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URBAN SOCIAL LANDSCAPES AND URBAN PLACES: PROCESSES OF MAKING AND INFORMING MARONITE IDENTITY IN BEIRUT

by

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Bachelor of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2015

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in
Geography
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Carolina
2018

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents who left everything behind in Lebanon to give me and my sister a better life here in the United States of America. I will never express enough gratitude for everything they have done for me and my sister. I can’t even begin to imagine selling my house and business and going across the planet to a place where I don’t even speak the language. To my parents: You are my heroes and I hope to be half the person you are by the time I am your age.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge Dr. Amy Mills who guided me through writing my first thesis. She has seen me cry, she has seen me laugh, and she has told me countless times to call her Amy, but I can never get myself to not call her Dr. Mills and for her I am forever grateful. I also want to thank Dr. Caroline Nagel who in my opinion is the most intimidating person on my committee; most times I was more afraid of disappointing her and Dr. Mills than I was of not passing my thesis defense. Finally, of my committee, I want to acknowledge Dr. Hamid Khan whose office I could just go to and we would sit and discuss Middle-Eastern politics and what I would do after I graduate. Dr. Khan kept me straight where Muslim information and history was concerned. Dr. Khan is one of the most complete scholars on Islam I have ever known; and he is someone I aspire to emulate after I complete my studies. Last, but not least, I want to give a big thanks to my MEHOGGS. Holly, Angie, Ben, and Sam, thank you for reviewing my thesis and catching my typos. This group of Middle-East focused graduate students started in the dungeons of Callcott, in the map room, and we slowly moved to above-ground offices with windows. I probably still can’t tell you exactly what MEHOGSS stands for; it’s probably Middle-Eastern Human Geography Graduate Student Syndicate and the o was just added to iterate the Arabic dammah and give the O sound.
ABSTRACT

This research looks at the Maronites of Beirut and examines, from their perspective, the role of belonging, imagined geographies, and memories of place in the processes of making and informing Maronite identity in Beirut after the civil war of 1975. The civil war of 1975 allows me to examine the city’s change in demographics in relation to the Green Line that divided the city between a Muslim West Beirut, and a Christian Eastern Beirut during the civil war. The thesis approaches Beirut’s homogenous neighborhoods, a result of the city’s cantonization during the civil war, as problematic for the future of the country. The first major contribution of this research is an illustration of the city from a Maronite perspective; I offer a pre-1975 Beirut and its neighborhoods compared with a post-civil war Beirut. The second chapter contributing to the body of research is a chapter that examines one specific neighborhood of the city and its major role in the processes of identity making for Maronites in Beirut. I identify consociational democracy as an institutionalized divide in the country that prevents the different ethno-religious groups from effectively communicating; in turn, this divide, illustrated by the city’s homogenous neighborhoods, reinforces the misconceptions and exclusive imagined geographies fostered within. In my research, I interviewed 24 Maronites including those with lived experiences in the city before the civil war, and a younger generation who do not remember the civil war; I compare and contrast their experience to propose a way forward.
PREFACE

I want to preface my thesis by explaining the reason behind my use of the word ethno-religious group. I designate the different confessional groups as ethno-religious groups because my Maronite participants viewed them as such. In the opinion of the majority of the Maronites I interviewed, Shi’ite Muslims were viewed as ethnically and religiously different than Sunni Muslims. Maronites also view the Druze community as ethnically and religiously different than the Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims. Finally, Maronites view themselves as ethnically and religiously different than the Muslims and the Druze of Lebanon. My participants looked at every confessional community in Lebanon as ethnically and religiously unique and different than the rest. For that reason, I use the term ethno-religious to identify the different communities throughout the thesis.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of ethno-religious segregation,¹ in an intended pluralistic urban society, is integral to understanding the role of urban social landscape processes informing Maronite identity both before, and after, the civil war of 1975. The Maronite narrative, specifically, is important because of their political and minority status within Lebanon’s consociational democracy. Not only is this Christian community an ethno-religious minority within the borders of their own country, but they are an ethno-religious minority in the broader context of the region as well—a Middle-East dominated by a majority Sunni Arab population. This thesis will examine Maronite identity and how Maronites see themselves in an urban context of increasing social and demographic change and ongoing recovery of creating a stable and fair representative parliamentary system. In the process, the thesis will explain how Maronites create a sense of belonging and safety among themselves.

Understanding the processes of identity making for Maronites is of particular importance due to Lebanon’s consociational democracy: per Lebanon’s constitution and the Ta’if Accord,² the president of the Lebanese Republic must be a Maronite. Not any Christian denomination, but a Maronite specifically. In contrast, the prime minister must

¹ See Figure 1.1 and 1.2.
² The Ta’if Accord, or Ta’if Agreement, could either be named for Ta’if, the Saudi Arabian city where the Lebanese civil war resolution was signed, or Ta’if for the word sectarian in Arabic.
be a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shi’a Muslim. Therefore, an argument can be made that the government and the constitution – a manifestation of consociational democracy whereby political elites are charged with keeping the peace – work in a way to institutionalize this divide; never allowing for matters to simply be Lebanese, but rather always categorizing Lebanese matters into Maronite, Sunni, and Shi’a. This constitutional structure is a legacy of European colonization.³

Because Maronites are guaranteed the executive branch, military leadership, and a quarter of the Lebanese parliament, ipso facto, they are a dominant minority (Wirth, 1941): a minority ethno-religious group that holds a disproportionate amount of power. While Maronites will always occupy the executive branch, top military brass, chair of the central bank, and a quarter of parliament, due to their rights under the Lebanese constitution (as amended by the Ta’if Accord), every other ethno-religious group in Lebanon is left to contend for three-quarters of parliament. Although Sunnis are guaranteed the prime minister seat, and Shi’as the speakership of parliament, the Christians are guaranteed 64 of the 128 parliamentary seats. Furthermore, of the 64 seats guaranteed to the Christian ethno-religious groups, 34 are reserved to representatives from the Maronite faith; meaning that while 11 ethno-religious groups are guaranteed representation in parliament, the Maronites alone would roughly make-up a quarter of parliament’s seats; a right guaranteed to them by the constitution.

³ The Lebanese Constitution of today, although amended, was written and established during the French Mandate’s first 5 years – in 1926 A.D. During this period, the Lebanese flag was the French flag with a cedar in the middle. The provisions of the Ta’if Accords that decree a certain ethno-religious identity to the top three government posts had originally been dubbed the National Pact – they were verbally agreed upon and adhered to; the Ta’if Accord, however, made them official and set them in writing.
The decision to reach these numbers is based on the 1960s-demographic study that found Lebanon to be roughly split 50-50; 50% Christian, and 50% Muslim. These numbers have changed since then, but there is hesitation in conducting another official demographic census because the constitution mandates parliamentary representation to mirror the population’s demography. As such, the reluctance to conduct an official census stems from the fact that a change in the assignment of parliamentary seats would cause a shift in the balance of parliamentary seats: most notably the fact that the Maronite population has decreased, which means that although they are still guaranteed the presidency, the Maronites would see a decrease in their parliamentary seats.

The decrease in parliamentary seats is cited by my participants as the primary reason for their opposition to conduct another official demographic census. All of the Maronites I spoke with officially for the purpose of this research believed that the Maronite population has been on a decline since a lot of Maronite youth and families are applying for immigration to Europe, the Americas, and Australia. The majority of my Maronite participants believe that Shi’a Muslims have the highest birthrates in the country and that is the reasoning they employ when they claim that Shi’a Muslims would be the ethno-religious group to gain the most seats in the Lebanese parliament. An official census that reflects a decrease in Christian population would ultimately lead to a decrease in their seats and conversely an increase for Sunnis and Shi’as. A decrease in seats, for Maronites, means decreased representation and less security. This is an important issue for many of my participants who feel that even with a 25%
parliamentary representation, the state is barely able to hold Hezbollah, a Shi’a political party and militant group, in check;\(^4\) they fear what would happen if the Christian-allotted parliamentary seats decreased and Shi’a-allotted parliamentary seats increased.

Both the Lebanese Information Center (2012) and the U.S. department of State (2013) categorize the Lebanese population as such:

**Table 1.1: Contemporary Lebanese Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethno-Religious Group:</th>
<th>Percentage:</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shi’a Muslims</td>
<td>27 – 29 %</td>
<td>Including Isma’ili and Alawite Shi’a Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Muslims</td>
<td>27 – 29 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>5 – 5.6 %</td>
<td>Considered by some an off-shoot of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maronite Catholics</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>8 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melkite Catholic</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>1 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian Minorities</td>
<td>2 – 6 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-Christian Minorities</td>
<td>&gt;1 %</td>
<td>Including: Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons, and Bahais</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Lebanese Information Center (2012), a non-profit research organization based in Virginia, Muslims make up 59% of Lebanon’s population while Christians make up 40%. Similarly, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2013) in their 2012 report found that 54% of the Lebanese

---

\(^4\) The United States classifies Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. The European Union views Hezbollah as having two separate entities: the political party, and the militant wing. The militant wing has been deemed a terrorist organization by the E.U. as well. For the majority of Maronites, anti-Hezbollah Maronites especially, Hezbollah is one entity: a Shi’a political party and militant wing where one cannot operate without the other.
population is Muslim, 40.5% is Christian, and 5.6% of the population is Druze. The difference between the two reports is that the Lebanese Information Center categorized the Druze as Muslims in their 2013 census. The U.S. Department of State, however, categorized the Druze separately since they do not consider themselves to be Muslims.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, aims at understanding the processes behind the Maronite identity in a contemporary context where demographic and political shifts place an increasing pressure on them as a dominant minority as they deal with the different potential scenarios of governance and security in Lebanon. I focus on Beirut because it is one of the few cities where the ethno-religious make-up is heterogeneous – therefore it allows me to examine Maronites’ social encounters with the other. For that reason, I research the critical role of the city in processes of identity making for Maronites. I acknowledge that although there is not one singular identity that defines the Maronite ethno-religious community, there needs to be a study aimed at examining what defines the community. It is my belief that the Ta’if Accord is detrimental to the long-term well-being of Lebanon because the consociational democracy is simply imposing an artificial peace without working towards any post-conflict reconciliation between the communities. Beirut’s segregated neighborhoods are evidence that the Ta’if Accord did not resolve the civil-war societal divide. Post-conflict resolution requires understanding how people think of themselves in relation to others in everyday life, in daily environments. The institutionalized divide imposed by the Ta’if Accord and the segregated neighborhoods do not allow for these encounters.
Figure 1.1: This map illustrated here by Sergey Kondrashov (2013) demonstrates the ethno-religious distribution of Lebanon’s population based on the Lebanese Information Center’s 2013 demographics study. As evidenced by this map, ethno-religious segregation is not unique to Beirut’s neighborhoods. It is a well-known phenomenon in the country that different towns and cities have different ethno-religious identities. These identities are usually attributed based on the most dominant ethno-religious group in the area.
Understanding the machinations behind various identities is thus essential for a peaceful and democratic future for Lebanon. For true reconciliation to happen between the communities, and not between the political elites (the purpose of a consociational democracy), the various ethno-religious communities need to understand each other and listen to each other’s concerns in terms that go beyond a strictly sectarian perspective. As the Maronite youth demonstrate throughout the interview process, in order for the Lebanese society to move past the sectarian politics imposed by the Ta’if Accords, there needs to be a path towards a political system that does not involve ethno-religious identity with politics.

The beginning of my thesis introduces the reader to my conceptual framework and the Beirut-related scholarly work done before me. Then, I present my methodology and explain the field work I conducted during my time in Beirut. The next chapter of my thesis examines the history of Maronites in order to give context to their contemporary situation. My research comprises the two chapters after that – chapters 5 and 6. The first examines processes that inform Maronite identity in Beirut, a capital city whose neighborhoods are ethno-religiously segregated. The second chapter focuses on the Achrafieh neighborhood and the reason behind its unanimous mention as the place that most informs Maronite identity in Beirut, and explores how the urban space in Beirut, and Maronite social practice and memory in this place.

Understanding Maronite identity after the 1975-1990 civil war is important because the relatively recent sectarian memories and counter-memories of the city that make Beirut a place stem from the 15-year conflict. I chose Beirut as the locale and
focus of my research because of its urban landscape – its fragmented neighborhoods and contested frontiers were created as separate ethno-religious groups segregated themselves within homologous environment bubbles: the Achrafieh district is a prime example. The urban ethno-religious segregation of neighborhoods in Beirut is a visible reminder that consociational democracy has utterly failed to produce post-conflict reconciliation.

Figure 1.2: This map depicts modern-day Beirut from a Maronite perspective. I gathered the data for this map from interviews conducted with my participants. The map also indicates landmarks and their religious affiliation. The landmarks are not just religious landmarks, as some may be schools, or even hospitals. The different markers are meant to point to different landmarks and the religious affiliation attributed to them around the city. The green line running through the middle is the contemporary highway that was once the infamous Green Line from the civil war; to this day, it still splits the city between what is perceived as a Muslim West Beirut and a Christian East Beirut.
Indeed, I argue that urban ethno-religious segregation in Beirut works to reinforce the institutionalized sectarian divide. For true reconciliation to happen, there needs to be an understanding of the different perspectives on what transpired during the civil war; this cannot happen while Beirut’s urban space remains segregated. There needs to be an acceptance of ‘the other’ and a willingness to co-exist with them because people rarely encounter “others” in daily life. As the 2018 parliamentary elections and Beirut’s neighborhoods demonstrate, there is no trust between different ethno-religious groups, especially between the Shi’a and Maronite communities. By enforcing sectarian parity in government, the Ta’if Accord only serves to keep the Lebanese society divided. A Sunni politician is only concerned with the Sunni constituents who will elect him / her; similarly, a Christian politician is only concerned with those who will elect him / her; and a Shi’a politician is only concerned with those who will elect him / her. What is not happening, however, is a Sunni politician being concerned with the Christians, and the Shi’a, and the Druze: they are not concerned with the ‘other.’ The political divide that began in the 1975 civil war left cultural traces in modern-day urban space in that people of Beirut attribute an ethno-religious identity to various neighborhoods. My thesis, therefore, aims to examine how Maronites construct identities in Beirut: understanding different identities and the processes that inform them can help break down boundaries and create understanding of the other.
CHAPTER 2  
HISTORICAL CONTEXT  
Modern-day Lebanon’s political government is a consociational democracy: a type of post-conflict democracy that aims to keep the peace between major ethnic or religious groups. As defined by Salamey and Tabar (2008), it is a type of government run by an elite cartel “designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy” (p. 239). Kamal Salibi (1988) similarly describes Lebanon as a dysfunctional state noting that it is a country only in name but not in reality, in the sense that there is not one national identity but rather many different conflicting identities rooted in their respective ethno-religious histories and memories. In multiple interviews with Maronites, Lebanon was described to me as a lawless jungle, and not a sovereign state – the majority of this sentiment stems from the belief that Hezbollah is stronger than the central government and that security forces cannot act without Hezbollah’s consent. Marwan, a civil-war veteran says: “What modern-day country are you going to build when you have a militia on your land, stronger than your military, openly conducting military parades in the streets of Beirut?” This chapter situates the problem in historical context by linking the various threads of “Lebanese” and “Maronite” history to past political situations and their interpretations.  
In his book House of Many Mansions, Salibi (1988) argues that Christians broadly identify themselves in terms of Lebanese particularism and the Muslims with pan-
Arabism (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). On the one hand, the Christians’ Lebanese particularism is an attempt at creating a unique Lebanese identity that is separate from the majority Sunni Arab majority. On the other hand, the Muslims’ pan-Arabism has its loyalties lying outside the borders of Lebanon, aimed towards the broader identity of the Middle Eastern region, and Arab countries as a whole. In effect, Salibi (1988) is describing two incompatible ideologies. The differences among the different ‘mansions’ have come to be reflected geographically – notably in Beirut’s urban space. The book’s name also serves as a satire of the small country and the big egos of its many prominent political households.\(^5\) Furthermore, the effective cantonization of Beirut during the 1975 civil war, and the massive population shifts between Christian and Muslim areas, further hardened the lines of division and exacerbated sectarian tension (Fawaz, 1984; Salibi, 1988; Kaufman, 2004).

Lebanon’s Christian and Muslim communities have long been in fundamental disagreement over the country’s history and identity. For a majority of Lebanon’s Christians, a majority of whom are Maronites, Lebanon’s history is one of Phoenician heritage, devoid of any relation with an Arab history (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Kaufman, 2004). For Muslims, however, there is an insistence that whatever history Lebanon can claim for itself, it must be one that falls within a broader Arab history (Salibi, 1988; Salamey and Tabar, 2008). Complicating matters further is the disagreement and debate, in Lebanon, over the fundamental historical association

\(^5\) The heads of said households are referred to as Zou’amah (Arabic: زعماء; translation: Leader). They are seen as leaders in their respective ethno-religious community. Therefore, when they speak, they are not simply seen as speaking for their party, but also speaking for the constituents in their district who share the same ethno-religious identity.
between Arabism and Islam: the idea is that one does not necessarily mean the other; a fact that is completely ignored by my Maronite participants who insist that Sunni Islam is synonymous to Arab heritage – for them, one cannot exist without the other. The underlying problem inherent in Lebanese society, therefore, is that it is rather difficult to separate political affiliation from religious, and cultural identity. Among Maronite residents of Beirut, it is assumed, that a Shi’a invariably votes for Hezbollah or Amal and resides in either al-Dahiya or al-Jnoub (Arabic: الجنوب; translation: The South (of Lebanon)). Similarly, if a person was to tell another they were from Achrafieh, the instantaneous presumption would be that they are Christian – either Maronite, or Greek Orthodox⁶ – and that they are part of the Lebanese Forces, or Kataeb’s political constituency.⁷ With these examples in mind, many scholars argue that a good starting point is to acknowledge that to create a country is one thing, but to create a nationality is an entirely different matter (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004).

As such, it is difficult to create a singular unifying Lebanese identity when the ethno-religious peoples that makeup the state view themselves as incompatible with one another. Consociational democracy in Lebanon has ethno-religious identities

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⁶ Locally referred to as Roum.

⁷ Much of this, perhaps, can be traced back to the 1975 civil war where a person’s religious identity was printed on their I.D. card as a formal way of identification. Many checkpoints administrating the entry and exit to certain neighborhoods would give or deny access simply based on the person’s religion. Similarly, there are many stories of kidnappings happening at these checkpoints also due to the religious identity. My father and friends who were in the car with him were kidnapped during the civil war after passing a Palestinian checkpoint. They were asked to get out of the car after presenting their identification cards and the Palestinian militiaman noticed that they were Maronites.
ingrained in everyday government politics, a problem further exacerbated by the fact that different ethno-religious communities live in segregated neighborhoods separated from the ‘other.’ For that reason, it is imperative to examine historical events between the ethno-religious communities to better comprehend the modern-day fabric of Lebanon. In order to better understand the contemporary Lebanese situation, this chapter provides a historical narrative that examines the histories of different confessional identities and their encounters with the Maronites. I also explain the historical geographies of the Maronites for the purpose of understanding historical events and their role in influencing contemporary Maronite identity.

