of *ranchero* music, streets are lined with Spanish-language billboards advertise money transfer services, *quinceañera* dresses fill store windows, and sandwich boards announce lunch specials of warm tortillas, shredded beef, and refried beans. Hidden between the Latino businesses an observer spies the curly script of signs for the Hmong and Burmese food stores where Southeast Asians buy bottles of pungent fish sauce and 50-kilogram sacks of fragrant rice. Various temples, churches, and mosques dot the skyline and visually define Milwaukee's growing cultural diversity. Billboards, music, foods, products, and buildings testify to the vitality of Milwaukee's immigrant communities and their power to transform the landscape.

Not all of Milwaukee's cultural groups have demarcated their community's borders within city limits so clearly as the Germans of yesterday and the Latinos of today. Immigrants, refugees, and students from a diversity of African nations are a growing group within Milwaukee and the United States as a whole, but unless one knows what to

look for, these culturally and ethnically diverse communities remain largely invisible. Often falsely portrayed in the American media as one big country, the reality is that the African continent is home to a vast number of languages, ethnic groups, cultures, and nations. The diversity is so great that sweeping generalizations about “Africans” or “Africa” are inherently problematic, yet at the same time there are some continent-level patterns and certain data are only released at the continental scale. So while I attempt to avoid broad statements of “Africans” throughout this work, there are times when people from Africa are discussed as one group due to the available data or to reflect the appropriate literature. The purpose of this thesis research is to break away from the pan-African scale to analyze the networks and landscapes of one group of Africans: economic immigrants and refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As Congolese community leader Pastor Kasango Gui Kabeo (henceforth referred to as Pastor Gui) explained in our first interview, Congolese migration is “...a new story” within Milwaukee’s history. While the narratives of the Congolese align with scholarly theories of immigration to the United States, for Pastor Gui and the Congolese worshippers at his church, they see themselves as a new story within the city’s immigration history (Montz and Wright 1996; Mitchell 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Ashutosh 2008; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). The rapid growth of their community over the last 10 years in tandem with their establishment of a church with a pastor reinforcing cultural traditions from the DRC represent their emergence in Milwaukee (see *Figure 1* on page 3). They do not view themselves as following a prescribed path but blazing their own trail as they create this story. Through a framework based in transnationalism, I explore the ways in which Milwaukee’s growing Congolese community at The International

Lutheran Church of Zion (henceforth referred to as Zion Church) quietly yet actively shapes its cultural landscape through a dense collection of transnational networks and the subsequent impact that this has on group identity formation.



*Figure 1: Zion Church on the day of Pastor Gui's installation in 2011. Photo courtesy of Freddy N'sau.*

Transnationalism is a theory of international migration that takes into account the complex socio-economic and cultural networks simultaneously rooted within and at the same time transcending the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. It flies in the face of assimilation theory that argues that successful immigrant adaptation to host-country culture occurs when relationships to the home country are cut and newcomers conform to host-culture values and behaviors (Gordon 1964; Nagel 2002; Ehrkamp 2006; Woltman and Newbold 2009). Instead, transnational theory embraces the multifaceted networks between old and new. Transnational scholars argue that transnational migrants' lived experiences are multi-situated; their familial, cultural, social, economic, religious, organizational, and political ties stretch across the globe (Mitchell 1997; Bailey 2001). The multi-scalar nature of transnational networks attracts scholars interested in

uncovering the mechanisms underlying these flows, the spaces between them, and how they come together to create a hybrid sense of belonging and identity (Montz and Wright 1996; Mitchell 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Ashutosh 2008; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). The spatialities embedded in transnationalism give cultural geographers the leeway to explore identity formation in the context of geographic concepts of cultural landscape and scale.

Landscape serves as a geographic lens for seeing and subsequently interpreting the lived spaces of human activity and how humans create group identity. When cultural geographers analyze landscapes, they unearth changes in social and cultural practices over time as a means to understand the production of cultural landscapes. Like the palimpsest, the artifacts of older traditions are etched into the landscape and cannot be completely erased (Schein 1997; Schein 2010). Landscape is often a framework for understanding group identity as the boundaries around the landscape are set through orthodoxy — the group defines “normal” behavior and regulates those activities taking place within the boundaries of their landscape (Trudeau 2006). When reading landscapes as texts, cultural geographers unearth clues to analyze present landscapes. They not only uncover cultural discourses but introduce textuality into the geographic imagination of landscape as well. Cultural geographers incorporate their own positions as researchers and many reject scientific objectivity in favor of positionality and subjectivity. Positionality is awareness of how personal characteristics such as gender, race, or social background of the researcher influence the research outcomes. Within this framework, the resulting representations ideally demonstrate a dialogue between the researcher, the

researched, and the reader throughout the research process (Barnes and Duncan 1992; Rose 1997b; Smith 2010).

In addition to landscape, scale is another key concept of transnationalism. Similar to cultural landscapes, scale also is constructed; it is not pre-determined but produced through socio-economic struggle (Leitner et al. 2002; Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Ghose 2007). As a result of socio-cultural tensions, scale jumping occurs when socio-economic, cultural, and political boundaries are reconfigured and rearticulated.

Transnational migrants cross these boundaries at multiple scales in their daily lives through their lived experiences and networks. Dynamic and flexible, scaled networks facilitate the processes and production of group knowledge and identity within cultural landscapes (Leitner et al. 2002; Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Ghose 2007). As my fieldwork indicates, the knowledge contained within transnational networks assists the Congolese in transitioning to their lives in the United States, strengthens the relationships and identity of the group as a whole and at the same time defines behavioral codes or expectations.

Scholars have noted that religious institutions can play an important role in the networks, landscapes, and identity formation of immigrants and aid them in their adaptation to the United States (Kwakyee-Nuako 2006; Agbali 2008; Abdullah 2010). Generally speaking, research on African immigration in the United States focuses on large cities, such as New York or Washington, D.C. (Wilson and Habecker 2008; Abdullah 2009; Abdullah 2010). This body of academic literature is small and in comparison to research on other immigrant groups in the United States, there is a dearth of literature on people originally from the African continent (Takyi and Konadu-

Agyemang 2006). The existing literature tends to be highly qualitative in nature with some descriptive statistics but very little in the way of spatial analysis. Qualitative research provides scholars with a rich narrative upon which to develop social theories. At the same time, quantitative research can strengthen the impact of qualitative research by providing statistical evidence and descriptive graphics to support qualitative narratives. Conversely, personal stories enliven numeric findings or spatial patterns uncovered via quantitative techniques. In my research, a quantitative analysis of foreign-born African settlement in Milwaukee County exposes broader spatial patterns before I dig into the nuances of the case study.

In this thesis, I synthesize the insight from theories of cultural landscapes, transnational networks, and identity to create a framework for analyzing immigrants and refugees from the DRC. Through careful analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, I show that Milwaukee contains dense Congolese networks centered on the Zion Church located in Milwaukee's Northwest side. Multiple transnational networks crisscross various local and international scales and manifest in the cultural landscapes found at Zion Church. Through combining qualitative and quantitative methodology, I hope to address the lacuna of scholarly work on African immigration in mid-sized American cities and contribute rich ethnographic information that highlights early community building among the Congolese in Milwaukee.

### **Research Questions**

By employing a framework derived from transnational theory I seek to critically evaluate the scaled networks and cultural landscapes of Milwaukee's Congolese



population, with particular attention to the networks supporting their creation and the resulting impact on identity. To do so, I address four primary research questions:

1. What are the spatial patterns of foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County?
2. What networks shape the migration and settlement of Congolese immigrants and refugees in Milwaukee?
3. What cultural landscapes have the Congolese created in Milwaukee?
4. How have scaled networks and cultural landscapes facilitated transnational identity construction among the Congolese in Milwaukee?

By addressing these particular questions, I seek to gain perspective on this vibrant community and how members are weaving their cultural traditions into Milwaukee's urban fabric.

## **Methodology**

Triangulation of different source materials and research methods is an effective way to demystify the process in the creation and reproduction of transnational networks and cultural landscapes (Schein 2010). For my research methodology, I engage in data triangulation and mixed methods that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques. Mixed methods add depth to the analysis under the assumption that multiple approaches clarify complex research questions (Visser and Jones 2010). I seek information from a variety of angles in accordance to the belief that there is no one complete story and that scholarly knowledge is situated (Rose 1997b).

In contrast to older positivist geographic methods espousing objective and universal knowledge, feminist geographers eschew this "God-trick" of scholarship. The God-trick is used by Haraway to describe knowledge production that claims to come

from a distant neutral research process (Rose 1997b). Feminist geographers reject such knowledge production and promote situated knowledge that describes knowledge production as limited, particular, and incomplete (Rose 1997b). Feminist geographers engage in research that acknowledges the privileged position of the researcher in the research process. They advocate a reflexive research methodology in which the researcher situates herself (e.g., gender, class, race, ability) in relation to the researched, and in the context of the research to produce situated knowledge under the assumption that acknowledging one's position produces more comprehensive results. Yet, Rose (1997b) questions whether situated knowledge production is not reproducing the same false neutrality and universal claims that feminist researchers rejected in the first place. She advocates that in the actual research process, even situated knowledge is not comprehensive — the relationships between researcher, researched, and spaces within which the research is produced are always incomplete and uncertain.

Research authority is further problematized by the performance of the research process and power dynamics. The researcher "...is situated, not by what she knows, but by what she uncertainly performs." (Rose 1997b, 316). As the performance of knowledge production in scholarly research occurs, gaps may emerge. When researchers publish their work, another layer of representation is added by the subsequent interpretations by the reader of which the researcher cannot control (Rose 1997b). As such, scholars have a responsibility to interrogate their own bias or vision for their research and to acknowledge that they are not the keepers of all knowledge in the research process. Researchers must recognize how the information they gather is situated within the research community they are working with and how the knowledge produced reflects

these spaces as well. The deep cultural entrenchment of individual biases makes their interrogation and balancing research relationships a challenge (Duncan 1993; Rose 1997b).

In addition to individual bias, a researcher's theoretical framework influences his or her interpretation of data or information. Specific theories highlight different aspects of the data and direct the researcher's analysis to fit within the structure of the theory's framework. The desire to maintain theoretical integrity may limit the researcher in conducting a comprehensive analysis. For example, in my focus on transnationalism, networks, and cultural landscapes, questions of gender, race, and socio-economic class are not teased apart in the same way they would be if I were to apply a framework that emphasized these important aspects of identity. As researchers must focus their analysis within their chosen framework to keep from overextending themselves, acknowledging limitations and the impact of biases or gaps within the research strengthens the analysis and representations. Thus with the concepts of situated knowledge and scholarly performance in mind, to look at the Congolese in Milwaukee from a variety of angles, my data sources include: participant observation, semi-structured ethnographic interviewing, demographic surveying, and data from the U.S. Census.

From May 2012 to November 2012, I actively participated in the life of Zion Church. I logged approximately 80 hours attending Sunday church services and other church events such as parties, wakes, and weddings (see *Figure 2* on page 10). These events afforded me opportunities to observe cultural expressions of Congolese identity, to also create relationships with church members and gather information informally through casual conversations. My training in community integration and experiences as a Peace

Corps volunteer for two years in Francophone West Africa, my ease with French, and genuine enjoyment of cultural activities laid the foundation for my incorporation into the Zion Church congregation. My regular attendance at church and other activities engendered trust between individuals at Zion Church and myself. This trust is vital in the qualitative research process, and the information that I learned during interviews and casual conversations reflects the nature of the relationships that developed between different people and myself.



*Figure 2.* The author at the reception of a traditional Congolese wedding ceremony. Photo courtesy of Freddy N'sau.

Before I started this research, I anticipated my own challenges in conducting fieldwork due to my lack of personal transportation. Fortunately, I entered a community in which so many members are without their own cars that someone always offered me a ride home after church on Sundays or to events around Milwaukee. These rides proved an excellent opportunity to get to know various church members and informally chat about their personal immigration stories, my studies, our families, and life in general. I built my strongest personal relationships with those individuals who gave me rides; that these

individuals were all single men is reflected in the largely masculine voice in my fieldwork.

Over the months spent at Zion Church, I learned that each member has an assigned role and over time my own niche within the congregation developed. Sometimes the role I was assigned did not fit well, as when Pastor Gui asked me to read scripture aloud and I stumbled over the archaic French. But other roles, such as whispering English interpretations during church services to non-Francophone American visitors or bringing fruit to potlucks and parties, better suited my strengths. As part of my fieldwork, I kept a regular diary in which I both recorded events and conversations as well as my own thoughts and perceptions as a researcher. This diary has been analyzed for major themes and findings. Throughout this thesis when I describe Congolese events and paraphrase conversations between others and myself, I am referring to informal interactions as part of participant observations most of which were recorded in my research diary. With the exception of Pastor Gui and Zion Church's name, all other names have been changed to protect privacy of the people who so openly shared their thoughts and stories with me.

In addition to participant observation, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with nine church members and two non-church members. My intention in selecting interview participants was to achieve a balance in terms of gender, age, method of entry to the United States, and interest in this project. *Table 1* (see page 12) breaks down basic demographic data for each participant and shows my limited success in achieving a balanced pool of participants. People were recruited through announcements at church services and in consultation with Pastor Gui. I approached Pastor Gui, Nicole, Reine, Jules, Olivier and Diana. Samuel and Jules expressed interest in being interviewed

after hearing the request for participants. Benjamin and his wife Elodie were visiting Olivier and Diana when I came to interview them and agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted in English, French, or a mixture of the two, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Interviews were digitally recorded, partially transcribed, carefully analyzed for major themes, and, when necessary, translated into English (see *Sample Interview Questions*, Appendix A). In this thesis, direct quotations are derived from these interviews. It is also of note that Pastor Gui was interviewed multiple times between spring 2012 and winter 2013.

Table 1. Interview Participant Demographic Information

#	Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Time in U.S.	Visa Type	Location
1	Pastor Gui	Male	40s	Married	13 years	Refugee	Zion Church
2	Nicole	Female	40s	Single	12 years	Refugee	African-owned business
3	Jules	Male	30s	Married	8 years	DVL	Zion Church
4	Lionel	Male	20s	Single	2 years	DVL	Private home
5	Reine	Female	60s	Married	8 years	DVL	Zion Church
6	Samuel	Male	30s	Single	6 years	Family Reunification	Restaurant
7	Benjamin	Male	40s	Married	2 years	Refugee	Private home
7	Elodie	Female	40s	Married	2 years	Refugee	Private home
7	Olivier	Male	40s	Married	6 months	Refugee	Private home
7	Diana	Female	40s	Married	6 months	Refugee	Private home

As is evident in *Table 1* regarding gender, I interviewed more men than women and in general the qualitative information from participant observation that I analyze

most heavily in the subsequent chapters reflect a male experience. Demographically speaking, there are more men in the community than women and more of the men are single than the women. The prevalence of masculine voices in my research is in part a reflection of my personal position and community dynamics. Initially I believed that my identity as a woman would establish more of a rapport with women. While superficially this is true, I found it harder to engage with women outside of the space of Zion Church than I did with men. My position as a single woman attracted a certain level of interest from men in the community and though minimal romantic overtures presented during fieldwork, this status still impacted who would engage me in conversations after church services, at events, and the general availability of individuals to meet outside of the church space for interviews.

Overall, Zion Church maintains traditional gender roles in which men are the head of the household and this dynamic presented itself during interviews so that the experiences of Congolese men in Milwaukee dominate the analysis in this thesis. I found that Congolese women in their 20s tend to be less independent than their male counterparts in terms of car ownership, living arrangements, and marital status. At different social gatherings that I attended, the participants were often teenage girls and single men in their 20s streaming African music videos from different websites. Lack of personal transportation impacted my abilities to reach out to women and engage with them in their homes or other neutral spaces. Married couples are also busier balancing family, work, and socio-cultural obligations than single individuals. This made spending time with married women a challenge and even when interviews were set-up with couples, husbands dominated the interviews as the women were pulled away to take care

of their children or appeared to believe that the subjects being discussed fell under their husband's authority more than their own. In one case a wife was excluded from the interview all together. As a result, I acknowledge that the findings I present in this thesis focus more on the processes that men in the Congolese community undergo as they build lives for themselves, their families, and their community in Milwaukee.

To complement the qualitative data gathered from participant observation and interviews, I collected quantitative information as well. Data from the U.S. census contextualizes the growth and identifies spatial patterns of Milwaukee County's foreign-born African population between 1970-2010. For privacy reasons, the census does not release demographic data for the Congolese population. Therefore in November 2012, 30 Zion Church members completed a short survey that I wrote in order to ascertain general demographic information (see *Demographic Survey*, Appendix B).

While my formal fieldwork concluded in November 2012, I have continued to attend church services through the entirety of this thesis process as to stay abreast of community activities but more importantly because I highly value the relationships that I have formed with the members of Zion Church.

## **Study Area**

### *African Immigration at the Local and National Scale*

Nationally, Africans are currently arriving at rates higher than during the Trans-Atlantic slave period (Abdullah 2009; Robinson 2010). Census data confirms that Milwaukee County follows the national trend of increased African immigration. From 2000-2010, the number of foreign-born Africans doubled from 1,917 to 3,813; individuals active

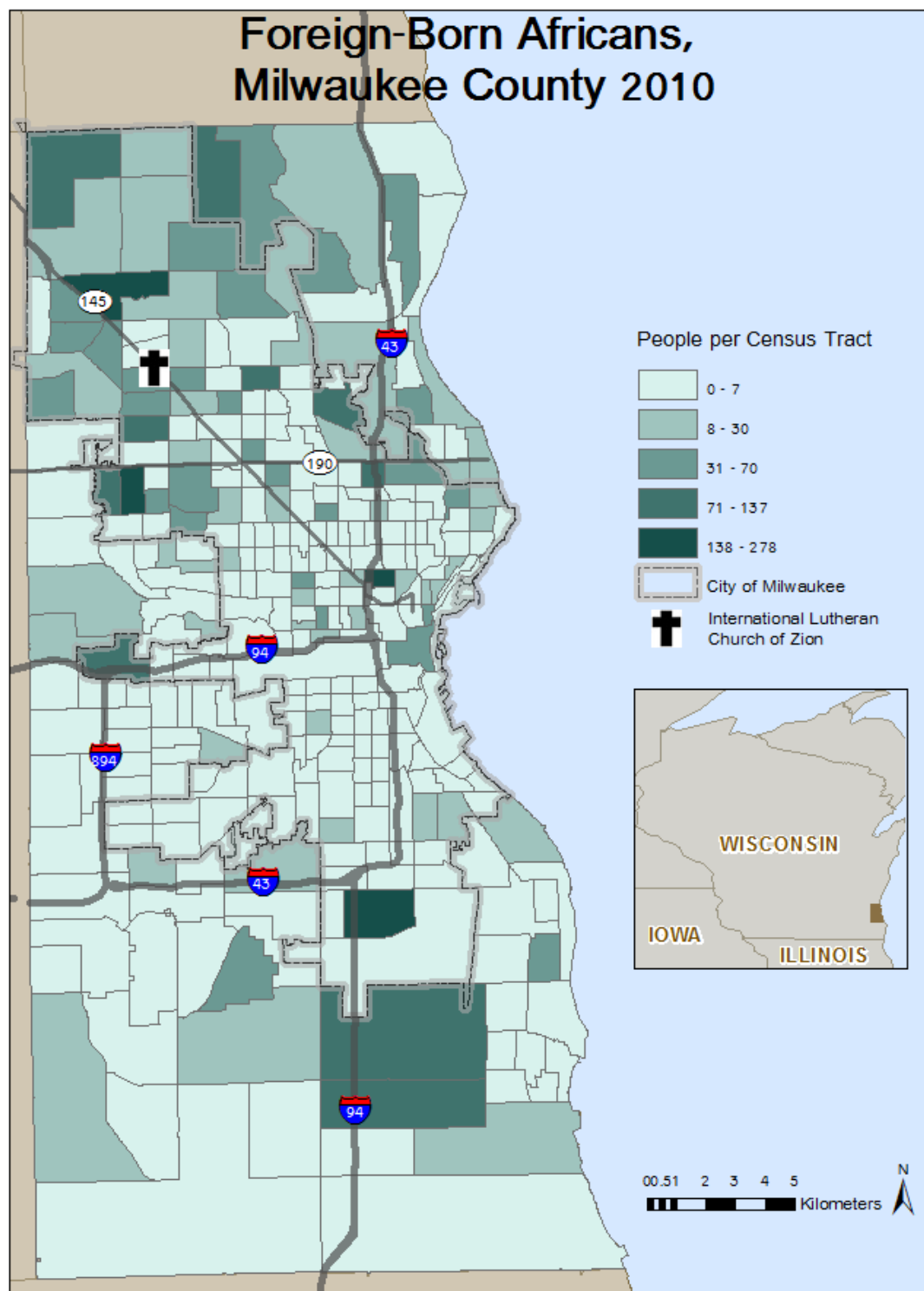


within various African communities estimate the current number to be even larger.

*Figure 3* (see page 16) shows the raw spatial distribution of foreign-born Africans across Milwaukee County in 2010. Spatial analysis of the 2010 census data reveals high clustering of Africans in the northwestern corner of Milwaukee and the far southern edge of the city in noticeable spatial patterns (see Chapter 3 for more details on spatial patterns).

From a historical perspective, Milwaukee's foreign-born African population has not always been so large, nor has it been so concentrated in the northwestern part of the city. According to individuals familiar with the history of Africans in Milwaukee, people arrived with student visas in the 1960s and 1970s to study at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). Census data from 1970 records 151 foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County and spatial analysis confirms their clustering in the census tracts adjacent to the UWM campus (see *Figure 8* on page 58). Prior to 1965, there was very little immigration of Africans to the United States in general. Few Africans had the financial resources necessary for immigration and U.S. immigration quota laws of the time favored immigrants from Western Europe (Lobo 2006; Abdullah 2009). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the quota system and established a new immigration policy that gave preference to family reunification, refugees, asylees, and people with desired occupational skills. This law did not have a significant impact on Africans; those looking to emigrate post-1965 continued to face considerable political and socio-economic barriers (Lobo 2006; Abdullah 2009).

In 1990, the U.S. Congress introduced the Diversity Visa Lottery (DVL) for citizens of traditionally under-represented countries seeking entrance to the United States.



*Figure 3.* Distribution of Milwaukee County's foreign-born African Population in 2010. Map by the author.

Applicants are required to have a high school diploma, its equivalent, or two years in a skilled occupation within five years of migration (Law 2002). For Africans pursuing immigration to United States through the DVL or other means of obtaining an entry visa (e.g., family reunification or student visas), insecure political situations, chronically under-performing economies, and social instability are among motivations noted by scholars (Lobo 2006; Okome 2006; Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Wilson and Habecker 2008; Abdullah 2009). Yet, despite this rapid growth at national and local scales, Africans remain hidden within Milwaukee.

*Case Study: International Lutheran Church of Zion*

My research on Milwaukee's Congolese community focuses on Congolese worshippers at Zion Church. Located in the predominately African-American northwest side of Milwaukee, Zion Church is housed within Benediction Lutheran Church's building (see *Figure 4* on page 18). There are minimal symbols indicating that Zion Church is there and this lack of physical signs of their presence is telling. In a metaphor that could be extended to the African population at large in Milwaukee, unless you are walking past on a Sunday afternoon and hear the distinct beat of the worship music, Zion Church sits almost invisible on the landscape.

Like many immigrant churches, Zion Church started in the basement of a home as a prayer group for Francophone Africans desiring French-language church services. In 2007 it became a ministry of Benediction Lutheran Church. Zion Church's pastor, Pastor Gui, is a dynamic leader who arrived in the United States as a refugee 10 years ago. An accountant in the DRC, he is one of the founding members of the original prayer group and has gone through seminary training in the United States. The Lutheran Church —

Missouri Synod (LCMS) ordained him in 2011 and Zion Church is now a charter congregation under the auspices of the LCMS.



*Figure 4.* The International Lutheran Church of Zion. Photo by the author.

According to the church website, Zion Church serves as “A Fellowship of Christians, Grounded in the Scriptures and Centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” As such, church services, beliefs, and the habits of its members reflect a very specific cultural landscape with social and religious norms that people are supposed to uphold if they are active members of the church. Church membership primarily consists of immigrants from various countries in West and Central Africa, but the majority of congregants come from the DRC while small handful of adults are from the United States. The Congolese who worship at Zion Church unapologetically uphold a specific religious and cultural identity that is not universal among all of the Congolese living in Milwaukee. The Congolese members of Zion Church still interact with other Milwaukee Congolese who do not attend the church in social settings, at work, or at other community functions. Thus, the information I gathered from worshippers of Zion Church does not

reflect the attitudes of all the Milwaukee Congolese, only those who actively participate in this particular spiritual and cultural community. While Zion Church is welcoming to newcomers, the congregants and pastor expect people who join them to maintain their beliefs and practices; there are clear boundaries around Zion Church that relegate individuals in the larger Milwaukee community who engage in acts or beliefs counter to Zion Church outside or at the margins of its boundaries. Indeed over the course of my fieldwork I observed a small number of Zion Church members choose to leave the church for reasons that I did not probe too deeply because of my position as a cultural outsider whose relationships with individuals in the church are still relatively new. Overall, the Congolese active at Zion Church are the dominant cultural group in Milwaukee and how they make it their central landscapes is my case study focus.

Sunday afternoon services are the core of Zion Church's cultural landscape. The first hour of the service is singing, dancing, and prayer led by four to six men and women and accompanied by three musicians. The second hour of the service consists of Scripture readings, a sermon, and community announcements (see *Figure 5* on page 20). Pastor Gui is an animated speaker with a soaring voice. When preaching, he frequently stomps his feet and wipes the sweat from his brow as the Word takes hold of him. The time after the service is a period of fellowship or meetings to plan the various social and religious activities central to church life. Zion Church's ministries include marriage counseling and workshops, cultural adjustment and employment trainings for newly arrived individuals, and mission trips to support churches in the DRC. For children there is weekly Sunday school, summer vacation Bible school, and the distribution of school supplies, jackets, and Christmas toys. Church members hold wakes for those who have lost family in

Milwaukee or abroad, holiday potluck dinners and picnics, and prayer meetings in the building's basement. Women, men, and young adults meet regularly to plan community activities such as outings to destinations in Wisconsin, weddings, or other celebrations. Many new congregants do not have the resources to purchase cars, so Zion Church members with cars are dedicated to picking up and dropping off others so that no one is excluded from services because of transportation barriers.



*Figure 5.* Worship service at Zion Church. Photo by the author.