2.1 Phoenicianism as a form of Maronite Nationalism

France’s colonial legacy in Lebanon created a domestic rift in the country. Through its “missionaries, geographers, scholars, and politicians,” (Kaufman, 2004, p. 15) France emphasized the distinct features of the Christians in Lebanon; primarily the Catholic Maronites – features that distinguished them from their other ethno-religious contemporaries. This exclusive self-perception that France highlighted within the Christian community brought the Maronite elites and the Maronite Church together. The bourgeois and the conservative respectively, as Kaufman (2004) calls them, coordinated together for the purpose of creating a nationalist sentiment and a nationalist identity (Jabbra and Jabbra, 1994; Phares, 1995; Kaufman, 2004; Nisan, 2004).
This cooperation kindled a Phoenician identity and a sense of Christian nationalism disparate from the Arab and Muslim communities in the region (Phares, 1995; Kaufman, 2004; Nisan, 2004). For Maronites, this glorious non-Arab past is that of the Phoenicians and of being the first to write with an alphabet, the first to trade, and the first to set sail; some even claim that there are Phoenician ruins in the Amazon forest in Brazil and the tropical rainforests of South America. In the end, the Christians’ conviction to advocate for a Greater Lebanon split from the Arab world, and their divergence from their Arab Muslim counterparts, further served the Sunni and Shi’a resentment of their Christian country kin who had turned towards Europe and the West.\textsuperscript{8} Much like the ethno-religious minorities of Turkey, the Christians of Lebanon – and the privileged Catholic Maronites of the time – became a local symbol for European economic and political dominance (Mills, 2010).

Lebanese poet, and philosopher Said Akl is famously quoted as having said: “I would cut off my right hand, and not associate myself with an Arab.” Many prominent Maronites, like Said Akl, emphasize this non-Arab heritage, including Maronite political and ideological leaders like Charles Korm, Michel Chiha, Charles Malik, Camille Chamoun and Bashir Gemayel – individuals whose stories and nationalist ideals are very much alive in the modern-day Maronite and Christian communities. Some of these leaders even professed anti-Arab and anti-Muslim views. Said Akl even went so far as to develop

\textsuperscript{8} In advocating for an independent Lebanese state that Maronites can call home, they insisted on including coastal cities; this ensured that their majority would always be tenuous since many of the coastal cities, including Beirut, had sizable Sunni populations (Volk 2009). Furthermore, Volk (2009) explains that the annexed areas outside Mount Lebanon and Beirut had closer ties to Syria and Palestine than they did the Maronites and Druze.
a Latin alphabet to be used as a replacement for the Arabic script;\(^9\) an alphabet that would further engrave a Phoenician identity separate and opposed to an Arab identity (Jabbra and Jabbra, 1994). Said Akl, amongst others, argue that the Lebanese dialect as spoken by Maronites is distinct enough that it should be considered its own language and not a dialect of Arabic.

Phoenicianism, therefore, was born out of an attempt by a few political, and intellectual elites, to serve as a legitimate past, nostalgic to a great history and past glories; all of these ideas which could unify the Maronites into one nation, and further move away from an Arab-identity (Phares, 1995; Kaufman, 2014). In his book on the Phoenician nationalism championed by Maronites, Kaufman (2014) invokes Ernest Renan (1882),\(^{10}\) and argues that although language, religion, customs, and geography are important in formulating a nation’s identity, the most important by far is that of a national consciousness. This national consciousness described by Renan, Kaufman (2014) argues, is in effect the Phoenician consciousness for Maronites.

The Phoenician consciousness allows for the sharing of a past – a Phoenician past – through nostalgia. It also allows for the sharing of a ‘glorious past’ as Renan (1882) calls it. In general, in Kaufman’s (2014) terms and as it relates to Maronites, Phoenicianism facilitated the formation and maintenance of a nationalist identity.

\(^9\) Similar to Turkey’s alphabet reform as part of Ataturk’s modernization / national identity process.
\(^{10}\) Renan is a French philosopher and historian. His 1882 book titled “What is a nation?” generally argues that nationalism and national identity are equally the product of what people forget, or ‘forgetting’ as well as what people remember, or their ‘memories’ and ‘nostalgia.’ Renan finally concludes that nationalism and national identity is constantly being produced because the process of forgetting and remembering is never-ending.
Phoenicianism granted the Maronites a sense of belonging by allowing them to imagine themselves as part of a historical collective rooted in a common and imposing past, and heading towards a shared and auspicious future. Maronites may disagree over politics, or social customs and norms, but most will come together in agreement when it comes to their Phoenician non-Arab heritage.

By World War I, Phoenicianism, as an idea, had been two decades old and it developed as a challenge to pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism. Under the French Mandate, however, Phoenicianism began to be associated solely with the Maronites in Syria and Lebanon. By September of 1920, the entire movement behind *Dawlat Loubnan al-Kabir* (Arabic: دولة لبنان الكبير; translation: Greater Lebanon), essentially carving modern-day Lebanon out of modern-day Syria, had been labeled Phoenician (Kaufman, 2014). So, although a Lebanese state had been declared at the time, there still was not one Lebanese nation to have emerged because it was only the Christians who adhered to this vision and not the entire Lebanese society (Kaufman, 2014). Greater Lebanon had a contiguous territorial boundary, but inside, there was no collectivist and unifying identity, or history, for all of its inhabitants – a problem that continues today. Although Phoenicianism served as the national conscience for Christians and Maronites in Mount Lebanon and Beirut, it only served to provoke the Muslim population – a population that was coerced into this newly founded political entity (Kaufman, 2014). The Muslim population, at the time, perceived the idea of a sovereign Greater Lebanon to be a pro-Western, anti-Arab project because it was backed by a Christian France and Europe.
The Muslim population, at the time largely led by the upper-class Sunnis of Beirut, later reluctantly accepted the reality but did not protest (Kaufman, 2014). While Maronites and other Christians saw Phoenicianism as the history of the people and the land, most non-Christians saw Phoenicianism as the history of the land only (Kaufman, 2014). Per Kaufman (2014), two different Phoenicianism ideologies had emerged by the 1950s, and they existed concurrently side-by-side. On one side, intellectuals and non-Christians from Beirut viewed Phoenicians as the “forefathers of [a] cosmopolitan, liberal, and open-minded Lebanon” (Kaufman, 2014, p. 245). On the other side, Phoenicianism was a far more nuanced ideology advocated by Christian-Lebanese nationalists. This side continued to view Lebanon as a Christian, non-Arab, and non-Muslim nation in the larger Arab and Muslim Middle-Eastern region; a neo-Phoenicia as Kaufman calls it (Kaufman, 2014).

The ancient Phoenician people have always existed in the history books, and they were there when Maronite and Christian Lebanese needed a basic bedrock for their national movement. For the Maronites, and Christians of the Levant, Phoenicians were much like the Gauls for France, the Saxons for England, the Pharaohs for Egypt, the Babylonians for Iraqis, and Assyria for the Assyrians (Kaufman, 2014). So, although the French played a role in the spread and dissemination of Phoenicianism in Lebanon, the tendency to fall back on this ideology was always there to be picked up by a Lebanese national movement – only in this case, and as it relates to Maronites, the Lebanese nationalist movement was picked up by Christian nationalists who wanted to distance themselves from the surrounding Muslim Arab world.
2.2 Early Maronite History

Maronites are an ethno-religious community that has existed since the Maronite church was founded in the year 680 A.D. as the Syrian Monothelite Communion (Salibi, 1988). One Muslim Scholar however, the historian Al-Masudi, disputes that the church was founded in 680 A.D.; rather, Al-Masudi writes that the Maronite church was founded a century earlier in the Levant’s Orontes Valley in the year 582 A.D (Salibi, 1988). The significance of this claim is two-fold. First, it disputes the common-held notion that the Monothelite Doctrine – the belief that Jesus Christ was of two natures (both divine and human) but one will and energy – was devised by the emperor Heraclius. If the Maronite Church was indeed founded on the Monothelite Doctrine, and was formally established in 582 A.D., it would mean that the Maronites’ Monothelite Doctrine pre-dated emperor Heraclius’ theological scholarship by almost 30 years – and since this church, the Maronite Church, was founded on that principle 28 years before him, it would then become illogical to assume that Emperor Heraclius was the one who established the Monothelite Doctrine. Al-Masudi’s account, therefore, indicates that the Maronite church pre-dated emperor Heraclius, and so did the Monothelite Doctrine.¹¹

Patriarch Douaihy, the 57th Patriarch to lead the Maronite Church between 1670 and 1704 A.D., and one of its leading historians, writes that although the Maronite Church was officially recognized in 680 A.D., it had existed long before then (Salibi,

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¹¹ The significance of the Monothelite Doctrine comes into play later when a split occurs between the Christian communities in the Middle-East based on the differing jurisprudence. Monothelite Christians were decreed as heretics and subsequently persecuted for believing Jesus was of a divine mind and soul, and not human.
Salibi argues on behalf of al-Masudi stating that in the writings of the Sixth Ecumenical Council – the council that declared Monothelitism a heresy – there is evidence that the originator of this doctrine was Theodore of Pharan, from Arabia (Salibi, 1988). Arabica Heretica, as the land came to be called, in reference to the heterodox interpretations of Christianity that came out of the area.

The second importance of al-Masudi and his contemporary Islamic theology scholar Abd al-Jabbar’s writings, is the indication that the Maronite Church is older than Islam (Salibi, 1988). If both al-Masudi and al-Jabbar are correct in placing the formal establishment of the Maronite Church and the Maronites in Syria by the year 582 rather than 680, it would mean that the Maronite Church was formally established almost 30 years before Prophet Muhammad began to preach Islam in Mecca circa 610 A.D. Furthermore, al-Masudi and al-Jabbar’s writings place the Maronites, and not just the Maronite Church, in the Levant 30 years prior to the rise of Prophet Muhammad and his preaching in the Arab Peninsula; meaning that Maronites and their Lebanese Particularism indeed existed without relation to Arab history. Salibi (1988), however, writes that Arab tribal movement between the Levant and Arabia was not uncommon, noting DNA research that some modern-day Lebanese can trace their ancestry back to modern-day Yemen and Saudi-Arabia. Since the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century A.D., the tribal politics of the Arabian Peninsula had frequently triggered off back and forth migrations between the Levant and the Arab Peninsula (Salibi, 1988).

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\textsuperscript{12} This is also an argument that many Maronites make: The church may have been recognized in the late sixth century or early seventh century, but the followers of Mar Maroun predated the church.
With the reign of Byzantine Emperor Justinian the First (527 – 565 A.D.), the chiefs of the Christian Arab tribes (of which Maronites were included) had entered the service of the Byzantine Empire. They were officially recognized as state officials, and Arab kings over the Levantine territories they controlled around Damascus, including the Valley of Orontes (Salibi, 1988). The Valley of Orontes, occupied by the Maronites, is described by Salibi (1988) as: The hill country on either side of Mount Lebanon all the way north to Aleppo. The significance of the Valley of Orontes is the fact that it was centered around the Levant’s chief river – the Orontes River. In Arabic, and in modern-day Lebanon, the Orontes River is known as *Nahr el-Assi* (Arabic: نهر العاصي). *Nahr* being the Arabic word for river, and *Assi* meaning rebel in Arabic. The significance of the name, is that this river – unlike most rivers around the world – flows from the south to the north. More importantly, however, is that Maronites came to control a major water source of the Levant – the area where they settled. In effect, a minority homogeneous group came to control a precious water source in an ethno-religiously heterogeneous region that severely lacks a potable water supply.

### 2.3 Maronites and the Crusades, a history from the 11th – 14th century

Many scholars regard the 11th century and the Crusades’ excursion as the earliest period to which one can trace the lines of disagreement between the different ethno-religious communities (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). The pertinence of this fact is that the different ethno-religious groups of today have 10 centuries of history between themselves; they had disagreements then, and they have
disagreements now. Although Maronites and Druze had existed before the 11th century, the 11th century marks the political emergence of Maronites and Druze – two major players in Mount Lebanon’s history. The emergence of the two ethno-religious communities leads to the political and economic emergence of Mount Lebanon itself – the precursor to the contemporary Lebanon which they share with the Sunni and Shi’a Muslim communities (Salibi, 1988).13

Although Maronites were predominantly located in the Orontes Valley, they soon became concentrated primarily in the Northern Lebanon region after leaving the Orontes Valley – which was their original homeland. The final exodus from the Orontes Valley to Northern Lebanon happened between the 10th and 11th century, marking perhaps the first major wave of Maronite migration and a change in modern-day Lebanon’s demography (Salibi, 1988). The reason for this early Maronite migration, is due in part to the Orontes Valley becoming a base for the Byzantine Empire and their Christian Syrian followers – two groups with whom the Maronites had a poor relationship. This poor relationship between the Maronites and the Byzantine and Syrian Christians, as well as the Muslims, stems from the accusations levied against the Maronites for being Monothelites – the belief that Jesus Christ’s body and soul were of

13 As demonstrated, and although Maronites and Druze lived in and around Modern-day Lebanese territory, it should be noted that their disagreement stemmed as a result of the creeping European power in the form of the Crusades; and later a disagreement between Maronites and Muslims as a result of the European powers’ meddling in the form of French colonialism.
one will; a notion decried as heresy by Byzantine Christians, Syrian Christians, and Muslims alike.\textsuperscript{14}

At the end of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, when the Crusaders arrived in modern-day Lebanon, most Maronites in Northern Mount Lebanon rallied around them; in fact, the pope and the European crusades were surprised to learn of the Maronites’ existence in the Levant (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). In the Maronites, however, the crusades found allies whom they perceived to be their civilized Christian brothers in the Middle East (Fawaz, 1984; Kaufman, 2004). The 11\textsuperscript{th} century, therefore, marks the early days when the Maronites began to build ties with the Catholic Church and the Christians of the West. A century later, in 1180 A.D., the Maronite Church officially entered communion with the Catholic Church of Rome – a religious communion that remains to the present day (Fawaz, 1984; Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004).\textsuperscript{15} It also marks the early divide between the Christians, among them the Maronites, and ‘the others;’ the divide between the civilized, and the non-civilized.\textsuperscript{16}

With the Maronites’ official communion with Rome and their alliance with Europe came troubles at home. 1180 A.D., therefore, is regarded as the point-in-time when the distrust between the Maronite community and the Druze, and Muslim

\textsuperscript{14} There is documented evidence, however, per Salibi (1988) and Phares (1995), in which Maronite religious scholars dispute this notion of Monothelitism dating back to the early 15\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{15} At the time of this writing, the Maronite Church has two cardinals representing it in the Vatican: Mar Bcharah Boutros al-Rai (the current Patriarch of the Maronite Church) and Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir (the former Patriarch of the Maronite Church).

\textsuperscript{16} Maronites view themselves as more civilized than Arabs whom they perceive to be more primitive. Due to their ability to articulate the French language and their close ties to the West, Maronites see themselves as more cultured and more open towards the world.
communities began to materialize (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). In the late 12th century, while the Maronites turned to France, and allied themselves with the Christians of Europe, their Druze and Muslim neighbors in the south of Mount Lebanon turned to Syrian Muslims and the Sunni Caliphate in Baghdad.\textsuperscript{17} As such, these events mark the significant role religious affiliation plays in cultural and political identity for Lebanon. Since the 12th century, political and economic ties were built almost exclusively based on ethno-religious identity.

Between the Maronite and Druze villages in modern-day Keserwan, however, existed a then-obscure community of Twelver-Shi’as that lived alongside Maronite Christians (Salibi, 1988; Kaufman, 2004).\textsuperscript{18} This Shi’a group also predominantly made-up the population of the Baalbek plains, the Bekaa alley, and the mountains south of Mount Lebanon. Keserwan, therefore, can be considered as the geographic location where this community’s modern-day conflict began to materialize with the Sunni Muslim population. During the period between 1291 A.D. and 1305 A.D., Mamluk Sunni armies launched three different military expeditions into Twelver-Shi’a villages in order to capture the strategic mountainous region of Keserwan (Salibi, 1988; Kaufman, 2004).

The third expedition, in 1305 A.D., was successful and allowed the Mamluks to relocate Sunni Muslims into Keserwan – settling in a region that overlooks Modern-day Beirut and the surrounding coastal areas of modern-day Lebanon; this action of

\textsuperscript{17} At the time, the third Islamic Caliphate, the Abbasid Caliphate was prominent.

\textsuperscript{18} This community would later gain power. Hezbollah and Amal – the two major Shi’a political parties in modern-day Lebanon are largely made up of a Twelver Shi’a constituency. Together, Hezbollah and Amal form one half of the March 8th coalition – controlling half of the Lebanese Parliament and holding the speakership at the time of this writing.
relocating Sunni Muslims would result in the displacement of Shi’a Muslims and Maronites who would be forced to migrate further south into modern-day southern Lebanon (Salibi, 1988; Kaufman, 2004). It should be noted that unlike the enmity between Beirut’s Shi’a and Maronites, the Maronite community and Shi’a community of southern Lebanon are much closer to each other; it is possible that this plight may have played a major role in bringing the two communities together.

2.4 19th Century Maronite History

European and Ottoman meddling maintained political and economic clout in the region until tensions erupted in the late 1800s. The 19th century, therefore, is most infamous locally for the 1860 Mount Lebanon civil war between the Christians – mostly Maronites – and the Druze. Majzarit al-Jabal (Arabic: مجزرة الجبل; translation: The Mountain Massacre), as it is called, forced an ethno-religious segregation on a Lebanese society that had previously thrived on everyday contact and inter-mingling (Fawaz, 1984; Makdisi, 2000). The violent conflict began in April of 1860 and ended in June of the same year with the Druze cleansing their towns of Christian inhabitants who migrated to Beirut and the coast (Fawaz, 1984; Makdisi, 2000). The result was pillaged villages with both Christian churches and Druze religious sanctuaries desecrated (Makdisi, 2000). The Druze’s perspective is that the Maronites provoked the conflict.

19 Perhaps this internal displacement plays a role in the close ties between Maronites and Shi’as in Southern Lebanon, ties that do not exist in other places – like the Maronites and Shi’as of Beirut. Maronites of Southern Lebanon are adamant supporters of Hezbollah – unlike many Christians and Maronites from other parts of Lebanon.

20 This event created the perception in the Maronite community that “You cannot trust a Druze.”
when on May 27th, a Maronite militia sent to collect silk harvest kept going until it reached the Druze’ Metn district. When the Maronites saw a garrison of Ottomans, they were alarmed and feared an incoming attack by the Ottomans and the Druze whom they perceived to be their allies (Fawaz, 1994). Maronites pre-emptively raided mixed villages on May 29th, and again on the 30th. The civil war broke out completely on May 30th of 1860 (Fawaz, 1994). This violent civil conflict, however brief, has had ever-lasting effects on the fabric of Lebanese society; moreover, the violent skirmish of 1860 had begun much earlier in Lebanon.