Approximately 110 people belong to Zion Church and on average 40-50 men, women, and children attend church services each Sunday afternoon. To better understand the demographics of Zion Church, I conducted a survey of 30 individuals. This sample paints the picture of a generally young, well-educated and growing church community. Of those surveyed, 60 percent were between 18-35 years old and 65 percent had arrived in Milwaukee within the last five years. In the sample, 55 percent of respondents were male and 45 percent female. The DVL was the most common visa type (63 percent), and those entering the country as refugees came in second (21 percent). The DRC has

struggled with civil war and political instability since the mid-1990s. Most of this armed conflict has been located in the eastern part of the country so that most Congolese refugees typically come from eastern DRC (Dunn 2003). In my survey, more than half of all respondents were from the DRC capital of Kinshasa, and 74 percent of DVL winners were from Kinshasa. Of the remaining 26 percent, approximately half did not list their city of origin but wrote “DRC” or “Africa” instead. While this is a limitation of the survey, language data does help fill in this gap as they are spatial distributed across the DRC and can be used to infer where people or their families are from (see *Figure 6* on page 22). Of the national languages, 66 percent reported speaking Lingala, 17 percent Swahili, 7 percent Kikongo, and 3 percent Tshiluba. Zion Church worship services are held in French and English with music in Lingala, Swahili, French, and other languages. As a former Belgian colony, most Congolese speak their traditional languages at home and in public life while French serves as the language of government and education.

In addition to place of birth and language, the survey also asked participants about their educational and occupational backgrounds. All survey participants had completed high school and 75 percent had continued on to achieve a university degree, vocational training, or a form of post-graduate education. Prior to reaching the United States, 69 percent of the respondents engaged in professional employment in diverse sectors of the Congolese economy such as: banking, social work, high school and university teaching, civil service, medical services (e.g., nursing or laboratory technicians), agronomy, law, and journalism. Responses from members of Zion Church and scholarly research concur that due to political instability there is a lack of economic opportunity in the DRC (Dunn 2003). There are not enough jobs for the number of educated citizens, pushing potential

economic emigrants to “play” the visa lottery in hopes of a better future in the United States. Upon arrival in the Milwaukee, most participants report a dramatic change in employment due in part to language barriers (only 31 percent report speaking English) and lack of U.S. educational or technical certification. Within this highly educated population sample, 37 percent reported working in manufacturing, 19 percent were currently unemployed, and 11 percent indicated professional job positions.

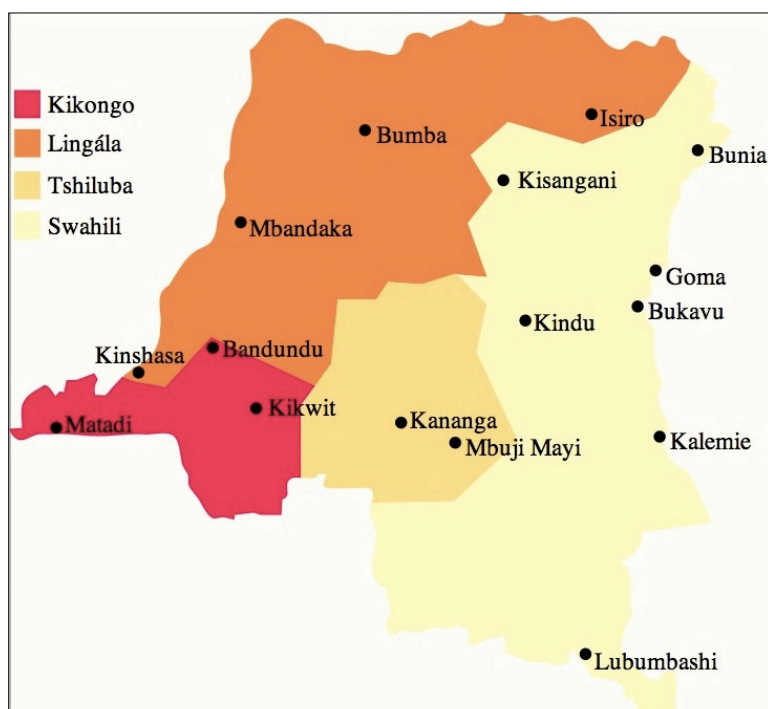


Figure 6. Major DRC language families. Image courtesy of wikipedia.org.

The demographic data provided by this survey is a snapshot of Zion Church’s membership and serves to contextualize the narratives of cultural landscapes, networks, and religious identity traced in this thesis’ analysis chapters (for a detailed list of demographic findings, please see *Table 3: Zion Church Demographic Data* on page 106).

### Thesis Structure



This thesis has the following organization: Chapter 2 surveys the academic literature regarding cultural landscapes, transnational networks and identity. The key aspects of these geographic concepts form the framework for the analysis in the remaining chapters.

Chapter 3 is a quantitative spatial analysis that uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to uncover spatial patterns of Milwaukee County's foreign-born Africans through available census data. It pinpoints global and local spatial settlement patterns at the pan-African scale before embarking on the case study of Zion Church.

Chapter 4 explores the scaled transnational networks found at Zion Church and their impact on immigrants and refugees. It outlines the motivations for Congolese migration, the processes for relocation to Milwaukee, and discusses their encounters with the growing thematic and territorial networks springing from Zion Church. All of this aids Congolese people in achieving the "better life" they seek in the United States.

Chapter 5 draws extensively on qualitative findings and textual analysis to discuss how the Congolese at Zion Church create the boundaries of their cultural landscapes in Milwaukee. While Zion Church itself functions as the most concrete material landscape, the processes of marriage form the most significant boundary on the conceptual landscape. These landscapes greatly impact the formation of a specific transnational and religious group identity that is not universally shared by all Congolese in Milwaukee.

The conclusion in Chapter 6 synthesizes the major themes of networks, landscapes, and identity found throughout the thesis and looks to the future of Congolese community building in Milwaukee.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

At times a nebulous concept, a cultural landscape is a framework for examining and interpreting a physical or conceptual environment for changes made by different cultural groups over time (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Trudeau 2006; Schein 2010). In the city of Milwaukee, the urban landscape contains cultural landscapes built by various immigrant communities. Over the span of a day, a person can explore a more or less classical ethnic enclave for cultural immersion (e.g., Historic Mitchell Street and the Latino Southside); visit world religious institutions (e.g., Sikh Temple or Zion Church); or go online to gather information on transnational civic associations (e.g., Milwaukee African Women's Association.). Urban cultural landscapes can be physical or conceptual. My focus is on the cultural landscapes specifically formed by different networks of immigrants in American cities. In particular, immigrant churches can be an ethnic and/or linguistic refuge of sorts and function as the "...first link as newcomers adapt into American society. By providing immigrants — some of whom have left their home countries without any ties to their new places — some sense of self-identity..." (Kwakyenuako 2006, 122). As examples of cultural landscapes at churches, the physical building functions as a defined space of belonging for the group and its various ministries can be viewed as conceptual landscapes. Their transnational networks facilitate the movement of cultural traditions and values from home to host country that define group identity while providing various economic and socio-cultural support mechanisms for members (Kwakyenuako 2006; Agbali 2008). These transnational networks are embedded in cultural landscapes, and they alter traditional spatial relationships. The physical distance between two countries does not change, but the social, cultural, and economic distances

shrink; the boundaries shift, and the scale of everyday reacts accordingly (Bailey 2001; Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). By seeking to understand disruptions in traditional borders between countries, an analysis of cultural landscapes and transnational networks illustrates the ways in which newcomers to a country create transnational urban spaces inscribed with their identity. Engaging in a dialogue that probes the intricate relationships between cultural landscapes, transnational networks, and identity is one way to deconstruct these landscapes.

Influential cultural geographers define culture as ways of doing, meaning, and power; as a distribution of things; and as a way of life (Anderson et al. 2003). This broad definition speaks to the complexity of culture and extends the challenge in untangling the social, economic, and political processes underlying the construction of cultural landscapes. Next, transnational theory highlights the mechanisms in which immigrants determinedly maintain various ties between their country of origin and host country (Bailey 2001; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Owusu 2006; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). They create scaled transnational networks that manifest in cultural landscapes (Leitner et al 2002; Ghose 2007). Finally, identities form through complex socio-economic, political, and often racialized processes. Identity, too, constitutes a knotty concept that must be unpacked in the setting of immigration in order to better understand the impact of boundaries on cultural landscape production (Pulido 2002; Ehrkamp 2006; Trudeau 2006; Slocum 2008). Therefore, to start this discussion, the questions I ask are: What are cultural landscapes and how do scholars “read” them? What insight does transnational theory offer when analyzing cultural landscapes? What role do networks play in transnational theory and the construction of cultural landscapes? How do cultural

landscapes facilitate immigrant identity construction? To answer these questions, I argue that a textual analysis of cultural landscapes offers a geographic approach to understanding the nuances of transnational networks and immigrant identity in American cities.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I investigate what cultural landscapes are and what constitutes “reading” a landscape. The second section explores a transnational framework and identifies how transnational migrants actively build networks between home and host countries. The final section discusses immigrant identity formation in relation to respatialized urban landscapes, the Other, and race. This section closes with a special focus on immigrant religious communities in preparation for my analysis of the cultural landscapes and transnational networks of the Congolese in Milwaukee.

## **Construction of Cultural Landscapes**

### *Defining Cultural Landscapes*

One of the fundamental organizational concepts of human and cultural geography is landscape. Landscape is a specific way of seeing or interpretive lens (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Trudeau 2006; Schein 2010). Although there are multiple ways of looking at and understanding landscapes, Sauer’s classical definition of a cultural landscape is as follows:

The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. *Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape is the result.* Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases... (1996 [1925], 309-310, author’s emphasis)

For my purposes, the italicized sentence is one key to understanding cultural landscapes. It breaks down cultural landscapes into what, who, and how. The landscape is the visible physical environment (“what”) undergoing transformation by the group (“who”) through their actions or decisions guided by culture (“how”). While Sauer’s definition focuses on physical landscape, a cultural landscape is also a conceptual object or set of objects where culture and human agency meet (Schein 1997; Trudeau 2006; Schein 2010). In the case of the conceptual, one may not see the landscape the same way as one sees a building, but the transformation is there just the same. The creation of landscapes draws upon changing socio-cultural codes or power networks over time leading to the creation of boundaries that separate groups from each other. As a result, layers of individual and group socio-spatial discourses come to life in the physical or cultural landscape undergoing construction. Deconstructing these layers leads to the analysis of how various values have been normalized, negotiated, and contested over time (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Trudeau 2006; Schein 2010; Rapoport 2011). A cultural landscape holds the stories of the people who have occupied a physical and conceptual space both in the past and present in addition to defining what is desirable behavior or values for the group defining it. Landscape records the social, cultural, political, and economic processes that shaped it (Duncan and Ley 1993).

A palimpsest is a popular metaphor to further clarify what a cultural landscape is. Just as one cannot erase the past impressions in the wax of a palimpsest, neither can one completely erase the marks of the past on a cultural landscape (Schein 1997; Schein 2010). For example, when old industrial buildings in Milwaukee are repurposed into condominiums, the city’s industrial history is woven into modern living spaces through

exposed brick walls and vaulted ceilings. Similar to a palimpsest, a cultural landscape is an “...accumulation of ‘geo-graphy’—literally human ‘earth writing’...” (Schein 2010, 222) that serves as a physical record of human presence on the earth. In the case of Milwaukee condos, people modify the industrial landscape without completely erasing it to meet their housing needs. A palimpsest is also an apt metaphor because, as I later explain, cultural landscapes can be read as texts to describe the intersection of people, places and representation. However, before “reading” cultural landscapes, it is important to differentiate landscape from another core geographic concept, place, as well as highlight the importance of boundaries in this distinction.

#### *Cultural Landscape, Place, and Boundaries*

Geographers conceptualize place in three ways: the first is as a discrete location, particularly in reference to Cartesian space (e.g., longitude and latitude); secondly, human geographers refer to a sense of place (e.g., the point of individual or group identity); and lastly, space is the locale where we realize or rehearse our everyday interactions with others (e.g., our neighborhood). Brought together, these three concepts define place as the area that houses social relations and identities (Agnew 1993; Abdullah 2009; Castree 2009). Humans live and love in places, and as such, become emotionally attached to them thereby imbuing social spaces with subjective senses of identity (Trudeau 2006).

One way to contrast landscape and place is to look at the question of time and boundaries. Corporal and conceptual cultural landscapes can be interpreted as bounded places that hold symbols that tell the story of human power relationships, politics, and social struggles that have shaped the landscape over time (Rose 1997a; Trudeau 2006).

To return to the palimpsest, cultural landscapes in the present may hold traces of the past but ultimately reflect cultural traditions or values (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). In contrast, sense of place is the relationship an individual has to a location during a particular time. Overall, cultural landscapes contain narratives that convey the development of who or what belongs to a group by imposing boundaries around the landscape (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011).

Trudeau (2006) argues that boundaries are a critical difference between place and landscape. When the cultural groups acting as the agents of cultural landscape formation are from the dominant group, they codify what it means to belong to their group and create an imagined geography. That is to say, a geography defined by socio-cultural boundaries that exist in the imagination of the group. Sense of place may be tied to a physical location, but a cultural landscape can shift with the group defining it — the values embedded in the landscape travel with them. The boundaries of cultural landscapes define values, allowable activities, or what the group in question deems “orthodox” behavior. Trudeau argues that defining orthodoxy normalizes or regulates the landscape. It controls human behavior so that by identifying orthodoxies, the group defines what is unacceptable or undesirable. By building boundaries around cultural landscapes through regularization of behaviors and beliefs individuals not engaging in such acts are by default excluded from the landscape in question.

Trudeau’s (2006) research on land zoning codes that restrict Hmong people from practicing ritual animal slaughter within city limits of rural Hugo, Minnesota clarifies the relationship between cultural landscapes, boundaries, group identity, and exclusion. By creating zoning codes, longtime residents of Hugo draw boundaries between themselves

and Hmong newcomers via city policy. City officials enact actual policy that excludes the cultural practices of Hmong residents from occurring within Hugo's city limits. They codified what/who belongs and what/who does not belong within Hugo's cultural landscape. Trudeau argues that

...landscapes represent socio-spatial practices aimed at fixing boundaries, imposing cultural coherence and stabilizing meaning as a response to the 'inherent unboundedness' and instability of the social world. (2006, 437).

For different cultural or religious groups, creating cultural landscapes defines belonging and identity as a mechanism for maintaining order if the group feels threatened by changes occurring in the landscape that appear out of their control. As these groups, and in particular those with religious affiliations, insert themselves onto a city's landscape, one tangible impact is change to policy (Trudeau 2006; Kong 2010). Cultural landscapes may be marked by clear overt boundaries such as Hugo's zoning codes. However, at the urban scale where social interactions form irregular dialogues among diverse sets of people, these subtle, often shifting boundaries are rarely defined by urban codes. They can be hard to discern unless one knows the cultural symbols and signs to look for (Duncan and Duncan 1992; Ashutosh 2008).

#### *Urban Cultural Landscapes*

Though not a geographer by training, Abdullah's scholarship (2009; 2010) on Senegalese Muslims in New York City offers insight on urban cultural landscapes and is salient as an example of urban African religious landscape. Through extensive ethnographic interviewing, participant observation, and critical assessment of literature, Abdullah paints a vivid picture of conceptual landscapes in New York's Senegalese Muslim population. An example of a physical boundary appears right away in Abdullah's (2010) text. In 1983, New York City changed the name of the intersection at 125<sup>th</sup> Street



and Seventh Avenue in Harlem to African Square. Through a street sign, the city physically labeled the intersection as a black space. Abdullah asserts that city leaders had no way of knowing that African Square would become home to a vibrant and growing African immigrant community over the next 20 years but that is indeed what happened. The labeled intersection exemplifies the physical manifestation of cultural boundaries recognized by people from outside the cultural.

Other symbols are not as overt for cultural outsiders as a street sign is. For Senegalese Muslims, the act of hanging a religious sign, selling Senegalese food, wearing traditional clothes, or listening to Senegalese music, "...not only creates Muslim space, [but] also inscribes their Africanisms onto the geography of the city." (Abdullah 2009; 48). Senegalese Muslims use their clothes to signify their cultural difference so that people from outside of their community can recognize the indelible boundaries that Senegalese Muslims have created in their neighborhoods. As Abdullah points out, cultural differences by themselves are not enough to create these boundaries or divisions. The social importance and cultural meanings of people both inside and outside the group maintain the divisions which are often the result of power dynamics.

The power relationships underlying the construction of cultural landscapes are entrenched in the cultural and social hegemonic discourses that shape the world. The visible and invisible boundaries etched into cultural landscapes communicate what belongs and what does not belong in that particular landscape. These boundaries change over time and the traces they leave tell the story of the landscape. Within a defined cultural landscape, groups can impose a cohesive cultural identity; in this way, cultural landscapes offer a geographic way to stabilize and codify cultural identities of different

groups of people (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). Cultural landscapes are a way to “read” changing, or respatialized, boundaries of belonging or exclusion in a city. In the following section, I describe how to read these landscapes as texts that signify what/who belongs and the importance of representation in scholarly work.

### *Reading Cultural Landscapes as Texts*

At first, reading a landscape as text may not seem intuitive or necessarily geographic. Yet, the etymology of geography is “earth writing,” and cultural geographers embrace a methodology in which cultural productions act as communication tools. Paintings, theatre, and other creative works open social, cultural, economic, and political relationships to reinterpretation and representation in a distinctively geographic way (Barnes and Duncan 1992; Duncan and Duncan 1992). As Cosgrove and Domosh explain, scholars glean valuable geographic knowledge from cultural landscapes that challenge rigid systems of representation:

In geography we trace out the production and communication of cultural meanings in spatial organization, conduct and the landscape. But cultural studies of landscape are no longer regarded as part of a ‘coherent body of knowledge’... Rather they seem disassociated fragments, shards of reflecting glass which at once illuminate, reflect and distort—in sum, re-present... (Cosgrove and Domosh 1993, 29).

By interpreting landscapes as texts, the possibility to increase geographic knowledge via social processes expands. Culling discursive elements, fragments, or “reflective shards” from landscapes highlights how multiple discourses shape the contours of cultural landscapes over time.

Just as a mirror does not perfectly reflect an image, textual representations are just *re-presentations* of the author’s interpretation of a scene. In essence, when reading a landscape, the researcher responds to the landscape while at the same time entering into a relationship with the landscape itself and the agents active in its production (Barnes and

Duncan 1992). The discursive narratives in cultural landscapes do not exist in a vacuum but interact in a process called intertextuality. They respond to each other, to those living within them, and those interpreting them. The interplay between these three elements within a strong theoretical framework is of great value. Therefore, I propose transnational networks as the core of the framework I will use to read cultural landscape production.

### **Transnationalism and its Networks**

Transnational theories of immigration propose that after leaving their homes, transnational migrants build cultural landscapes by creating multi-faceted networks facilitating the movement of peoples, goods, and culture between country of origin and host country (Bailey 2001; Leitner et al. 2002; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Owusu 2006; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). As I situate my research within this framework of transnational networks, I begin with the limitations of an assimilation model, then define transnational migrant networks and end by explaining the relationship between these networks and neoliberal political and socio-economic structures.

#### *From Assimilated Immigrants to Transnational Migrants*

The United States' history of immigration has long emphasized the processes of assimilation, the mythology of the melting pot, and the primacy of the nation-state. In classical terms, assimilation is a gradual process in which immigrants are incorporated into the host-country culture by taking on its language, food, attire, values, and attitudes. In the case of the United States, immigrants historically have been expected to embrace a national culture rooted in Anglo-Saxon traditions (Gordon 1964). Consequently, if immigrants hope to achieve parity with middle-class native-born citizens (e.g., the

American dream), they will give up their customs and traditions. When newcomers resist complete assimilation, they face harsh criticism from nativist Americans who feel their culture is threatened (Nagel 2002; Ehrkamp 2006; Woltman and Newbold 2009). Within the context of assimilation, mainstream U.S. culture is built around the ideal of the melting pot. The melting pot's roots in U.S. national mythology reach back to the eighteenth century when the country and its new society were under formation. As immigrants undergo the process of assimilation, their cultural traditions add flavor to the culture milieu, but eventually disappear into the melting pot thus preserving a cohesive cultural identity dependent on the nation-state (Gordon 1964).

Ultimately, assimilation theory supports the primacy of the nation-state. In its idealized form, a nation-state is a politically bound space that contains people of the same socio-cultural traditions: one political territory corresponding with one homogenous people (Anderson 1981; Agnew 1993). While this geopolitical ideal has rarely occurred in the modern world, this did not deter expectations of immigrant assimilation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to fit the nation-state model. Assimilation theory pairs well with the nation-state because they both operate under the premise of rigid political and territorial borders that are mutually exclusive with cultural boundaries.

While assimilation theory may have dominated immigration studies for much of the twentieth century, some scholars propose transnationalism as an alternative framework for understanding and even celebrating immigrant identity, cultural landscapes, and representation in the immigrant receiving countries. Conceptually, transnationalism seeks to understand the ways in which international migration challenges traditional concepts of culture and the nation-state in the face of changes to

global socio-economic systems (Montz and Wright 1996; Mitchell 1997; Lawson 2000; Baily 2001; Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Owusu 2006; Ashutosh 2008; Blunt 2008). More specifically, in light of changing global socio-economic structures, a transnational framework focuses on the networks of people, commodities, and culture purposefully maintained by immigrants.

### *The Networks of Transnationalism*

Networks are dynamic and flexible multi-strand conceptual structures that connect goods, information, people, and capital (Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003; Ghose 2007). Social actors, defined as individuals or groups, forge relationships that develop networks. The power of such actors within a network depends on where they are situated inside it (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). Transnational migrants, as social actors, choose to engage in network formation that connects their daily lives in their host country with that of their home country. While transnational migrants live in one place, they have a strong sense of attachment and responsibility to people and places far from the landscapes they physically inhabit (Lawson 2000; Gilmartin 2008; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). Previous research shows how, to fulfill these senses, transnational migrants build scaled networks that address the barrier of physical distances (Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003).

Montz and Wright (1996) offer such an analysis of transnational relationships between San Agustín in Oaxaca, Mexico and Poughkeepsie, New York. They demonstrate how social actors weave social, biological, economic, and cultural networks between two physically separate cities. Employing ethnographic interviewing techniques, they learn that despite being geographically distant, daily life in San Agustín entwines

with that in Poughkeepsie: cultural norms from San Agustín accompany migrants to Poughkeepsie and, due in part to new communication technologies, events in one place impact the other. Montz and Wright find that networks shrink the geographic distance between the two cities.

Transnational networks, such as those between San Agustín and Poughkeepsie, operate at various scales and the scale of the network is equated to the geographic scale that a network's members occupy (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). While some geographers discuss scale at length, one argument is that scale is a fluid, social production conceptualized as "...contingent and as an emergent property of sociospatial processes." (Leitner et al. 2002, 286). There is no single-value in scalar hierarchy, therefore associations, for example those between socio-economic and political processes, at different scales influence each other (Ghose 2007). The scale of such networks is not fixed but rather reacts in accordance to the evolution of the processes building the network. One impact of such fluidness on the part of network production is that the effectiveness of a scaled network may be contingent on the scale it occupies. A second result is that scaled networks force traditional hierarchical relationships to be questioned (Leitner et al. 2002).

As in the case of San Agustín and Poughkeepsie when network processes jump between scales and hierarchies, this is called "scale-jumping" (Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Ghose 2007). The urban scale no longer is strictly nestled within a global-regional-local hierarchy — rather the local transcends the national (Leitner et al. 2002; Ashutosh 2008; Schiller and Çağlar 2009). The local networks of Montz and Wright's (1996) transnational migrants bypass the regional and national scales, connecting urban

to urban. Such transnational networks respond to physical distances and hierarchies as they override traditional boundaries; this concept is in stark contrast to assimilation theory and its support of a hierarchical nation-state (Leitner et al. 2002).

Through their networks, transnational migrants challenge the hegemony of the nation-state in geopolitical discourses by perpetuating diverse networks and flows. Instead of cutting their relationships upon migration, transnational migrants deliberately maintain scaled networks. In this sense, transnational networks are a transgressive alternative to assimilation theory. Embedded networks at local, regional, or global scales are emblematic of how transnationalism contravenes older notions of nation-state dominance, culture, and immigration. They are transgressive because they destabilize the nation-state's traditional link between political/territorial boundaries and culture in a process coined as "deterritorialization" or "respatialization" (Hannerz 1996; Mitchell 1997; Bailey 2001; Mitchell 2003; Blunt 2007; Ashutosh 2008; Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). In respatialization, people consistently are crossing conventionally defined territorial, political, and conceptual boundaries in their daily lives. The connections between space and people are altered, and traditional conceptual relationships between identity, territory, and assimilation lose saliency. Two types of transnational networks that do this are thematic and territorial networks. Thematic networks link people and places "...with common concerns and problems, irrespective of their location." (Leitner et al. 2002, 289). In comparison, territorial networks connect people and places "...in a common geographic region or in particular types of regions." (Leitner et al. 2002, 289). These transnational networks jump between scales and contest the idea of a central national identity and national culture (Bailey 2001;

Leitner et al. 2002; Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009).

As an example of how changing transnational networks respatialize the relationship between territory and politics, Mitchell (2003) draws attention to the ways in which expatriate Haitians purposefully maintain ties in Haiti's national politics from locations across the world. A thematic network, expatriates living in different cities and countries are so active in the national political scene that they are considered the country's tenth political department even though they are geographically dispersed throughout the globe. Transnational Haitian migrants engage in thematic network building practices that span political geographies with their corresponding social relationships and cultural values. Transnational migrants deliberately participate in multiple societies simultaneously — their physical location in their host country does not hinder their abilities to shape political and social processes in their country of origin. Upon immigration, they not cut their ties to home per assimilation theory; rather transnational migrants intentionally create social, economic, cultural, familial, political, organizational, and religious relationships across borders (Bailey 2001).

While Mitchell's (2003) work highlighted political networks, Ashutosh's (2008) study of Chicago's Devon Avenue demonstrates territorial networks that also jump scale. Devon Avenue prides itself on being an international marketplace that integrates South Asians from different national groups and other people living in various locations in and around the Chicago area. It takes on thematic characteristics when it links the Chicago network with other cities within the global South Asian diaspora and South Asia itself. Ashutosh found that the interactions between merchants, laborers, and residents highlight



how thematic transnational sites are representative of multiple expressions of belonging and difference at multiple scales: their location in the Chicago area pulls together South Asian merchants. Devon Avenue becomes emblematic of the ways in which “...urban spaces can be seen as the outcome of processes produced by the practices of migrants negotiating the boundaries of multiple nation-states.” (Ashutosh 2008, 228). It is a cultural landscape that contains a breadth of embedded networks. The transnational nature of these networks, deeply buried in the urban landscape, contradicts older models of the immigration, culture, and economy in the nation-state. Thematic and territorial transnational networks, like those found in Devon Avenue and among Haitian expatriates, are well equipped to respond to current changes in socio-economic and political structures.

#### *Transnational Networks and Neoliberal Policies*

The socio-economic and political restructuring of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been impacted by different geographic influence and often is referred to by academics as neoliberalism. To summarize, neoliberalism is a collection of political and socio-economic projects that result in capital accumulation, uneven global development, and changing relationships of capitalist “...production including the organization of labour [sic], space, state institutions, military power, governance, membership and sovereignty.” (Schiller and Çağlar 2009, 178). Neoliberalization promotes the mythology of individual economic self-sufficiency by establishing the ultimate free market with a hollowed-out government, limited social programs, and increased flows of commodities, services, and peoples across lowering national borders

(Mitchell 1997; Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Varsanyi 2008; Schiller and Çağlar 2009).