Usama Makdisi (2000), and others (Fawaz, 1984; Volk, 2010), trace the roots of the 1860 civil war in Mount Lebanon to when Ottoman rulers responded to European political pressures with a series of political reforms in the Empire. The Ottoman reforms, also known as Tanzimat, intended to make everyone equal under the law – regardless of religious affiliation (Makdisi, 2000). European powers, and France in particular, arranged for the Tanzimat reforms to mandate “interference on behalf of the ‘subjugated’ Christian population” (Makdisi, 2000, p. 196). This discourse of reform promoted a space whereby religion functioned as a forum for colonial encounter (Fawaz, 1984; Makdisi, 2000; Volk, 2010). This meeting between Lebanon’s Christians’ self-described ‘West,’ and their perennial adversary the ‘Islamic’ Ottoman empire further emphasized religion as a form of identity; this resulted in ethno-religious identity becoming the “only viable marker of political reform and the only authentic basis for political claims” (Makdisi, 2000, p. 2). So was born Lebanon’s ‘modern’ sectarian story, in the form of a consociational democracy, and with it the segregation of Lebanon that would inevitably
change the social demography of the country; suddenly every ethno-religious group was self-segregating: congregating around the ‘self’ away from ‘the other.’

As Makdisi (2000) argues in his book on Lebanon’s culture of sectarianism, the 19th century was the starting point where every ethno-religious community in Lebanon began to define and demarcate its own respective boundaries. At this point, ethno-religious identity – that may have started as early as the 11th century with the Crusades highlighting the Maronites’ Christian faith – had become the master status. It had also become the source and reason for drawing boundaries where they are. Contrary to many contemporary arguments, Makdisi (2000) points out that the Lebanese problem isn’t its tribal nature, nor is the sectarianism a “disease that prevents modernization” (p. 3); the violence of 1860, for Makdisi (2000), was not an explosion of ancient loyalties. The violence of 1860, however, indicated the failure of a unified nation and caused Lebanese demography – specifically Maronite demography – to change, it inevitably laid the foundations for a possible discourse of nationalist secularism.

It was not just the social fabric of Mount Lebanon that was affected by the events of 1860, however. As Leila Fawaz (1984) writes, the relationship between Beirut and Mount Lebanon changed and the effects on political life are still felt to this day. Although historically Jabal Loubnan (Arabic: جبل لبنان; translation: Mount Lebanon) had held sway over the coastal cities, Fawaz (1984) argues that the 19th century was the time when that role was reversed; Beirut began to hold economic and political clout over Jabal Loubnan (Fawaz, 1984; Volk 2010). Although Beirut undoubtedly prospered by its new status as the dominant partner, the unresolved tensions of Jabal Loubnan...
were transferred to the coast, a precarious situation that would undoubtedly pave the way for the city’s sectarian rivalries and tensions in the mid and late 20th century. For Mount Lebanon, however, the 1860’s series events resulted in the break-up of the feudal economy that was prevalent in Jabal Loubnan (Fawaz, 1984).21

Furthermore, the numerical and economic balance that existed between the Maronite and Druze communities now swung in favor of the Maronites who increasingly held more influence in Beirut than the Druze (Fawaz, 1984). Beirut, at the time, became the political sphere from which Maronites petitioned the Ottomans and lobbied the French (Fawaz, 1984; Volk 2010). Beginning in the 19th century, Beirut became increasingly influential and progressively pulled the political strings in Jabal Loubnan. After the 1860 war, the political meddling of Beirut waned but its influence remained unchanged because of its economic influence; an economic influence largely entrenched amongst the Christian population22 which by now had largely made-up the Beiruti population (Fawaz, 1984).

During this time, silk was an internationally traded cash crop that was vital to Mount Lebanon’s economy (Khater, 1996). Silk had also brought the peasants of Mount Lebanon in direct contact with Europeans and European markets (Khater, 1996). French demand for silk brought Lebanese Christian peasants from Mount Lebanon “into the folds of the French Capitalist system” (Khater, 1996, p. 327); the silk crops would grow in Mount Lebanon but be exported out from the ports in Beirut which had a direct

21 I repeatedly use Jabal Loubnan in this section because Mount Lebanon of the time was much smaller and did not have the same borders of Lebanon today. As such, I purposefully use Jabal Loubnan because I am talking about the parameters that defined it then, and not the Mount Lebanon district how it is today.
22 Mostly Orthodox Christian – not Maronite, nor Catholic – before the migration from Jabal Loubnan.
connection to Marseilles, France (Khater, 1996). This brought the French ever-closer to
the Christian population in Lebanon. By the late 1800s, however, Japanese and Chinese
silk was cheaper, and of better quality than what was grown in Lebanon and Lebanese
silk factories began to close and reduce in numbers (Khater, 1996). Silk production
slowly waned in mount Lebanon, but it had made Beirut an essential trading hub
between Europe and the near-East.

By 1888, Beirut – a city now largely made-up of Christian migrants who fled the
mountainous region because of economic hardships and the 1860 conflict – became the
heart of economic and cultural life of Jabal Loubnan (Fawaz, 1984). Beirut had become
the destination of refugees fleeing the troubled areas in the Levant (Fawaz, 1984), and
had been designated by the Ottomans as the provincial capital which turned it into one
of the region’s most important trading centers (Volk, 2009). Originally a city dominated
by Sunni merchants and wealthy Orthodox Christians, many Maronites fled to Beirut
from Mount Lebanon. Christian populations came from Mount Lebanon, and from
Damascus, and Syria as well, where Christians had feared reprisals and impending
retaliation for the violent acts committed by both sides between April and June of 1860
(Fawaz, 1984).23

The European consuls in Beirut at the time, and more importantly the French,
suspected the Ottoman Empire of sympathizing with the Druze and Muslims. European
envoys suspected the Ottomans were encouraging the Druze and Muslims to attack the
Christians. Conversely, the Ottomans accused the Europeans, and the French, of inciting

23 The series of clashes in the 1860s is sometimes referred to as the Mountain’s Civil War (Arabic: حرب
الجبل). It was a repeating cycle of violent acts and retaliations perpetrated by both Christians and Druze.
Christian nationalist sentiment in Mount Lebanon. After the involvement of Sunnis and their alliance with the Druze, France invoked its Capitulations Agreement signed 300 years earlier\(^\text{24}\) with the Ottoman Empire, and intervened on behalf of its Catholic protégés (Fawaz 1984; Kaufman, 2004). Thus, in August of 1860, France exerted its power in support of the Christians (Fawaz, 1984), first through its troops stationed in Beirut, and second through its warships in Beirut’s harbor (Fawaz, 1984). Subsequently, France was accused by the Ottomans that they were enticing unrest in order to validate their presence (Fawaz, 1984).

A month later, in September 1860, following the violent events of Mount Lebanon, international powers that included France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire, met to discuss the events that transpired (Hakim, 2013). The result of these international conferences was *Le Règlement Organique* (Organic Regulation) that established Mount Lebanon as a semi-autonomous mutasarrifate and carved it out from Greater Syria (Hakim, 2013). Under this new agreement, the Ottoman Sultan, with the approval of European powers, appointed a non-Lebanese Christian mutassarif to govern the territory (Hakim, 2013).

Now that the Maronites had a recognized homeland, they further removed themselves from the Arab-Muslim surroundings by learning the French language from the Jesuit priests sent by France to setup schools in Lebanon, and the Jesuit order in Syria (Fawaz, 1984; Kaufman, 2004). Maronites first began to adopt the language and

\(^{24}\) Earlier in 1535 A.D., in the “Capitulations Agreement” signed with the Sublime Porte (a French term for the Ottoman Empire’s central government), France declared itself the ‘guardian of Catholics’ in the Ottoman Empire (Fawaz, 1984; Kaufman, 2004, p. 26).
culture of the French circa 1831 in their first bid to remove themselves from the Muslim, Arab, surroundings (Fawaz 1984; Kaufman, 2004); to this day, fluency in French and speaking it in public is one of the distinct Maronite, and Christian, ‘features’ and status-symbols in public Beiruti space. The French language plays a very significant role in influencing Maronite and Christian identity in Beirut today.

The Maronites became the French of the Levant; they “died for the same ideas [the French] were defending” (Fawaz, 1984, p. 37). Lebanon soon after became known as the Switzerland of the East, and its capital city Beirut was dubbed the Paris of the East. The relationship between the Maronites and the French was twofold. On one hand, the French genuinely cared for the Maronites whom they believed were as close as one could get in the Orient to a civilized and noble culture (Fawaz, 1984; Kaufman, 2004). On the other hand, France needed the “perfect collaborator for their colonial aspirations in the region” (Fawaz, 1984, p. 27; Kaufman, 2004). The elite Maronite class, in conjunction with the Maronite Church, worked with the French to establish Greater Lebanon – a French Mandate within the Ottoman Empire. Once Greater Lebanon was formed, the Maronites worked with the French to mold it into a Western-oriented stronghold in the Middle-East. in this manner, the French would have easier control over the mandated territories of the Orient, and the Maronites, as collaborators, would have their long-sought political power in Lebanon. During this period, the French worked with Maronite elites and the Maronite church to foster Phoenicianism as Lebanon’s national identity.
2.5 20th Century Maronite History

The foreign meddling in Lebanon continued into the 20th century where Maronites felt emboldened by the military presence of their French allies. The first five years of the French Mandate that began in 1921 were very strong pro-Christian years where the French showed favoritism towards the Maronite Christians. General Gouraud, appointed as High Commissioner over Greater Lebanon at the time, was a devout Catholic himself whose “faith tremendously influenced his policies” (Fawaz, 1984, p. 28). Therefore, it was not all too strange for him to regard the Lebanese Christians, and the Catholic Maronites in particular, as brothers of the same faith – much like the Crusades and the Vatican before him. As a French-speaking Catholic group, the Maronites presented a stark contrast to the French when compared to their Arab Muslim neighbors; and so, the Maronites became France’s “well-loved collaborative group that could only facilitate the process of colonization” since they were already civilized (Kaufman, 2004, p. 29). France’s colonialism, according to Kaufman (2004), involves spreading civilization. The Maronites could help facilitate that with their adopting of French customs, culture, and language.

In 1958, the brooding ethno-religious tensions burst. A crisis emerged between Maronites and Sunni Muslims in Beirut’s urban environment (Salamey and Tabar, 2008). The tensions had started 2-years earlier in 1956 when the pro-Western Christians refused to break ties with the West following the Suez Canal Crisis. Matters further

25 The presence of the French military and their support for the Maronite community was viewed by the Muslims then, and is viewed today, as a hurdle towards harmonious co-existence. Muslims resent the Christians’ reliance on outside powers; they view it as Christians preferring to rely on Western powers rather than negotiating with their fellow countrymen on domestic issues and concerns.
escalated when Lebanese President Camille Chamoun showed a positive attitude towards the Baghdad Pact of 1955 – a Middle-Eastern alliance modeled after NATO. Egypt’s president Abdel Nasser viewed the Baghdad Pact as a pro-Western alliance that posed a threat to his pan-Arab ideals.

At a time when the pro-Western Christian president Camille Chamoun supported a pro-Western military alliance, the Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karami supported the pan-Arab Egyptian-Syrian alliance that would later form the United Arab Republic. This unease lasted for period of 2 years but nonetheless served as the precursor to the civil war of 1975, which was caused by much of the same: conflicting identities, contested memories of past events, and incompatible visions for the future of the country. A secular, capitalist, pro-west, and western-oriented country advocated for by the Maronites versus an anti-west, socialist, Arab-League oriented country advocated for by the Sunnis and the Druze (Salibi, 1988; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004).

The most recent civil war, however, from 1975 to 1990 gave a quasi-closure to the 1958 crisis. This civil war was another struggle for the Maronites who fought “in order to preserve their religious and ethnic identity and satisfy their security needs amidst an overwhelming Muslim population in Lebanon and across the frontiers” (Sirriyeh, 1994, p. 60). Maronites felt that their identity was in danger; a majority Muslim population was seen by them as overwhelming and a threat to their way of life. In their eyes, a Sunni-dominated Lebanon would no longer remain secular. The most recent civil war, therefore, can help explain the mistrust between these regionally-dominant ethno-religious groups. As it relates to this research, Beirut’s confessional
segregation of today has been traced to the cantons established by the different militias during the civil war of 1975 (Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh 1998; Kaufman, 2004; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010); an act taken by the Christian militias for security purposes first, and for the establishment of a federalist system that proved to be unacceptable by the other Lebanese parties second (Sirriyeh, 1998).

Much like previous crisis, the civil war of 1975 was framed as a conflict between a pro-Western side and a pro-Arab side. One side, consisting mostly of Christian political parties, emphasized that Lebanon was non-Arab and should not be subject to the broader pan-Arab movement sweeping the Middle-East at the time (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). The other side, conversely consisting of Palestinian, Druze, and Sunni Muslim political parties, believed that Lebanon should be part of the pan-Arab movement and submit to the League of Arab Nations (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). The civil war did not start as an ethnic conflict, but the political disagreements became framed in opposing ethno-religious group terms (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that neither side of the political, or ethno-religious spectrum can agree on the events that transpired. As a result, the civil war is not taught in schools. The events of the 1975 civil war, therefore, are a learned-memory because the Lebanese youth learn it from their parents who recall the civil war events from a subjective lens of lived experience and ethno-religious communal bias.

On April 13th, 1975, during a baptism at the Church of Notre Dame in East Beirut, Palestinian Liberation Organization members (a secular organization officially,
but with a mostly Sunni Arab membership) conducted a drive-by, shooting and killing 4 Christians: the father of the child who was just baptized, and three bodyguards who belonged to the protection team of Maronite leader Pierre Gemayel, then-patriarch of the prominent Gemayel family, who was attending the baptism (O’Balance, 1998). That night, Christian militiamen close to the Kataeb Party (Pierre Gemayel’s political party) retaliated with an attack on the nearby Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. This series of events, on April 13th, 1975, very likely denoted sectarian undertones to the remainder of the conflict over Lebanon’s identity – pitting Christians versus ‘the other’ (O’Balance, 1998; Sirriyeh, 1998).

The civil war divided the capital Beirut and the whole of Lebanon into an ‘us versus them’ grounded in ethno-religious sentiment. This divide, a result of the cantonization of the neighborhoods, seeped into the modern-day urban fabric of the city with the contemporary segregation of cities and Beirut’s neighborhoods (Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh 1998; Kaufman, 2004; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010). Beirut’s cantonization during the civil war continues to inform the contemporary segregation of Beirut’s urban landscape.

Understanding this segregation, and the processes that led to it, is integral to understanding Maronite identity as it continues in the 21st century. Similar to Falah’s (1996) examination of Israeli-Palestinian segregation in ‘mixed cities,’ I argue that the Maronite / Christian segregation from Sunni and Shi’a Beirutis is largely due to the differences in ideological, social, political, and economic relations, not a natural outcome of simple cultural and religious difference. The shaping and evolution of this
urban segregation, along ethno-religious lines, was further compounded by the ethnic violence of the civil war. As in Falah’s (1996) study, the segregated communities in Beirut generated an even more exclusive identity.

Beirut, therefore, became important as a place because it is one of the few cities in Lebanon where all three major ethno-religious groups – Maronites, Sunnis, and Shi’ites – co-exist, albeit in mostly segregated neighborhoods and districts. Today, more than 25 years after the end of the civil war, the locals still refer to an Eastern and Western Beirut. Where once Eastern Beirut was a canton of Christian militias,26 and Western Beirut a canton of Muslim militias,27 the Lebanese people still refer to Christian and Muslim neighborhoods of Beirut in this manner: A Christian, Eastern Beirut, and a Muslim, Western Beirut. Although there is officially only one Beirut, among the people there are two different Beiruts.

26 Christian militias were primarily made-up of Maronites and Orthodox Christians; depending on the neighborhood you hailed from, you were more likely to join the dominant Christian militia in your neighborhood. In Beirut, the dominant militias were Kataeb and Ahrar before they were folded into the broader Lebanese Forces.

27 Muslim Militias included the Lebanese National Movement which was mainly comprised of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Kamal Jumblatt’s Druze militias, militias loyal to Prime Minister Rashid Karami – a Sunni, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon.
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Review of Related Research

This chapter situates the contributions of this thesis to two broad bodies of academic literature. First, I provide an overview of the literature related to Beirut and the different ethno-religious groups of Lebanon. My work with the Maronite community of Beirut is most directly inspired by Lara Deeb's (2011) ethnographic work on the Shi'a community in the Dahiya suburbs of the city, and Asher Kaufman’s (2010) book on the Maronites’ search for identity in Lebanon.28 Reading their work prompted me to want to do more research on my own community and its identity. The second section offers a conceptual framework for my research by giving a synopsis of the theoretical work on imagined geographies and belonging.

There is a general consensus among scholars that there were two distinct sides in Lebanon's civil war of 1975 (Sirriyeh, 1998; Nagel, 2000; Ramsay, 2005; Salamey & Tabar, 2008; Kaufman, 2010; Fawaz, 2014; O'Brien, 2015). The agreed upon consensus is that Christian militias were on one side, and Muslims — both Sunni and Shi'a — were on the other; the nuanced differences correlated with this matter however, is whether the

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28 In this book, Kaufman heavily relies and recounts stories and political ideologies from time spent with Christian militias and the Lebanese Forces. During that time, Kaufman was one of the Israeli soldiers who intervened in the Lebanese Civil War of 1975; an event that was greeted by Christians with rose petals and rice – a form of celebration.
civil war was inherently sectarian in nature, or if different ethno-religious groups took up different positions with regard to the identity of Lebanon. While much of the scholarship is on the civil war itself, and about the urban landscape, very little is written about the urban identity of Maronites moving forward. While all authors identify this ethno-religious group as a major player in the civil wars, a close examination of what Maronite identity is to Maronites themselves is lacking. My research aims to fill this gap by exploring Maronite identity as it has been shaped by the civil war of 1975, and by the contemporary urban landscape.

As Sirriyeh (1998) noted, Beirut is still segregated along the very same ethno-religious lines that were demarcated by the effective cantonization of the capital city during the civil war of 1975 (Kaufman, 2004; Larkin, 2010). Cantonization is the process of creating ‘cantons,’ or territorial districts; in the case of Lebanon, Beirut was divided into cantons where neighborhoods became districts ruled over by sectarian militias. This process of cantonization essentially eroded the state’s sovereignty and influence over the capital city; control and security of neighborhoods eventually became the concern of the different militias vying for control during the 1975 civil war.

Many scholars today still describe Beirut as a city recovering from civil war, as well as a city whose population attributes major importance to ethnic and religious identity (Sirriyeh, 1998; Nagel, 2000; Ramsay, 2005; Salamey & Tabar, 2008; Lawler, 2011; Fawaz, 2014; O’Brien, 2015). By virtue of the violent sectarian historical events, where neighborhoods were targeted simply due to the ethno-religious identity attributed with them or the militia occupying them, the urban landscape is embedded
with memories that influence the contemporary identities of the different ethno-religious groups. Memories of violence created by the act of urbicide (Fregonese, 2009; Fawaz, 2014) continuously perpetuates 'anti-other' sentiment, therefore reinforcing the already present divide between the dominant ethno-religious groups; a sentiment that impacts identity as well.