Owusu's (2006) study of Ghanaians in Canada is a generalized qualitative analysis of transnational ties that is particularly salient regarding a hollowing-out government. His study occurs at two national scales. Ghanaian immigrants in the city of Toronto have created more than 50 different ethnic organizations representing their place of origin in Ghana. Owusu explains while these organizations target different ethnic groups, they typically serve the same purpose. The associations function as social welfare organizations that are in keeping with the hollowing out of government social programs, and are hallmarks in neoliberal government politics. Welfare associations assist members with finding opportunities to improve their economic and social standing, as well as provide members with an outlet for cultural activities such as child naming or funeral ceremonies. Transnational ties are actively preserving Ghanaian cultural in Canada and relieve the government of providing social services to assist immigrants with integration. Owusu's work highlights not only neoliberalism but the thematic and territorial networks connecting Ghana and Canada at different scales.

Neoliberalism encompasses changes at the global, national, and local political and socio-economic scales. This focus on the geographic context of neoliberalism highlights economic and socio-cultural structures as intimately woven together as opposed to causal (Mitchell 1997; Mitchell 2003). While transnational migrants might not use the phrase "neoliberalism" to describe their migration stories, Lawson (2000) argues that neoliberal policies and practices frame the experiences of economic migrants to urban areas. Schiller and Çağlar (2009) extend Lawson's argument and suggest that the urban scale is

vital to understanding current transnational migrants. Instead of a physical place, they describe the city as a “cultural metaphor” (Schiller and Çağlar 2009, 182) or a cultural landscape embedded with neoliberal dynamics that further the concept of respatialization.

As this respatialization unfolds and traditional boundaries shift, instead of conceptualizing isolated and territorially bound nation-states, the focus changes to how the “...relations *between* things and on movements *across* things forces a reconceptualization of core beliefs in migration and geopolitical literatures.” (Mitchell 2003, 74, original emphasis). This reiterates the fluidity of scale, boundaries, and identity, as well as exposes the limitations of the nation-state within liminal spaces (Hannerz 1996; Mitchell 1997; Mitchell 2003). In essence, transnational networks contextualize the ways in which a migrant’s lived experiences are both situated within and/or across multiple scales and react to neoliberal structures. It questions the ways in which the socio-economic and cultural constructions of the nation-state and social structures cross multiple borders (Mitchell 2003). This flexibility impacts transnational identity formation and as such, cultural geographers hope to give marginalized individuals a medium in which their voices can be heard among the cacophony of immigration stories at the margins of hegemonic discourses.

### **Identity, the Other and Race**

Just as there are multiple networks connecting people and places, the ways in which humans construct their identities have multiple facets. For immigrants coming to the United States, the strenuous processes of migration add new dimensions to the sense of self that they may have firmly held in their home countries. Reading the landscape and

networks at work in its creation is one methodology scholars employ for understanding identity construction. Engagement between native-born and newcomers in the host-country's landscapes inform an evolving sense of identity (Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). In entering the physical territory of the host culture, immigrant or refugee groups develop a relationship with the culture of the host country. At times, identity construction can be the process of identifying what the new cultural group *is not* in stark contrast to what the host country majority group *is* (Rose 1997b; Nagel 2002; Brace et al. 2006; Ehrkamp 2006; Trudeau 2006; Woltman and Newbold 2009). In a similar process, host-country nationals stigmatize new cultures in a process that creates the Other: that which “*we*,” the host society or dominant group, are not. Creating defined cultural landscapes through overt symbols or normalized behavior can be a defense mechanism for people seeking to protect as well as define their identity.

In the United States, non-English language signs, religious or cultural symbols identify neighborhoods as outside of American cultural norms. On Milwaukee's Southside, while reminders of the old Polish neighborhood remain, new billboards in Spanish and retailers selling Latino products are the physical signs of a Latino cultural landscape. It marks a cultural divide between Anglo and Latino communities — a new boundary forms within the landscape of Milwaukee that pulls together a specific group of people (Rapoport 2011). In this example, the cultural boundary is not a physical structure around city blocks that separates Anglo and Latino communities but cultural signs (e.g., billboards, restaurants, stores, language) that communicate to people that the cultural identity of the space is not Anglo-American. Those creating these boundaries decide what behavior is acceptable and the individuals entering these landscapes must decide whether

they belong in those spaces or not (Trudeau 2006; Abdullah 2009; Rapoport 2011). As transnational migrants settle in cities, they connect their new homes to their old ones with the various networks previously discussed. As the transnational networks grow, they become engraved into the respatialized urban landscape through symbols. These respatialized landscapes occur at multiple scales that include whole neighborhoods, individual homes or apartment buildings, and religious institutions. Each landscape holds cultural symbols that may or may not be recognized by outsiders. By marking spaces, immigrants may feel freer to express their cultural identities within the safety of the bounded zones (Nagel 2002). Such cultural landscapes frequently manifest themselves in the places people live; again, the urban landscape serves as an excellent scale for investigating the intersection of identity, belonging, and culture (Anderson 1987; Yeoh 2003; Ehrkamp 2006; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009).

Landscapes contain the symbols and imagery of identity. Through the construction of landscape, groups pick and choose how they wish to be represented within the privacy of their spaces or, conversely, which face they choose to show the public. The landscape becomes a physical manifestation of identity in which the exterior landscape reflects the group's interior (Nagel 2002; Bonnet and Nayal 2003; Abdullah 2009). As a result, the landscape often upholds the multiple strains of identity valued by different groups. Ehrkamp's (2006) research on Turkish immigrants in Germany discusses the value many Germans hold in maintaining "German" space. By discouraging the spatial clustering of Turkish immigrants, the Muslim call to prayer, or Turkish coffeehouses, Germans reproduce spatial and cultural hegemony over the Turkish Other. By pushing for Turkish assimilation is an attempt to limit the respatialization of German

landscapes and the agency of the Other. Global or transnational linkages are discouraged in favor of a unified German cultural territory. This unity rings false and glosses over the complexities of the relationship between landscape and identity. Unpacking this relationship reveals how race can be found deeply embedded into the socio-economic and political structures carved onto the landscape.

Anderson's (1987) research on Vancouver's Chinatown dives deep into racial identity, the Other, and landscape construction. While cultural landscapes may not have geopolitical borders, Vancouver's Chinatown is an excellent example of a territorially defined space of a group labeled as the Other. As Anderson explains, "Chinatown was not simply an idea...[its] physical presence propped up the vision of identity and place." (1987, 589). The very existence of the Chinatown exemplifies indelible racial ideology on the landscape and reiterates the idea that humans reproduce racialized material spaces. When people of the same phenotype gather together, certain physical features are connected to certain spaces: "[r]ace becomes material through the body." (Slocum 2008, 854). Daily interactions in Chinatown of people sharing certain physical characteristics reproduce racialized space, thus Chinatown physically manifests racial hierarchies or privileges for white Vancouverites. Chinatown generates an imaginary cohesive Chinese identity confined to the geographic space of Chinatown for the cultural comfort of white Vancouver. Such racialized spaces are frequently thought of in terms of minority group so that the Chinese space takes on a racialized identity while white spaces are perceived as lacking any racialization (Pulido 2000; Bonnet and Nayal 2002).

Often, racial classifications focus on a person's physical features so that "...it and other visible characteristics (e.g. clothes) are recognized in real, everyday interactions

and play a role in...what happens to bodies.” (Slocum 2008, 854). For immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, their skin marks them as part of a homogenous black community so that unless they are wearing traditional clothes, speaking something other than American-accented English, or eating traditional food, it renders their distinct cultural identities invisible. The effect is that people should not just see racial differences via skin color but use their senses of hearing, smell, taste and touch to discern racial differences and distinguish racialized landscapes (Slocum 2008). When Africans do assert their identity through their clothes or other cultural traditions, they challenge notions of black space in America (Abdullah 2009). These immigrant communities in the United States often are built around religious or cultural identities in hopes that skin color is no longer the biggest marker of difference.

Race has physical, material, and ideological dimensions that affect social formation and cultural identity for people of color and people who identify as white (Pulido 2000; Bonnet and Nayal 2002; Pulido 2002). Some seek to essentialize race into different binaries like black-white, but a racial binary is too simplistic. It excludes the ways in which a person’s gender, socio-economic position, sexuality, ability, place of birth, ethnicity, and spaces of daily interaction subordinate people of color (Pulido 2002). Race is more complex than a binary. To echo the earlier discussion of respatialization, understanding the processes of creating racialized space is not only about the resulting space itself but about the connections between these different factors as well (Slocum 2008). To uncover such connections is beyond the scope of this research; however, race, place of birth, and spaces of daily interaction are critical in an analysis of cultural landscapes for immigrants and refugees.

*Identity Construction and Religious Immigrant Landscapes*

Shared religious knowledge shapes behaviors and creates new landscapes by utilizing shared religious epistemologies (Gallagher 2005; Olson 2006). Religious institutions offer newcomers a refuge where they can voluntarily discover the extent to which they wish to incorporate themselves into mainstream society (Kwakyie-Nuako 2006; Agbali 2008; Kong 2010). Immigrants lacking adequate networks in their new homes find that religious organizations provide a major link between new and old as they offer socio-cultural safety and support as they cope with the stresses of living in a new culture. People from sub-Saharan Africa in particular may foster strong transnational, religious, and cultural ties to eschew deeply racialized social hierarchies in the United States and the long history of the African as Other (Kwakyie-Nuako 2006; Okome 2006; Owusu 2006). Within the confines of the church space, congregants are not considered as Other but as members as a specific religious identity that is upheld within the space of the church and the experience of worship (Gallagher 2005; Kong 2010). This identity though, only exists within the space of the church and with no visible marker visible to the general public, once someone leaves this space he or she returns to the status of Other. Despite this, scholars have uncovered that religious landscapes have been “...radically reshaped and sharpened...” as the local-global connections grow connecting various landscapes (Kong 2010, 755).

Kong (2010) writes about the connections between and the rise in unofficially sacred sites and religious landscapes. These small-scale landscapes, considered banal or commonplace, gain religious importance through the practices of the individuals inhabiting them. Minority religious groups contest mainstream culture through



constructing landscapes that reflect their own values. By defining their own cultural landscape through religious organizations whose networks manifest across multiple landscapes, pastors and their congregations maintain social order according to their cultural traditions and preferences that may be in stark contrast to national or dominate landscapes. Religious landscapes are not the only organizations and groups created by newly arrived people, and they also form organizations that foster ethnic or national ties between host and home spaces. Religion however, functions as a unique set of beliefs for constructing cultural landscapes, strengthening identity, and marking belonging at multiple scales. The formation of religious communities must be nurtured in a manner that results in a secure sense of belonging for individuals within the community (Brace et al. 2006). Both individuals within the group and the group as a whole mutually construct the sociospatial and cultural boundaries of religious landscapes. Within these bounded religious landscapes, people have the opportunity to act out their religious beliefs as a group and through the individual movements of their bodies (Brace et al. 2006). The transnational networks of religion shape the immigrant/refugee community's moral landscape, which in turn impacts that of the host country so that identities, whether national, racial, or religious, are layered across different scales (Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009; Kong 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The processes of immigration do not stop when a person crosses the national boundaries of the host culture, nor do these processes cease when or if citizenship is established. Immigrants and refugees spend their lives negotiating between the culture

they grew up in and the culture in which they are living. Indeed, transnational migrants use the transmission of people, culture, and capital via multiple networks at different scales to be “...expressive and performative in terms of shaping multi-scalar ‘ways of Belonging’.” (Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009, 87). For transnational migrants, this negotiation is critical as they actively maintain their connections to home through various networks (Hannerz 1996; Bailey 2001; Mitchell 2003). One way to assess the impact of these networks on immigrant identity is through analyzing cultural landscapes.

Transnationalism is a theoretical framework that can be used to structure a discussion of the junction of cultural landscapes, networks, and identity formation in immigrant communities.

Analysis of cultural landscapes and transnational networks in U.S. cities unearths the ways in which urban space is respatialized as immigrant identity jump scales. Like the palimpsest, new traditions that write over old ones may be more outwardly visible, but the older artifacts can never be completely erased from physical and conceptual landscapes (Schein 1997). Boundaries that reflect group identity define cultural landscapes and create community by pulling people together often at the cost of excluding those who do not, for innumerable reasons, “fit” in the geographic imagination of the landscape (Trudeau 2006). The thematic and territorial networks that people form between home and host countries contribute to the ways in which they create the landscapes that shape cultural boundaries and delineate group identity (Gilmartin 2008; Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). In the following chapters, I break down first the distribution of foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County, and then networks and the cultural landscapes of the Congolese worshipping at

Zion Church as a way to gain insight into the ways in which they produce their own transnational identity centered on religious belief.

## **CHAPTER THREE: AFRICAN SPATIAL PATTERNS IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY**

### **African Immigration to the United States**

The current rapid population growth of foreign-born Africans in the United States can be attributed to different socio-economic push factors on the African continent (e.g., unstable political situations, draught, famine, and chronically under-performing economies), as well as significant changes to U. S. immigration law and perceived economic opportunities (Lobo 2006; Takyi, and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Wilson and Habecker 2008; Abdullah 2009; Logan and Thomas 2012). Momentous changes to U.S. immigration policy were the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act and the introduction of the DVL in the 1990s. The former abolished the immigrant quota system that gave preference to peoples from Western Europe, and it prioritized family reunification, skilled laborers, refugees, and asylum seekers (Law 2002). While this policy change was intended to increase the flows of people from diverse world regions, natural disasters, political instability, and lack of social capital or familial connections still inhibited immigration of individuals from African countries to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s (Lobo 2006). Instead, the DVL system, designed specifically to draw individuals from under-represented countries, had a greater impact on the number of Africans arriving in the United States than did the 1965 immigration act (Lobo 2006; Takyi and Boate 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012).

Despite the DVL's impact on African immigration to the United States, people originally from Africa can be considered an invisible population in the United States. Similar to individuals arriving in the United States from other continents, when Africans

immigrate, they bring distinct and multiple cultures, languages, religions, and identities with them. Scholarly inquiry serves to better understand this diverse population and the overlap between culture, people, and U.S. space (Takyi and Boate 2006). Scholars often use qualitative methodologies of archival research and ethnographic interviews to gather data on cultural landscapes and networks (Schein 2010). To this point, much of the scholarship done on groups of people from different African countries living in the United States has been influenced by transnational theory and conducted through qualitative techniques. Overall, when compared to other immigrant communities, there is less scholarship available on people originally from African in the United States and even less research into the spatial dimensions of their growth (Takyi and Boate 2006). As an example of one quantitative study, Taky and Boate's (2006) analysis of the location and settlement patterns of African immigrants to the United States provides solid descriptive spatial statistics at the national and state scale but is lacking in more detailed spatial analysis or description at the municipal scale. By analyzing census data with GIS spatial analysis techniques at the pan-African scale, I seek to contribute to the current literature as well as generate a broad understanding of pan-African settlement patterns across Milwaukee County in relationship to the country's extreme segregation that serves to contextualize my case study of the Congolese migrating to the city of Milwaukee.

#### *Analysis of Milwaukee County*

From 1970-2010, the number of people living in Milwaukee who self-identified as "foreign-born African" grew from 151 to 3,813 people (U.S. Census Bureau). Despite this 2,400 percent increase, foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee remain homogenized into one pan-African community. Through spatial analysis techniques, this chapter

analyzes the foreign-born African population's distribution across Milwaukee County for patterns. The Milwaukee metropolitan area is perhaps *the* most racially segregated urban area in the United States. An expert report written by UWM Professor Marc V. Levine for the plaintiffs in the 2012 case *Frank v. Walker* (Civil Action No. 2:11-cv-01128(LA)), outlines in detail the extreme socio-economic disparities between white and minority communities in Milwaukee. The city of Milwaukee has consistently scored high on black-white dissimilarity indexes and from 1980-2010 the metropolitan area showed the lowest rate of desegregation in the United States. From a residential standpoint, urban and suburban Milwaukee African American communities have remained consistently separated from white communities which is in sharp contrast to modest desegregation movements in many U.S. cities since the 1980s. Levine points to mortgage lending policies and entrenched political racism as two of the major factors contributing to the low rates of homeownership and suburbanization occurring in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. These deeply entrenched socio-economic and political disparities between white and minority peoples influence the relationships between individuals born in different African countries and native-born Americans. The maps in this chapter establish the historical landscape of African migration to Milwaukee County in light of this extreme segregation and set the stage for my focus on networks, landscapes, and transnational identity formation of individuals from the DRC in Chapters 4 and 5. Using data from the U.S. Census, in this chapter I address this question: What are the patterns for Africans in Milwaukee County? How have these patterns changed over time? To answer these questions, this chapter has the following structure: I will first describe my data sources and methodology. Then, I present my findings utilizing tables and maps that

depict the emergence of distinct settlement patterns over time for Africans identified via the U.S. Census as “foreign-born” residing in Milwaukee County which lays the groundwork for identifying the existence of networks and landscapes within the Congolese community.

## **Data**

The data for this analysis came from the U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census provides public access to population data for foreign-born Africans in 1970, 2000, and 2010 for Milwaukee County at the census tract level. The U.S. Census Bureau does not release all of the data it collects to the public, nor does it release data in the same way for each census. For these reasons, this analysis excludes 1980 and 1990 because all foreign-born residents were lumped into a single category thus the number of foreign-born Africans living in Milwaukee County was not released.

## **Methodology**

I use three different statistical techniques to assess the spatial distribution and changing patterns over time of Africans in Milwaukee: global Moran’s  $I$ , local Moran’s  $I$  and Getis  $G^*$ . Global tests answer the question of whether a pattern exists *across a region* with the goal of detecting the presence of any clusters, their size, and location (Rogerson 2010). The local Moran’s  $I$  and Getis  $G^*$  tests focus the analysis by identifying the locations of clusters *within the region*. Together, these tests analyze data for spatial patterns at various scales to provide a thorough investigation.

The global Moran's  $I$  is a classic spatial test that measures autocorrelation of aerial data. Autocorrelation refers to the ways in which the value of the selected variable at one point relates to the value of the same variable in a neighboring location (Rogerson 2010). In this case, the variable is individuals who self-identified as "foreign-born African" in the U.S. Census, the area of analysis is Milwaukee County, and the census tracts form the spatial unit. Using spatial data, GIS calculates the global Moran's  $I$  statistic between -1 and 1. Results closer to -1 indicate strong negative auto-correlation, values closer to 1 indicate strong positive autocorrelation and values near 0 indicate an absence of spatial pattern. When calculating global Moran's  $I$ , GIS finds the z-score and p-score. The z-score standardizes the resulting  $I$  value so that the significance of the pattern can be assessed at a specified standard critical value. The p-score is an indication of how likely a result equal to or more extreme than the observed value would be. While the global Moran's  $I$  effectively measures autocorrelation for the region as a whole, it can overlook outliers or population hot/cold spots within the dataset (Rogerson 2010).

The local Moran's  $I$  detects whether clusters or outliers of the variable occur around specific points within the region. In the case of the local Moran's  $I$ , the sum of the  $I$  values is equal to a constant proportion of the global Moran's  $I$ . When mapped, the local Moran's  $I$  classifies spatial units as: high high; high low; low high; and low low. This indicates the relationship between the variable within a specific spatial unit to those values of the units around it (Rogerson 2010). For example, a census tract classified as "high high" has a high proportion of the variable and indicates that this finding is in keeping with high proportions in adjacent units. A high low indicates that the spatial unit in question has a high proportion of the variable compared to low concentrations in



adjoining tracts. In other words, the local Moran's  $I$  pinpoints the location of clusters and outliers within in a dataset.

In addition to local Moran's  $I$ , a Getis  $G^*$  test shows hot and cold spots of the variable in question. A spatial unit and its surrounding units are assessed as to whether they have higher than average, lower than average or average value of the analysis variable. Mapping the resulting z-score visual illustrates any hot or cold spots of the variable within the region (Rogerson 2010).

## **Spatial Patterns**

### *Global Tests, 1970 and 2000*

Mapping the foreign-born African population across Milwaukee County reveals interesting patterns that connected to both the academic literature on immigration and my fieldwork in the Congolese community. In 1970, the global Moran's  $I$  statistic of -0.003 and the z-score of -0.48 confirm that the pattern does not appear to be significantly different than random. Given the small total population (151 people), this perhaps is not surprising. The results of the global Moran's  $I$  for the 2000 dataset also report no autocorrelation, meaning that there is no significant pattern to the distribution of foreign-born Africans in 1970 or 2000 at the county-wide scale (for a complete summary of the results from the global Moran's  $I$  tests, see *Table 2* on page 56). Negative global tests for 1970 and 2000 indicate that more analysis is necessary in the form of local tests.

Table 2. Global Moran's *I* summary

Year	Moran's <i>I</i>	Z-score	P-value
1970	-0.009	0.011	0.634
2000	-0.003	0.011	0.991
2010	0.053	3.304	0.001

*Local Tests, 1970 and 2000*

For 1970 and 2000, the local tests point to some local clusters and outliers, as well as hot spots within the spatial distribution of the data. In the case of the 1970 data set, both local Moran's *I* and the Getis *G\** denote increased levels of Africans in the eastern section of the county (see *Figures 7 and 8* on pages 57 and 58). The Getis *G\** shows a growing zone of Africans concentrated in that part of the county, with a tiny pocket on the southern boundary of the city of Milwaukee. The local Moran's *I* reveals outliers scattered in the northern part of the county. These outliers, classified as "high-low" mean that a higher concentration of foreign-born Africans exists in these census tracts as compared to their immediate neighbors. In general, the spatial patterning confirms field research that attributes African immigration in the 1960s and 1970s to individuals coming to study at UWM. The small numbers of Africans at this time could also be linked to overall low numbers of Africans immigrating to the United States. The increase in Milwaukee County's African population from 1970 to 2000 and the subsequent change in spatial pattern reflect the national increase in African immigration in the 1990s tied to the DVL.

Local tests for the 2000 data set detect a shift in spatial patterns. The Getis *G\** map shows a strong hot spot in the northwestern corner of Milwaukee County and a small cold spot in census tracts just south of the city of Milwaukee's downtown (see *Figure*

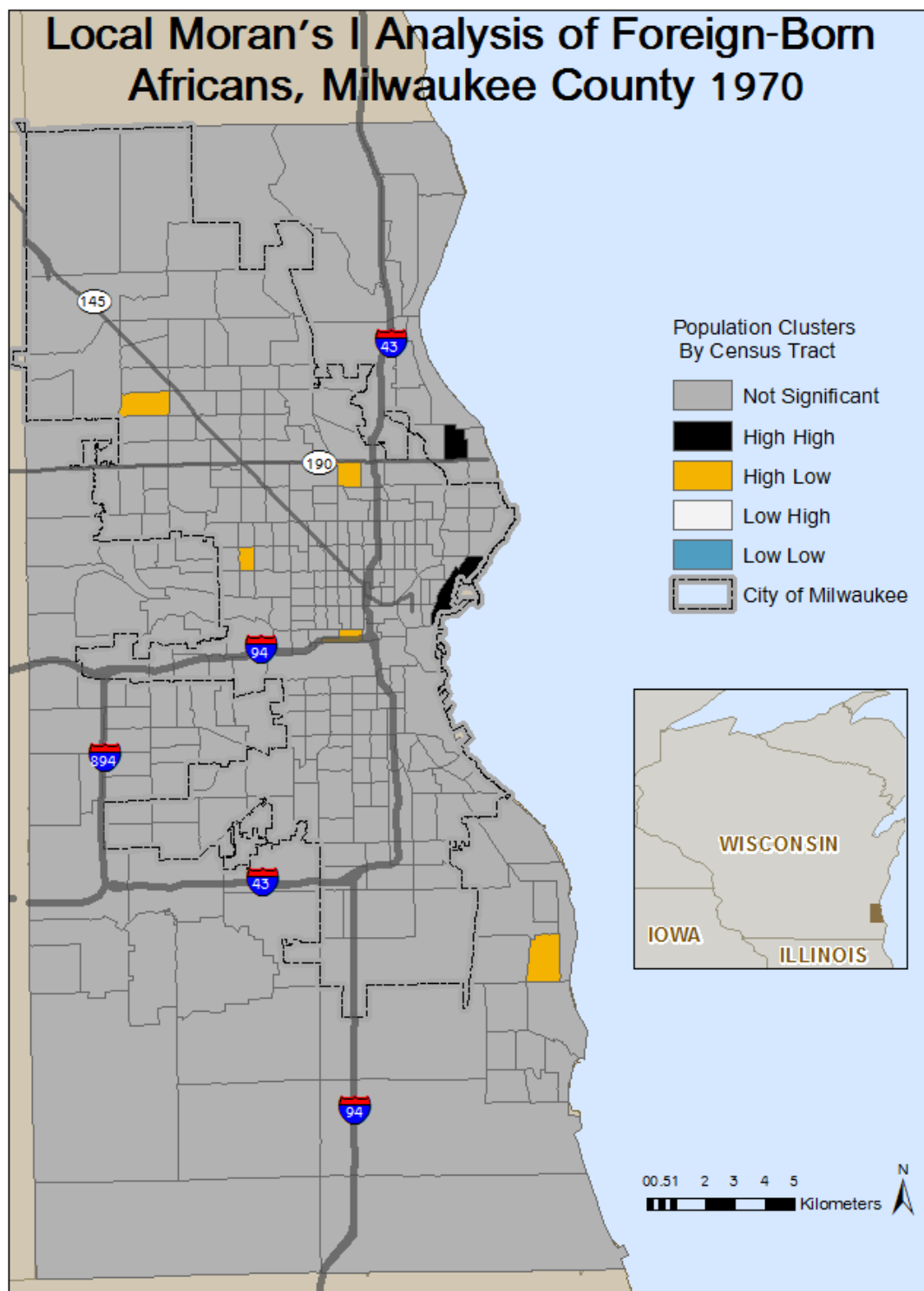


Figure 7. Local Moran's *I* analysis of foreign-born Africans, Milwaukee County in 1970. Map by the author.