Sara Fregonese's (2009) concept of urbicide "expresses the hostility towards a universally accepted 'civil' way of life" (Fregonese, 2009, p. 310) in multi-ethnic places. Through urbicide, Fregonese (2009) illustrates the hostility between two different neighborhoods. Al-Shiyyah and Ayn al-Remmaneh, although situated in urban Beirut, mirrored a broader conflict in the region — that of the Arab / Israeli conflict by proxy of Palestinian militias and Christian militias who received training and armaments from Israel. Fregonese (2009) goes on to explain that urbicide therefore isn't simply a localized affair but can rather possibly contain a "multi-sited geopolitical discourse" (p. 311). Fawaz (2004) describes the neighborhoods as becoming much more than simply residential: by way of embodying political and ethno-religious identities, Fregonese (2009) essentially attaches political and ethno-religious identities to parts of Beirut that were destroyed during the sectarian civil war. The examples in her article stem from various former civil-war militia members who recollect different battles and their attachment to the different neighborhoods, thus branding these different spaces with sectarian undertones.

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29 Urbicide refers to the destruction of a city / urban landscapes.
In many contemporary accounts of urban discourse on Beirut, ethnicity and identity are almost always intertwined. In an article on ethnic conflict in Beirut, Nagel (2000) explains that "ethnic conflict in the growth and transformation of cities has long concerned urban scholars" (p. 213). The Maronite situation is no different. Nagel maintains that Beirut's urban setting "epitomizes the manipulation of ethnicity, heritage, and cultural identity" (p. 218). Finally, she illustrates how the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut was influenced by identity and politics (Nagel, 2000). In her conclusion, Nagel asserts that Beirut reveals how "ethnic boundaries and identities have become intertwined with every component of national and urban redevelopment" (p. 229). In doing so, Nagel ties ethnic identity with bounded space in the reconstruction of Beirut.

In a separate article, Nagel (2002) argues that the civil war was not the end of the struggle for identity but rather that Beirut itself is the space in which "an ongoing discourse about the shape and meaning of Lebanese nationhood and identity" (p. 718) is taking place. In this sense, Nagel (2002) describes the current rebuilding of Beirut as "another battlefield in the long-running struggle over national identity and sectarian inequality in Lebanon" (p. 719). Similar to contemporary discourse among the local population, she describes the civil war not simply as that of Christian versus Muslim but rather one of political ideals. Nagel (2002) explains that Christians fought for Lebanese nationalism, whereas the Muslims fought for Arab socialism and pan-Arabism in a bid for involvement in the greater region. Essentially, Nagel (2002) argues that the civil war
was not so much sectarian, as it was an armed conflict over the identity of Lebanon—an armed conflict that had different sects on different sides.

Similar to Nagel's argument on the divide between the Maronite and Muslim beliefs on where Lebanon stands, Allan Ramsay (2005) traces it back even further than pan-Arab versus Lebanese particularism. In his analysis of this divide, Ramsay (2005) argues that the Maronites were pro-West, and wished to re-create a Phoenician state, a re-incarnation of the very same maritime Phoenicians of the ancient times; an empire to which Maronites claim to be descendants of (Ramsay, 2005; Kaufman, 2010). Conversely, and similar to Nagel (2002), Ramsay (2005) holds that the Muslims' belief was that Lebanon is part of the Arab world—although he is careful to point that even within the Christian and Muslim camps, there was a divide. For example, Ramsay (2005) points out that Sunnis and Shi’as disagree between themselves in regard to certain versions of history. Concerning the civil war, he notes that the city came to be divided along a "notorious Green Line, splitting the Muslim west apart from the Christian east" (Ramsay, 2005, p. 138). Ramsay (2005) concludes that critical for the country, and the region as a whole, is the future of the Maronite community—a community that, much similar to other minority ethno-religious communities in the region, is on a decline.30

With regard to the split between Muslims and Christians, and illustrating the divide and segregation of Beirut's neighborhoods, Mona Fawaz (2014) invokes Lefebvre when she describes Beiruti space as embodying historical moments from the civil war. Fawaz (2014) addresses Haret Hreik, a neighborhood in the western districts of Beirut.

30 According to the Lebanese Information Center, Christian emigration since the first day of the 1975 civil war to 2011 is estimated at 731,066. This number has no doubt increased since then.
This space simultaneously symbolizes the Shi’a communities laying claim over the western side of Beirut and the "erasure of a Christian village whose residents found it impossible to maintain a living amidst violent reactions and animosity" (Fawaz, 2014, p. 930). Prior to the civil war, Haret Hreik was a Christian neighborhood, the Hezbollah symbols and the funds provided for the neighborhood’s reconstruction, therefore, can be interpreted as Shi’as taking over historically Christian neighborhoods. Fawaz (2014) goes on to explain that different districts, or spaces, in Beirut, embody the social displacement of their respective communities. Therefore, by extension, these spaces come to embody political identity as well as ethno-religious identity (Fawaz, 2014).

In a more qualitative article, Salamey and Tabar (2005) examine whether a consociational democracy is "good" for the long-term of Lebanon and if this form of government can effectively bridge the divide between the different ethnic communities. The researchers conducted 300 interviews by phone, split roughly even between Sunni, Shi’a, and Christian residents of Beirut, thus encompassing a broad heterogeneous representative population (Salamey & Tabar, 2005). Furthermore, Salamey and Tabar (2005) examined the power-sharing agreement by detailing the way parliamentary seats are allocated along confessional lines within the parameters of consociational democracy. In their article, Salamey and Tabar (2005) refer to Lebanon’s consociational democracy as confessionalism because the parameters of power-sharing revolve around the confessional identity of the different political parties – read religious identity. The power-sharing, therefore, is a balance of power between the major ethno-religious groups. In their conclusion, Salamey and Tabar (2005) argue that "deep-rooted political
institutionalization of confessionalism along a degenerate Consociational model in Lebanon has abducted modern urbanization and transformed such a process into a catalyst for permanent conflict" (p. 254). In summary, Salamey and Tabar (2005) argue that the reconstruction of Beirut embodies the confessional divide and ethno-religious identities that played a role in the civil war; as such, the physical and social landscape will forever incite tensions that may erupt at any moment. Example: During my trip, at night, you could see Maronite youth standing around important entry-points to their neighborhoods looking to stop anyone who looks “suspicious” from entering.

In fact, Makdisi (2000) points out that the institutionalized divide in the Lebanese political system works in such a way that it requires cooperation amongst the different ethno-religious groups; in effect, the Lebanese political system forces the different parties to reach across the aisle and form coalitions with parties representing the ‘other’ ethno-religious groups. On the other hand, however, the very institutionalized divide in the Lebanese political system that Makdisi (2000) praises for requiring cooperation works to keep the status quo – enforcing an ever-presence of ethno-religious identity, and therefore a divide in the political and societal fabric along ethno-religious lines. As Salamey and Tabar (2005) have noted, Lebanon’s consociational democracy keeps the peace between the political elite but it has not brought the different ethno-religious groups closer since the end of the civil war. My research contributes to scholarship by examining how Maronites construct their identity in Beirut. Understanding the different identities involved in Beirut’s urban landscape and the everyday processes that inform them can help break down boundaries and create understanding of the other.
3.2 Conceptual Literature: Identity, Imagined Geographies, and Belonging

My research draws upon literatures that address identity theory and theories of space, place, and belonging in cultural geography. These literatures emphasize that identity is a continually evolving, and fluid process that requires an arena, or space, within which the process occurs. That space, in turn, contributes to, and is also changed, by that process. The agents that influence this change, or serve to reinforce it, are the oral histories and memories that occurred in this place. For the purpose of this study, Beirut and its neighborhoods are the arena in which Maronite identity is constantly being shaped and negotiated. This literature review therefore examines different theoretical perspectives, and explains how I situate Maronite identity in relation to Beiruti spaces and places.

3.3 Space and Place

Space and place are the arena in which identity, imagined geographies, and belonging take place. Although the two terms overlap in some cases, and have been used interchangeably at times, the two terms refer to two distinct and separate ideas. In summary, “space” refers to a geographic location – an area, or a locale. “Place,” however, is space infused with human attachment: it is a space endowed with a certain identity (Tuan, 1977). Place, therefore, is a space that has come to have meaning – whether through memories, learned histories, nostalgia, lived experiences, or other human interaction that attributes a certain significance to a set of geographic coordinates (Massey, 1994; Agnew, 2014; Cresswell, 2014).
John Agnew (2014) writes that although little critical definition and attention has been given to space and place, they nonetheless have a long-standing conflict between them. Agnew (2014) traces the interest of geography in defining space and place to Yi-Fu Tuan’s work (1974) and argues that there has been much effort exerted theoretically to define and describe the difference. Agnew (2014) notes that place, in particular, is difficult to define because it “exists on one or the other end of a continuum running from nomothetic (generalized) location at one end to idiographic (particularistic) place at the other” (p. 324). Agnew (2014) essentially argues that the definitions of place are on a spectrum, like a pendulum that swings between a more general (nomothetic) definition, to a more idiographic (individual, or particular) definition.

Lefebvre’s (1991) neo-Marxist approach to putting space and place together, Agnew says (2014), is the most popular today. In *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre (1991) focuses on the production of meaning within spaces in which social interaction takes place. Lefebvre argues that social space is a means of production. Lefebvre (1991), in his work on socially produced space, where identity, memory and space converge on each other, describes three different categories (Lefebvre, 1991). The first category, 'perceived space,' is the result of "human design, urban planning, and spatial organization" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 291). The second category, 'conceived space,' is the abstract and imagined space. It may include signs and perceived symbols, and it tends to be influenced by politics and economics (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 291). The third, 'lived space' is less theoretical and more applied. Larkin (2010) describes Lefebvre's 'lived space' as
"how people inhabit everyday life, the way they create their city as 'users' through practices, images, and symbols (p. 416).

Similar to Lefebvre, David Harvey (1989; 1990) argues that the concepts of space and time are social constructs that influence social reproduction: space is constructed and then influences social production; which in turn influences space, in a continuous process. For example: imagine a space that is a place of worship, or a hospital. By virtue of being designated by society as a place of worship or a hospital, the space becomes emplaced with a set of expected cultural parameters and social norms. The norms of the place of worship, or hospital, condition the activities within; at the same time, the activities within continue to reinforce the meaning of this place of worship, or hospital, by virtue of the acts being done.

Harvey (1989) builds on Lefebvre’s three aspects of space by infusing it with a temporal dimension. This notion is born out of a post-modern theory that distance has become arbitrary with the advent of technology; an argument he calls “time-space compression” (p. 426). Time-space compression, Harvey (1990) says, has led to the “collapse of spatial barriers [and] undermined older material and territorial definitions of place” (3). The new territorial parameters used to define place, Harvey says, are social constructs: exclusionary behavior is what defines place.

Taking Lefebvre and Harvey’s work and infusing it with political discourse leads us to Doreen Massey’s (2005) work on the relation between space and politics. In her work, Massey (2005) addresses three different ways to approach space. Her first contention is that we should understand space as the result of inter-relational
interactions. This first understanding of space then, as Massey describes it, does not accept ‘relations’ and ‘identities’ for what they are, but rather argues that they are part of that created social space; the processes that create identities are thus inherently spatial. Massey’s (2005) second proposition for a better understanding of space is that “the story of the world cannot be told […] as the story of ‘the West’ alone” (p. 10). Massey (2005) argues for a “serious need” (p. 11) to accept the world’s multiplicity and heterogeneity; to do so, however, we need to change the parameters that define spatiality (Massey, 2005). Massey’s argument here is similar to Roy’s (2009) in that we ought not transfer Western studies of space to non-Western parts of the world because the processes behind the creation of space are not the same. Massey’s (2005) third characteristic for space is the need to regard it as an open, and never-closed system. Massey (2005) invokes Laclau in reproducing the argument that only by “conceiv[ing] of the future as open can we seriously accept or engage in any genuine notion of politics (11).” In summary, Massey (2005) argues that the process is never a closed system, but rather the need to make meaning is a continuous open process across a temporal spectrum: both in the past, in the present, and in the future.

3.4 Identity

Like Massey’s (2005) call for understanding that the meaning of space is continuously created across time, recent identity scholarship disputes the perception which holds national identity as ‘primordial’ and fixed to a specific geographic location, community, race, or gender group (Mills, 2008; Nagel and Staeheli, 2008; Mills, 2010).
Identity, as adapted in recent literature, is not "unitary," nor unyielding and uncompromising (Mills, 2010, p. 12); it is rather flexible and shifting, encompassing various meanings, even contested ones (Mills, 2008; Nagel and Staeheli, 2008; Mills, 2010). Identity, therefore, is produced by the continuous negotiation of political, social, and economic processes as they happen in social space.

It is a process negotiated and disputed in the arena of space and place by societies with multiple memories and counter memories (Mills, 2008; Nagel and Staeheli, 2008; Mills, 2010). Furthermore, identity is constantly formed and re-formed by the interactions and encountered experiences of daily life (Mills, 2008; Langellier, 2010). In the process of formulating identity, the self becomes defined not only by what, and who, we are, but also by what, and who, we are not (Hall, 2006; Johnson, 2012); and although identity is influenced, and shaped, by past experiences, Hall and Du Gay (1996) argue that identity is also influenced by "what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (p. 4), noting that identity is therefore "constituted within, not outside representation" (p. 4). In the process of bounding identity, the negotiation of multiple social paradigms — religious, ethnic, social, and political affiliations (Mills, 2010) — inadvertently fabricates an 'other' (Hall, 2006); if said identity is different than the self, it must therefore be the 'other'. In this endless, fluid process of formulating the self, symbolic boundaries materialize demarcating what the identity is, and what it is not; denoting the self, and the other (Hall, 2006).

To better understand Maronite identity, it is important to establish an
understanding of Maronite ethno-religious history. Maronites trace their origins to the 
early fourth Century and Mar Maroun. Since the fourth century, the identity of this 
ethno-religious group has been an ever-evolving process, shaped and molded by 
navigating complex social, political, and economic variables encountered over the 
centuries, resulting in a complex contemporary identity. Wherever there is a human 
footprint, there is a memory of the experience, a place the experience occurred, and the 
creation of some understanding of oneself in relation to that emplaced history. Due to 
the Maronites' long history, their memories of place and their formation of Maronite 
identity are the result of almost 1800 years of continual shaping; in the process, the 
Maronite faith has been politicized (Makdisi and Silverstein, 2006). This is something 
many of my participants corroborated. There was this idea that was repeated whereby 
they viewed Maronite politicians, and others, as businessmen trading with religion for 
personal gains. Many believe that if the politicians stopped talking about Maronites, and 
Shi’a, and Sunni matters, then maybe the different communities would be closer to one 
another.

Memories are powerful forces cultivated by lived experiences, and emotions. 
Memories are constantly being produced and re-produced within, and in relation to, 
specific contexts — they surround us; they are everywhere because not only do they 
influence individuals, and the identity of the self, but rather physical landscapes come to 
be associated with memories. Memories, therefore, work as a sensory cue that evoke 
and provoke certain feelings or emotions. In short, memories "install pauses and 

31 Mar is the word for Saint in Assyrian and Syriac. It has also been used historically, and in present-day, as a title given to the patriarch of the Maronite Church.
As such, memory plays a pivotal role in the processes of identity-making; it is an ever-created and ever-manifested process between people, communities, and nations because it defines who we are and how we perceive others (Mills, 2008; Nagel and Staeheli, 2008; Mills, 2010; Drozdewsky et al. 2016). Memories are therefore pervasive, and powerful actors, in creating a sense of who we are and who we are not (Hall, 2006 Nagel and Staeheli, 2008; Mills, 2010; Drozdewsky et al. 2016). If memory were to work as a means of story-telling, then identity becomes a sense-of-self produced, and reproduced, through memory and place (Drozdewsky et al. 2016).

Political memory is particularly important in shaping identity (Maalouf, 1984; Slyomovics, 1994; Chakrabarty 1996; Slyomovics, 1998; Gregory; 2004; Kaufman, 2004; Neyzi, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Johnson, 2012) especially in Lebanon where political parties have relatively homogeneous constituencies of similar ethno-religious identities. The process of discovering and defining who, or what someone is, is heavily influenced by political ideology as "societies, or groups within [these societies], strive for some coherent identity" (Johnson, 2012, p. 240). In many cases, political memory is (re)created through stories passed on from generation to generation about a certain place, or certain people. Thus, although an individual may not have personal lived experience with an 'other' or a place, they subconsciously hold and reinforce certain prejudices based on these political memories. According to Johnson (2012, p. 240) this is a 'trained memory.' A trained memory, he says, is an "instructed memory; [a] forced
memorization enlisted in the service of the remembrance of those events belonging to a common history which are held to be remarkable, even founding, with respect to the common identity.” As Mills argues, national identity politics plays a major role in the construction of memory (Mills, 2008; 2010); this construction of memory is further intensified in a scenario of segregation and post-conflict society: the difference between self-identity and the ‘other’ becomes even more emphasized.

Memory and conflict tend to be embedded in a disputed place or territory that was central to an ethno-national conflict (Neyzi, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Nagel 2000; Nagel, 2002; Bakshi 2012. Processes of memory, therefore, rely on and influence certain landscapes and places (Mills, 2008; 2010). Furthermore, segregation as a result of past conflicts intensifies many aspects of memory, to include forgetting and nostalgia (Slyomovics, 1994; Slyomovics 1998; Neyzi, 2008; Bakshi 2012). Because of segregation, the oral histories are not contested by the ‘other,’ and the result is usually one version of events that gets continuously reinforced. Bakshi describes ‘forgetting’ as: “a positive meaning insofar as having-been prevails over being-no-longer in the meaning attached to the idea of the past” (Bakshi, 2012, p. 480). In a sense, forgetting is where history and memory ignores, or ‘excludes,’ certain events.

In contrast to 'forgetting,' which seeks to omit, nostalgia takes a more positive approach to memory, a rosier lens to view contested memory, attempting to paint the negative in a more positive light. Whereas 'forgetting' contracts a positive history by omitting the negative, nostalgia takes what can be a negatively disputed narrative by some and paints it in a more positive light (Neyzi, 2008; Bakshi 2012). Memory literature
maintains that nostalgia is a representation of the past, and although there may exist disputed and contested memories, the nostalgia is neither false nor unauthentic unto itself; the nostalgic memory is true to those who recount it (Neyzi, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Mills, 2010; Bakshi, 2012). In relation to geography, space and place come to be viewed differently because of the memory through which they are perceived. A place, or an oral history, is rarely viewed the same by different identities if the memory is contested.

3.5 Imagined Geographies and Belonging

Imagined geographies can be understood as power-laden representations of places, people, and cultures that reflect the standpoint of the observer as much as the actual state-of-things in a given place. These representations are usually influenced by personal preconceived ideas and feelings towards a particular subject. Originally, the term was proposed by Edward Said who coined the term “Orientalism” when he argued against the power dynamics-lens through which colonial and western powers saw the colonized, non-western peoples and cultures (Said, 1978). In his orientalist theory, Said argues that imagined geographies are power-laden, and non-innocent in nature, and automatically serve to create an excluded ‘other’ (Said, 1978).

Cultural landscapes can be infused with nostalgia or memories, and urban landscapes of cities can be affected by imagined geographies (Hoelscher, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010; Mills, 2010; Johnson, 2012). In a post-conflict city, societies can seek to imbed nostalgia into the
physical landscape of the city (Johnson, 2003; Fregonese 2009; Larkin, 2010; Mills, 2010; Johnson, 2012). Memories begin to shape imagined geographies and influence physical landscapes. Memories, therefore, are a lens through which we comprehend imagined geographies and interpret physical landscapes; memories influence our perception. Competing groups who have contested and counter-memories will come to hold different parameters for imagined geographies and attribute different meanings to the same physical landscape. The articulation through imagined geographies, or physical representation, gives these memories meaning; we come to understand history and explain and view certain places differently when we imbue them with imagined geographies. As such, memory may be illustrated, exhibited, and performed in the physical landscape, 'displaying' memory (Mills, 2010: 15; Hoelscher, 2003; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Johnson, 2003; Johnson, 2012).

This may take many forms in the context of Beirut: a statue may be destroyed and removed, like Temsel al-Shaaleh (Arabic: تمثال الشعلة; translation: Statue of the Flame / Beacon) in Ain el-Remmaneh.\(^32\) In contrast, a statue may be erected post-conflict like Temsel al-Shuhada (Arabic: تمثال الشهداء; translation: Statue of Martyrs) in Sahat al-Shuhada (Arabic: ساحة الشهداء; translation: Martyr's Square) as a symbol that the society is a reconciled post-conflict society.\(^33\) This latter example attempts to create

\(^{32}\) Temsel el-Shaaleh is a statue erected in 1975 as a memorial for Kataeb martyrs who fell during the civil war – Christian militiamen. At the time of its unveiling, the militant wing of the Kataeb party swore in more than 1,150 new members; my father and his brothers were among them.

\(^{33}\) Unlike Temsel el-Shaaleh, Temsel al-Shuhada was erected after the civil war and is not affiliated with any ethno-religious group. Temsel al-Shuhada is a memorial to all who had fallen during the civil war.
a more nostalgic feeling in that society; it is no longer fractured but rather is now united. That is, society now has moved past the 15 years of sectarian violence.

Although Lefebvre establishes three separate dimensions of space, it is not impossible for them to overlap (Larkin 2010). For example, an apartment building with a shrine for Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary simultaneously signifies that it is at once both a Christian residential building and not a mixed ethno-religious residential building. The shrine at the entrance of the building works to include one group, while excluding others. The memories provoked by similar symbols are further intensified due to the 'post-conflict' status of a fragmented Beirut; as such, the events of the civil war further reinforce and exacerbate the contested memories and disputed histories. In one of her articles, Lucia Volk (2009) mentions checkpoints in Beirut as being a painful reminder of the checkpoints and roadblocks setup by militias during the civil war to mark the extent of their influence.

Such symbols serve to create perceived and conceived spaces. In Lebanon, the convergence of the perceived and conceived spaces produces a sort of boundary, designating who belongs and who does not belong. These boundaries in return are reinforced by human agents through daily interactions. A Maronite will usually not cross into al-Dahiya (Arabic: الضاحية; translation: the suburb), not only because the neighborhood's entrances are plastered with posters of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and Hezbollah's Sayyed Nasrallah, but also because a Maronite grows up hearing from their parent that they do not belong there and that it is a different, and dangerous area for Maronites. The same is probably true for a Shi’a who looks across the street and sees a
Lebanese Forces cross spray-painted on a building, or a poster of Bashir Gemayel. The images displayed there materialize, with tangible boundaries, the imagined geographies that map a separate self and ‘other.’ Much like a Maronite hesitates in going to al-Dahiya, a Shi’a may very well feel that they do not belong in an Eastern-Beiruti district like Achrafieh. Albeit the city does not officially recognize these borders and boundaries that split the different ethno-religious groups, these boundaries are nonetheless recognized by society and are passed down from the pre-civil war’s generation to the post-civil war society. The lines may not be official on a map, but they are very much real in people’s thoughts and minds as I demonstrate in Chapters 5 and 6.

Lefebvre’s (1991) argument for the perceived, conceived, and lived aspects of space are particularly useful in the case of Beirut; they help us to better understand the contested memories and spaces by understanding how these special aspects come together. Beirut, after a 15-year sectarian civil war, is essentially a “space of uncertainty” (Larkin, 2010, p. 416), a sphere of disputed narratives, and contested memories and space. It is a city, an urban space, that defies a simple reduction into three abstract and distinct dimensions (Larkin, 2010). Thus, Beirut should be examined within the context of this research as a "hybrid, fragmented, and unstable city" (Larkin 2010, p. 416) due to its post-conflict emergence as a place of encounter and confrontation between the different ethno-religious groups (Larkin 2010).

A transgression occurs when a spatial practice breaks the traditional norm. For example: a restaurant in Muslim towns opening while the sun is up during Ramadan, or people taking Fridays off instead of Sundays in Christian parts of Lebanon. Transgression
is an act of breaking rules, or exceeding boundaries (Cresswell 1996). According to
Cresswell (1996), transgression is different than resistance in that the effect and
reaction of a particular act are more defined. It is not so much the lead-up to breaking
the norm and the reasoning behind it, but rather the after-effects of the taboo and
results of it. Furthermore, Cresswell’s (1996) transgression recognizes that there are
power dynamics at play and that usually it is the powerful who create the established
memories and norms that color a space (Cresswell 1996). In the case of Maronites, who
are most powerful in Beirut al-Sharkiyyeh (Arabic: الشرقية; translation: The Eastern
(Beirut), they determine the spatial order: if it is acceptable to close shop on Friday and
not Sunday, or if it is normal to prohibit the sale of alcohol and gambling like in al-
Dahiya. The socio-spatial order, however, is flexible; as we will see in chapters 6 and 7,
certain kinds of Muslims are welcome as long as they do not disrupt the order.
Essentially, transgression is the conduit connecting imagined geographies and
belonging, to the city of Beirut as a place. All the disputed narratives and contested
memories, confined to a place, create a sense of belonging. If you fall within the norm,
you belong; if at any point, you break the norm, you transgress – and do not belong.

In the context of imagined geographies, and more specifically for the purposes of
this research, Beirut, transgression becomes more than just crossing into al-Dahiya or
al-Sharkiyyeh. Memories of place establish norms and rules; Maronite identity, as
influenced by the civil war of 1975, starts to establish what is acceptable and what is
not, what is prohibited and what is not. A Maronite church in al-Dahiya ringing its bells
is a transgression, similarly a mosque's Adhan (Arabic: آذان; translation: Muslim call to
prayer) in *al-Sharkiyyeh* is also perceived as a transgression; it is a break of the norm and what is acceptable. Much like belonging and boundaries unequivocally create inclusion and exclusion, transgression illustrates the taboo and the norm. Space, therefore, is the arena in which transgression is played out.

In many cases, belonging is associated with identity (Antonsich, 2010). In describing her experience in Turkey, Mills wrote: "to figure out who someone is, people ask about where." (Mills, 2010; p. 1). Mills denotes that the question of inquiring where someone is from, is aimed at formulating an identity based on their place of origin (Mills, 2010). "Imagined geography situates a person in some way within the nation in terms of culture, socioeconomic status, political, or even ethnic identity" (Mills, 2010; p. 2). These imagined spaces, therefore, become conditioned and imagined through cultural, religious, economic, and political lenses (Maalouf, 1984; Hall and Du Gay; 1996; Gregory, 2004; Mills, 2008; 2010).

I attended the wedding of a Shi’a friend of mine here in the United States in the summer of 2016. When I got to the reception party and I was congratulating his family, his uncle asked me my last name. I answered with Boutros – I had refrained from giving out my last name on purpose because I knew his family was from Southern Lebanon; giving my last name would have immediately given me away as a Christian because Boutros stands for Peter in Arabic and it usually signals a Christian family. I remember being thankful for my formal dress shirt that night because it allowed me to

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34 There have been instances in the past where Muslims and Christians show unity. The majority of these acts, however, happen between political allies: most notably between Hezbollah and General Aoun, and Saad Hariri and Samir Geagea.
hide the rosary that I was wearing around my neck. It wasn’t that I didn’t feel safe, it was that I was afraid of offending someone if they saw it. His reply was: “Christian? Where are you from?” and I answered: “I grew up in Beirut, but my family roots are originally from Zahleh.” He replied: “Zahleh... Catholics, Orthodox, and Maronites are our brothers. The tension between the Hezb (Hezbollah) and al-Ouwwet (Lebanese Forces) will ease. There is no rift between our people tonight. Thank you for coming my son.” So, as we can see, this is a societal norm that Lebanese people adhere to even outside of Lebanon; people inquire about your roots because knowing where you come from gives them information about you.

In Beirut, your ethno-religious identity is typically the place, group, and culture you are associated with. If a Lebanese tells someone they are from Achrafieh, there is an almost immediate assumption that they are Christian, that they vote for a “Christian party,” and that they are strong advocates of Lebanese Particularism. If someone says they are from al-Dahiya, it is almost automatically assumed that they are Shi’a, they vote for Hezbollah or Amal – the two most prominent Shi’ite political parties – and that they are adhere to Wilayat al-Faqih (Arabic: ولاية الفقيه; translation: Governance of the Jurist). If someone says they are from Ras Beirut (Arabic: رأس بيروت; translation: North Beirut), it is almost automatically assumed that they are Sunni and vote for the Future Movement party.

Maronite identity, like other ethno-religious identities in Lebanon, is thus the result of imagined geographies, belonging, and memories of place converging in Beirut. This thesis therefore affirms that understanding the identity of each of the ethno-
religious groups in Lebanon is a step towards mending the rift between them. Beirut, in particular, is important because it allows us to study the different ethno-religious identities relative to each other; most importantly the boundaries delineating the respective Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'a spaces. Homogeneity, therefore, becomes an obstacle in post-conflict societies because a group becomes enclosed unto-itself. As a non-porous boundary, the homogeneity of the different ethno-religious communities becomes a problem when it refuses to listen to the concerns of the ‘other.’ With respect to Lebanon, this is manifested in Beirut’s segregated neighborhoods and other homogenous towns and cities.
CHAPTER 4
METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Major Research Question

The ultimate research question guiding my study is thus: From the perspective of Maronites, what is the role of belonging, imagined geographies, and memories of place in the process of making and informing Maronite identity in Beirut after the civil war of 1975? To further develop and particularize this research question, I pose the following three sub-questions:

1- From a Maronite perspective, what effect, if any, did the civil war of 1975 have on the urban social geography?

2- From a Maronite perspective, how does attachment to parts of Beirut, as a place, inform their identity as a people?

3- What role do homogeneous neighborhoods in Beirut play in processes of making Maronite identity.

My intellectual goal to answer my research question is three-fold. First, to understand and report on the Beirut Maronite perspective of belonging. How do they see inclusion and exclusion working in the city? Second, what are Maronite imagined geographies? What are the pre-conceived ideas about the different areas of the city, and what transgressions and resistances are occurring? Third, what role do segregated neighborhoods and districts play in re-enforcing Maronite identity? By pursuing these
three goals, I am able to understand the different components that make up Maronite identity. By telling the story of Beirut’s urban Maronite community, I am enabled to report on different layers and processes that play a part in the identity-making of this ethno-religious group. And by understanding how Maronites construct their identities through and within the city, we are one step closer to breaking the political gridlock and urban cultural segregation imposed by consociational democracy.

4.2 Maronites in Beirut: Place and People as Site and Subject of Study

The location for my research is the capital city Beirut and its suburbs, an area locally referred to as Beirut al-Koubra (Arabic: بيروت الكبرى; translation: Greater Beirut). I chose a heterogeneous location that would allow me to also examine Maronite identity through everyday encounters with the ‘other;’ mainly the Maronite encounter with the Sunnis and the Shi’as. The reason for choosing Beirut is that, unlike most of Lebanon, it is unique in the sense that all ethno-religious groups claim one urban district or another within it; while those districts are homogeneous, the city itself is heterogeneous. Greater Beirut includes the suburbs and Maronites of different socio-economic status: wealthy elites live near the city center in north-east Beirut, while middle and lower-class Maronites live in the suburbs. By interviewing people across Greater Beirut, my participant pool includes Maronites of varying socio-economic status.

For the most part, however, I focused on ‘Eastern Beirut.’ Although Beirut is not officially demarcated into western and eastern districts, the local population designates Eastern and Western Beirut based on the civil war divide that split the capital city in two
– a legacy of the Green Line demarcation during the civil war (Davie, 1994; Chakhtoura, 2005; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010). Eastern Beirut denotes predominantly Christian and Maronite neighborhoods and districts. However, Maronites who hold official government positions may not strictly be working out of Eastern Beirut; One ‘authoritative’ person I interviewed, on the condition that no notes be taken, or recording be done, was a Maronite working in a Shi’a district in Western Beirut.

The ultimate focus of my research is to understand Maronite identity from an urban, Beiruti perspective. How does Maronite identity play out in Beirut in the context of space and place? Sirriyeh (1998) argues that self-segregation was a strategy that Maronites used to protect themselves. That seems logical for the past, in the immediate aftermath of a 15-year long violent sectarian war, but his research was written twenty years ago (Sirriyeh, 1998). Why, then, do Maronites and other ethno-religious groups continue to self-segregate? Is safety still a justified reason? What is it, about the city, that shapes Maronites’ individual senses of self and community as a whole? Why – from a Maronite perspective – does urban ethno-religious segregation still exist 28 years after the end of the civil war? How do the current boundaries of segregation in the city influence or reflect notions of Maronite identity? How can Maronites’ imagined geographies and memories of place help illuminate their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Beiruti place and space?
4.3 Ethnography

To accomplish my research goals, I conducted an ethnographic narrative. An ethnography is “a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms the irreducibility of human experience” (Willis and Trondman, 2002, p. 394). Through ethnographic voice-recorded interviews, I aimed to correlate the relationship between Beiruti place, space, events, and their influence in forming Maronite identity (See Appendix A). An ethnographic study recognizes that a researcher has the power to sway the research and the data as a result of their immersion in the society and social world they are studying (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Punch, 2001). The inherent nature of an ethnography is the understanding, therefore, that the familiarity with the participant population, and the learned bias and opinions on certain subjects may influence the researcher; an ethnographic study does not pretend to be ‘objective’ in the sense of reporting the neutral observations of a detached observer (Punch, 2001).

Poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques view this “ethnographic authority” (Willis & Trondman, 2002, p. 395) in a negative light, arguing that experiences, imbedded in the subconscious, influence the writer’s reflection (Clifford & Marcus, 1985). This process, to which the researcher is unconscious, leads them to report on the observed culture through a sort of invisible biased lens (Clifford & Marcus, 1985). In contrast, the very same critique of ethnographies’ inherent weakness is perceived to be a strength by others. Willis and Trondman (2002, p. 7) argue that the “discursive
 naïveté” described by Clifford and Marcus (1985) is a strength because the very biased nature of ethnographies demonstrate that the reflexive studies, and data analysis gained from participant observations, cannot be “equated with the lived outcomes” (Willis & Trondman, 2002, p. 7). The social landscape being studied “requires constant reflection on the social processes and the personal characteristics and values of the researcher, which inform the data generated as well as the subsequent interpretation and data analysis” (Punch, 2001; p. 168). This subconscious experience that influences the reflection process is a fundamental element in the data’s interpretation (Mason, 1996; Punch, 2001; Willis & Trondman, 2002). These biases, inherent to the very nature of ethnographies, are one of the methodology’s very strengths (Willis & Trondman, 2002).

4.4 Situated Knowledge and Related Assumptions

As a Maronite who speaks the language, adheres to and practices the Christian Maronite faith, and lives by the Maronite culture's values and traditions, I occupy a particular position as I conducted research and write about my community's identity and what it means to be a Maronite in Beirut. Because Maronites view themselves as ethnically, and religiously different from others in Lebanon, I label them as an ethno-religious group. By virtue of this fact, I also label the ‘other’ as ethno-religious groups for the sole reason that my participating Maronites labeled them as such.35 The Maronite

35 Maronites in general, and the participants from my interviews, tended to label Sunnis as one major ethno-religious group that was ethnically and religiously distinct from them. For Maronites, Sunnis are religiously Sunni Muslim, and ethnically Arab by descent. At the same time, they also considered Shi’as to
faith is almost exclusively adhered to by ethnic Maronites – in the broader sense of ethnons that members of a particular group construct. Although some would argue that there is room to label Maronites as a linguistic group, I do not do so because the younger generations are moving away from the Syriac language; many of the bibles today, which was almost the only connection left between Maronites and the language, are in Arabic. Maronite’s dialect of Aramaic, Syriac, is spoken today only in rural Maronite villages, but remains the official liturgy language of the Maronite church. Although there are efforts to revive the language, Maronite youth scarcely speak it outside of Sunday mass.

Born and raised a Maronite, my research is heavily influenced by my lived experience as well as by the lived experience of the Maronite individuals I interviewed. I expected to encounter Maronites who would make the following distinction: Maronites are not Arab, but descendants of the sea-faring Phoenicians and Assyrians that lost our native language because of centuries-long Arab and Ottoman occupation. When I served in the United States Army, I encountered and interacted with many Assyrians in Iraq who made this specific distinction\(^{36}\) — and although fellow soldiers could not comprehend the significance, having this insider knowledge is fundamental: being non-Arab and non-Muslim is of importance in that part of the world. It highlights your

\(^{36}\) For Iraqi Assyrians, however, the distinction was more-so that they are not Arab. Every Assyrian I met in my deployment to Iraq, and even in the United States, was articulate in the Assyrian language. Maronites, in comparison, speak Arabic in everyday interaction and reserve the Syriac language – a dialect of Assyrian – for church mass and the Bible.
ancestry, as well as serves as a tool in creating the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ Through this insider understanding of the minority ethno-religious culture, I am able to understand the customs and values better than a non-native who is new to this ethno-religious minority culture.

My research is strengthened by my Maronite identity and my family’s legacy in participating in the civil war of 1975 because I have first-hand knowledge of the learned memories that come with being a Maronite who was born after the civil war. Furthermore, my foreign education and foreign citizenship played a positive role in enlisting participants in my research. In Lebanon, a foreign education and foreign citizenship is seen as superior to both the local education and the Lebanese citizenship. An American citizenship is viewed in this manner: an American passport can get you to most places, and an American citizenship is viewed around the world less suspiciously than a Lebanese citizen with a Lebanese passport. Similarly, a Lebanese education is viewed as second-rate to a foreign education; or rather a Western education. As it was made clear to me when I asked why Maronite youth prefers to immigrate than stay in Lebanon, a western education from the United States or Europe will take precedence over a Lebanese one when applying for jobs; as such, a lot of elite Maronites (and elite Lebanese in general) who can afford it, send their children to study abroad. Lebanese youth with a Lebanese education are not competitive with someone who holds a degree from the West; during the hiring process, companies favor those who studied abroad. Hence, with my American citizenship and my American education, everyone seemed
eager to talk to me; the conversations helped build rapport, and as a result I was able to elicit more interviews.