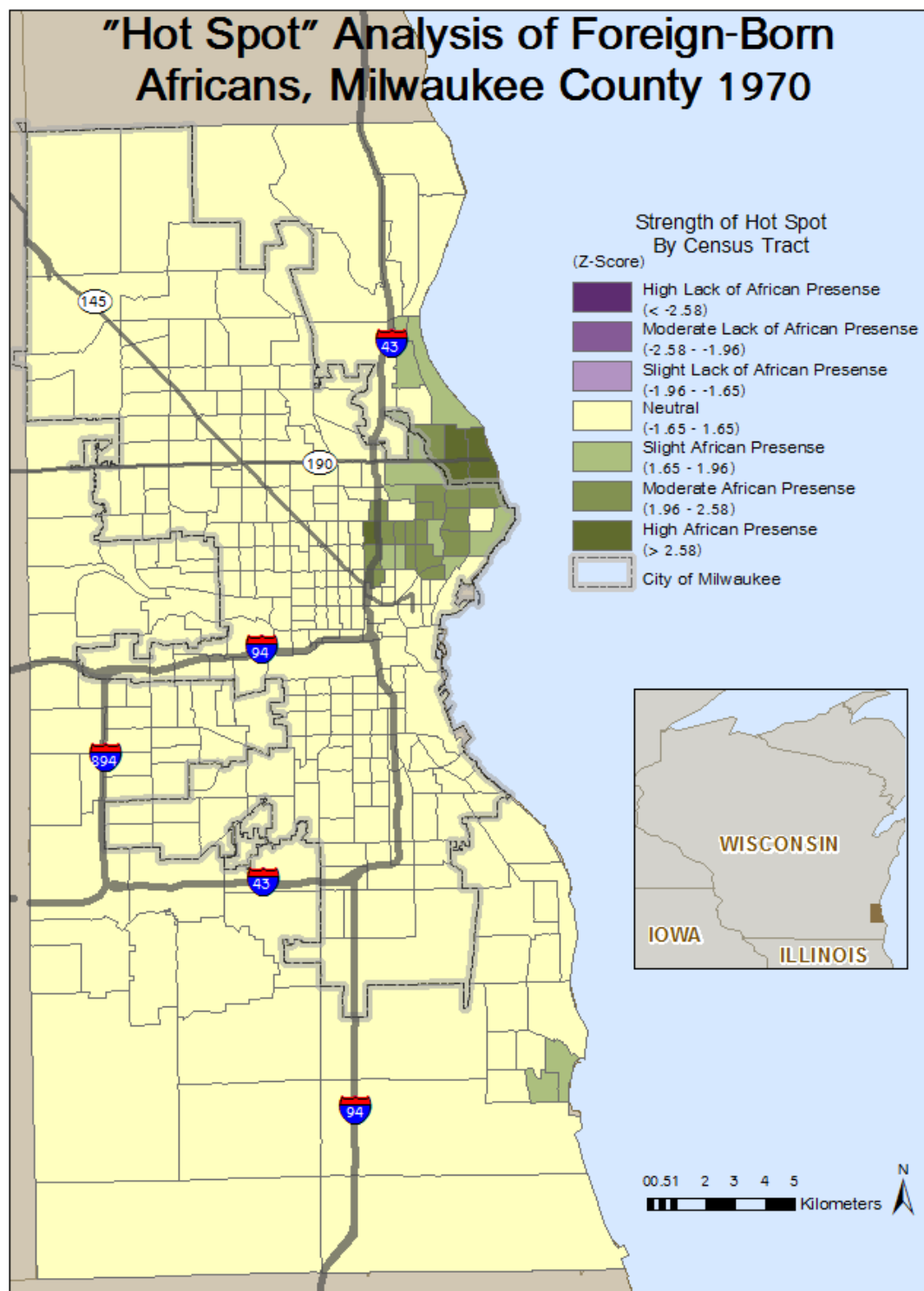


Figure 8. "Hot spot" analysis of foreign-born Africans, Milwaukee County in 1970. Map by the author.

10 on page 61). The map of the local Moran's *I* contains small clustering of census tracts categorized as "high high" in the northwest section of the county with some "high low" outliers all located in the northern half of the county (see *Figure 9* on page 60). The near north and northwest parts of Milwaukee have been home to the city's African American population since mass black migration to Milwaukee occurred in the 1950s. The spatial shift from the UWM area to the northwest side reflects decisions made by African immigrants or refugees in the late twentieth century to settle in parts of Milwaukee identified as African American or black. These identifiable local spatial patterns emerging in 2000 become more pronounced within the 2010 dataset and must be examined within the larger setting of Milwaukee's extreme segregation and the relationships between African Americans and African immigrants or refugees.

*Global and Local Patterns, 2010*

In keeping with national trends, the number of foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County doubled from 2000 to 2010 to a total of 3,318 people. The 2010 dataset exhibits significantly strong spatial patterning. Looking at the results of the global Moran's *I*, the z-score of 3.304 means that statistically speaking, there is less than a 1 percent chance that the spatial patterns exhibited by the data were the result of random distribution. The p-value of 0.001 confirms the statistical unlikelihood that a more extreme result could occur randomly. The local Moran's *I* map indicates multiple instances of "high high" clustering with some "high low" outliers (see *Figure 11* on page 63). Zion Church is located within these "high high" census tract. The 2010 data is the first dataset to have "low high" outliers; these were census tracts that had a markedly low foreign-born African population when compared to the adjacent tracts. While the results

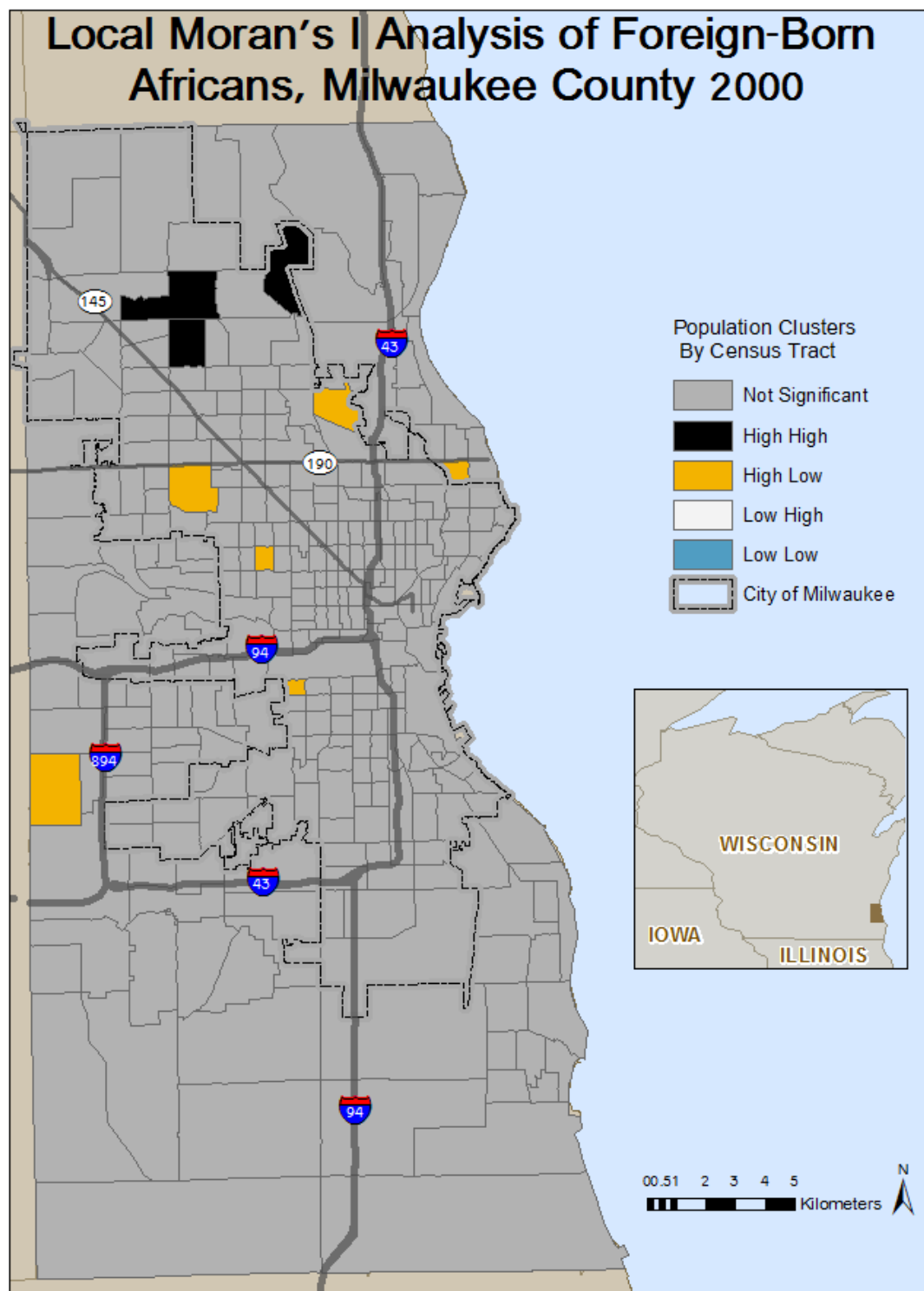


Figure 9. Local Moran's  $I$  Analysis of Foreign-Born Africans, Milwaukee County 2000

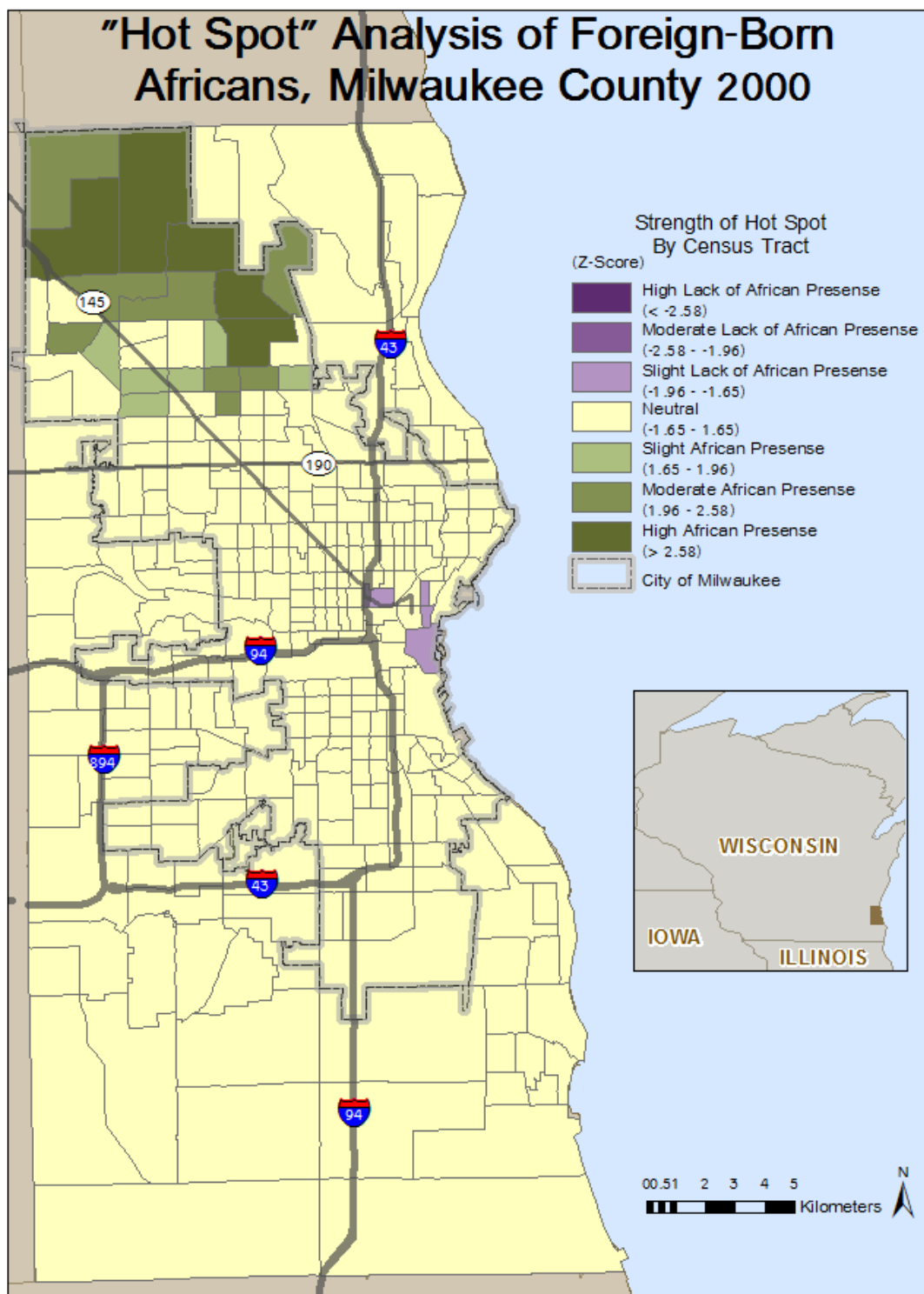


Figure 10. "Hot spot" analysis of foreign-born Africans, Milwaukee County in 2000. Map by the author.

from the local Moran's *I* confirm growing spatial clustering, the Getis *G\** 2010 map depicts the most striking spatial pattern of this map series. It reveals that the hot spot in the northwest part of the county from 2000 grew in 2010 with Zion Church tellingly located in the heart of this population hot spot (see *Figure 12* on page 64). The locations of hot and cold spots in the 2010 maps directly connect to historical and current racial segregation patterns in the Milwaukee metropolitan area.

### *Current Trends*

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, racial segregation in Milwaukee is extreme and the lack of random settlement in the 2010 data confirms that African immigrants and refugees are concentrating in Milwaukee's historically "black" areas on the northwestern side. Despite their relatively recent arrival in the United States, African immigrants and refugees are aware of the historical economic and political marginalization of people of African descent (Robinson 2010). In Milwaukee, newly arrived Africans are cognizant of the metropolitan area's segregation because they see it around them. In an interview, Elodie a Congolese refugee resettled in Milwaukee, related how her friend who was resettled in Minnesota lives in an integrated neighborhood with apartment buildings where children of different colors and backgrounds play together.

Elodie contrasts this with what she observes in Milwaukee:

If there's a white neighborhood it's only whites. But if it's blacks, you're going to see the neighborhood—all of that neighborhood—black. You aren't going to see a white guy because if he comes by they know he's a stranger. Maybe he's come to get someone.

No one needs to tell Elodie and others that Milwaukee is segregated because she and her family live it. Refugees like Elodie live in homes chosen for them by their resettlement agencies but DVL winners find initial housing through their personal networks that appear to pull them to the northwestern hot spot in the 2010 map.



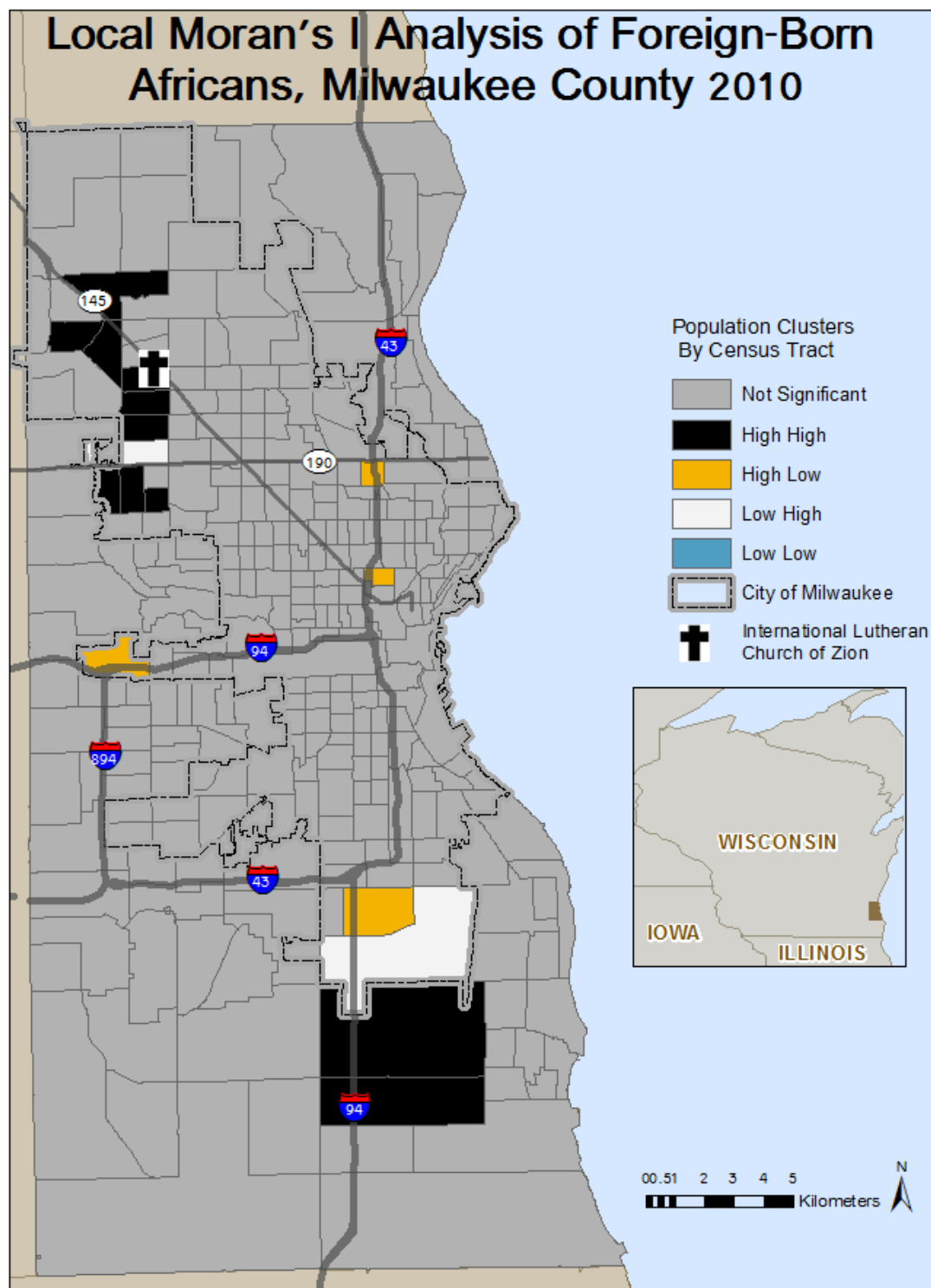


Figure 11. Local Moran's  $I$  analysis of foreign-born Africans, Milwaukee County in 2010. Map by the author.

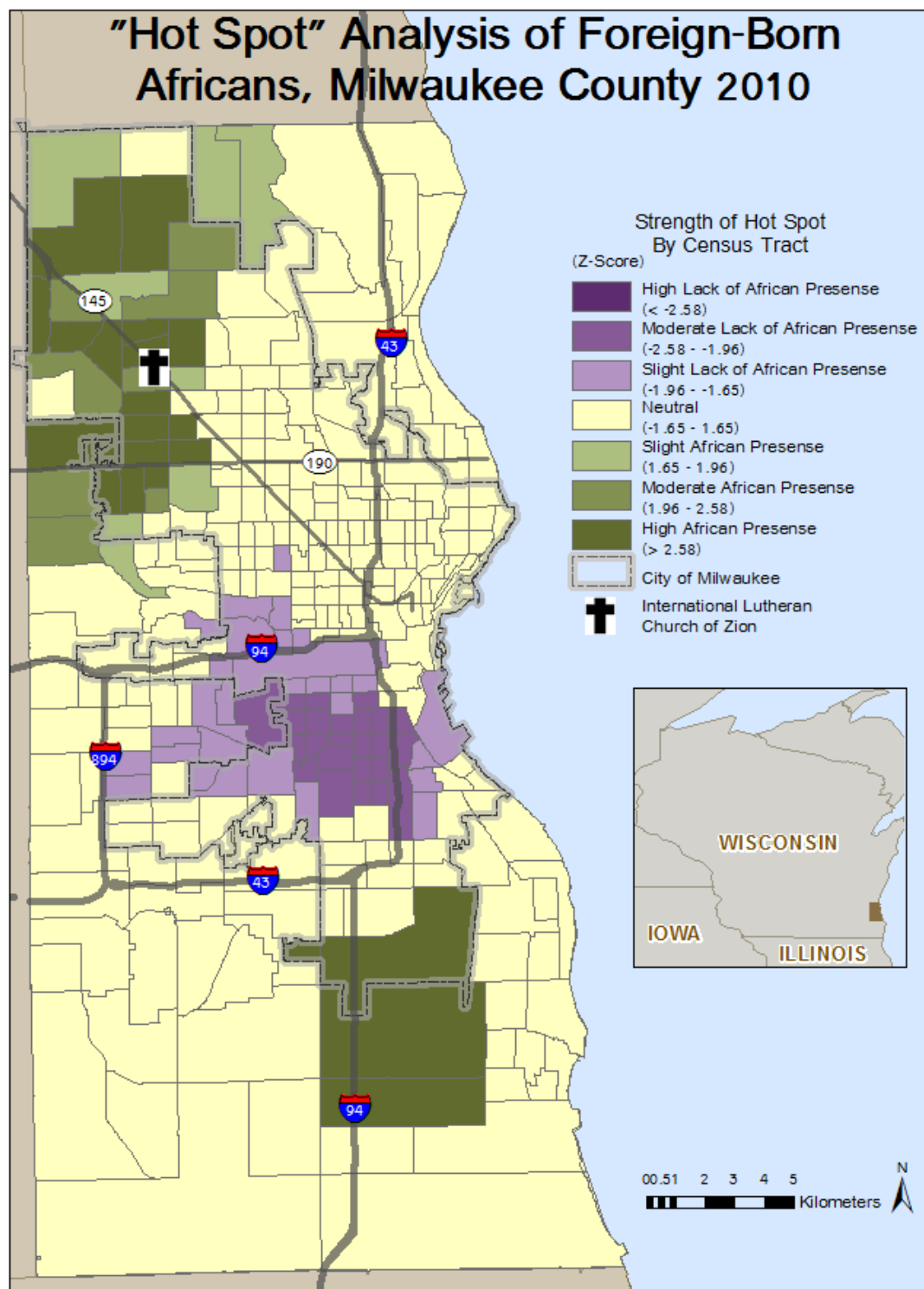


Figure 12. "Hot spot" analysis of foreign-born Africans, Milwaukee County in 2010. Map by the author.

Information gathered from observation and interviews at Zion Church corroborates the two major hot spots found in the 2010 map as most people are settled in the northwest but a growing number have decided to move to neighborhoods in southern Milwaukee. In separate conversations DVL winners Jonas, Gerard, and Reine cited concerns about crime and poverty in northern Milwaukee and the center city as to influencing to their choice to move south. For example, during our interview at his home Olivier pointed out the house across the street that the Milwaukee Police department boarded-up because it was a methamphetamine lab and his daughter described how gun shoots at night make her feel unsafe. As soon as he is financially able, he would like to move his family to a more stable neighborhood. Parts of Milwaukee that are farther away from predominantly African American neighborhoods are regarded by Jonas and Reine as safer, quieter, and more desirable due to their proximity to employment, technical schools, and other members of the Congolese community. In this sense, during my interactions and interviews with people at Zion Church, it occurred more often that people explained to me their decision to move away from the northwest side more than their decision to settle there originally.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as certain countries in Africa continue to face economic, political, and social challenges, immigration between the continent and the United States facilitated by the DVL does not appear to be slowing down at the national scale. On the local level, quantitative data point to growth and spatial concentration of the foreign-born African population in the northwestern corner of Milwaukee County. Uncovering where Africans

are settling and pinpointing Zion Church's location within these clusters or hot spots point to areas with the potential to develop into larger-scale cultural landscapes for African cultural communities. Knowing the locations of areas of high and low concentrations of Africans can assist organizations and businesses (e.g., social service or non-profit agencies, African grocery stores, clothing design or alterations, bars or restaurants) looking to target services to Africans. At this point, there is no defined "African" corridor in Milwaukee. People food shop at Latino or Asian markets or visit people in their homes for services like seamstress/tailoring, hair braiding, small appliance/car repair, or even music and dancing at home nightclubs. However, establishing the existence of clear spatial settlement patterns for Africans indicates the possibility of growing dense socio-cultural ties between different African ethnic and national communities at the county scale. These different groups may not always get along, but these spatial indications serve as the jumping off point for my qualitative analysis of the transnational nature of the networks and landscapes of the Congolese in Milwaukee. As I describe in the next two chapters, the movement of people from the DRC are accompanied by continuous and purposeful flows of cultural values, traditions, and social expectations that are vital to forming a cohesive group identity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS AND FINDING A 'BETTER LIFE' IN MILWAUKEE**

Urban transnational migrants exist in multiple places at once and as such, the social, political, cultural, and economic events in the home country influence how they live their lives in the host country (Montz and Wright 1996). Instead of an assimilated immigrant ensconced in the host-country culture, transnational migrants build intricate systems of transnational networks that connect home and host countries (Bailey 2001; Ashutosh 2008). Scaled transnational networks facilitate "...increasing, accelerating, and deepening relations across space and time..." through the back and forth flow of people, culture, and commodities (Leitner et al. 2002, 298). They are organizational tools that act as bridges for the people building them. Through these bridges, the daily lives of transnational migrants challenge traditional conceptions of fixed socio-cultural, economic, and political boundaries of the nation-state which results in transnational networks transcending borders and respatializing national and urban landscapes. (Mitchell 1997; Mitchell 2003; Bailey 2001; Blunt 2007).

To build transnational networks, interrelated social, cultural, political and economic factors bring together different social actors. Social actors are either individuals or groups that operate within different networks and develop dependent relationships based on various power dynamics at multiple scales (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). Scaled networks operate at the geographic area equivalent to that of the size its members occupy. These networks function at varying spatial scales within this area; this is why they are described as "scaled networks." Conceptually, scale is a social production

dependent upon sociospatial processes; not static, it reacts to external and internal developments (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007).

In this chapter, I focus on the narrative of scaled networks within Milwaukee's Congolese community. The framework of scaled networks uses thematic and territorial networks to explain the various relationships and connections between social actors and space. Thematic networks pull together social actors in different places who share problems or concerns and territorial networks form between social actors within a common geographic area (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). The Milwaukee Congolese at Zion Church support both types of networks through, for example, their growing relationships with area employers or the church's informal transportation system. The Congolese community may be small compared to other cultural groups in the city, but there are strong transnational networks coursing between Milwaukee and DRC, and even within Milwaukee itself that shape people's experiences. For many Congolese people, networks of family, friends, and organizations have impacted every step of their journey because, as DVL winner Jules explains,

When we leave Congo to come to the United States, you have to have an address. Without an address you can't come. Imagine yourself. You have the visa, but you don't know where to go.

Obtaining a U.S. address, whether through thematic or territorial networks, is one in the long process of finding, as Pastor Gui describes it, a "better life" in the United States.

For this analysis, I integrate information gathered from many hours spent with the Congolese at events, semi-structured interviews, and survey data to describe how densely scaled networks radiating from Zion Church guide the Congolese associated with the church through the processes of settling-in. This approach emphasizes the development of transnational networks and their impact from multiple perspectives. Therefore, I begin

this chapter with a short description of my data sources and quantitative methodology. Next, I address the economic and social factors that compel refugees and DVL winners to leave the DRC for Milwaukee. Then, I locate the thematic and territorial networks found in the Congolese community at Zion Church that bring people to Milwaukee and specifically how these networks assist individuals going through the complex process of English language acquisition and employment.

Throughout this chapter, I focus primarily on the experiences of DVL visa winners and refugees because my fieldwork indicates that most of Zion Church members arrived in the United States through these two channels. While overlap exists between these two groups I often discuss them separately as the impetus for migration and subsequent placement make for distinct experiences of being Congolese in Milwaukee. I highlight these differences in *Figure 13* (see page 70). It diagrams the dense system of networks between the DRC and Milwaukee that I refer to throughout this chapter. I designed the chart to show the separation and overlap of networks for Congolese refugees and DVL winners. The upper half of the diagram is dedicated to the refugee process, while the lower half is for DVL winners. The overlap takes place in Milwaukee as refugees active at Zion Church have access to the same networks of Zion Church's DVL winners. However, DVL winners are excluded from the networks in connection with refugee resettlement agencies. Some of the organizations or groups labeled in the diagram are identified as both thematic and territorial as it depends on an individual's personal connection to the group while others are strictly one or the other. The details of these different thematic and territorial networks are deconstructed throughout the remainder of this chapter using the information gathered during fieldwork.

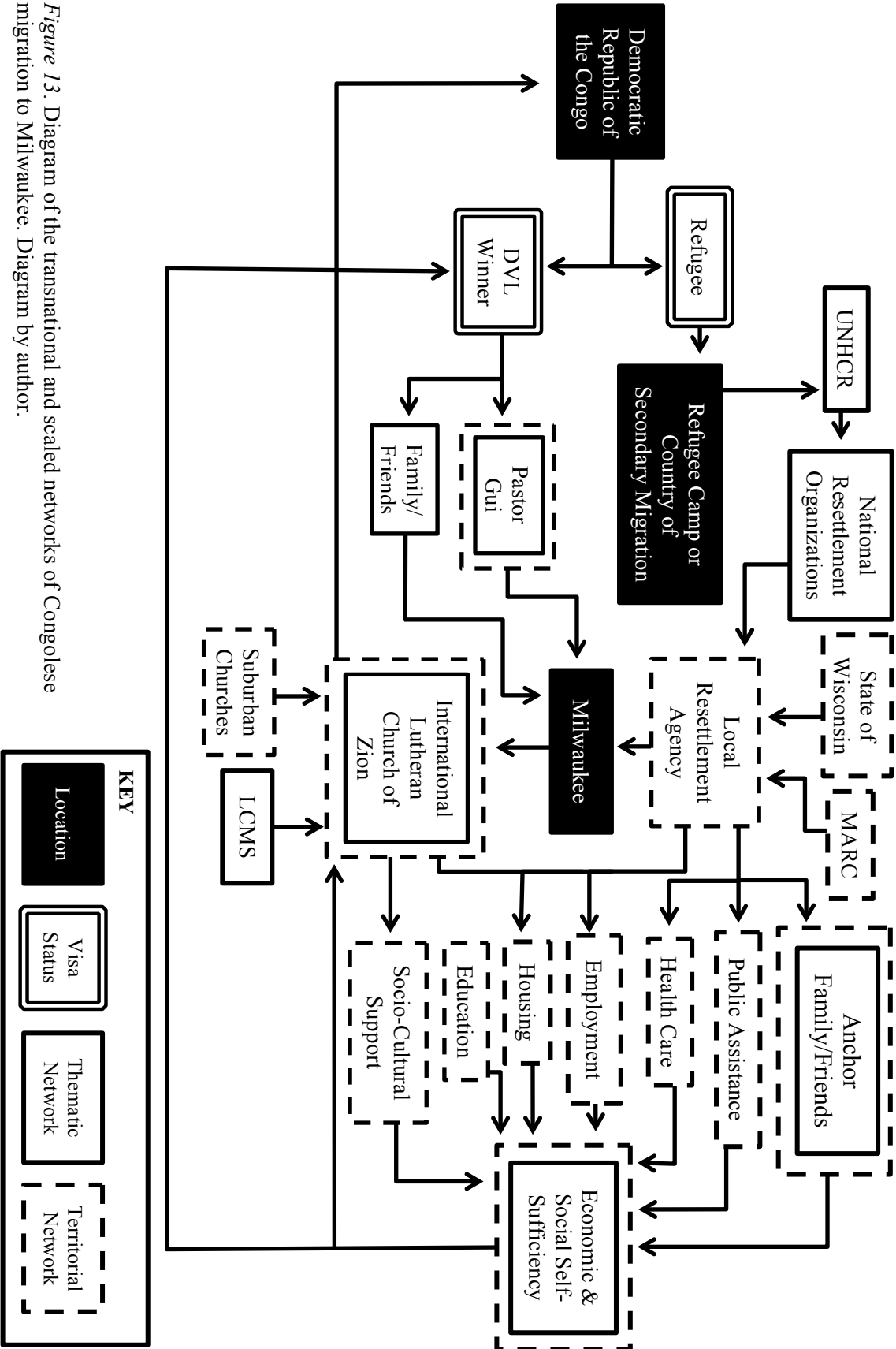


Figure 13. Diagram of the transnational and scaled networks of Congolese migration to Milwaukee. Diagram by author.



## **Data Sources and Methodology**

In November 2012, I conducted a survey with 30 members of Zion Church. The optional survey, administered in English and French, provides general demographic data for the congregation (see *Demographic Survey*, Appendix B). Non-Congolese church members were excluded from the sample<sup>1</sup>, as well as individuals who did not speak English or French. Not all participants answered every question, and this was noted in the tabular results. Using the data, I calculated descriptive statistics (see *Table 3: Demographic Data* on page 106 for complete results) with select results graphed using IBM SPSS Statistics software to provide quantitative evidence to support my fieldwork noting the growth of scaled networks between Milwaukee and the DRC.

Throughout this chapter, I support my analysis with information gathered from interviews, participant observation, and conversations. When I recount events or describe conversations, unless noted otherwise, these are from my informal interactions with different Congolese and other Africans in Milwaukee. Direct quotations or references to interviews originate from my semi-structured interviews that I recorded, transcribed, and translated from French when necessary (see *Sample Interview Questions*, Appendix A). With the exception of Pastor Gui, I use pseudonyms to identify all individuals.

## **Leaving the DRC: Forces at Work**

At the continental scale, Africa's marginalized place in the economic global system increases the pressure on Africans seeking "a better life" to look for this life outside the continent. The neoliberal political economy prizes capital accumulation in

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of one individual from the Republic of the Congo which neighbors DRC to the west.

certain parts of the world and achieves it through the movement of goods, technology, and capital. These flows create uneven global development that in turn shapes world migration patterns (Arthur 2006). Select world regions such as North America and Western Europe act as magnets pulling human capital and labor from parts of the world in which people suffer chronic unemployment or underemployment (Okome 2006; Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006). Okome (2006) draws causal links between globalization and the African continent. Whereas causality is outside the scope of this thesis, exploring such linkages is not, particularly when fieldwork supports the notion that Milwaukee Congolese DVL visa holders take the DRC's position within global neoliberal political economy into consideration when they enter the DVL.

From a theoretic standpoint, scholars frequently employ a theory of push-pull factors to explain why individuals migrate. Certain factors push migrants from their homes while other factors simultaneously pull them to new countries. Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang (2006) critique this theory for prioritizing economic factors above other migration processes. The focus on economics alone ignores linkages between political economy, global uneven development, and human migration. They suggest that within this context, North America becomes a magnet for labor from underdeveloped countries for those migrants that make voluntary and rational decisions to leave due to a confluence of social, political, and economic situations. As I learned through many conversations with Congolese refugees and DVL winners, the DRC's entwined political, social, and economic chaos are the reasons for voluntary and involuntary Congolese migration.

*Refugees*

Domestic conflict and insecurity, particularly in eastern DRC, force individuals and families from their homes, often into neighboring countries such as Uganda or Tanzania. Once in a secondary country or refugee camp they apply for refugee status with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees leave their homes under duress because there is no guarantee for their personal safety. According to Kevin, a case manager at a Milwaukee refugee resettlement agency, the refugee process under UNHCR is long and complicated. After potentially years of living in refugee camps or as visitors in a country of secondary migration, refugees are assigned a country to be resettled in. For those assigned to the United States, at this point, multiple U.S. governmental and non-governmental agencies work together to arrange the logistics and provide the appropriate support to move the refugee and/or family from their locations abroad to the United States. Refugees are assigned to a lead resettlement agency nationally and then a local agency in the resettlement city. Milwaukee is home to four resettlement agencies, each of which is affiliated with a different parent agency nationally. If a refugee already has family willing to serve as an “anchor,” the national and local agencies speak with them and if these U.S. ties are willing, the agency sends the refugees to the U.S. city where the anchor lives. Otherwise, refugees do not decide independently as to which country or city they will be resettled.

Refugees from different world regions have different attitudes towards the resettlement process. From his experience in the field, Kevin explains that the situation refugees leave behind impacts their resettlement experience. Those who faced severe oppression and violence in their home countries embrace the possibilities for economic

and social advancement in Milwaukee, while those who had a high standard of living are frustrated at rebuilding their lives within a new system where they lack the socio-economic standing of home. The Congolese refugees I interviewed at Zion Church were highly educated and held high socio-economic positions in the DRC. While one refugee, Olivier, admits that he and his family were not safe in the DRC, he laments leaving behind their lives there and this highlights a major distinction between refugees and DVL or other Congolese immigrants. When contrasting the resettlement and DVL process in an interview, Olivier, who has lived in Milwaukee for less than a year, explains how DVL winners "...sought this out." He bluntly described the differences between Congolese refugees like himself and the DVL winners he knows in Milwaukee:

Those who arrive come through the lottery, for them, their blessing is to have the visa to get here...It's a category of people and when you ask one of them, 'how do you live?' that's when he'll say 'it's fine, it's fine.' You work, or even if he suffers, he's going to say, 'my friend, hey, it's better than back home.' Why? Because his problem was only in getting here.

While Olivier glosses over the challenges that DVL winners face or the difficult decision to enter the DVL in the first place, he calls attention to the key distinction between refugees and DVL migrants. In multiple conversations with different members at Zion Church and interviews with Pastor Gui, at a critical point a DVL winner decides for himself or herself to leave his or her country of origin in hopes of a better life abroad while refugees are forced to leave for their safety.

### *Diversity Visa Lottery Winners*

The Diversity Visa Lottery system implemented in 1990, gives preference to citizens of underrepresented countries looking to migrate to the United States. It requires a high school diploma or two years of significant technical experience within the last five years. Applicants' job skills are categorized and assessed through an in-person interview.

Applicants must have the financial resources to cover additional costs (e.g. round-trip tickets to U.S. embassies in neighboring countries; food and lodging during the DVL interview process; air travel to the United States) and the overall capacity to navigate program bureaucracy (Logan and Thomas 2012). As a result of the DVL, the number of Africans coming to the United States from 1990-2000 more than doubled to 35,100 people annually, with 47 percent of the visas issued through the DVL (Lobo 2006).

The DVL has not only been found to have greatly increased the number of Africans immigrating to the United States but is also believed to impact the migration of Africans with professional skill levels (Lobo 2006; Takyi and Boate 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012). There is also evidence of even greater impact on people from Francophone African countries due to the program's design to attract migrants from under-represented countries of origin and its use as a marketing tool to increase competition with the French labor market (Logan and Thomas 2012). An interview with Pastor Gui echoes these findings. While France and Belgium may have been countries that earlier generations of Congolese immigrated to in search of "a better life," Pastor Gui contends that Anglophone countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia are currently more popular destinations than Europe. Despite their historical relationship to Belgium, potential migrants hoping to improve their personal situations believe they will encounter more economic opportunity in a country like the United States. While Pastor Gui does not directly state it, the existence of the DVL promotes the idea of openness on the part of the United States to newcomers seeking personal advancement and who hope to contribute to the U.S. economy. In short, U.S. policy changes unlocked the door for current African migrants seeking new prospects in the United States and the Congolese

coming to Milwaukee are individuals taking advantage of such opportunities for reasons that Pastor Gui and other Congolese explain in the following section (Lobo 2006; Takyi and Boate 2006; Thomas and Logan 2012).

*The DVL and the Decision to Leave the DRC*

When asked in our first interview why people leave the DRC, Pastor Gui identified political, economic, and religious problems as spurring members of his congregation to immigrate to the United States primarily through the DVL program. Within the survey sample, 63 percent of respondents held DVL visas, while only 21 percent came as refugees. Over the course of my research, interviewees and other Congolese individuals rarely mentioned freedom of religion as their primary motivation to enter the DVL. Therefore, I focus on the interconnected political and economic motivations explained by Pastor Gui:

The crisis in the Congo is about people not having a job and those who are in power don't create the jobs that people need to have for them to move forward. Because, what is the purpose of studying? People can study and at the end of the day they cannot find a job. *That's the reason that most of the people are leaving the Congo — to go somewhere where they can find a job and to have a self/life support.* (Author's emphasis).

According to Pastor Gui, education is not the problem but lack of jobs due to poor governance is. This lack of jobs in turn hinders people's ability to sustain themselves and their families. In a narrative repeated consistently in my interviews with DVL winners, political mismanagement restricts the economic opportunities for educated people living in the DRC. The DRC's historical legacy of political and economic chaos has prompted them and other members of the congregation, almost all of who have completed high school and varying post-secondary programs, to search for a more secure life overseas by entering the DVL.

Political turmoil in the DRC has ebbed and flowed over the last 60 years (Dunn 2003). While the Belgian rule of the DRC in early to mid-twentieth century was fraught with violence against Congolese nationals and other social, political, and economic complexities (Dunn 2003), Reine, who is in her 60s and the oldest of the people I interviewed has positive memories of growing up during colonialism. Her father always received his paycheck and life then was orderly. Even during rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko (from 1965-1997), known for violent political suppression and rampant corruption (Dunn 2003), some Zion Church members, especially a refugee named Nicole, remembers a certain level of stability then:

With Mobutu? A dictator? It was tough, but life was also easy, less expensive. People worked, but it was African life.

She discusses how people had to stay in line with Mobutu or risk violent repercussions against themselves and their families. While Nicole does not condone this type of violence, her remark about “African life” implies that despite the hypocrisy of the political situation, average Congolese citizens could get by more reliably than today.

Repeatedly in interviews and conversations, people described to me how the current disorder under President Joseph Kabila, whose father Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997, impacts life for ordinary Congolese people (Dunn 2003). During our interview, Jules, a well-established Milwaukee resident in his 30s and DVL winner, mused on how the functional DRC of his childhood deteriorated over time to its current chaotic state. When discussing his life in the DRC before immigrating to Milwaukee, Jules clearly states:

Congo...it's the country where I was born. It's a country that I admire a lot, but today, there's chaos because of the system. The political system and everything doesn't function ... The political system is daily life. When the political system functions, everything functions. When it doesn't function, daily life doesn't function.

Reine clarifies the dysfunction that Jules refers to when she shares what she appreciates the most about life in Milwaukee: doctors are punctual, her husband receives his paycheck on time, and she can always buy meat or fish at the grocery store. As much as Nicole, Jules, Reine and other Congolese feel a patriotic connection to their country, they are discouraged by the lack of political stability and how that impacts access to essentials like electricity, clean water, and food, not to mention economic opportunity. Reine expresses this mix of loyalty and frustration when she recounts her position as a nurse in a hospital in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa:

Really, it's my country but there are a lot — so many, so many obstacles. You work, but there's no pay. Draw your own conclusions: You go to work. June 30<sup>th</sup> they tell you 'we don't have your pay, but keep coming to work.' Two, three months 'keep coming to work.' Now, where is that you're going to get the money to pay your [bills]?

Reine describes a situation in which taking care of her family's basic needs proved a constant challenge. This stress — working for months in hopes of receiving a paycheck eventually — clarifies why some people look outside the continent for economic stability (Takyi, and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Lobo 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012). When Reine's husband won a DVL visa in the late 1990s, he left for the United States. As they initially lacked the funds for their family to leave together, she did not join him until 2005 and they are now among the leaders of Zion Church.

Frustration with the political and economic situation in the DRC among the well-educated congregation at Zion Church is palpable. To connect back to Pastor Gui's earlier reference to education, in the DRC a degree is neither synonymous with employment nor does employment equal a livable wage. Lionel, a man in his early 30s with a degree in technology expresses his chagrin with the employment situation in the DRC:



Life in the Congo, it isn't easy to succeed compared to the United States, or even Europe, because, well, the authorities. It isn't secure ... that is to say, to give opportunities to young people, for young people with the will ... You know, you can study, but to find a job it's really difficult. Even if you find employment the wage just isn't enough, not even to buy a car. It's difficult.

In Milwaukee, he feels like he does not have to do as much in order to buy a car or achieve other indicators of financial success. What people shared during interviews demonstrates how in the DRC, the government's inability to deliver basic services and create jobs that provide educated citizens with the means to support themselves and their families at a desired level pushes the Congolese, especially young people, to look for opportunities outside of Africa (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Lobo 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012).

Research has found that immigration is a selective process; African immigrants, and in particular those within the DVL system, are disproportionately young, educated, and able to navigate the bureaucracy of the migration system (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012). Unsurprising then, the Congolese members of Zion Church are a relatively young and educated group. Of the 30 people I surveyed, 60 percent were younger than the age of 36, all had a high school diploma, and 75 percent earned technical, bachelor, or graduate degrees.

Thus, in keeping with scholarly research on the motivations for immigration, a faulty political system in combination with a lack of economic opportunity are major push factors that Congolese members of Zion Church cite when asked about their decision to leave home (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006). The political and economic challenges that Lionel, Reine, and Jules outline are so great that starting over in a new country, with a new system, culture, and language is a more appealing option than

staying in the DRC. The case of Marcel, a man in his late 20s, corroborates these opinions.

According to Marcel, compared to his peers back home, in some ways he feels two years behind. While he currently works in a steady manufacturing job, shares an apartment with another Congolese man, and has a girlfriend, none of these indicators of success happened immediately upon arrival. Despite attending a university in Kinshasa, he has started his post-secondary education all over in Milwaukee and is currently training to be a certified nurse's aide. He needed these first two years to learn the system in Milwaukee, improve his English, and take classes at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC). Yet, for feeling behind in some ways, he concedes that from a rational economic standpoint for the future, he made the right decision to come to the United States.

Marcel's narrative reflects a cost-benefit thought process: the pros (e.g., better standard of living; more options for the future) of emigrating outweigh the cons (e.g., distance from family and friends; his lack of U.S. recognized credentials, and limited English proficiency forcing him into manual manufacturing work) (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006). In sum, while the refugees discussed in the beginning of this section do not choose where they are resettled, the DRC's interconnected political and economic struggles push potential migrants to enter the DVL in the first place and come to the United States. Here, at this juncture in the migration process, territorial and thematic networks influence the decisions of Congolese people to move to Milwaukee.

### **Something in Your Pocket: Thematic and Territorial Networks**

As a mid-sized city nestled in the United State's Upper Midwest region, Milwaukee does not jump to mind as the destination of choice for people migrating to the United States from the African continent. Using U.S. census data from 1980-2000, Takyi and Boate (2006) found that at the national scale, the South is the U.S. region with the highest foreign-born African population containing roughly a quarter of foreign-born African people. According to their findings, at 13.5 percent, the Midwest is the region with the fewest African immigrants. Changing to a state scale, New York (13.3 percent), California (12.9 percent), and Texas (7.3 percent) have the largest percentages of African immigrants which is unsurprising as these states serve as major destinations for immigrants from all corners of the globe. Using the 2000 data, the state of Wisconsin had 0.5 percent of the foreign-born African population, sharing its national rank of 27 with the states of Louisiana, Iowa, and Oklahoma. In 2000, while nearby Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota, and Chicago, Illinois, were among the 10 metropolitan areas with largest concentration of foreign-born people, Milwaukee did not rank. Yet according to the U.S. Census, between 2000 and 2010 the number of foreign-born Africans in Milwaukee County doubled. Using the data from my demographic survey, the number of Congolese in Milwaukee also is seeing an increase in population that appears to be related to the expansion of the DVL program and the establishment of Zion Church.

Of the 30 members of Zion Church surveyed in November 2012, all had arrived since 2000 and almost 50 percent since 2011 when Pastor Gui was ordained and Zion Church made an official congregation under the auspices of the LCMS. This increase in numbers is depicted in *Figure 14: Visa Type and Year of Arrival* (see page 83). This

graph plots the type of entry visa (x-axis) against the year of arrival (z-axis). This graph shows a dramatic increase from 2010-2012 in the number of individuals arriving in Milwaukee with DVL visas. The high numbers of individuals with less than three years in Milwaukee could in part be attributed to more newly arrived people being need of the various services that Zion Church offers members, however, this is not the only reason for an increase in DVL visa holders. *Figure 15: Entry Visa and Reason for Settling in Milwaukee* (see page 83) calls attention to the impact that Pastor Gui and Zion Church has on Congolese migration to Milwaukee. The graph emphasizes the high percentage of DVL winners who attribute their decision to settle in Milwaukee directly to Zion Church. Family and friends have traditionally impacted why DVL winners come to Milwaukee, but as both these graphs indicate, the influence of Pastor Gui for DVL visa holders is gaining strength for those in the DRC seeking connections in the United States. Overall, slightly more than 40 percent of those surveyed attribute their decision to come to Milwaukee to the presence of family and friends and just under 40 percent link their decision to connections with Pastor Gui. However, when separating DVL winners from individuals with other types of visas, more DVL winners cite Pastor Gui as their reason for settling in Milwaukee than family and friends. These statistics and graphics substantiate the existence of thematic networks crisscrossing from the DRC to Milwaukee and the territorial networks embedded in the city itself.

Once Congolese immigrants and refugees relocate to Milwaukee, they encounter similar challenges to economic and social success. As Jules describes,

It's like you're at zero. Friends, all that, knowledge, you really start at zero. So, to travel to another country to live is difficult because you have to adapt. You have to know the language and also the system. Without these things, you can't do anything!

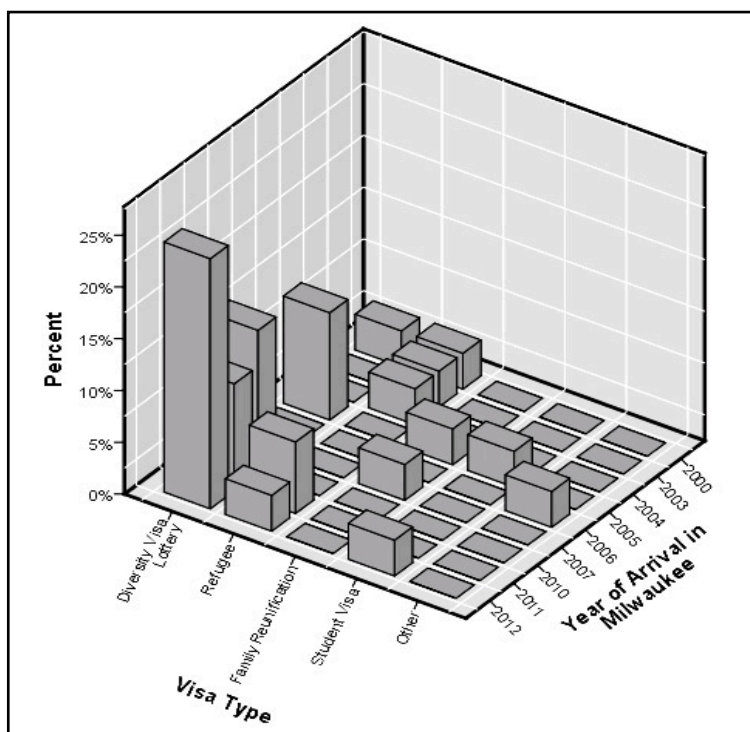


Figure 14. Visa type and year of arrival in Milwaukee.

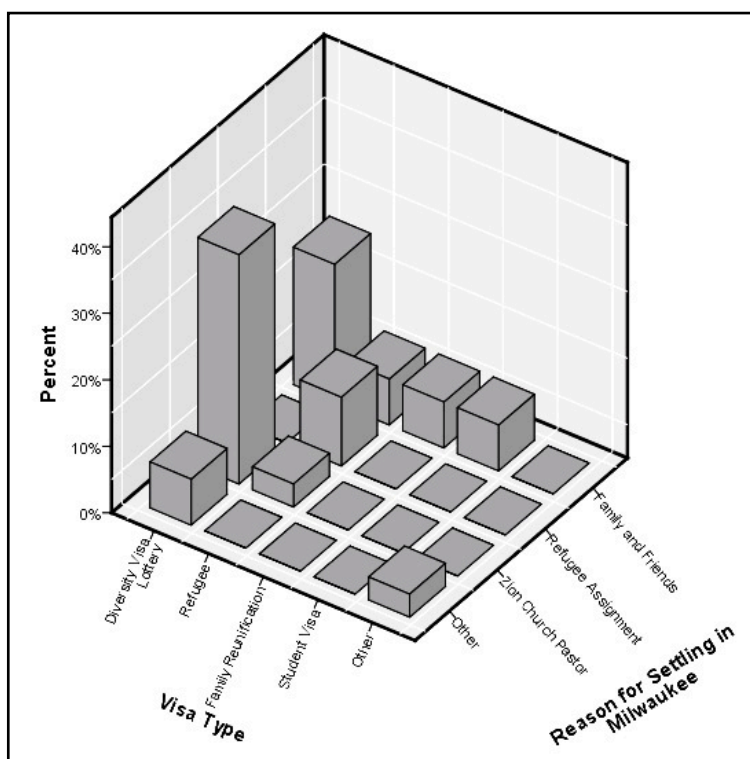


Figure 15. Visa Type and reason for settling in Milwaukee.

This narrative of starting at “zero” repeated itself so frequently during my fieldwork that I found myself assuming that all Congolese immigrants and refugees feel this way, but I was corrected one evening at a wake held in the church basement for two families who lost loved ones abroad. After a short prayer service with singing and a discreet collection of funds for the bereaved families, the 30 or so men, women, and children sat down to share a potluck style meal of fufu, rice, fish, meat, fried plantains, sweet waffles, and hot peppers prepared by the women of the church. As I chatted with Luc, a man in his 30s holding his infant son, he dispelled my assumption that everyone who arrives believes they come with nothing. He countered that they all arrive with something in their pocket and it is a matter of learning how to use that something after arrival. Here, I argue that Zion Church’s expanding thematic and territorial networks are the “something” that Luc refers to as they not only bring Congolese refugees and immigrants to Milwaukee but also build both community and individual capacity.

#### *The DVL and Thematic Networks*

When an individual first wins the DVL, he or she is not guaranteed a visa. There is a long process of paperwork and interviews all of which require substantial monetary funds and ability to navigate bureaucracy (Lobo 2006; Thomas and Logan 2012). Recipients also are required to have a contact in the United States. For some DVL winners, this contact comes from within their personal kinship or friendship networks. The experience of Jules demonstrates the long process from entering the lottery to arriving in Milwaukee through thematic networks.

Jules’ cousin Innocent came as a student in the mid-1990s to study engineering at a university in the southern United States. After graduation, he relocated to Milwaukee

and in 2005 entered Jules and Jules' brother in the DVL that both men won simultaneously. Unfortunately in 2005, the U.S. Consulate in Kinshasa was not issuing visas, so the brothers had to use additional resources to complete the visa process in Cameroon. Visa officials verified their university degree, paperwork, and connections to the United States as well as conducted a thorough interview. The steps taken to authenticate his education played an important part of the process because, as Jules stressed, the DVL is only open to qualified individuals (Lobo 2006; Thomas and Logan 2012). After receiving their visas, Jules and his brother flew from Cameroon to New York and took the long bus ride to Milwaukee.