At the same time, I acknowledge that my foreign education and foreign citizenship may have negatively impacted my research analysis because I have not lived in Lebanon since 2002. I have followed Lebanese news closely since my family and I immigrated to the United States in 2002, but some events were mentioned for which I was not present, nor was I surrounded by a Maronite community; my interpretation of some comments and reactions is thus influenced by my own absence. Moreover, I recognize that my young age may have negatively impacted the way elders saw me. In a culture that correlates knowledge and wisdom with age, I would simply be a child to them and this can negatively impact my research as they may not have believed that I can comprehend and reflect on the experiences and oral histories they are recounting to me. I use this to my advantage, however, by showing the elders that I am eager to learn from their oral histories and situate their experiences; once the elderly learned about my research, and saw that I was serious about this project, they were more willing to sit down with me and have conversations.

Furthermore, with my status as an American (in my participants’ perspective) with an American education, I ran the possibility of being seen as an outsider; the result of this may be an insincere sentiment being presented to me because the participant wished to be portrayed in a specific manner, or wished for me – the researcher – to perceive them in a certain way, or report in a certain way. More than a few times, when I arrived for an interview, I was introduced to neighbors or family present as “an
American” or “from America.” As a researcher, I strived to invoke trustworthiness with my participants. Therefore, the first step I took in gaining the trust of my participants is by informing them that the interview was completely anonymous, and that pseudonyms will be given to mask their real identity.

Building rapport with the participants who are not family friends or former classmates was crucial, and confidentiality was perceived to be of utmost importance to them since the socio-economic status of a few participants cannot afford them protection and defense under the law in the case that something sensitive was made public. The second step in my process to gain trust was to get the interview questions to my participants ahead of time. With my interview questions, I attached a copy of my IRB certificate, and presented a translated copy of the IRB certificate (French or Arabic) if the participant was not comfortable with the English language. The purpose of this was to demonstrate a legitimate research purpose to alleviate any feelings of suspicious information-gathering; this was relevant when I spoke with Maronites who held government positions.

Furthermore, my interview questions were written in English, French, and Arabic. The goal behind this was to encompass all my participants and clear the way for all levels of education and socio-economic status. It is important to note here, that in order to gain trustworthiness, I spoke in French with the elite Maronite participants who usually initiated conversation in French and spoke in Arabic with those who initiated

37 An IRB certificate is issued by the Institutional Review Board. Any research that involves human subjects requires an IRB certificate. In this process, the researcher is required to provide a copy of their research proposal as well as a copy of the questions that will be asked. Once approved, the researcher receives the IRB certificate permitting them to conduct their research.
conversation in Arabic. Arabic sprinkled with French and English seemed to be the preferred language for Maronite youth. Beyond trustworthiness, this technique enabled me to break the power dynamics and put myself, as the researcher, and my research participant on equal footing.

Although I e-mailed the interview questions ahead of time, and gave a hard copy to those who had no internet access or computer (usually these were elderly or short-notice participants), I revisited every participant before I left the country and shared with them a copy of my notes and conclusions. This member-checking helped me ensure that I was comprehending and assessing comments and reactions in ways that most closely reflected the perspectives of my participants. To balance out my fear of misunderstanding a concept, or inaccurately portraying a comment or the Maronite community’s reaction, I opted for a semi-structured interview the first time where a conversation was loosely guided by my interview questions (See Appendix A), and an open-ended discussion of my results and findings the second time around.

4.5 Methodological Approach

I conducted a series of interviews between June and August of 2016 where I lived in Beirut for 3 months. During this time, I gathered visual data which I analyzed alongside the oral histories I gathered in my interviews. While in Lebanon, I stayed with my grandmother in Ayn-al-Remmaneh neighborhood,\(^{38}\) a neighborhood famous for its

\(^{38}\) This neighborhood is one of the three neighborhoods that constitute the “delta” of Christian resistance. During the civil war, there were three neighborhoods in Beirut that formed a triangle of Christian
Lebanese-Forces, Kataeb, and Ahrar residents / constituents. Most of the residents living in my grandmother’s street are elderly: I did not officially interview them, nor did I write notes in our discussions. Because most were widows, they usually gathered for morning coffee and breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Every lady would host the other ladies at some time of the day, and they would drink coffee or tea; and when the neighborhood ladies came to my grandmother’s I would sit with them and listen: they always seemed to find their way to discussing contemporary politics, or reminiscing the civil war, and what life was like. Due to the strong Lebanese-Forces affiliation of the neighborhood, however, and in order to spread out my participants across political ideologies, I elected not to interview these ladies and to simply sit and listen. In the end, I had participants that were spread out across Beirut’s Christian-identified neighborhoods, as well as different participants scattered on the socio-economic scale.

Most of my interviews were individual 1-on-1 interviews, while the others were focus groups largely made-up of people with opposing political views. For example, I sat down with 4 ‘older generation’ Maronites – all of whom identified with a different political party and all of whom were part of militias during the civil war. This allowed the discussion to go beyond the pre-written questions, and it entered an arena of debate where I got to hear different perspectives on the same issue.

Resistance. These neighborhoods were famous for their Christian nationalist sentiment – they became known as the Delta after the Greek Delta letter because they formed a triangle on a map.

39 Most of the residents were affiliated with Christian militia groups during the civil war, both men and women. While most men fought on the front-lines, many of the women worked in communication, or logistics.
Going into this research, I envisioned that conducting interviews with Maronites would shed light on the processes that inform Maronite identity: What is it that makes someone a Maronite? As such, I felt that splitting my participants into three distinct groups would yield the best results: 10 participants who were regarded to be in a position of power, or authority in the Maronite community; 10 participants with lived experience of the civil war and remember what life was like before and during; and 10 participants who do not have lived experience of the civil war, and do not remember what life was like before and during the civil war. Although the aim was 30 participants, I left Lebanon with a total of 24 participants. With Maronite identity being the center of my research question, I elected to work exclusively with Maronite participants in order to better reflect Maronite identity by analyzing and describing the Maronite perspective. By doing so, I am better able to focus on my sample group. In some sense, the broader sampling of my participants is homogeneous in nature in that they all identify as Maronite.

I have designated the three groups as the authoritative, older, and younger groups. The first of the three is the authoritative / official group. These were participants who wield authority in the Maronite community – whether it be a person within the Maronite Church, a person in a political party, or a person with authority 

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40 Due to the political role sometimes played by the Maronite Church, I elected to categorize them in the authoritative / official group. There are many scholars who write about the Maronite Church’s role in developing a Maronite identity under the French rule. Furthermore, during the civil war and to this day, the Maronite Church’s top clergy serve in an advisory capacity to many prominent Maronite leaders. In Maronite communities, priests and nuns play a prominent role in solving domestic issues; their role for conservative families is similar to that of a marriage counselor, or mentor in the West. They are respected figures people go to for advice.
working for the government. The aim behind this group was to create a category for someone who was expected to give a ‘canned answer’ all-the-while not discounting their voice. The authoritative group was carved separate owing to the expectation that a certain answer was ‘forced’ upon the participant, a certain narrative that the government wished to portray; as such, and in order not to discount or silence their voice, this group was created to be separate from the others.

Although the aim was to have 10 participants from each group, the participants from this group were cut at 4. Even though there were a total of 6 authoritative voices in my research, the official ‘authoritative’ participant count remains at 4 because two of the ‘authoritative’ voices were family friends, and due to the close rapport with the participant they were slotted in the ‘older’ category. The reason there is a distinction between them is that, due to the weak rapport with the 4 authoritative voices who were strangers to me before the interview process compared to the 2 authoritative voices who were more familiar to me, I elected to then make the distinction that the authoritative / official group would remain a group within which I categorize those with authority who I was not familiar with. These 4 authoritative participants were participants who I got to interview by going through the proper channels, and not by having a relative reach out to them for an interview; as such, the distinction further separates these individuals as authoritative figures than the two ‘friendlier’ authoritative figures whom I categorized under the older group.

The second group is what I call the older group. These participants are individuals who lived before, or during, the civil war and remember it vividly. These
participants offer me lived experiences, and oral histories of Beirut as well as the
Maronite identity and community of the time. In total, there were 11 participants from
this group. Two of the participants are hybrid participants in that they are categorized in
this group but could at the same time be categorized under the authoritative group; as
explained earlier, the distinction for the two participants whom I categorized under the
older group is that they are family friends and they were not reached through official
means. Because I am familiar with these two participants, and due to the strong rapport
that pre-dated the research opportunity, I elected to categorize them in the older
group; this allowed me to keep the authoritative group as a voice for Maronites who
serve in an official capacity, and whom I reached by proper, and official channels.

The third group is my younger group. This group is made up of participants who
were born after the civil war and do not remember what it was like before. This group
helps me understand the influence of Maronite memory on a generation that did not
have a lived-experience of the sectarian civil war. How, then, does this generation view
the segregated neighborhoods of Beirut? How do they perceive the imagined
boundaries created by the generation before them? Furthermore, this group is
important because they have lived in a time where Muslims and Christians are starting
to intermingle again; a fact they were eager to share. This group offers contemporary
experience of urban life and Maronite identity uninfluenced by direct experiences of a
sectarian civil war. As such, it enables me to compare and contrast between the
Maronite participants who lived before, and during the civil war. For example: while
most of the participants in the older group did not appear to have Muslim friends, many
of the younger participants in the younger group appeared to have Sunni and Druze friends.\textsuperscript{41}

From the understanding that all previous lived-experiences have a way of making their way into current practice, I believe that the various groups I have carved out within the Maronite community afford me a maximum variation sampling for the short two months I was in the city. With the participant groups detailed out, the aim of this research was to have 10 participants in each group. With 10 authoritative figures, 10 older, and 10 younger, I felt like I would have a broad enough sampling group with which I can work with. In the end, I did not quite reach my goal and ended up with 24 participants with my time in the field.

In summary, there were 4 'authoritative' persons I interviewed, 11 categorized in the 'older group' and 9 in the `younger' group. The participant pool was selected from different districts of Beirut and different neighborhoods so as to gain different insight into how different places and spaces shape Maronite identity. With the different interviewees in each group, and heterogeneity in their residence and / or place of work, the intent was that the oral histories being recounted, and memories being shared, would be diverse enough to illustrate their different lived experiences.

I anticipated to conduct a recorded interview with every member of my participant pool. In the end, all my interviews were recorded except for two

\textsuperscript{41} While the older group lived in segregated neighborhoods that still appear to this day, many of the younger group participants meet people from other ethno-religious groups (largely Sunni and Druze). Although none of my 9 participants did appear to have Shi’ite friends, it is too small a participant pool to assume that Maronites in general do not have Shi’ite friends. It is also important to note that they met their Sunni and Druze friends in universities and that they are not their neighbors.
participants. One divulged sensitive militia movement information from the civil war and wished for their voice to remain anonymous; they felt like they could be identified and wished to remain anonymous — I was, however, given consent to take notes during the interview. The other participant was a civil war veteran and current military officer; I conducted a 2-hour interview with them, however I was not allowed to audio record, or take any notes.

The end-result, therefore, was 24 interviewed participants: 22 of whom gave consent to be audio recorded, and 23 for hand-written notes. Through this method of qualitative inquiry, I anticipate being able to portray a meaningful account of the role of urban places, and urban social landscapes, in processes of making and informing Maronite identity before, during and after the civil war of 1975. By comparing and contrasting the lived experiences, and oral histories of the older and younger group, I analyze how the urban social geography changed; furthermore, I aim to make note of the generational differences immerging between the older Maronite generation and the younger generation that has had more social encounters with the ‘other’. By describing and analyzing their lived experiences, I am able to discern the differences between the urban social geography before the civil war of 1975, and what it's like now.

Moreover, in the process of conducting my interviews, I made sure to ask all three groups (the authoritative, those who experienced the civil war, and those who do not) on what they saw, or felt, Beirut was like before the civil war (See Appendix A: Questions 7-14): Was it always segregated? Did the neighborhoods always have an ethno-religious identity? What I aim to do with this information is create new maps. My
Maronite participants' memories and stories enabled me to draft 3 maps that illustrate Beirut from a Maronite perspective: A Beirut as a result of the Maronite community's imagined geography. Furthermore, the maps I have drafted will be more peculiar concerning the different ethno-religious neighborhoods and districts.

4.6 Data Analysis

Due to the wide range of concepts and social constructs I anticipated to show in my data, I broke down the lived experiences into 'themes' and then analyzed these relationships categorically. First, with the recorded interviews, I began by translating and transcribing. Next, I color-coded the different 'themes' that seemed to be recurring. What color-coding allowed me to do is not only simplify my comparing and contrasting of the lived experiences, but also facilitated a system where I can simply look for yellow highlighting, for example, — which is the color I have chosen for Maronite 'identity triggers' — and quickly contrast it to other yellow highlighting from a different interview. Another example would be the Maronite Church and red highlighting. Any time an interviewee discussed the Maronite Church and its role during the civil war or in modern-day urban life, the transcribed lines were highlighted red. With this color-coding, I then analyzed, compared, and contrasted all the related themes.

4.7 Ethics

I expected to encounter requests to hide participants' identities due to Maronites' resentment of Hezbollah's growing influence in the country and the fear
among a few in the Maronite community to speak against this powerful political group (Mostly those who lived extremely close to al-Dahiya or had government jobs).

Therefore, ultimate discretion and a multitude of steps had to be undertaken when conducting interviews and interactions with the authoritative group. For example, I interviewed a Maronite politician and it took 37 days before I was granted an interview with them: they had to inquire as to “who sent me” and the “end-goal of my information gathering” was. Furthermore, as an 'insider' to this community, I had to make the familiar unfamiliar, and that is where the member-checking I mentioned earlier came in. For member checking, I revisited the participants I had spoken with a transcribed copy of the interview. The aim was to receive approval to use the information given to me; through this, I was able balance out inherent bias and assumptions by getting the go-ahead from the research participant. The information portrayed henceforth represents the meaning intended by my participants since they signed off on it.

Finally, risk of privacy for fear of retaliation was an anticipated risk that my participants had to undertake. For this reason, they were given the choice to choose a pseudonym, or remain completely anonymous. Due to Maronite animosity against 'the other' and animosity towards other Maronites who do not feel the same way, anonymity was a top priority for me concerning my research participants. As such, even if they elected to use their regular name, I chose a pseudonym for them when I mention them in this article. The benefit, as I see it and as my participants have said to me, is that by feeling safe, they felt that by getting their voice heard and getting their thoughts and
ideas out there, they were making their voices heard. In this thesis, I did not use anyone’s real name. I used either the participants’ chosen pseudonyms or names that I made-up to hide the participants’ identity.

4.8 Limitations and Contributions

As stated previously, one limitation considered was the time constraint. I was in the country from June 8th to August 11th and two months is not nearly enough time to accurately understand the processes informing Maronite identity. Although an official census has not been done since the 1960s, I estimate that there are around 900,000 Maronites because Maronites are the biggest Christian denomination in Lebanon and 30 participants cannot accurately portray a population that size. The U.S. Department of State (2013) and the Lebanese Information Center (2013) put the Christian population at around 1.3 Million in 2013.

Furthermore, with Beirut being a place and space with contested memories, it should be noted that although from a Maronites' perspective, their way is the right way and it is the authority behind their imagined geographies, sense of belonging, and transgression; it should not be seen as the 'only' way. It should also be noted that there is not ‘one’ way even within the Maronite community itself. Moreover, there are Shi’a, Sunni, and Druze and 14 other officially-recognized ethno-religious groups in Lebanon who could contend and dispute the version of events recounted to me by the Maronite participants. This does not mean, however, that to each respective person, their own recollection is not an honest and 'true' recollection. I understand that the different
recollections are influenced by lived experiences, oral histories, and memories of place. In spite of these limitations, however, I do believe that this thesis offers a meaningful analysis of Maronite identity.

With my research, the aim is to introduce processes of identity making for Beiruti Maronites to the field of cultural geography. The processes of identity-making for Maronite identity is complex: many events, places, and spaces across a spatio-temporal scale have had an effect on this community. By reporting on Beiruti Maronite identity, I aim to introduce a new platform through which one can study this ethno-religious minority of the Middle-East. Furthermore, following Roy's (2009) argument, my research is not applying a Western or a Global North concept to an Eastern culture; rather, as someone who is a member of that culture, I am reporting on my own community on the processes that make us unique.

Beirut's current urban segregation is studied very little. It is studied even less so in connection to Maronite identity. When studied, however, it is often examined through a geo-political lens. Maronite identity, and especially the Maronite community of Beirut is often not addressed. Therefore, my contribution is in the form of an ethnographic narrative that will illustrate this community through an urban studies perspective. Bearing in mind that political, cultural, and religious sentiments will be expressed, I would re-iterate the possibility (and probability) that all these different concepts can, and probably are, inter-connected. I believe strongly that understanding
Maronites is a first step to mending the rift that exists between the different ethno-religious communities of Lebanon.
CHAPTER 5
BEIRUT – A CITY REBORN

“The war divided us all, no matter the religion.”

- Robert, a Lebanese Army veteran.
  Interview with author, June 2016

Take a stroll down the streets in downtown Beirut and you might find yourself walking right above the previous 6 incarnations of Beirut; you will peer at history that is thousands of years old beneath the glass covering the ancient ruins. Cross the street and talk to people sitting at cafés about what is underneath the glass and someone is sure to liken Beirut to the phoenix bird from Greek mythology. The story told is that Beirut was reduced to ash 7 times, and 7 times it has been rebuilt. Like the phoenix, it is a long-living city that rises from the ashes. Another story you might hear is a play on phonetics whereby the phoenix is associated with Phoenicia – the land of the Phoenicians. As this legend goes, the Phoenix bird is named after the Phoenicians. The reason for it is the association between a certain red-purple dye discovered by the Phoenicians in a conch shell, and the supposed red-purple color of the Phoenix. “Like the phoenix, Beirut was destroyed and burnt to ash 7 times in history, and 7 times it has risen back up” a young participant, Sari, told me. Since the end of the Lebanese civil war, Lebanon’s cities

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42 In ancient Greek mythology, the phoenix is a bird that reincarnates from the ashes of its previous death.
43 The same is applicable in the Arabic language where Finiqya (Arabic: فنيقية; translation: Phoenicia) sounds remarkably similar to Tayr al-Finiq (Arabic: طائر الفينيق; translation: Phoenix Bird).
and towns have segregated themselves to the point where different municipalities, or urban districts, can be identified as predominantly Sunni, Shi’a, or Maronite. This process of establishing cantons during the civil war – the creation of semi-autonomous districts in urban Beirut – has translated into modern-day segregated neighborhoods. This incarnation of Beirut, therefore, is a fractured Beirut: it is a Beirut born out of sectarian differences; a reality made possible as a result of nostalgia, memories, counter-memories and contested memories, boundaries, and belonging.