Since arriving in 2005 and establishing himself in Milwaukee, Jules has served as a model conduit in the expanding thematic networks between Milwaukee and the DRC. To review, a thematic network connects people with common problems or concerns (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). For the transnational migrants in Milwaukee's Congolese community, kinship connections along with the common problems faced by people in the DRC form a thematic network. Jules' English abilities, education, job situation, family life, and maintenance of traditional Congolese values make him a role model for new arrivals hoping to achieve economic and social prosperity in the United States without complete assimilation (Bailey 2001). He is highly regarded in the Zion Church community and this position appears in part to be due to how he has enhanced the networks between Zion Church and the DRC (Leitner et al. 2002). After immigrating to the Milwaukee, Jules, like his cousin, did not cut his ties to home. Instead, Jules strengthened the network that brought him to Milwaukee by supplying the necessary

contact and initial destination for Marcel and Jonas, two of his neighbors from Kinshasa going through the DVL process.

On multiple occasions, one of these neighbors, Jonas, spoke of the important role that these networks currently play in his life. If someone he knew from home needed a contact in the United States, he would offer himself without hesitation. Jonas believes that he and other Congolese immigrants in Milwaukee are like “fish pulled from the sea.” Due to their good fortune in winning a visa in the first place, they have a responsibility to help those still in the DRC. Similarly for Lionel, financially helping family and friends in Africa is a priority on par with meeting his daily needs:

...because with work you can pay rent, pay the telephone, bills. You can also think about the people that are in Africa, pay for school, a lot of things.

Lionel, Jonas, and Jules demonstrate an acute awareness common among transnational migrants. The lives they lead in Milwaukee are not separate from that of friends and family in the DRC (Montz and Wright 1996). Jonas in particular is critical of his cousins in Europe who, in his opinion, spend too much money on clothes and other luxuries while their family back lives in tenuous conditions. Despite his physical distance, Jonas’ responsibilities to those in the DRC impact the decisions he makes and how he lives his life in Milwaukee (Lawson 2000; Gilmartin 2008; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). This awareness manifests itself in the ways in which Jonas and other Congolese individuals develop thematic networks increasing the flows of people between Milwaukee and the DRC.

Jules explains, though, that not all newcomers to Milwaukee have direct connections for family or friends into U.S. Congolese networks that he provided for Jonas and Marcel. Instead, individuals access broader thematic networks in the form of



Zion Church to find their U.S. contact. Through his work with Lutheran churches in the DRC, Pastor Gui has developed a broad thematic network that connects believers in Jesus Christ across the Atlantic (Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). If someone participating in the DVL lacks the requisite personal ties to the United States, but they have the correct connections in the DRC through the Lutheran Church and follow the orthodoxies of the church, Pastor Gui is willing to be his or her American contact. Well known in the DRC Lutheran community, Pastor Gui's contact information lends weight to DVL applications of individuals with a spirituality that matches the one professed by Pastor Gui and members of Zion Church. Individuals who do not fit within these religious specifications may be excluded from the network, yet, as Alain's story indicates, for those who do, Pastor Gui and Zion Church provide more than an address for a bureaucratic form.

For a man like Alain, Pastor Gui's thematic network was essential as he went through the DVL process. Alain sold everything he had to enter the DVL and complete the necessary paperwork, however, unlike Jules and Jonas, he did not have the appropriate U.S. connection through his own kinship network. Applications without U.S. contacts are considered weaker by the U.S. authorities, so to strengthen his application, friends in Kinshasa connected Alain with Pastor Gui and, with this support, the U.S. Consulate issued his visa. A U.S. contact was not Alain's only obstacle. He also lacked sufficient funds for the one-way plane ticket to the United States. Despite no personal knowledge of Alain, Pastor Gui loaned Alain the money interest free for his plane ticket and initially hosted Alain in his own home. Pastor Gui has sponsored 12 individuals in this manner and has had as many as five newly arrived people living with him, his wife, and their four children in their personal home. These newcomers will stay with the

pastor's family anywhere from one month to one year, and he dismisses the idea that supporting individuals in this manner could be perceived as a burden to his wife and family. He maintains that in their tradition, there is always room for one more at the table or space to squeeze in one more for the night. If there are more people than he can provide for himself, he speaks with others in the congregation and they work together to provide the necessary aide. The expectation that members of Zion Church help others when they can is a cornerstone of their cultural landscape (Kwaky-Nuako 2006).

Pastor Gui believes that supporting other promising Congolese to arrive in Milwaukee is the best use of his financial, cultural, and religious resources. He understands the challenges of daily life in the DRC. These challenges form the commonalities that create the thematic networks currently respatializing the distance between the DRC and Milwaukee (Hannerz 1996; Mitchell 1997; Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). When Pastor Gui provides an address or a loan to Congolese nationals, the distance between the individuals in these different places closes. In interviews and casual conversation, Pastor Gui and other members of Zion Church assert that once they arrive in the United States, they are simply Congolese — ethnic or tribal distinctions disappear. While others in the church make statements supporting this assertion, due to the history of ethnic violence in the DRC, the tensions with Rwanda, and the current volatile political situation, this claim should be explored in more depth. However, it does reflect the idea that on a certain level, transnational networks enforce the idea of a unified Congolese national identity among expatriates. Territorial state borders rarely shift, but through the development of networks, individuals living outside the political borders of the country are redefining what it means to be Congolese (Bailey 2001; Leitner et al.

2002). Assisting family, friends and others living in the DRC through these religious and family networks allows Pastor Gui, Jules, and others to circumvent traditional political hierarchy; they override the ineffective Congolese government and provide direct aid to people who need it and fit their criteria (Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). In the case of Zion Church, these networks establish a religious identity that builds the community of believers at the church who assist the people who come to the church through kinship or known religious networks that verify their belonging to a specific religious identity. Those who do not fit within the boundaries of this identity would be, by default, excluded from the networks. In addition, Pastor Gui uses his position in the LCMS to bridge the cultural distance between his congregation and those at suburban Milwaukee Lutheran churches who share this religious identity through the LCMS. Thus, the networks in question are not limited to only Congolese living in Milwaukee or the DRC but extend to people following a more mainstream American LCMS practice.

Zion Church's relationships with suburban churches are further evidence of how its transnational networks jump scales. Scaled networks respatialize traditional political hierarchies so that churches located in different countries or born out of different cultural traditions develop relationships (Leitner 2002; Schiller and Çağlar 2009). Connected by the ministry of the LCMS, suburban churches donate food, winter jackets, Christmas presents, scholarships for Congolese youth to attend summer camp, funds for Zion Church's mission trip to the DRC, and their pastors will give occasional sermons at Zion Church. All these activities assist the Zion Church Congolese in building a solid foundation in Milwaukee (see *Figure 16* on page 90). Observing suburban Milwaukee church officials and members interact with those at Zion Church clarify that the

connections with Zion Church fulfill the suburban church's mission to assist those perceived to be in need in the greater community. The American church members relish the opportunity to make local inter-cultural connections through a mutual love of Jesus Christ. For Zion Church members, it is an opportunity to connect with U.S. Americans outside of work or school who share the Christian values that form the boundaries of their community. Scholars of African immigration note the importance of religion in the Christian African psyche and how American religiosity frequently mirrors it. In effect, Christian religious institutions also facilitate integration of newly arrived Christians into U.S. social fabric Christian traditions form solid ground between cultures (Kwakyenuako 2006; Agbali 2008).



*Figure 16.* Quilts distributed by Zion Church to new arrivals or others in need. Photo Courtesy of Gui Kabeo.

Accordingly, for Congolese DVL winners in Milwaukee, their kinship networks and Zion Church facilitate the growth of thematic networks that initiates their decision to settle in Milwaukee. Transnational Congolese people living in Milwaukee use networks

to bridge and, as a result, shrink the physical and cultural distances between Milwaukee and the DRC. However, once individuals arrive in Milwaukee, they no longer are limited to thematic networks; they begin accessing the territorial networks within the region. In the next two sections, I examine the territorial networks for DVL winners and refugees which are vital as they start their new lives in Milwaukee.

### *Territorial Networks and Refugee Resettlement*

For Milwaukee refugees, the arrival processes and settling-in period differs from that of DVL winners. While DVL winners initially depend heavily on scaled networks springing from Zion Church, refugees use their resettlement agency's territorial networks to establish their lives in Milwaukee. While thematic networks connect those with shared concerns in different geographic areas, territorial networks bind together people in a common region (Leitner et al. 2002; Ghose 2007). The Milwaukee Area Refugee Consortium (MARC) is the largest territorial network for refugee resettlement in Milwaukee. It brings together resettlement agencies, the State of Wisconsin, social service providers, and other non-profit/non-governmental organizations.

The State of Wisconsin is a significant player in MARC and provides some of the funding and services for refugee resettlement while the day-to-day needs of recently arrived refugees are met by case managers working for the resettlement agencies. A hallmark of neoliberal governance, the State delegates service provision to non-profit entities. While not providing all services itself, the State is not entirely disconnected from service provision. In separate monthly meetings facilitated by the State, MARC administrators and service providers meet to discuss best practices and share concerns with the goal of providing consistent culturally and linguistically appropriate services to

Milwaukee refugees. This strengthens the relationships among network partners and highlights the ways in which geographic networks overlap at different scales. For example, the International Institute of Wisconsin (IIW) is an active MARC member, but among other networks, it is affiliated with the U.S. Committee for Refugees, a national scale organization (Leitner et al. 2002). Each MARC agency operates in multiple networks that come together through the MARC partnership.

In conjunction with my field research at Zion Church, I have worked as a refugee program developer at IIW, one of Milwaukee's refugee resettlement agencies. My position at IIW afforded me an inside look at the refugee resettlement process. Each resettlement agency must comply with requirements from their national affiliate; the State Department Bureau of People, Refugees, and Migration; and the State of Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families. While each agency runs its operation differently, per requirements from the State Department and the State of Wisconsin, they all are responsible for assisting refugees with adequate housing, providing employment training and finding sustained employment, obtaining medical care, English language acquisition, and overall cultural orientation during the first year. MARC agencies design their programs to enable refugees to acquire the necessary skills to be economically and socially self-sufficient as soon as possible. As Olivier contends, at his resettlement agency they aim to deliver high quality services. However, the numbers of Burmese, Iraqi, East Africans, and Congolese refugees coming to Milwaukee and the services they require stretch agency budgets and personnel to the limit. Delivering high-quality services to every refugee challenges resettlement agencies and the quality of this

assistance varies by resettlement agency or even by case managers within the same agency.

While agencies do their best, refugees arrive with certain expectations due to what they are told by UNHCR and other officials before leaving their place of secondary migration. Unlike DVL winners, refugees case managers find their first home, set-up and escort them to medical appointments, sign them up for public assistance and English classes, and look for their first jobs. Despite this system, Olivier explains that, “We think that we are going to arrive here and find it better while we find something else.”

Obtaining suitable employment is a salient example of how Olivier and Benjamin have felt disappointed by the realities of refugee resettlement. Benjamin and Olivier both hold Congolese graduate degrees and held professional jobs in the DRC, therefore they struggle under the pressure to take entry-level jobs in Milwaukee. Resettlement agencies strongly encourage refugees to take the first job they are offered as it is the first step towards self-sufficiency. These jobs are frequently entry-level manufacturing or other manual labor that requires little English and typically do not reflect an individual’s educational background. To the frustration of refugees and DVL winners, post-secondary degrees and professional certifications from the DRC are not recognized by the United States. After his case manager gave him a job setting-up refugee homes, Benjamin asks,

It’s me who’s going to take out the garbage? And then someone’s going to tell me, ‘no, you aren’t doing a good job.’ I looked at him, *oh my god*. Does he even have my same level of education? Take out the garbage? Is that what one should do? ... I went through a three month period of depression.

Here, Benjamin expresses frustration at not only the menial nature of this job but that he knows his educational background is better than that of his case manger. To echo Olivier’s earlier statement, Benjamin held certain expectations of the resettlement process

that his resettlement agency has not met. DVL winner Jules also expresses disappointment in his early work experience in Milwaukee, but his attitude contrasts with Olivier and Benjamin's:

It was a little discouraging ... but with my English that wasn't good yet, what could I do? So, it was good to start at zero. It was a little painful, but I've found that it was OK to start at zero.

Jules accepts that starting at "zero" is part of the process of finding his way in the United States. He did not arrive with the same preparation or expectations of what assistance to expect. This demonstrates how the differing circumstances for leaving the DRC, expressed earlier in this chapter by Olivier, create separate mentalities between DVL winners and refugees. Benjamin and Olivier arrived expecting assistance from the resettlement system. Jules knew he would only have his family's help in getting started. An advantage that refugees have though, according to Pastor Gui, is that they are plugged into not only the territorial networks of their resettlement agencies but that of Zion Church as well.

Benjamin demonstrated the ways in which Zion Church's outreach complements the work of resettlement agencies when he recounted his arrival in Milwaukee. When he and his family first entered their Milwaukee home, he describes a near-empty apartment lacking basic necessities such as chairs and water glasses. With some bitterness, Benjamin contrasts this initial situation in Milwaukee with what he left behind in the DRC, "In my house, I had a television. I had everything. I even had a car." Poignantly, he remembers how when he and his family first arrived it was "that pastor, the pastor Gui Kasango, who came, who bought me glasses, plastic glasses." Where he felt like his resettlement agency failed him, Zion Church stepped in. This example highlights how, as refugees, they can access multiple thematic and territorial networks in Milwaukee that



overlap (Leitner et al. 2002). The services refugees receive from their agencies might not be perfect, but the work of Pastor Gui and Zion Church creates a more complete system of networks. DVL winners on the other hand, do not have this same cushion as they start their new lives in Milwaukee.

*Territorial Networks and the Strength of Weak Ties*

Pastor Gui and other significant actors in the Congolese community are aware of the multiple challenges that newcomers face in establishing themselves because they too faced such obstacles. As such, they maintain different territorial networks and carry out multiple culturally appropriate programs designed to sharpen people's skill sets and ease the transition into Milwaukee life. Thematic networks discussed previously address the initial issue of choosing Milwaukee and then procuring adequate housing before most immigrants arrive in Milwaukee or within their first few weeks. Once settled into a home in the city, language, and employment constitute the primary barriers faced by newly arrived individuals. As is common in immigrant churches in the neoliberal political economy, Zion Church has stepped forward to fill in these gaps for new immigrants. Many immigrant congregations provide,

... material aid, education, information, and emotional support to their members. Thus the congregations become the mediums through which immigrants begin to adapt to their new communities and to exploit their full potentials for independence and positive contributions to the economies of their new countries. (Kwakyie-Nuako 2006, 132).

Pastor Gui and other leaders plug those in need into a system of territorial networks. He argues that for those Congolese new to Milwaukee, "you have to start somewhere if you want to be successful. You cannot choose." While some Congolese report that they start in Milwaukee at "zero," my findings demonstrate that tapping into territorial networks gives Congolese immigrants and others connected to Zion Church a starting place. In

particular, they have a head start as they tackle two major challenges: English and employment.

While learning English may be an initial challenge for the Congolese, my survey data indicates that they are a multilingual group with most people speaking an average of two to three languages. As a reflection of their education level and the realities of modern life, many of the Congolese who come as DVL winners speak French (the language of education and government in the DRC) in addition to one or more national languages (e.g., Lingala, Tshiluba, Kikongo or Swahili) which are often in addition to less common local languages spoken at home. Of those surveyed, only 31 percent self-identified as English speakers. As approximately 40 percent of respondents arrived within the last two years, this is perhaps not surprising. However, it does greatly impact their ability to find employment and feel comfortable living in Milwaukee. As Benjamin bluntly states,

... in Milwaukee, before even knowing who you are, your education level, the first test starts from your mouth.

Jules explains that theoretically there are jobs in Milwaukee that do not require English, but in the end,

[In] the United States, there isn't French. There's only English ... I have to improve my English. Because without English, without English, you can't do anything! Even if we say you can work even if you don't speak English, but really you ought to have English in your mouth. Without that you can't do anything.

English pushes people economically forward. Alain admits that his employer would like to promote him, but after over a year in Milwaukee, his spoken English is not strong enough so his promotion will have to wait while he improves his English abilities.

For Congolese immigrants looking to learn English, Milwaukee offers various opportunities. MATC has an intensive English as a second language program, in addition to other educational and technical classes. As a technical college, MATC's classes are

expensive for people with limited income and no access to federal financial aid, but they are an accredited school and their credits transfer to other institutions of higher learning. Individuals not looking for accreditation may attend the International Learning Center (ILC), which offers English, citizenship, and math classes plus tutoring at an affordable \$25 per semester. Their programming is excellent as well as their sensitivities to the various cultural communities in Milwaukee. While conducting fieldwork, I spent time at ILC as part of my position at IIW. On five occasions I encountered individuals or groups of Congolese members from Zion Church participating in English tutoring sessions or signing-up their newly arrived family members for classes. That the Congolese chose ILC is a classic example of the “strength of weak ties.” Congolese immigrants learn about educational opportunities at ILC from the experiences of others in the community not, to the best of my knowledge, through a direct administrative contact at ILC. The actors in various Congolese networks find out about employment, social services or other educational “opportunities not through direct contacts but through a flow of information via various networks in which they are embedded.” (Ghose 2007, 1965). By participating in various networks, social actors increase their exposure to information that will aid them and others in their communities in building their capacity for success in Milwaukee.

In another example of the strength of weak ties, Samuel, a Congolese man who came to Milwaukee with a family reunification visa, reached out to me via cell phone to inquire if I had connections to psychological services specific to refugees and/or immigrants in Milwaukee. Through our conversations after church, he was aware of my position in refugee services, and I passed along the appropriate information. Through the

strength of weak ties, Samuel took advantage of my presence at Zion Church to extend his own network in Milwaukee and access my professional connections.

The knowledge held in these weak ties and territorial networks empowers people to leap forward in their progression towards economic and social success. Lionel knew no English when he arrived, but like many Congolese, he takes classes at MATC and actively engages his listening, speaking, and reading skills in daily life so that his English “... is coming along little by little.” He measures his progress through small achievements like telling the barber how to cut his hair and making small talk with women, to larger victories such as filling out paperwork and easily communicating with his work supervisors. Indeed, the latter two employment-related achievements are of the type that Pastor Gui argues as fundamental for the success of his congregants with limited English proficiency.

While ILC and MATC offer good English classes, they do not always deliver the specific technical English that Pastor Gui argues that the people he works with need. He stresses the need for targeted language training so that individuals learn the vocabulary they need to communicate effectively with their supervisors and be safe on the job. For example, if a newly arrived person knows how to measure a table and communicate those measurements to his coworkers, his marketability increases. For this reason, Pastor Gui works with limited English speakers to teach technical vocabulary related to employment. He knows what English newcomers need because it is often through his personal connections that some Congolese find their first job in Milwaukee.

Pastor Gui has established solid relationships between Zion Church and local manufactures. As he explains, the church,

... supports new people, helps with job applications, to find jobs to bring [members] to interviews and ensure that they find a job.

Filling out a job application in English can be daunting (see *Figure 17* on this page).

Newly arrived individuals might not understand questions that native-born Americans are accustomed to answering on a job application. Pastor Gui explains why employers ask if a potential hire has ever been convicted of a crime and he enlists church members to help other newcomers to write résumés that appropriately portray their skills and work experiences in the DRC in light of the American workforce. This type of engagement with his congregants mirrors the services that refugee resettlement agencies provide for their clients.



*Figure 17.* Pastor Gui filling out paperwork with a refugee family. Photo Courtesy of Gui Kabeo.

Many of the individuals at Zion Church who have been in Milwaukee for less than three years work in the same two or three manufacturing plants as a result of the relationships cultivated by Pastor Gui and other prominent members of the Congolese community (see *Figure 18* on page 100). Pastor Gui works with employers to explain that

while the individuals they are hiring have limited English proficiency, they are educated. He ensures that individuals who find jobs through his networks understand safety rules and workplace expectations. As more Congolese employees connected to Zion Church prove themselves to be reliable workers, the relationships between the church and the Milwaukee manufacturing community grow and Pastor Gui can help match more newly arrived DVL winners and refugees with jobs.



*Figure 18.* Pastor Gui and members of Zion Church in front of a Milwaukee manufacturer. Photo courtesy of Gui Kaboo.

Over time, individuals like Jonas are advancing from entry-level positions to more advance manufacturing. Jonas is going through specialized welding training at work that gives him the on-the-job-experience he needs while he completes an associate's degree in welding technology at MATC. Despite receiving minor burns from machinery, Jonas is upbeat about what this opportunity means for his career and earning potential in the long run. After five years in the United States, the desire for economic success that prompted him to leave the DRC appears to be in reach. Like many people with a transnational

mentality, as his economic stability and social standing in the community grows, he continues to use his personal resources to assist other Congolese who reach out to him through thematic networks of the Congo and territorial networks of Milwaukee by providing community members with rides to destinations in the city. He feeds back into the system of networks that, as shown in *Figure 13* (see page 70), takes on the characteristics of a circuit.

### **Summarizing Congolese Scaled Networks**

The intricate scaled networks spanning the breadth of the distance between Milwaukee and the DRC function as a system of “... linked lattices of connected entities” (Leitner et al. 2002, 287). To visualize the mechanisms of this system, *Figure 13* (see page 70) depicts the general path for Congolese people entering the United States through the DVL or as refugees. In summary, once people arrive in Milwaukee, thematic and territorial networks provide them with shelter, food, rides to church and other appointments, enroll them in English classes, fill out job applications, and prepare them for employment. The upper half of the diagram describes the process which refugees go through: the UNHCR assigns them to be resettled in the United States and at that point various governmental and non-governmental organizations, including a national resettlement agency, work together to arrange the logistics of departure and arrival in the United States. The national resettlement agency then assigns the refugee to an affiliated local agency and they arrive in Milwaukee with access to the agency’s territorial networks. Resettlement agencies receive financial and service provision support from their national affiliate and other national organizations, the State of Wisconsin, and the

MARC group. The resettlement agency's networks provide the refugees with public assistance benefits and health care that DVL winners do not have access to. If applicable, refugees also may use the networks of their anchor family or friends, and as shown in the diagram, those of Zion Church. This diagram illustrates how refugees have access to more networks and services in Milwaukee than their DVL counterparts.

Compared to refugees, DVL winners have limited resources in Milwaukee. They follow the path in the lower half of the diagram. DVL winners typically arrive in Milwaukee through family and friends, or increasingly Pastor Gui and Zion Church. Many depend upon the thematic and territorial networks originating from Zion Church to provide them with housing, economic, educational, and socio-cultural support. They do not receive public benefits or subsidized health care as refugees do. Zion Church itself receives support from the LCMS and a system of suburban Milwaukee churches. Whereas refugees have access to both their resettlement agency's resources and those of Zion Church, DVL winners depend on the church and whatever family or friends they have in Milwaukee. For both groups, once they attain a certain measure of economic and social self-sufficiency, they demonstrate their mentality as transnational migrants when they feed back into the system locally and internationally. By sending resources back to the DRC, assisting their compatriots locally, or as the next chapter discusses, maintaining Congolese traditions in the United States, transnational Congolese migrants in Milwaukee are reinforcing the complex system of networks. They also play a great role in the increase of the number of Congolese settling in Milwaukee.

Within this strong system of networks though, there is one noticeable absence. While Zion Church has made inroads into the white suburban churches and has



connections with resettlement agencies, area employers, and other local or national African associations, there is limited interaction with African American businesses or organizations. Over the months I spent at Zion Church there were only two or three regular African American church attendees one of whom is married to a Congolese man. Though it could be the result of my own identity as a white American, the Zion Church community showed me more of their relationships built with white communities than connections with Milwaukee's diverse African American communities. As African immigration increases in the United States there is less pressure on people to be incorporated into the African American mainstream as earlier generations may have felt (Robinson 2010). With more Congolese coming to Milwaukee, people can choose to blend into African American culture or, as those at Zion Church or others active with smaller Congolese communities, maintain their own cultural traditions.

## **Conclusion**

Pastor Gui encourages his congregants to build their community by strengthening these scaled networks through his family's example of providing assistance to DVL winners and his sermons. In his Father's Day 2012 sermon, Pastor Gui advised his congregants to "*prendre courage*" [take courage]. "*Prendre courage*," he preaches to the sanctuary containing 50 adults and 30 children, "Today might be hard, but tomorrow will be better." He appeals to those listening as he tells them in the same sermon that God told them to move; He brought them to the United States that they might have better lives here. If they take courage, God will walk with them as they create a legacy in Milwaukee for their children. For worshippers at Zion Church, the scaled networks of

transnationalism are a significant part of this legacy. These networks continue to pull DVL winners to Milwaukee in the first place and as more refugees are successfully resettled here they can become anchors to family members waiting to be resettled. Scaled networks form the solid foundation of the growing Zion Church community with conceptual religious boundaries, and while Jules does not mention them specifically here, they are present as he attributes much of the strength of the Milwaukee Congolese to its growth:

[We're] strong because the church assembles us, and well, the pastor preaches the Word to us. I don't know how to respond. Now, it's strong. It's strong because we have a lot more people now than before, you see, a lot more people. We have families. Others are coming. It makes for a strong community.

Jules describes a church community that reflects the attitudes and actions of participants. Transnational members of Zion Church and other Congolese people in Milwaukee value connecting their lives in the DRC with Milwaukee in a symbiotic relationship that Jules describes: the Congolese are strong because Zion Church is growing; Zion Church is growing because scaled networks grow stronger as more people who support the church's religious identity come. The implications of this religious identity is further analyzed in the next chapter, but this chapter's focus on transnational networks highlights how the everyday experiences of an individual can be located within and/or across multiple scales (Montz and Wright 1996; Mitchell 2003). These growing networks spread out within the metro Milwaukee area, connect nationally, and finally stretch across the Atlantic Ocean to the middle of Africa. Stronger networks increase the flows of people, culture, and commodities that respatialize the traditional concept of the nation-state and unified national cultural identity (Mitchell 2003). As the Milwaukee Congolese community's economic and social achievements expand, transnational networks situated in Zion

Church forge a particular type of Congolese cultural landscape and group identity that transcends national borders to build conceptual cultural boundaries in the urban landscape. While these boundaries naturally exclude some Congolese living in Milwaukee who do not wish to conform to its system, with Pastor Gui's firm guidance, those who embrace it are incorporating traditions and religious belief from the DRC into a cultural landscape in Milwaukee that stands apart from other African or African American communities (Brace et al. 2006; Robinson 2010). As I analyze in the next chapter, aspects of worship services at Zion Church, and in particular the tradition of marriage, define this vibrant cultural landscape and build the community.

Table 3. Demographic data (in percentage)

Gender	
Male	55.2
Female	44.8
n=29	

Place of Birth	
Kinshasa, DRC	56.7
DRC	23.3
Southern DRC	10.0
Eastern DRC	3.3
Africa	3.3
Brazzaville, Rep. of Congo	3.3
n=30	

Year of Arrival in Milwaukee*	
2012	30.3
2011	17.2
2010	13.8
2007	3.4
2006	3.4
2005	6.9
2004	13.8
2003	3.4
2000	3.4
n=29	
*Years with no reported arrivals omitted	

Languages Spoken	
French*	100
Lingala*	65.5
English	31.0
Swahili*	17.2
Kikongo*	6.9
Kinyarawanda	6.9
Tshiluba*	3.3
Luganda	3.4
Tilubu	3.4
n=30	
*Official or National Language	

US Entry Visa	
Diversity Lottery	63.3
Refugee	20.7
Student	6.7
Family Reunification	6.7
Other	3.3
n=30	

Reason for Choosing Milwaukee	
Family and Friends	41.4
Zion Church Pastor	38.0
Refugee Assignment	10.3
Other	10.3
n=29	

Age	
18-25	21.4
26-30	17.9
31-35	21.4
36-39	17.9
40-44	3.6
45-49	7.1
50-54	0
55-59	3.6
60-64	7.1
65+	0
n= 28	

Highest Education Level Completed in DRC	
Primary School	0
High School	24.1
University or Technical Training	65.5
Graduate	10.3
n=29	

Annual Income in Milwaukee	
Less than \$10,000	17.6
\$10,001-\$20,000	29.4
\$20,001-\$30,000	29.4
\$30,001-\$40,000	23.5
n=17	

## CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND IDENTITY

The framework of cultural landscapes analyzes the interaction of physical places, cultural traditions or symbols and can be used to understand group identity. While physical landscapes are visible, conceptual landscapes often are intangible cultural boundaries that groups create around themselves. Visible symbols (e.g., signs, clothes, food, and buildings), behaviors or actions, and orthodoxies rooted in the individual and group social dynamics ultimately codify cultural landscapes (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006; Abdullah 2009; Schein 2010; Rapoport 2011). Deconstructing such landscapes provides insight not only on their construction but shows group values and how groups define who or what belongs — it builds cohesive cultural identity that excludes individuals who break orthodoxies and transgress community boundaries (Ehrkamp 2006; Trudeau 2006). For immigrants, this cohesive cultural landscape and identity serves to contrast the home and host cultures. Frequently, immigrants are perceived as the Other — people that do not belong to the majority group (“us”) and are outside the norm of the host culture. By creating their own landscapes, cultural groups strengthen and protect their group identity (Nagel 2002; Brace et al. 2006; Ehrkamp 2006; Rapoport 2011). Geographers, like Anderson (1987), have written about how this sense of identity can often carry overtones that racializes the landscape.

Racialized landscapes often are grounded on physical characteristics based on skin color that impact social interactions (Pulido 2000; Bonnet and Nayal 2002; Pulido 2002; Slocum 2008). Essentializing race to binaries ignores the socio-cultural and economic characteristics that define identity and can be as marginalizing as skin color (Pulido 2002). For African immigrants, when skin color overrides perceived identity the

focus on black-white binaries by non-Africans limits their identity formation and cultural landscapes. By asserting their cultural identities onto the landscape through their clothes, food, and religious traditions, African immigrants and refugees challenge the notion of black American space (Abdullah 2009; Robinson 2010). Religious institutions become one landscape where Africans in the United States can reject skin color as their defining characteristic and choose the ways in which they embody their faith within their landscape (Gallagher 2005; Brace et al. 2006). This challenge though is that once people leave the space of the church, they face the marginalizing perceptions of outsiders based on their skin color that once again inserts them into U.S. racial hierarchy. As I explore in this chapter through textual analysis, the members of Zion Church live a faith that shapes and reflects their own cultural landscapes and identity, not perceived racial differences.

My analysis of Zion church's cultural landscapes is an interpretation of how the interactions of cultural symbols and traditions give insight into the lived experiences of being Congolese in Milwaukee and my own position as researcher (Cosgrove and Demosh 1993; Yeoh 2003). The physical space of Zion Church is home to multiple conceptual landscapes that define specific community values. The acts of worship taking place at Zion Church in tandem with the processes of marriage define boundaries and codify a specific religious Congolese identity in Milwaukee (Gallagher 2005; Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006). In this chapter, I reconcile the insights from months of participant observation, interviews, and analysis of cultural artifacts found at Zion Church to break down Milwaukee's physical and conceptual Congolese landscapes. As with previous chapters, direct quotations are from semi-structured interviews, while recounted conversations took place at various community events over the span of my fieldwork.

While conceptually cultural landscapes are not limited to physical places, the material realm makes a good entry point into this analysis as they are the most visible on the urban landscape. Therefore, through the building Zion Church worships in, I analyze how the physical space and worship routines manifest diverse symbols of cultural identity. From there, I probe what I believe is the principle conceptual Congolese cultural landscape in Milwaukee: marriage. Adherence to and performance of traditional activities related to marriage form a vital discourse of how Congolese members of Zion Church maintain a distinct religious Congolese identity in relation to American culture.

## **Landscapes of Zion Church**

### *Building Physical Landscape*

Physical structures are one way that religious immigrant communities assert themselves into urban spaces and show that they, too, belong. By constructing or adapting buildings, cultural groups physically modify the landscape of the city they live in to meet their needs while they locate their religious identity in a particular place (Gallagher 2005). To do this, they may demand changes to public policy in order to express themselves in a culturally or religious appropriate manner. This forces the community at large to come to terms with the presence of a new cultural group or conversely, the host community may enact policies restricting the practices of the new religious community (Trudeau 2006; Kong 2010). While the number of people originally from the DRC is growing in Milwaukee, they have not yet begun to physically assert themselves into the city landscape. Despite the active socio-cultural and economic networks described in the previous chapter, the small number of people and Zion

Church's lack of a permanent or even a clearly identifiable building renders them a congregation relatively unseen in Milwaukee. Zion Church services occur in a church that, from outward appearances, is a mainstream American Lutheran church (see *Figure 19* on this page).



*Figure 19:* View of Benediction Lutheran Church building from the road. Photo by the author.

The building that Zion Church worships in was designed in the style of a modern Protestant American church with a high roof, cross and a simple sign by the adjacent road that states “Benediction Lutheran Church.” Black-and-white signs on the red church office building display the times of the various church services and the names of the pastors, yet they are only visible once a car has turned into the church parking lot (see *Figure 20* on page 111). When members of Zion Church transform the sanctuary into their own worship space every Sunday, the biggest outward expression of its presence for the general public is auditory so that as I walk the two blocks from the bus stop to the Benediction Lutheran Church building on Sunday afternoons, I hear Zion Church’s



service almost before I see the building. The cars rushing by are oblivious to the rhythms of the drums and vocal harmonies spilling from the sanctuary and to the ritual of transformation that this mainstream American Lutheran landscape undergoes every Sunday afternoon (Brace et al. 2005).



*Figure 20.* The only physical sign of Zion Church's presence.  
Photo by author.

On Sundays, there is a rhythm to church services and to the time after it. Musicians arrive early to convert the sanctuary from Benediction Lutheran Church to the International Lutheran Church of Zion. The drum set, congas, and keyboard are brought out, and cords are unwound to set up the multiple speakers, amplifiers, and microphones. Band members arrive, perform sound checks, and the music signals the start of the service: bulletins are passed out, the laymen or women lead prayer, Pastor Gui arrives, *Maman* Anasthasie or a volunteer reads the gospel, Pastor Gui preaches, Jules announces community events, Samuel interprets into English while others whisper interpretations into the ears of the non-English/French congregants. Over the course of two hours,

people filter in and when the service is over, everyone greets each other with hugs and a “how have you been this week?” Soon after, the equipment hastily is put back as the musicians balance their desire to greet other congregants with the necessity of returning the space to “order” (see *Figure 21* on page 113). In these moments of taking-down the equipment, it is apparent that Zion Church borrows this building and that they have not made a permanent mark on the landscape (Abdullah 2009; Kong 2010). Discreet symbols of Zion Church linger during the week: a large decorative clock purchased to help keep Zion Church’s service running on time rests in the back of the sanctuary and a plaque in the fellowship hall with a blessing translated in English, French, Hmong, and German (the languages of worship for the different services housed in the building). Yet, through their ritual actions during church services and activities, the Congolese and other worshippers at Zion Church make the building into the nexus of their cultural landscape. It is representative of the beliefs and values that pull them together as a cultural community of faith (Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006).

### *Landscape of Movement*

Within this space, worshippers at Zion Church are free to physically act out their culturally distinct Christianity. They use the rituals of the preparation, the church service itself, and the take-down to reproduce a cultural landscape that reflects their socio-cultural identities and values; bodily practices construct identity and self-awareness and services at Zion Church require the full bodily participation of the congregants (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Gallagher 2005; Brace et al. 2006; Kwakye-Nuako 2006; Abdullah 2009; Kong 2010; Schein 2010). The pastor’s Word inspires congregants to action. People raise their hands in praise and “Jesus,” “Amen,” or ululations of affirmation

punctuate sermons and singing. Older women play their own handheld rhythm instruments during the music. People clap while they dance. Frequently, Pastor Gui or other lay-preachers instruct everyone present to stand up, to dance, to repeat Bible verses to their neighbors or applaud for Jesus. Church is a sensory experience. By involving their physical selves in worship the body takes on a religious significance that enhances the sacred quality of the landscape (Kong 2010). Music, dance, and, above all, movement are expressions of faith and the cultural values that appear at other points on the bounded landscape.



*Figure 21.* Taking down the music equipment after Sunday service. Photo by author.

Apropos to the majority of the congregation's status as newcomers to the United States, forward movement is a frequent motif of Pastor Gui's sermons: God *pushed* them to leave Africa; God *carried* them to Milwaukee; God said *move* and they did. Associated

with their migration to Milwaukee, Pastor Gui believes that the success of his congregation rests with their desire to push forward spiritually and economically, thus he encourages people to do so during sermons. The high numbers of Congolese enrolled in technical programs at MATC or English classes at ILC while simultaneously working physically demanding manufacturing jobs are indicative of their motivation to move forward and achieve success. At the end of services, Pastor Gui's predilection to share job promotions, graduations, milestone birthdays, or engagements encourages the community as a whole to keep advancing. Community success reaffirms the initial decision DVL winners and other visa-holders made to leave behind family and friends to come to Milwaukee and eventually establish a new life within the landscape of Zion Church. The accomplishment of one individual is the accomplishment of the group and for the congregation sitting together in the physical space of the sanctuary these successes reinforce the benefits of following group orthodoxies. For example, Pastor Gui reminds the congregation that at the beginning Zion Church had no engineers and he points out individuals in pews with engineering degrees as proof of what everyone can accomplish if he or she lives a life within boundaries based on their Congolese traditions and values rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Gui emphasizes morals and the role of Jesus in his weekly sermons and choice of hymns that define the community of believers at Zion Church. These separate members from other Congolese people in Milwaukee whose religious beliefs do not align with those in this landscape in a way that may marginalize individuals who share cultural traditions with members of Zion Church but do not fully embrace the religious tenants underpinning the landscape. At the end of services, Pastor Gui leads the congregation

through “*En mon cœur, j’ai choisi*” [“In my heart I’ve chosen”]. This hymn echoes the decision made by people at Zion Church to live their lives within the church’s socio-spatial borders:

*Si mes amis s’en vont, qu’importe, moi, j’irai! Oui, pour toujours.  
Au monde je dis “non,” joyeux je prends ma croix. Oui, pour toujours.*

[If my friends go away, what does it matter, I will go! Yes, forever.  
To the world I say “no,” joyfully I take up my cross. Yes, forever.]

The hymn, sung in French, symbolizes the decision that congregants take to follow the path of Jesus Christ regardless of what trail their friends go down. For those Congolese people active at Zion Church, acceptance of Jesus is a condition of belonging. The implication in the hymn is that the singer’s friends are not following the orthodox path. Pastor Gui identifies the belief in a Christian God as fundamental to bringing this Congolese community in Milwaukee together and the lyrics of the hymn echo these sentiments. The singer chooses to take up the cross, the most prominent Christian symbol of Jesus. The singer turns away from the material world in deference to Jesus and the Christian path. These are the same choices that Pastor Gui encourages all his congregants to make and distinguishes them from individuals who do not live their lives within this landscape. For the DVL winners in the congregation, the hymn reaffirms their initial decision to enter the lottery and consequently physically leave their friends and family behind in search of a better life in the United States. The decision to come to the United States and walk the path of Jesus at Zion Church is salient in relationship to the hymn and the development of a religious and cultural landscape bounded by the daily activities that they perform as Congolese Christians living in Milwaukee. Other Congolese or people living in Milwaukee who do not walk down this path, who do not perform the

responsibilities as defined by the community in the following section, may be relegated to life outside of the community boundaries.

### *Landscape of Community Participation*

The performances of weekly happenings at the church building add cultural depth to the Sunday afternoon landscape. The rituals around weddings, wakes, Thanksgiving and holiday dinners, and other activities that take place in the church basement throughout the week simultaneously pull the group together and reinforce cultural identity that excludes individuals who do not take part (Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). At these activities, each person plays a predetermined role that infuses the community with a familiar sense of predictability (Brace et al. 2006). When there is a wake announced on Sundays, Pastor Gui simply states, “The *mamans* [women of the church] and the *papas* [men of the church] know what it is they should do” indicating that the women bring food and the men bring drinks (see *Figure 22* on page 117). Pastor Gui makes it clear that people who do not contribute or assist others in the community should not expect to receive similar aide if and when they find themselves in need. Emphatically, Pastor Gui uses the case of unmarried women to make his point clear. An unmarried woman who consistently chooses not to prepare food for events should not expect the women of the church to bring food to her future reception. This is Pastor Gui’s mechanism for setting boundaries around the community. When people in the congregation hear these types of speeches, they must decide if they want to participate in the prescribed manner; if they do not, they are made aware of the consequences of transgression.



*Figure 22.* Communal meal after a traditional ceremony among members of Zion Church. Photo courtesy of Freddy N'sau.

To further deconstruct the consequences of violating cultural boundaries, if a young woman decides not to bring food to community events she risks being marginalized from the community. By defying expectations, a young woman puts in jeopardy her claim to the assistance of the other women when it is time to plan her own wedding. As the analysis of communal processes embedded in the landscape of marriage explains explained in the second half of this chapter, this is a serious consequence. Even I, a cultural outsider, was assigned a role over time at group events that fit into prescribed cultural norms. Unable to make Congolese food, but still a woman, the older women instructed me to bring fruit. For me, the act of bringing oranges or watermelon showed my respect for Congolese tradition, granted me better access to the community, and allowed me to more fully participate in the life of Zion Church. As a researcher, I was grateful to be allowed to participate, but for other women in the church, rigid expectations of participation based on traditional gender roles may make them feel out of

place in the landscape unless they are able to find a different way to participate that elders at Zion Church deem acceptable.

This narrative of expected participation ran through much of my fieldwork. Researchers identify that Africans from various national groups often create their own faith communities in the United States so that they can worship in their own languages but also because they find the lack of total community involvement in U.S. services unsatisfying (Kwakyee-Nuako 2006). The congregation wants to be included in the running of their church and during the church services themselves. The Congolese at Zion Church build a thriving cultural landscape by realizing assigned roles within the community that foster a sense of belonging for individuals comfortable with these expectations (Brace et al. 2006). Before I met Pastor Gui, a leader in the Milwaukee LCMS had praised Pastor Gui for Zion Church's almost unheard of complete congregation participation rate attributed to Pastor Gui's charisma. Many months observing Zion Church has clarified for me how the expectation of participation in church events forms a cultural boundary around the church's landscape. The high volunteer rate is rooted in the religious belief that God gives each individual his or her own personal strength and merging these unique strengths inside and outside of the church building strengthens the group, even if such participation is not always convenient for the individual to do so.

The previous chapter's analysis of the scaled networks demonstrates the importance of a landscape of participation in helping newly arrived individuals adjust to live in Milwaukee. The networks diagram (see *Figure 13* on page 70) highlights how newcomers in the Congolese community depend on others to not only have the means



and connections to reach the United States but to find housing, employment, and socio-cultural support. The stories of DVL winners like Jules, Jonas, and Alain each show how they have relied on different thematic and territorial networks at different moments in order to have the economic and social self-sufficiency to channel their resources back into the network. Therefore, this landscape of community participation is not only how Pastor Gui expects members of the church to assist each other at church events but that the Congolese in Milwaukee utilize each individual's unique skillset to solve individual problems or community. Jonas describes a situation in which each person in the community is known for helping people with certain problems. As a result, people within the Congolese community know not only whom to turn to for specific help but how to use others' strengths to effectively navigate the contours of the greater Milwaukee landscape. At the same time, this expectation to help others and put one's own needs below that of the community's can be wearing at times. Jonas' dedication to driving people to appointments around Milwaukee and setting up and taking down the sanctuary each Sunday takes away from his own time to plan his week or run personal errands. Yet, while he may occasionally express frustration, he recognizes that as a single man, he is obligated to help the community in this way until he gains status by marrying and can put his responsibilities for providing for his own family before that of the community. Jonas and others active in Zion Church accept the orthodoxies that define the cultural landscape. From a theoretical perspective, the rigidly defined invisible boundaries that unite the Congolese and other worshippers at Zion Church may push those who transgress them to the margins or even outside in a form of "Othering" that brands them as not fully belonging to the group (Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006).

Therefore, while cars zip past Zion Church each Sunday, they are oblivious to the ways in which the Congolese members of Zion Church are busy constructing a cohesive cultural landscape through their acts of worship and the expectations of total participation. For those Congolese who are members of the church, Pastor Gui guides the group to shape a landscape that fuses the Christian values he espouses from the pulpit and shared cultural traditions that emphasize group participation (Gallagher 2005). The orthodoxies of these values set boundaries around the congregation at Zion Church that distinguish it from other groups. These boundaries are further solidified through processes of marriage that, as I observed during fieldwork, is the strongest mechanism for building a cohesive Congolese cultural landscape within Zion Church's ministry.

### **Cultural Landscape of Marriage**

During my hours observing, participating, and conversing with the Congolese members of Zion Church, the sanctity of marriage emerged as a significant cultural narrative. Married men and women are viewed as more responsible with higher social status than their unmarried counterparts resulting in single men and women at the church expressing a strong desire to marry in the future. Marriage comes up in casual conversation between young and old. Pastor Gui's sermons regularly revolve around marriage and familial relationships. Zion Church's Valentine's Day dinner, with separate programs for couples and singles, is a highlight during the year. As I engaged with church members most assumed that I was married and when they found out otherwise, to remain inside the boundaries of the landscape, I inevitably had to reassure them that someday I would be. Marriage is valued and when asked about important traditions that

Congolese people bring with them from the DRC, in interviews Pastor Gui and Lionel in particular point to marriage and Jonas bluntly states in conversation that Pastor Gui wants everyone to be married. For people at Zion Church, marriage is a community act so fundamental that the belief that individuals actively choosing to remain single or those who divorce risk silent relegation to the margins. Pastor Gui makes it clear to church members it is their individual responsibility to work to maintain robust community and marriage is one of the vehicles in which to do so. When orthodoxies like this develop around a community, the potential to unite the majority and alienate the minority looms (Trudeau 2006). Over the course of my fieldwork I did not hear members openly question the institution of marriage but this may be due more to my focus on the Congolese majority at Zion Church and minimal interaction with people outside the community. Therefore, my fieldwork positively describes marriage as a community-strengthening act undergone by individuals.

Within Zion Church's Congolese landscape, marriage represents more than the joining of a bride and groom; it is the merging of families, communities, and culture. A pending marriage prompts church meetings to plan details and assign responsibilities in accordance to the landscape of community participation. In this sense, marriage serves as a mechanism to shape "... transnational moral geographies ..." and instill group identity through shared and lived values from the DRC manifesting in Milwaukee (Kong 2010, 760). Asked during his interview about what traditions Congolese people in Milwaukee maintain, Lionel responded by explaining the marriage process in the DRC:

Traditions? Well, there are a lot of traditions over there. Maybe if you want to get married ... There's the first stage, the engagement stage. The groom ought to introduce himself on the level of the girl's family. He ought to give something, just an envelope so that the woman's family accepts the groom. After that, they're going to evaluate the situation and assemble all their resources and

take the invoice for the dowry. After that, [the groom's family] will come deliver the *dot* [dowry<sup>1</sup>]. They'll do the traditional wedding, and then they'll move on to the civil ceremony, and then they're going to finish with the religious ceremony.

The system of introductions, dowry, and multiple ceremonies Lionel describes is similar to what parishioners at Zion Church ascribe to. By following the values and traditions of Congolese marriage, they distinguish themselves from the American mainstream (Gallagher 2005; Ehrkamp 2006). The processes of marriage, including engagement, preparation, and traditional, religious, and civil ceremonies, are the vehicle with which the Congolese at Zion Church produce boundaries around their community that defend an identity based on culture and tradition they control, not perceived racial differences by outsiders (see *Figure 23* on this page) (Ehrkamp 2006; Slocum 2008). Deconstructing the processes of marriage show how the Congolese at Zion Church use marriage to seal union between the couple, families, their communities, and even countries.



*Figure 23.* Traditional ceremony in the basement of Zion Church. Photo courtesy of Freddy N'sau.

<sup>1</sup> As the money or goods in question are passed from the groom's family to the bride, the direct translation is "bride price" not "dowry." However this falsely implies that the groom's family is "purchasing" the bride from her family with the money or goods. To counter this, I use the English word "dowry" as it is more culturally appropriate and preferred by members of Zion Church.

### *Landscapes of Engagement*

An engagement ceremony is an early, clearly delineated step that Pastor Gui requires couples wishing to marry at Zion Church to go through. The engagement ceremony between Solange and Aristide, Congolese DVL winners in their late 20s and early 30s highlights the set boundaries of the cultural landscape and its transnational nature. Solange and Aristide's relationship started in the DRC, but its culmination in Milwaukee exemplifies the intricate networks respatializing the distance between countries (Montz and Wright 1996; Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). Solange, a schoolteacher in Kinshasa who has had trouble finding stable work in Milwaukee, has been in Milwaukee for a little over a year. The groom Aristide has less time in the United States and moved to Milwaukee from Illinois so that he and Solange could prepare to marry.

At the engagement ceremony, Pastor Gui led the discussion between the couple and their families. Aristide's uncle and male cousins were his representatives, and they traveled from Illinois to meet with the couple and the aunt and uncle that Solange lives with. The uncles, cousins, Pastor Gui, Aristide and Solange considered the arrangement in the living room over beer and wine. Solange's aunts and grandmother floated between the kitchen and the living room, preparing the dining room table as they listened but did not participate in the conversation. The men discussed the history of bride and groom's relationship in Kinshasa and praised their maturity for not only deciding to marry but for proceeding along proper cultural and religious channels. Before the engagement was official, Aristide's cousins retrieved multiple cases of beer, wine, and soda to present to the bride's family. Aristide then passed two crisp \$100 bills in an envelope to Solange.

Directed by Pastor Gui, Solange knelt in front of her uncle and presented him with the envelope and a bottle of wine. With that, the couple was engaged and the group moved to the table to celebrate over a traditional Congolese meal of fufu, fish, rice, sauce, plantains, and vegetables prepared by the women.

For those wishing to be married by Pastor Gui, traditions such as those performed by Aristide and Solange form a clearly bounded cultural landscape infused with transnationalism. While he need not be present at every step, Pastor Gui is frank that he will neither bless nor participate in a wedding that does not proceed along traditional lines. He maintains that engagement and marriage,

... make us who we are so we cannot change it. The people who come to us... [they] have to follow what we believe and that's our tradition.

Not merely a line in the sand, the socio-spatial boundary identified here is important for members of Zion Church who value living inside the community (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). As the DRC contains a diversity of cultural traditions, Pastor Gui taps into his socio-cultural and religious networks in the DRC to ensure that traditions specific to the bride or groom are followed and that the bride's family receives the proper dowry. Living in Milwaukee or marrying someone from outside Congolese culture does not mean that traditions are ignored. While many Congolese people marry within the local diaspora, for members of Zion Church marrying someone from outside the cultural community, they are not released from the expectation to go through the wedding process with Pastor Gui. Seeking out unfamiliar Congolese traditions or introducing Americans to the importance of maintaining Congolese tradition eliminates potential reasons a couple could give for refusing to follow cultural procedures. In the eyes of Pastor Gui, there is

no legitimate excuse for transgressions and there are social ramifications vis-à-vis his refusal to perform the marriage ceremony for transgressive couples (Trudeau 2006).

At the same time that clear socio-spatial boundaries form around group identity at Zion Church, additional respatialization takes place during the enactment of the engagement ceremony. The milestone of engagement collapses the traditional distance between Milwaukee and the DRC (Montz and Wright 1996; Leitner et al. 2002; Mitchell 2003). By firmly enforcing cultural traditions, Pastor Gui ties the transnational Congolese community at Zion Church more closely to the DRC when relationships, like Solange and Aristide's, solidify (Montz and Wright 1996). Similarly, the ritual of marriage which Congolese people in Milwaukee go through reflects a transnational identity in which they physically live in Milwaukee but maintain their "Congolese-ness" by adhering to traditional processes (Bailey 2001). Traditional processes are the foundation of identity built around religion, culture, and community participation (Brace et al. 2006; Abdullah 2009). Solange and Aristide start their wedding preparations by going through a traditional engagement that culminates in a wedding prepared by the group. To say that a Congolese wedding at Zion Church is a community affair is an understatement. Whether the preparations begin months before the date or only a week beforehand, the community of worshippers at Zion Church mobilizes. An American style wedding, focused on the bride's desires and directed almost exclusively by the couple, restricts the Congolese landscape of community participation. During the first half of my fieldwork, I observed as the congregation at Zion Church communally prepared for the wedding of Solange's cousin Alexandrine, a much-loved member of their congregation and American-born and bred Frank.

*The Landscape of Traditional Marriage*

In the preparation for and at Alexandrine and Frank's ceremonies, I watched as the landscape of marriage, fortified by the importance of community as an element of group identity, continued to unfold. At the end of every church service for months Jules updated the congregation on wedding preparations. Men and women would meet separately to tackle tasks and assign duties for the traditional and religious ceremonies. The full wedding is a two-day affair. The first day is the traditional Congolese wedding and the second day is the Christian ceremony and reception. Both days involve intense preparation by the community in the same spirit of total participation analyzed earlier. Here I briefly describe this preparation, but to approach cultural landscapes from an alternative angle, I focus on reading specific symbols present during preparations and at the traditional wedding to diversify the textual analysis.