The first recorded destruction of Beirut occurs in 140 B.C., a result of a conflict over the throne of the Seleucid Empire. The second ‘destruction’ is more cultural than physical in nature: it happened in 64 B.C. when Beirut was conquered by Pompey and assimilated into the Roman Empire; as a result, architecture more ‘Roman’ in nature was built. The third destruction came in the mid-6th century after an earthquake leveled the city; as a result of the Roman Empire’s occupation, the reconstruction efforts resulted in a more Roman urban landscape. In 635 A.D., Beirut was destroyed again, this fourth destruction was both physical and cultural. After the Arab conquest, a more Arab-looking architecture replaced Beirut’s Roman landscape. Beirut was destroyed and rebuilt a fifth time during the times of the crusades as a result of a battle between the Crusades and the Abbasid Caliphate. The sixth rebirth of Beirut occurred slowly throughout the Ottoman period where, for 600 years, Ottoman architecture increasingly influenced the urban landscape. The seventh reconstruction came about after the 1920s, when after the French colonization, the urban landscape morphed from Ottoman
design and influence to a more Western, French, architecture. This seventh reconstruction, is something Maronites and Christians are thankful for. When Maronite speak of the French occupation in comparison to the Ottomans, they are quick to point out that the French built schools, hospitals, roads, and railroads; in comparison, they tell you that the Ottomans only ever “took” and never “gave.”

One might argue, however, that Beirut has actually been reborn 8 times if we take into consideration the urbicide that occurred as a result of the 1975-1990 civil war (Fregonese, 2009). This 8th reincarnation of Beirut is one with a schizophrenic identity: It is not a Beirut with a singular identity, but rather a city with multiple ethno-religious identities attributed to the multiple neighborhoods that were carved during the civil war. These neighborhoods of today are a remnant legacy of the sectarian cantons that divided the city, during the civil war, along ethno-religious lines.

This chapter will examine the role of Beirut in the processes of identity making for Beiruti Maronites. As noted by my participants, the civil war created a lived experience that became embedded in the physical landscape of the city. When talking to the older participants, they would reference specific parts of the city and some of the events that occurred there during the civil war; furthermore, many of the shop-names are direct references to civil war events or status. The lived experience of the civil war, therefore, influences modern every-day life in Beirut through imagined geographies and

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44 There is another, more mythical legend that goes: Beirut has historically been destroyed by two earth-splitting earthquakes, a fire that burnt the city, a Tsunami, and three times by conquering armies. This, also, when added, is a total of seven times.

45 As noted by my participants, the 7 ‘reincarnations’ of Beirut were not always a result of destruction. Some of the ‘incarnations’ point to a change in architecture and culture. For example: the Ottoman architecture during the mid to late-1700s; or the influence of French culture after the 1920s.
inherited memories of place. Events that occurred during the civil war are attached to modern-day streets and landscapes; in turn, these streets and landscapes illicit memories and emotions from the local populace.

The quasi-reconciliation after the end of the civil war in 1990, in the form of the Ta’if Accord, serves to reinforce the ethno-religious identity associated with the neighborhoods. The sentiment usually echoed by my participants usually was somewhere along the lines of: My family fought and died for this neighborhood during the civil war. It is ours and they (the ‘other’) do not belong (physically, or culturally). A civil-war veteran who wished to remain anonymous for safety reasons had this to say: “As Bashir Gemayel once said, we (Christians) are the saints of this East and its devils, we are its cross and its spear, we are its light and its fire. We can burn it to the ground if they burn our fingers, or we can enlighten it if they leave us be.” The participant used this Bashir quote when we were discussing Beirut, saying afterwards: “We would have burned Beirut and Lebanon to the ground before we let them dictate its identity.” This line of reasoning, then, echoes what many scholars have said about the civil war: it was over the identity of Lebanon, and whether it started with sectarian undertones or not, the fact is that towards the end of the civil war, it very much carried sectarian undertones.

Today, more than 25 years after the end of the civil war, Maronites still demarcate ‘our neighborhoods’ and their ‘neighborhoods,’ and the parameters that designate the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ are the very same ethno-religious sentiments passed down from the civil war generation. Furthermore, these lines, for the most part, mirror
the imaginary borders drawn up by the sectarian militias during the civil war. In modern-day Beirut, the locals still refer to an Eastern and Western Beirut – a designation originally referring to anything east of the Green Line, and anything west of the Green Line. As my participants, and Maronites in general refer to them, there was al-
Gharbiyyeh (Arabic: الغربيّة; translation: The Western (Beirut)) and al-Sharkiyeh. Where once Eastern Beirut was a canton of Christian militias, and Western Beirut a canton of Muslim militias, the Lebanese people still refer to Christian and Muslim neighborhoods of Beirut in this manner: A Christian, Eastern Beirut, and a Muslim, Western Beirut.

Although there is officially only one Beirut, among the people there are two different Beiruts.46

The Civil war of 1975 fractured Beirut and demarcated the different cantons that were created then into modern-day neighborhoods segregated along ethnic and sectarian divides. These divides were further entrenched by a violent sectarian civil war that lasted 15 years, between 1975 and 1990. During the war, a battle line stretched from the north to the south of Beirut. The Green Line, as it came to be called (Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010; Shlay and Rosen, 2010), did not originally demarcate an Eastern Beirut and a Western Beirut as people of different ethno-religious backgrounds lived on both sides of the Green Line.

As the civil war prolonged, however, the Green Line separated Muslim militias, primarily based in Western Beirut, from the Christian militias who were primarily based in Eastern Beirut. The ethno-religious militias, in their fighting across the Green Line,

46 One might also argue that there are many Beiruts. A Sunni Beirut, a Shi’a Beirut, a Palestinian Beirut, a Maronite Beirut etc...
embodied the competing rhetoric of power, territory, and identity (Davie, 1994; Chakhtoura, 2005; Fregonese, 2009) which resulted in two very-much homogenous sectors that served to further reinforce the sectarian undertones the civil war was increasingly spiraling into (Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010). Fregonese writes: “Beirut’s wartime built environment [...] played an active part in the socio-political reimagination of the entire city and of the political spaces beyond it” (Fregonese, 2009, p. 317). As a result, Beirut became a city with multiple competing identities; every neighborhood carried the identity of its most dominant ethno-religious group.

Figure 5.1: This picture illustrates the Muslim – Christian Green line. Professors Møystad from the University of Beirut and Ludvigsen from Østfold College used newspaper articles and clippings from the time of the Lebanese civil war to piece it together. The solid dark-green line marks the Muslim – Christian divide while the light-green highlighted areas mark the contested areas – if we look closely, we can see that the highlighted areas area all to the left (or west) of the green line. (Møystad and Ludvigsen, 1995).
Maroun, a civil war veteran, described the Green Line to me saying: “Originally, the Green Line was the highway that lead to Beirut’s only sea port. Both sides fought for control of the highway because controlling it meant controlling the entrance and exit to the port, and by extension controlled the incoming and outgoing ships and shipment. After a few years of it being the frontlines where Muslims were on one side and Christians on the other, the highway and the buildings were mostly abandoned. Eventually, trees and brush started sprouting and covering the cement and so it is why we call it the Green Line.” As Maroun notes later on: “Originally the Green Line existed between the Palestinian militias and the Christian militias; then, it divided Beirut between Christians and Muslims. But as the war went on, and with the intervention of Syria and Israel, there was also a line that began to form separating Sunni neighborhoods from the Shi’as’. As the Shi’as increasingly migrated into Beirut from the south, they also began to congregate amongst themselves. Today, while the divide may be lessening between Christians and Sunnis, there is a divide between us and the Shi’as; and a divide between the Sunnis and the Shi’as.” Although Hezbollah (Shi’a) and Amal (Shi’a) are staunch allies with Syria, it was not that way during the civil war. Syria supported the Palestinians (Sunni Arabs) and helped arm them against the Shi’a of Hezbollah, but not Amal.

For a majority of the younger Maronite generation, their histories and memories of the civil war are derived from the older generation’s lived experiences. These memories, in turn, create imagined geographies whereby socially or spatially distant

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47 Maroun, a Maronite who considers himself part of the Lebanese Force’s constituency today had fought against them in the civil war. Maroun fought with the Druze of Kamal Jumblat.
parts of the city are represented in ways that express fear and discrimination. Generally speaking, however, these imagined geographies are influenced by the previous generation’s oral histories, memories, nostalgia, and forgetting. In essence, the imagined geographies, influenced by ethno-religious identity and its consequences during the civil war, create memories of place that further reinforce confessional identity.

In the context of Beirut, memories of place influence identity because historical events that happened to your ethno-religious group play a major role in who you are, and how others perceive you. Robert, a participant who was in the Lebanese Army during the civil war, says: “I had Muslim friends before the war took extreme sectarian tones. At one point, the different parties set up checkpoints around their districts and neighborhoods. At these checkpoints, they would check your I.D. card; at the time, the cards had your religious identity on them. If they stopped at our checkpoint, or if we stopped at theirs, there was a possibility of kidnapping. I remember my friend Ali, a Shi’a I played soccer with. I had to pull strings and get him an I.D. card that said his name was Georges and that he was a Maronite so that he can come to my neighborhood safely.” It is memories like these, like the one recounted by Robert, passed down to the next generation, that serve to reinforce memories of place and confessional identity. Ali was there when I met with Robert the second time to confirm the data gathered from the initial interview. We had coffee on the balcony, and Ali and Robert shared stories of times crossing the checkpoints back and forth with the fake IDs. Ali used to be Robert’s neighbor before the civil war, but he now lives in al-Dahiya. Robert’s neighborhood is
predominantly Orthodox Christians with some Maronite families; Ali’s family migrated during the civil war to a Muslim neighborhood in Eastern Beirut.

5.1 Contested Memories in Beirut

One of the negative traits attributed to confessional memories of place and imagined geographies is that they are inherently disputed and contested. Different people have different versions, a result of the lack of civil war education in schools which is due to the inability of decision-makers and educators to agree on what really happened. For example: If a Maronite and a Palestinian discuss certain events from the civil war, their recollection will be different, perhaps even contradictory; that recollection influences who they are as a people because their version of history stems from the lived experiences of their ethno-religious groups. In turn, this results in two version of events, theirs and the ‘other.’ By extension, it creates their perception of the self, and the perception of ‘the other.’ It does not, however, mean that one version of events is truer than the other, it is just the fact that the perception of the event is different; and if the perception is different, the event itself therefore comes to be viewed in a different light.

The events of April 13th, 1975 that sparked the 15-year war illustrate this difference: Maronites blame Sunni Palestinian militants, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, for the church massacre on that day because they saw a car plastered
with PLO posters and flags fire at Kataeb members. In contrast, Palestinians deny the allegation: consider the PLO shot at the churchgoers, why retaliate on an entire refugee camp? Palestinians therefore reject the accusation that they were the reason for sparking the civil war of 1975. The church attack in Ain el-Remmaneh resulted in the death of four Maronites belonging to the Kataeb party that day, and the Maronites responded with an attack on a nearby Palestinian refugee camp with as many as 30 Palestinian casualties. Many similar violent events occurred during the civil war, and the memory of those places undoubtedly influences the identity of the community and the individual.

Contested memories are not exclusive to a Christian narrative as opposed to a Muslim narrative. As I learned in my interviews, there were memories and counter memories within the Christian community as well. The most prominent one described to me by those who experienced it came towards the end of the civil war when Christian militias turned on each other. There is a period of 2 years, between the Ta’if Accord and the end of the war, where a series of clashes occurred between loyalists to the Lebanese Forces and by extension Dr. Samir Geagea, and those loyal to General Aoun. Geagea loyalists, who were members of the Lebanese Forces call this period *Harb al-ilgha’*

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48 For Maronites, when they talk about Palestinians, they usually lump militant Palestinians in refugee camps and refugees as one. Very rarely do Maronites distinguish between militant Palestinians and refugees; this mentality, however, is changing with the younger Maronites who do make the distinction.  
49 There is also a third version circulating amongst non-sectarian Maronites and Palestinians who say the Palestinians had nothing to do with the attack, but that it was rather an attack orchestrated by Syrian loyalists who plastered PLO logos and slogans on the vehicle used in the church attack in order to spark a conflict between Christians and Palestinians. Syrian president Hafez al-Assad cites the Christian – Palestinian conflict as a security concern and therefore justifies the Syrian occupation and military presence in Lebanon.
(Arabic: حرب الإلغاء; translation: War of Elimination) in that Aoun was waging a war to eliminate the opposition; at the time, in January 1990 Aoun had ordered the Lebanese media to refrain from using political titles when referring to those elected into office the under Ta’if Accord. Consequently, the participants I talked to who were loyal to General Aoun at the time, or make-up part of his party’s constituency today, refer to the same clashes as *Tawhid al-Boundouqiyeh* (Arabic: توحيد البندقيّة; translation: Unification of the Rifle).

Today, the major rift within the Christian community is between the Christian supporters of General Aoun and the Free Patriotic Movement, and the Christian supporters of Dr. Samir Geagea and the Lebanese Forces. As I mentioned earlier, this rift stretches back to the end of the civil war and the 2-year period between the signing of the Ta’if Accord and the last day of the Lebanese civil war. General Aoun, who had been exiled before 2005, is an ally of Hezbollah and Amal – both predominantly Shi’a political parties. Together, the Free Patriotic Movement, Hezbollah, and Amal, makeup the March 8th Alliance: a pro-Syria, pro-Iran coalition. Their name comes from their demonstration on March 8th, 2005, prior to the Cedar Revolution that was meant to show solidarity with Syria and to thank them for their efforts in ending the Lebanese Civil War. It should be noted, however, that General Aoun and his supporters – in 2005 the Free Patriotic Movement was not an official party yet – were part of the March 14th Alliance at the time because Syria was the main force behind his exile to France. General

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50 This was in a bid to consolidate power. At the end of the civil war, the National Pact that had been verbal up to this point, had been penned into the Ta’if Accord amending the constitution, requiring that the Prime Minister be a Sunni Muslim. General Aoun, however, was not Sunni, nor Muslim. He was a Maronite, and with the absence of an elected president had declared himself Prime Minister.
Aoun had fled to the French Embassy towards the end of the civil war when Syrian troops sieged the presidential palace in Baabda, Mount Lebanon.

The March 14th Alliance was formed in 2005 as a response to the assassination of Sunni Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri; an act that prompted the Cedar Revolution and the removal of Syrian forces from Lebanese soil. The March 14th coalition’s most significant achievement, in my opinion, is not the removal of Syrian forces from Lebanon but rather it was the first time in the history of Lebanon that Christian, Sunni Muslim, and Druze parties were all allied and working towards one common goal – although this would later fall apart. At the time of the demonstrations, Dr. Samir Geagea was imprisoned in the Lebanese Ministry of Defense – accused and convicted of bombing a church in 1994. Many of Geagea’s supporters claim that this was a fabricated attack to imprison Geagea and sideline the Lebanese Forces. From 1990 until his arrest and conviction in 1994, Geagea had resisted the Syrian government publicly, and resisted participating in what he termed a ‘puppet government’ while Syrian troops remained on Lebanese soil and influenced Lebanese politics.

Many civil war veterans I interviewed who were part of the Lebanese Forces during the war argue that it is impossible for Geagea to order the bombing of a church because the whole reason the Lebanese Forces fought during the civil war was to protect Christian identity in Lebanon and the Middle-East; it therefore wouldn’t make sense that Geagea would order the bombing of a church. My participants argue that the dissolving of the Lebanese Forces – now a political party – and the arrest of Geagea and his advisors and deputies are proof that Syria, through the Lebanese government,
wanted to silence any opposition. In 1996, Amnesty International (1996) issued a report confirming what many of Geagea’s supporters argue. The report claims that Geagea’s trial and his conviction were unjust and politically motivated. The report’s main reason is that Geagea was acquitted of the church bombing but was convicted of maintaining a private militia, arms, and bombs in the aim of overthrowing the Lebanese government – an accusation that the report found no basis for (Amnesty International, 1996).

The amnesty deal protecting the warlords of the civil war was therefore voided and Dr. Geagea was imprisoned until the massive demonstration of March 14th saw him released from jail and General Aoun return from France. Originally, the March 14th Alliance’s major parties\textsuperscript{51} included the Future Movement – a Sunni political party led by Rafiq al-Hariri before his assassination, but later picked up by his 2\textsuperscript{nd} son and current Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri. Alongside the major Sunni political party were the Free Patriotic Movement (Aoun supporters, not yet an official party), Lebanese Forces, Kataeb, National Bloc, National Liberal Party, Independence Movement – all predominantly Christian parties. Jumblatt’s Progressive Socialist Party was also allied with the March 14th Alliance.

The main political parties today are the same as they were during 2005, except the allegiances have shifted. As I have mentioned, General Aoun and his supporters are allied with Hezbollah while Dr. Samir Geagea and his supporters are allied with the Future Movement. Christians who are anti-Hezbollah therefore perceive General Aoun

\textsuperscript{51} I designate the parties ‘major’ because although there are many more parties officially recognized in Lebanon, all the ‘major’ parties I mentioned have had one or more representative in parliament between 1994’s elections and the most recent elections in 2018.
as a traitor owing to his alliance with Hezbollah. Part of my interview process was a panel of four civil war veterans; four people who support different political parties. Maronites who fought against General Aoun and his supporters during the civil war, and who are against him today, argue that he is allied with the enemy. Their logic stems from their argument that Syrians oppressed and kidnapped Christians and silenced oppositions, and today by virtue of allying with Syria’s allies, he is legitimizing their behavior and offering political cover for Hezbollah’s operations – something that Christians who are not supporters of General Aoun are completely against.

The other side of this disagreement is the alliance of Samir Geagea and the Lebanese Forces with Saad al-Hariri. By extension, General Aoun’s supporters and the Free Patriotic Movement argue that Samir Geagea is enabling the Saudi vision for the region and Lebanon with his alliance with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the 4-person panel, a Aounist supporter levied an accusation against the Lebanese Forces supporter saying: “What about all the trips your master takes to Saudi Arabia? Every time he disagrees with Saad al-Hariri he packs up his bags and flies to Saudi Arabia and then comes back calm and amicable.”

One memorable quote from the panel that all participants seemed to agree on is the idea that Christians are more divided than their counter-parts. The echoed sentiment was that the Shi‘as have two main political parties: Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah’s Hezbollah and Nabih Berri’s Amal. The Sunnis also have two main political parties: Hariri’s Future Movement and former Prime Minister Najib Mikati’s Majd Movement. The Druze, as well, have two main political parties: Walid Jumblatt’s Progressive
Socialist Party and Emir Talal Arslan’s Lebanese Democratic Party. The Christians, however, have many more and the result is that there is much more disagreement within the Christian community than there is within any other ethno-religious community in Lebanon. This thesis has mentioned Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement party and Geagea’s Lebanese Forces. Other major Christian political parties include: the Gemayel family’s Kataeb Party, the Chamoun family’s National Liberal Party, the Eddé family’s Lebanese National Bloc, the Moawad family’s Independence Movement, and the Sakr family’s Guardians of the Cedars.