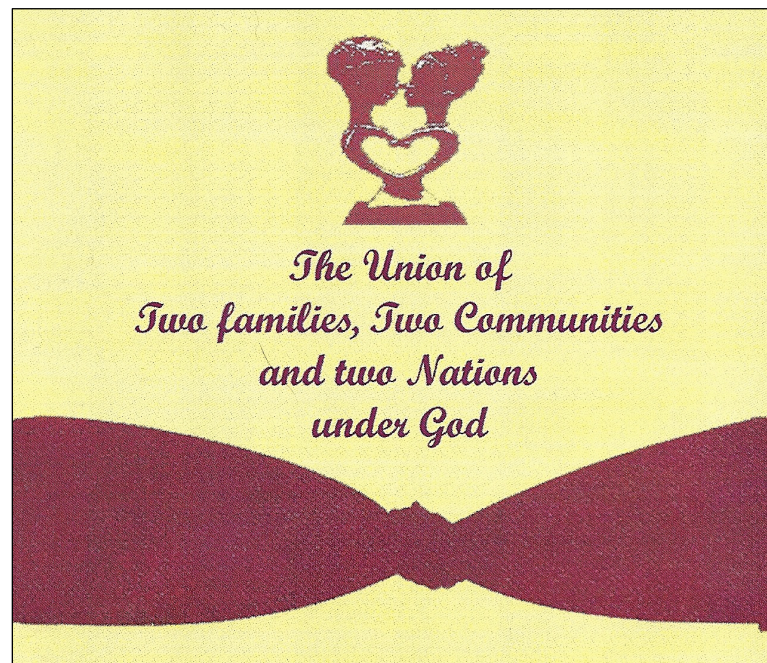
Leading up to the traditional and religious ceremonies, invitations were handed out to the entire congregation at Zion Church. With only couple weeks left, Alexandrine's father announced after church that they need the congregation to respond to the invitation for the religious wedding and reception as the venue needed an official headcount. For the traditional ceremony, he assured the congregation that they would not need to do this because that ceremony and reception were to be facilitated by Zion Church, thus it was *en famille* [within the family]. This expression, *en famille*, is indicative of interlocked cultural conceptions of family and community. The church community acts as a family to prepare for the traditional wedding. The discourse of each person playing a role continues, particularly for the traditional *en famille* wedding.



For the traditional ceremony as one of the oldest women in the congregation, Reine assigned each woman a particular dish to make and handed out assignment cards with strict orders of what time the food needed to be at the reception. Jules and other key members of the church worked with the men on specific tasks and the Sunday before the wedding, a final all-church meeting took place after the service to confirm each individual's role. Community leaders candidly told the congregation that if someone was unclear regarding his or her role, that it is that person's responsibility to ask for clarification. If people see something missing in the days leading up to or the day of the ceremony, they must take it upon themselves to fix it. At this same meeting, Alexandrine was teary-eyed as she thanked the community for their handwork and sacrifice in planning a weekend to unify her, Frank, and their communities.

The invitation to the traditional Congolese wedding between Alexandrine and Frank highlights the importance of the multiple unions taking place during their wedding (see *Figure 24* on page 128). It also offers a slightly different approach to the transnationalism thus far embedded in the networks at Zion Church. The image at the top of the invitation invokes the love, commitment, and connectivity between the bride and groom, but that is not the invitation's focus. With bold font, the invitation declares the union between first the families, then their communities, and finally two nations in a nested hierarchy of scale. By adding "under God" the invitation stresses the way in which religion pulls these diverse groups together. The knot on the invitation further symbolizes connection and unity. The names of the bride and groom are not pictured in *Figure 24*, but they are buried in a smaller font in the text of the invitation. While much of my discussion of transnationalism has been on the ways that Congolese networks break down

scaled hierarchy, here they nod to traditional hierarchy (Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003). By going through the cultural marriage process, members of Zion Church are upholding cultural order; the union of the couple prompts the marriage, but the couple fits inside a preconceived hierarchy that Pastor Gui and other elders in the community value. One union engenders multiple connections at different scales with the couple at the center. This multi-scaled bond is cemented during the dowry exchange at the traditional ceremony.



*Figure 24.* Wedding invitation highlighting the multiple unions a wedding represents. Document courtesy of the author.

In Congolese tradition, the dowry is passed from the groom's to the bride's family. Among other items, a dowry can include money, clothing, fabric, and jewelry. A description of African dowry and marriage custom written by Alexandrine's father, provided to guests at the traditional wedding, clarifies that a dowry is not the bride's purchase price but a transfer of wealth to the bride's family to compensate them for how

she enriches her husband's family or as a thank you to her family for the work they did in raising her. Symbolically the dowry,

... is like a social pact or sacrament bringing together not only two individuals in love, but also their two families, two tribes or villages; and nowadays two nations.

During the traditional wedding, guests see the couple and their families come together during the dowry negotiations by male representatives of both families and the presentation of the dowry to the bride's family. Without the performance of negotiating and exchanging the dowry, the relationship between the bride and groom remains that of an informal boyfriend-girlfriend.

The performance of different cultural traditions at the wedding ceremony reinforces a specific religious and cultural identity in the conceptual and physical landscape (Gallagher 2005; Kong 2010). While the traditional ceremony for Alexandrine and Frank took place in the gymnasium of a suburban parochial school, Zion Church pulled together to respatialize the gym into a sacred Congolese landscape (Brace et al 2006; Kong 2010). The traditional wedding is a sensory experience in which cultural outsiders recognize that while they may still be in Wisconsin, they are not in what is typically thought of as an "American" landscape. This landscape not only tells cultural outsiders what it is to be a Congolese member of Zion Church, but it visibly codifies this identity to the children of Congolese immigrants and refugees who may or may not have been born in the DRC themselves. When the girls of the church perform a traditional dance during the ceremony they articulate cultural and religious narratives and signify their Congolese-ness through clothes and movement (see *Figure 25* on page 130) (Brace et al. 2006). Overall, the different elements of the traditional ceremony, such as negotiating the dowry and the girls dancing, seal the union and require that the

community physically act out cultural traditions all of which reinforces a Congolese cultural identity in Milwaukee that is in contrast to the traditional American one.



*Figure 25. Zion Church girls performing a dance at Alexandrine and Frank's wedding. Photo courtesy of Freddy N'sau.*

### **Conclusion: Reading the Landscape**

While some cultural groups in Milwaukee may cultivate landscapes readily visible to outsiders, the Congolese have yet to do so. As the analysis in this chapter demonstrates, this does not mean however, that they are not developing a dynamic landscape of their own with clear boundaries and processes to codify belonging. Their church building, the ways in which they physically engage during church services, and the rituals and symbols of marriage serve as landmarks on the cultural landscape. This landscape forms through conscious and unconscious processes. While the ritual of Sunday services reinforces group identity, the fact that they do not have their own space limits their ability to fix themselves within Milwaukee's urban landscape. The set-up and dismantling each Sunday of equipment is tiring but necessary until Zion Church has the financial capital to buy and operate their own building. While a building will not

automatically and dramatically increase the visibility of the Congolese in Milwaukee, it will signal continued growth and permanence (Kong 2010).

With or without a building, however, what is clear is the vast social and cultural traditions and networks that the Congolese worshippers at Zion Church possess are building a landscape that reflects their identity rooted in faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, community participation, and marriage. By adhering to Congolese traditions, members and their children at Zion Church create an important sense of belonging within their own landscape. The construction of identity involves building boundaries through a mixture of social, cultural, and political processes that distinguish one group from other groups (Brace et al 2006). Shared experiences and awareness of the immigrant or refugee group's collective narrative in the host country constructs a relational character so that identity is not just how the group perceives itself, but how that perception relates to the host culture (Anderson 1987; Ehrkamp 2006). Cultural landscapes pull communities together, codify group belonging, and serve as a reaction to perceived threats by the host culture (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011).

For members of Zion Church, they contrast their identity with that of the host culture and even other Congolese people in Milwaukee. Within their landscape they are not the Other, but they are free to define their own cultural landscapes by acting out important traditions and religious beliefs (Nagel 2002). The rituals of Sunday services, the landscapes of movement and participation, and the processes of marriage distinguish themselves from other cultural groups in the United States. By going through the wedding planning process, carrying out specific dances, eating certain foods, laying out meters of colorful fabric for the procession, engaging the audience in call and response

Lingala phrases, the Congolese construct their identity as a cultural group within Milwaukee's grand cultural landscape. The use of matching African fabrics worn to the traditional wedding by Zion Church members and the bridal party functions as a visible symbol of unity displayed by the Congolese community and Zion Church as everyone pulls together to make the event happen (see *Figure 26* on page 133). For example at the traditional wedding, my dress in matching fabric symbolized to guests who did not know me personally that despite my appearance as a white woman, I belonged to the group at Zion Church. These symbols also serve as a mechanism to distinguish members of Zion Church from Milwaukee's African American or other African communities. Their skin color does not define them, their actions, traditions, and above all, their values do. They attempt to remove themselves from racial black-white binaries and within the church landscape they are successful (Pulido 2000; Pulido 2002; Slocum 2008). Congolese values become clear: they *value* marriage, they *value* family, they *value* their community. As they perform these acts at weddings, similar to shared physical movement at Sunday services, the body becomes a sacred landscape (Kong 2010). The challenge is that once they step outside of the church, skin color is a major marker of identity and reinserts them into the black-white binary.

One strategy to avoid racial binaries that Pastor Gui preaches to help congregants to circumvent what he believes to be the stigmatizing label of "African American" is to learn English but maintain a Congolese accent. This accent signals Americans that they are not talking to an African American, but an African. For Pastor Gui, the connotations of being African are more positive than those of being labeled African American. For immigrants and refugees who arrive in their late teens and as adults, they will naturally

maintain some level of English accent. But for those who arrive as children or the first generation of children, they will have no accent and the community will have to think of other mechanisms to signal their Congolese background. This ethnic or national identity is important as research finds that children of immigrants are more successful at school and in the workplace when compared to their African American counterparts (Robinson 2010). Therefore, to ensure that their children identify as Congolese Christians, Pastor Gui and others at Zion Church work hard to build a defined cultural landscape which they pass on to their children by strictly maintaining its boundaries.



*Figure 26.* Matching fabric and colors at a traditional wedding ceremony. Photo courtesy of Pastor Gui.

Landscape boundaries both strengthen group identity and create cultural cohesiveness for current and future generations (Nagel 2002; Trudeau 2006). But, by doing so, the landscape at Zion Church forces other people in Milwaukee, Congolese or

not, outside its boundaries if they pose a risk to the uniform identity by refusing to follow group orthodoxies. Cultivating a rich cultural landscape helps Zion Church contrast their group identity with undesirable aspects from mainstream American or non-Christian Congolese landscapes (Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). Pastor Gui speaks for the community when he says,

We don't want to be American. We want to live in America, but we don't want to be American. We don't want to be American because some of the good value of America is that you can be whatever you want to be.

For Pastor Gui and others in the Congolese community, American culture is one potential threat to their family life. Congolese marriage, as described by Alexandrine's father, is a contract that cannot be broken; it is a sacrament or holy act. With high U.S. divorce rates, Pastor Gui expresses how when Congolese immigrate to America, one potential consequence is an American influence that "... destroys the family." Going through communal wedding preparations and ceremonies reinforces a group cultural identity revolving around marriage and family for the whole community. By deliberately requiring his congregation to operate within this cultural landscape Pastor Gui maintains cultural order within the group. As I observed, the landscape for Congolese Christians at Zion Church is one in which those who do not follow the religious and cultural orthodoxies fall outside the boundaries of the community and all visitors to Zion Church, Congolese or not, must decide if they fit into this landscape.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION: CONGOLESE STORIES IN MILWAUKEE**

In our first recorded interview, Pastor Gui shared that he views his church and Congolese migration as a “new story” in the city of Milwaukee. After careful evaluation of census and demographic data, and information gathered through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, it becomes clear that Congolese immigration to Milwaukee is not as much a new story, as it is multiple personal stories unfolding in the form of networks and cultural landscapes connecting the Congolese in Milwaukee through Zion Church. By developing relationships with community members during my fieldwork and learning their stories, common threads emerge. These threads — the transnational networks that build their common cultural landscapes and identity — weave together the DRC and Milwaukee.

By analyzing transnational networks, cultural landscapes, and their relationship to the development of a group identity, this thesis offers a glimpse into one group within Milwaukee’s growing national Congolese communities. Similar to nationwide trends, census data indicates that African immigration to Milwaukee County has doubled since 2000 and the Congolese form a small slice of this overall growth. Census data does an adequate job of describing the size and spatial distribution of foreign-born Africans at the county level, but it glosses over the gradations of personal or community African experiences in Milwaukee. The case study of Congolese people at Zion Church is an opportunity to dive deeper into immigration practices in Milwaukee and the early processes of community building. Demographically speaking, most members of Zion Church hail from the DRC and have been in the United States for less than five years. They are a young, well-educated community primarily consisting of DVL winners and

refugees. It is a new church community led by a magnetic pastor that, like most immigrant churches, began as a private prayer group. Though Pastor Gui characterizes it as an international church, the Congolese majority at the church give it a distinct cultural feeling, and while not every Congolese person in Milwaukee worships at Zion Church, for those that do, it is the heart of their landscape.

This analysis is designed to look at select aspects of the Congolese in Milwaukee through a variety of angles in keeping with a mixed methods approach. By integrating the data from months of observation, interviews, participation at Zion Church's activities, and demographic data, I reconcile the ways in which a variety of information sources convey certain understandings of being Congolese in Milwaukee in terms of the distinct religious identity practiced by those at Zion Church. When integrated, this information emphasizes networks, landscape, and identity that excludes those Congolese in Milwaukee who, for reasons ranging from religious and cultural beliefs to interpersonal relationships with church members, live outside of Zion Church's cultural landscape. The information here is a case study and therefore a snapshot. Multiple data sources diversify the body of information presented, but in deference to feminist methodologies, the notion of this thesis being "complete knowledge" is rejected in favor of situated knowledge (Rose 1997b). The information I present is filtered through the lens of my own personal experiences, socio-economic and cultural background. It reflects the relationships and trust that developed between members of Zion Church and me over months of observation and participation as well as the theoretical framework I employ (Duncan 1993; Rose 1997b). For example, I conducted semi-structured interviews during the first half of my fieldwork, and were I to have conducted them later in this process, the

information people chose to share with me would have reflected our deepening personal relationships and, in some cases, burgeoning friendships. This short reflection is not meant to discount the information I present here, rather to acknowledge the role that my personal behavior, education, and beliefs have played in shaping this work. By employing mixed methods, I hope to minimize some of this influence by incorporating knowledge from a diverse body of thoughts and ultimately contribute to scholarly work on African immigration to the United States.

Focusing on the people worshipping at Zion Church contributes to the existing academic literature in two key ways. The first describes a new cultural community in Milwaukee. Milwaukee prides itself on its European cultural background, but with the influx over the last 30 years of people from across the globe, this identity is changing, and analyzing Zion Church sheds light on this evolution. In addition, my research fills an academic lacuna. Generally, immigration of individuals from different African countries has received less scholarly attention than other ethnic or cultural groups in the United States from different world regions. There is little spatial analysis of demographic data, and few scholars supporting their research through a mixed methods approach (Takyi and Boate 2006; Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang 2006). Of the literature that does exist, much of it takes place in the largest American cities, is strictly ethnographic, and often focuses on Muslim Africans (Wilson and Habecker 2008; Abdullah 2009; Abdullah 2010). Therefore, my focus on Congolese Christians not only examines a community in a Midwestern, mid-size American city in the early stages of development through multiple angles but it helps fill in an academic gap regarding African immigration in the United States. Starting with quantitative analysis and transitioning to qualitative research

techniques, this research paints a picture of the dense collection of transnational networks that aid Congolese people on their journey to Milwaukee and help them as they develop distinct cultural landscapes through Zion Church.

*Networks, Landscapes, and Identity*

Before addressing networks and landscapes, census data contextualizes the history of foreign-born African immigration to Milwaukee County in light of the metropolitan area's stark racial segregation. Mapping the spatial patterns of Africans in 1970, 2000, and 2010 illustrates the growth and movement of the foreign-born Africans across the county. Increasing from 151 people in 1970 to over 3,000 in 2010, there is no doubt that the Milwaukee African population follows national trends. The distribution of this population across the county also highlights how methods of entry have changed over time. Instead of individuals with student visas clustering around UWM as in the 1970s, newcomers today arrive in Milwaukee holding different kinds of visas and settle primarily in areas of northwestern Milwaukee historically considered African American. Hot and cold population clusters expand from 2000 to 2010 and statistical tests verify a significant transition from random settlement in 2000 to patterned settlement in 2010. This information does not say why African population is increasing; however, when it is put in dialogue with national immigration policy, some explanation emerges.

The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act significantly changed U.S. immigration policy, but due to economic, socio-cultural and political factors, it did little to increase immigration of people from Africa to the United States. This immigration increased more in response to the implementation of the DVL program that was enacted to attract educated people from historically under-represented countries to the United

States (Lobo 2006; Takyi and Boate 2006; Logan and Thomas 2012). Research at the national level indicates that the DVL system opened the door for African migration, and a demographic survey at Zion Church confirms the current impact of this legislation for economic migrants from the DRC.

As Congolese members of Zion Church conveyed during interviews, the difficult political, economic and socio-cultural situation in the DRC prompts them to leave through the DVL or as refugees. Jules, Reine, and Lionel all express how the political chaos in their country affects the daily lives of its citizens. As economic migrants, they each recount the factors that influenced their decision to take their chances on a new life in the United States, even though it means learning a new language, taking jobs that do not reflect their education level, and living far from family and friends. As they grapple with these barriers, they have depended on different transnational networks at multiple points in their individual processes of finding economic and social security in Milwaukee.

Transnational networks serve to pass knowledge, people, capital and other cultural products between spaces. As they grow in the strength, they respatialize traditional hierarchies by eliminating the distances between places (Leitner et al. 2002; Newstead, Reid and Sparke 2003; Ghose 2007). These networks can be scaled and the geographic space they exist in shapes them. The Congolese at Zion Church rely upon two types of scaled networks: thematic and territorial. Thematic networks form between people with common interests or problems, such as the mission of refugee resettlement that connects national and international resettlement agencies. Territorial networks forge connections between people who share a common geographic area (Leitner et al. 2002;

Ghose 2007). For members of Zion Church, their location in Milwaukee and their cultural background builds connections. Thematic and territorial networks play an important role for DVL winners. These networks assist them in acquiring appropriate housing, enrolling in ESL classes, and finding employment. For some such as Jules and Jonas, they choose Milwaukee because of the presence of family and friends. Others, like Alain, do not have connections to the United States via their own personal networks and depend on the thematic networks at Zion Church; Pastor Gui provides them with the essential resources that they need to leave the DRC and start their lives in Milwaukee provided that they practice the traditions and values that define the Zion Church community.

Not all members of Zion Church are DVL winners. Refugee status was the second largest visa type represented in the demographic survey of church members. With their safety unsecure, refugees are forced from their homes and undergo a long international migration process that culminates in their resettlement in Milwaukee. While DVL winners decide to immigrate to Milwaukee, refugees are forced from their homes and have little influence regarding their city of resettlement. Once resettled, they face similar challenges as those of the DVL winners, but as Benjamin and Olivier recount, they arrive with high expectations for government assistance from their resettlement agency that are not consistently met. To their benefit though, they have access to both the networks at their agencies and Zion Church.

Once in Milwaukee, both refugees and DVL winners benefit from networks to meet their housing, education, economic and socio-cultural needs. As DVL winners do not have additional support from the government, Pastor Gui and others at Zion Church

work to fulfill the needs of DVL winners and refugees. Their needs are considered community needs just as the success of one individual becomes the success of the community. Once someone has attained a measure of economic and social success, he or she then feeds back into the system of networks by assisting people locally and sending resources home to the DRC. Whether arriving in Milwaukee as an economic migrants or refugees, the Congolese bring with them cultural traditions and other markers of identity that create the boundaries of the landscape they live in. For the majority of the Congolese people I interacted with during fieldwork, Zion Church is their central cultural landscape. These networks are in large part responsible for the transnational cultural landscapes that fuse different symbols and processes that shrink the traditional distance between Milwaukee and the DRC.

Theoretically, transnationalism embraces ways in which networks purposefully built across national boundaries respatialize the physical and cultural distances between places so that daily life for people living in one place influences the other (Bailey 2001; Leitner et al. 2002; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Owusu 2006; Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw 2009). These changes manifest themselves in the development of cultural landscapes. A cultural landscape, be it a material building or a well-maintained tradition, is a spatial organizational tool used by geographers. Cultural landscapes become the ways in which communities and groups define themselves by demarcating the physical and conceptual space around them through rituals (Rose 1997a; Schein 1997; Trudeau 2006; Schein 2010). Cultural landscapes contain markers of identity. To recognize them, one must look for specific symbols of the group in question. Through Zion Church, the Congolese in Milwaukee who worship there are creating cultural landscapes clearly

bounded by orthodoxies that can be deconstructed through textual analysis. A textual analysis allows for interpretation of the relationships between the researcher, the case study, and the various symbols of the landscape (Cosgrove and Demosh 1993).

The most obvert cultural landscape of Zion Church is the one that takes place every Sunday as members set up the sanctuary and go through the rituals of worship. The worship service itself builds cultural landscapes as the musicians create the physical environment each week when they set up and take down the music equipment. Pastor Gui has the people sitting in the pews engage with each other by clapping, dancing, and repeating Scripture to their neighbors, which forces people to act out the landscape. Singing the same hymns promotes a community identity of followers of Christ walking down the path of righteousness. The members of Zion Church use food, language, clothes, and other symbols to create a unique cultural and religious identity in Milwaukee that reflects them, not the conceptions of cultural outsiders that are often based on visual racial characteristics, not socio-cultural ones (Anderson 1987; Pulido 2000; Pulido 2002; Kwakye-Nuako 2006; Okome 2006; Owusu 2006; Slocum 2008; Abdullah 2009). Establishing their own landscapes allows the Congolese at Zion Church to more comfortably act out their beliefs as they define their own landscape in Milwaukee (Nagel 2002; Kong 2010). For the Congolese at Zion Church, the communal act of marriage acts as one of the most salient cultural landscapes and markers of identity.

Congolese marriage is a four-fold process that involves everyone at Zion Church and prompts multiple scaled unions. A Congolese couple at Zion Church goes through an engagement ceremony, a traditional ceremony that includes the groom's family giving a dowry to the bride's, the religious ceremony, and lastly a civil ceremony. At each



juncture, Pastor Gui and other members of Zion Church are there to ensure that tradition is followed. Adherence to traditional marriage processes defines the community and sets them apart from the American mainstream and other Congolese outside of Zion Church. Weddings bring the Congolese together as each person in the community plays a role. They symbolize the couple, their families and communities, and increasingly, their countries. The planning that goes into American weddings focuses on the couple, perhaps their families, but rarely the totality of their communities and countries. As with other cultural landscapes at Zion Church, weddings solidify the transnational cultural community.

The theme of transnationalism runs throughout this analysis as the lives of Congolese people in Milwaukee are shaped by their connections to the DRC: Solange and Aristide carried their romantic relationship from Kinshasa to Milwaukee; Jules provided the contacts and early support to bring Jonas to Milwaukee — and if an opportunity arises to do the same for another person Jonas would willingly assist; without connections of his own, Alain depended on the scaled networks that Pastor Gui is resolutely building. Each of these examples stress the sense of responsibility and commitment to building a strong cultural landscape in Milwaukee that is the foundation of the Congolese at Zion Church.

When groups engage in the community building practices like these, they set boundaries around themselves that are designed to create cohesion (Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). When such boundaries are established, individuals who act in ways viewed as transgressive by community leaders may be relegated to the margins of the community or even forced outside it all together. While immigrants are

frequently viewed as the Other in American life, cultural communities like the one at Zion Church may in turn do their own version of Othering when people do not follow their established practices. In an unfortunate reality of community building such as that occurring at Zion Church, the ties that bind are also the ones that exclude (Brace et al. 2006; Trudeau 2006; Rapoport 2011). The majority of the voices heard in this thesis are from people acting within the Zion Church community as it is Milwaukee's Congolese majority. There are, however, other Congolese in Milwaukee who do not worship at Zion Church because they do not wish to live within the cultural boundaries it prescribes.

#### *The Future for the Congolese and Zion Church*

The next step then, is to look to the future of Congolese migration to Milwaukee and ask what its impact could or will be. Already the dense transnational networks are respatializing the distance between Milwaukee and the DRC. As more people arrive through the DVL and continued domestic instability leads to an influx of refugees to Milwaukee, the networks will continue to expand. New people will add to the narratives at Zion Church and ideally create a rich Congolese identity and presence in Milwaukee. For people worshipping at Zion Church, as their leader, Pastor Gui is clear that he values maintaining a distinct Congolese or African culture in the United States:

If we become American, then we don't have nothing to give to America. If we stay as African, we've got something that people can learn from us and we can learn from America.

By increasing the connections between the DRC and Milwaukee, by building and keeping cultural traditions alive through strong cultural landscapes, Pastor Gui sees his community positively contributing to the United States. This contribution though, hinges on their ability to continue to build cohesive landscapes and group identity in Milwaukee that are isolated yet still interact with local communities as Zion Church's current

connections with the LCMS and Pastor Gui's contacts with area manufacturers underscore. Above all though, the continued educational, social, and economic successes of the members of Zion Church emphasize the inroads that the Congolese are making as they begin to leave lasting marks on Milwaukee.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Sample Interview Questions**

1. Where were you born?
2. Tell me about your family.
3. Tell me about your childhood.
4. What languages do you speak?
5. What was school like in the DRC?
6. Tell me about your life in the DRC prior to immigration.
7. Why did you leave the DRC?
8. What type of visa did you use?
9. Why did you come to Milwaukee?
10. Where do you work?
11. How did you find this job?
12. Do you go to school in Milwaukee?
13. What are the biggest obstacles you face in Milwaukee?
14. How have you overcome these obstacles?
15. What do you like about Milwaukee?
16. What do you do for fun in Milwaukee?
17. What don't you like about Milwaukee?
18. What traditions or values from the DRC that you want to keep in Milwaukee?

## APPENDIX B

### Demographic Survey

*Please answer the questions to the best of your abilities.*

1) What is your age?

18-25   26-30   31-35   36-39   40-45   46-49   50-55   54-59   60-65   66+

2) Gender:   Male      Female

3) Where were you born?

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4) What languages do you speak?

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5) What is the highest level of education you completed in the Congo?

a) Elementary school	b) High school	c) University or vocational/technical	d) Post-graduate
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6) What was your occupation in Congo?

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7) How did you enter the US? Please circle one answer.

a) Diversity Visa Lottery	b) refugee	c) Family reunification visa	d) Student visa	e) Other (please specify)
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8) What year did you arrive in Milwaukee?

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9) Why did you choose to come to Milwaukee?

a) Family and/or friends already here	b) Was chosen for me (refugee)	c) Through connections with Pastor Gui	d) Other (please specify)
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10) What is your current occupation in Milwaukee?

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11) What is your place of employment's address?

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12) How many people live in your household?

1    2-4    5-7    8+

13) What is your average annual income?

a) less than \$10,000	b) \$10,001-20,000	c) \$20,001-30,000	d) \$30,001-40,000	e) \$40,001-50,000	f) More than \$50,001
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14) What streets do you live on in Milwaukee? *For example: Humboldt Ave. & Center St.*

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