As you may have noticed, I designated the families associated with various political parties because the Christian political parties hand down leadership of the party within the family. Many of these political parties are based in one town or another, and the political leader is also head of the most influential family in their respective town or district. I argue that this is another failure of Lebanon’s consociational democracy: when political elite are charged with keeping the peace (read: keeping your own constituency in check), it inadvertently promotes the “hand-off” of leadership to your own political party within the family and the cycle simply repeats itself. The elections, if there are any, are merely symbolic; as evidenced by the Kataeb’s more recent leadership elections: party leadership that did not support Sami Gemayel in the election was weeded out. As a result, the Christians have many more political parties than their respective counterparts and, generally speaking, the constituency of the political parties tends to be local Christians from said town or district. The only exceptions to this rule are the two major Christian political parties: Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement, and Geagea’s
Lebanese Forces, who tend to have popular Christian support throughout Lebanon as a whole – as well as Shi’a support and Sunni support from their political allies.

Memories and counter memories, therefore, are not exclusive to two different ethno-religious groups; rather, it is possible for them to exist within the same group. Furthermore, these clashes played out in Beirut as well; Beirut’s Christian neighborhoods, therefore, came to embody memories and counter-memories. To this day, many Christian families remain torn as a result of the final two years of the civil war. Robert, who had talked earlier about obtaining an I.D. card for his friend Ali, told me: “My own uncle did not come to my father’s funeral. He did not pay his respects to his own brother because one had pledged loyalty to Aoun, and the other to Geagea. That is the reality for many families. Brother not talking to brother. The war divided us all, no matter the religion.” Robert continues saying that his mother moved out of central Beirut towards the suburbs because the city’s physical structures reminded her too much of the war’s events. Robert’s mom, who sat with us the first time around, says that the same street will have different meanings to two different people if they are both looking at it from opposing sides. “Like Robert told you, brother was killing brother. If their children revisit the same street today, they will not have the same version of events. One’s father had died and the other had killed. They might not agree, but both stories are true.”

Imagined geographies and memories of place, in Beirut, have many similarities to memories and counter-memories in South Africa and Israel / Palestine. In his study of spatial segregation during the apartheid years, Hall (2006) discusses how the physical,
material, and cultural landscape serves both to create closure through common interests and to challenge by way of counter-memories. These counter-memories challenge the oral histories. As Hall (2006) argues, counter-memories inadvertently create a discourse of identity and power-dynamics. Furthermore, in the case of ‘segregated mixed cities’ in Israel and Palestine (Falah, 1996), the memories and counter-memories based on differences in ideological, social, political, and economic relations create an exclusive identity in the aftermath of ethnic violence.

The cantonization of Beirut, therefore, creates memories within a community, and a counter-memory within opposing, ‘other’ communities. Concerning Hall’s argument, however, the element of power dynamics is rendered moot here due to the fact that every ethno-religious group has its own version of events, and by virtue their own memory. The counter-memories, therefore, are not the memories of the weak ethno-religious group; rather, counter-memories are the other side of the story; the version of events as ‘the other’ recounts it. These memories and counter-memories, consequently, become more exclusive as a result of the homogenous, closed-in communities in the segregated city.

Jean-Paul, a young Maronite participant I met through a childhood friend, had this to say: “We grow up hearing one version of events and they (referring to Muslims) grow up hearing one version of events. The two versions of the civil war might, and probably do, conflict. The problem, however, is that we do not hear the other side until our version of events has been firmly established.” Jean-Paul, later on in the conversation, says that he never really delved into a deep political and religious
conversation with Muslim friends until he interacted with them more in college. Before attending l’Université Saint-Joseph de Beirut, Jean-Paul says that he never really interacted with Muslims. “Similarly,” he continues, “the other side does not hear our side until they’ve determined that their version is the correct one. This is a problem. It is a problem that there are competing histories, because every side favors their own version over the other side as the truth, which keeps us divided. It comes down to ethno-religious lines; we believe our version of events because it is what our people say happened. They believe their version of events because it is what their people say happened. We believe our version because of what their people did to us, and they believe their version because of what our people did to them.”

With the spatialization of the capital city and the subsequent manifestation of contested memories, Maronites – and conversely other ethno-religious groups – privilege a certain part of history and ignore other parts (Hall, 2006), forming cultural and political identities through particular understandings of the city’s cultural geography. As Jean-Paul described, the younger generation comes to understand Beirut’s cultural geography through the lens of the previous generation – a generation whose memories and histories are no doubt influenced by the sectarian civil war. Many places and spaces in the city are viewed through the lens of events that occurred during the civil war; mostly events of sectarian violence. These are memories and histories that resent the ‘other’ and is the issue with people having a particular understanding of place.
Figure 5.2: Many residential buildings and neighborhoods will use religious statues and symbols to highlight the ethno-religious identity of the building / neighborhood. This picture was snapped in the entrance of a residential building in Achrafieh; the statue of the Virgin Marie (in white and blue) and Saint Rafqa (in the black garb of a nun) are a clear indicator that the building’s residents were Christian.

While we were sitting, I overheard a lady speak in French with her waiter. The waiter, however, did not understand French; it was obvious by his Arabic dialect that he was a Syrian refugee. The lady knew that because although both the Lebanese and Syrians speak the Levantine dialect of Arabic, there are differences in pronunciation. So, while she was giving the waiter a hard time in French, he was telling her in Arabic that he cannot understand her. So, although she clearly understood him, she used the language barrier as an exclusive boundary.

Boundaries are everywhere in Beirut, normally they designate who belongs and who doesn’t based on primarily one of two things: either ethno-religious affiliation, or
political affiliation. Beirutis, and Maronites, like to tell the world that co-existence is the Lebanese way; many will point to the downtown Beirut area with the Sunni Muhammad al-Amin’s mosque being adjacent to the Saint George Maronite Cathedral. This might have been true before the civil war; some of my participants confirm co-existence before the civil war. This is not to say, however, that there are no neutral spaces in the city.

Martyr’s Square in front of Muhammad al-Amin mosque and the Saint George cathedral is definitely a neutral one having previously hosted demonstrations by both March 8th and March 14th political coalitions. More recently, the square saw both Christians and Muslims protest the “unity government” after events like the garbage crisis, the public-sector teachers not being paid, the protests to preserve the beaches and the mountains from commercial projects, among other things. Beyond Martyr’s square as a neutral space there aren’t many more places in the city.52

Beyond this neutral space, there are some mixed areas in Beirut are typically public spaces and rarely residential areas – except for the high income neighborhoods. Nightlife spots are public-spaces only-so-much as you conform to what has already been established as normal. There are, however, historically Muslim streets that welcome the ‘other’ – such as Hamra; conversely, there are historically Christian streets that welcome non-Christians such as Badaro and Gemmayzeh. In these mixed spaces, everyone is welcome and religious symbolism is minimal.

52 Jbeil, a town north of Beirut, is widely known and respected for being a neutral space. Residents of Jbeil will tell you that while Lebanon was torn apart during the civil war between Christians and Muslims, the inhabitants of Jbeil didn’t allow the divide to seep into their town.
There are many such examples in the city, recently, with Shi’a attending church in Mar Mikhael, and al-Dahiya decorating its streets for Christmas. On the other side, many Christian politicians have taken to congratulate and offer holiday wishes to Muslim politicians during their holidays. Government offices are also mixed spaces; the offices close for Christian holidays and Muslim holidays. Similarly, universities are also mixed spaces that close for Christian and Muslim holidays; more importantly, however, universities are usually the first space in which many Maronites encounter the ‘other.’

While many universities hold hardcore student body elections that are heavily influenced by national political parties and sectarian slogans are shouted, they are nonetheless an officially neutral institution that welcomes everyone. Université Saint Joseph is the primary example. Three of my younger Maronite participants attended this university and it is there that they first encountered Druze and Sunni Muslims with whom they became friends. Although U.S.J. is officially Christian, it welcomes students from all faiths – as long as you can afford the tuition.

It is easier for institutions, however, to be neutral or mixed spaces because historically many of them do not hold sectarian or confessional identities. Streets like Hamra, Badaro, and Gemmayzeh, however, are more important in the sense that they offer real evidence of mixed spaces in an area historically affiliated with one ethno-religious group or another. It is the youth that drives this intermingling, many of whom hang out with friends from different ethno-religious groups in the street cafés and restaurants along the sidewalks in Hamra, Badaro, and Gemmayzeh. Downtown Beirut, as well, having generally been contested territory during the civil war, is today home to
Marty’s Square – a square meant to commemorate everyone; its restaurants also welcome everyone with no religious symbolism other than the Muhammad al-Amin mosque and the Saint George cathedral towering overhead offering hope for solidarity to a post-conflict society.

Preconceived ideas about a people or a place, typically are the result of, or result in, historical tensions; in the case of my research, confessional and ethno-religious tension is manifested in the segregation of the city.\(^{53}\) This segregation is not made any easier by the confessional political system employed in Lebanon that constantly reinforces ethno-religious identity. Memories of place are bound to imagined geographies through belonging. The sense of who belongs, and who does not belong, in certain places involve memories of place because it is in place that disputed narratives and contested memories collide. Renée, an interior-design student I interviewed used churches and bell tolling to illustrate belonging. “I know I belong in a place, and that it is safe for me when I see decorations for Christian holidays and know that I can hear the [church] bells toll during the holidays and on Sundays,” she said. “I have a friend who lives in a predominantly Sunni town, and although they have a church, you do not feel like you belong there because they do not put up decorations for our holidays, and they are scared to toll their church bells to call for mass. But if you look at Christian areas,

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\(^{53}\) The animosity from the Christian lady towards her Syrian waiter is not rare. A majority of Christians in Lebanon hold animosity towards the Syrian people; they blame them for the actions perpetrated by their government. It is often repeated when Syria is mentioned that they kidnapped thousands of Christian youth during the civil war. I remember when I was young myself, my parents often told me to cover my cross in public when I was alone because it was not safe to signal that I was a Christian; at the time, Lebanon was occupied by Syria and there were Syrian checkpoints outside the city.
you know you belong because you can feel the holiday spirit and you are called to prayer by the tolling of the Church’s bells.


**Figure 5.3**: In June of 2008, an armed confrontation occurred between Hezbollah loyalists and the Lebanese government and citizens. Hezbollah occupied Western Beirut for three days before tensions eased. The Lebanese government, at the time led by Sunnis, March 14th Christians, and Druze, had elected to shut down Hezbollah’s (Shi’a) communication network. The government had officially declared the communication network, outside of the Lebanese defense network, to be illegal. This picture in the denotes the old Christian – Muslim Green line, and the emerging Sunni – Shia line my participant Maroun had mentioned. (Shadid, 2007).
Figure 5.4: This picture taken in Ras Beirut shows a Stop Solidere sign hanging from the St. Georges hotel. The Solidere Project is usually attributed by Maronites as being the brainchild of Gulf-Arab and Sunni elites. It is perceived by many Maronites as encroachment by Sunni elite onto historically Maronite neighborhoods.

5.2 Illustrating Beirut from a Maronite perspective

This section of this chapter will examine how Maronite identity is experienced and played out in the representations, memories, and understandings of the cultural geography of the city, with a specific focus on what role, if any, the civil war of 1975-
1990 played in processes of identity making. During my interview process, I discussed at length with my participants the ethno-religious nature of various Beiruti neighborhoods. Similar to Renée’s example, Beirut’s neighborhoods have different ethno-religious identities based on who lives there, and the symbols and boundaries demarcated by the occupants; for example, are there churches or mosques? Are there Christian symbols or not? What are the names of the local shops? What language are the signs? What political symbols / slogans are displaced on balconies and on the sides of buildings?

Based on my interviews, and discussions I had during my trip I elected to draw two maps that would illustrate ethno-religious Beirut. The data gathered for these two maps stems from my interviews with 24 Maronite participants. Throughout the interview process, I spoke with both older Maronites, and younger Maronites about the different neighborhoods of Beirut and how they perceived the identity of these neighborhoods to be. For the maps, I compared and contrasted the information given to me about pre-1975 Beirut and contemporary Beirut after the civil war. It should be noted that both maps are a depiction of the city from a Maronite perspective, and in some cases the illustrated neighborhoods do not reflect the reality of the city; the illustrated maps are Beirut and its neighborhoods from a Maronite perspective. After I present my pre-civil war and contemporary maps, I use el-Chami’s (2013) illustration of the city to compare and contrast her objective data with the Maronite perspective. One of the major topics of contention between the Maronite perspective and the reality of the city are going to be the neighborhoods of Zaqaq el-Blat, Bachoura, and Mar Elias.
Figure 5.5: An illustration of pre-civil war of 1975 Beirut from a Maronite perspective. The pink neighborhood is known as the “American” neighborhood.
The pre-1975 civil war map depicts Beirut with the Green Line dividing it. The different neighborhoods are not the official neighborhoods / districts of Beirut. I designated the borders on the neighborhoods based on the information I received from my participants. For example, if an interviewee said that “an area is Maronite from here to here” then I drew my borders from where the person pointed, to where they said the certain population ended. Because I interviewed 24 participants, many of the borders did not align from one interview to the next; in these cases, I drew the border along the general consensus of my participants.

What is immediately clear in looking at the pre-1975 map is that Sunni Muslims dominate Western Beirut and that Christians dominate Eastern Beirut. Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Western Beirut are the ‘old families’ of the city as both communities descend from merchant and business classes who migrated to the city during the Ottoman Empire when Beirut’s port was a major trading hub. Moreover, in Western Beirut we can see that Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Sunni Muslims lived with each other while the Maronites did not. In the map, it is evident that Maronites were near the port, and towards southern Beirut; they occupied their neighborhoods almost exclusively without the presence of any other ethno-religious group.

Maronites were not the original Christian population of Beirut; in fact, many of the Maronites in Beirut would tell you that their family roots are from out-of-the-city towns. Many Maronites, after the events of the 19th century, fled to coastal cities like Beirut. Maronites live in the city because it offers better jobs, and schools, than the
towns their family is originally from. Eastern Beirut, in comparison, on the other side of the Green Line is almost exclusively Christian in nature. There are two major changes, however between this map and the post-civil war contemporary map. First, is the presence of what my interviewees termed the American neighborhood. Before the civil war, the United States had an embassy in Beirut, and all around it were American shops and restaurants, and Americans occupied the residential area all around it. In the contemporary map, the embassy and the American neighborhood are not present – after the Beirut embassy bombing, the American embassy closed, and the closest American embassy was in Damascus, Syria. Today, the American embassy is once again in Lebanon, however it is in Awkar, Mount Lebanon, in a Christian district that is very pro-West, anti-Hezbollah. The other notable difference between pre-civil war and contemporary Beirut is the complete absence of a sizeable Shi’a community before the civil war, and the Hezbollah stronghold in al-Dahiya in modern-day Beirut.

Furthermore, while there are major ethno-religious groups living in different mixed neighborhoods, what we are about to see is that the neighborhoods after the civil war become much more homogenous in nature – no doubt a result of the cantons, sectarian violence, and ethno-religious based checkpoints. Mar Elias, notable in the pre-1975 map because I marked it with horizontal Christian Orthodox and Roman Catholic markers is gone in the post-civil war contemporary map as you will see on the page 110. A residential neighborhood once predominantly Christian has become predominantly Muslim in nature as the civil war caused a migration of ethno-religious groups between Western and Eastern Beirut. When the militias established cantons during the civil war,
these pockets of influence where the various ethno-religious militias had control, many of the residents did not feel safe staying in their homes and this triggered a migration of communities from one side of the Green Line to the other. The result of this, as the illustration of contemporary Beirut from a Maronite perspective will show, is that neighborhoods became more homogenous and other than Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Western Beirut, very few neighborhoods – if any – remained where the residents were both Christian and Muslim.

In this Maronite illustration of post-1990 Beirut, the only sizable Christian population that remains in East-Beirut according to my participants are the Christian Orthodox; in comparison to the pre-1975 illustration, Maronites and Catholics migrated over the Green Line into Eastern Beirut. Furthermore, the most significant change in the city today is the major Shi’a population that migrated to south Beirut from Southern Lebanon after the Israeli invasion during the civil war. When compared to the pre-1975 map, much of southern Beirut that was once home to Maronites is now a Shi’a area; moreover, the area near the port that was previously mentioned to be exclusively Maronite is now a Sunni Muslim area. The area immediately bordering the Green Line seems to have Maronites alongside it; whether it is a Majority Maronite neighborhood, or a Christian Orthodox neighborhood with a sizeable Maronite presence. Furthermore, there is one neighborhood that needs to be mentioned and that is Zaqaq-el-Blat. Before the civil war, the neighborhood was illustrated by my interviewees as being home to a majority Christian Orthodox neighborhood, but also home to a sizeable Sunni Muslim community.
Figure 5.6: An illustration of modern-day Beirut from a Maronite perspective.
Post-civil war, and in the contemporary illustration, my participants noted that Zaqaq-el-Blat and Bachoura neighborhoods are almost exclusively Christian Orthodox in identity. Yasmina al-Chami’s (2013) work however, denotes that Zaqaq al-blat and Bachoura are low-density high-income Druze, and high density high income Sunni Muslim respectively. It is possible that my participants denoted the area to be Christian because the Christian Orthodox Patriarchy is in the area; what can be extracted from this, however, is that the Maronite recollection of the city’s neighborhoods and their identities does not always reflect the empirical reality.

When I asked Robert’s mom on what else besides sectarian violence could have resulted in the more homogenous neighborhoods, she talked to me about the urban displacement of Christians and Muslims during the civil war. She says: “al-bouyout al-mousadara (Arabic: البيوت المصادرة; translation: Confiscated, or Seized homes) played a major role, but they came as a result of the sectarian violence.” An occupied home, as Robert’s mom explained, is a home that was evacuated during the civil war because the family fled. Most often, these homes were left behind by one ethno-religious group, and then occupied by “the other.”

She explains: “Our neighbor here, in the second floor. They do not own the home, but before the civil war they lived in al-Gharbiyyeh (Western Beirut). During the civil war, the previous occupants of the home moved across the Green Line. What happened is that Christians who lived in predominantly Muslim neighborhoods crossed over the Green Line and took up residence in an abandoned home; a home probably abandoned by a Muslim family who left a Christian neighborhood to go and live among
other Muslims so they can feel safe.” What was essentially happening is that families of a certain ethno-religious affiliation were leaving their immediate ‘uneasy’ surrounding environment, and either leaving the country, or migrating to a neighborhood where their ethno-religious identity was dominant. Because neighborhoods and districts were protected by sectarian militias, families were fleeing to a neighborhood where they can safely cross the checkpoints. As such, throughout the civil war, families and households were being displaced, or leaving voluntarily, and moving into the now-vacated homes. In essence, these homes were now seized, or confiscated, by those who had now moved into a neighborhood that shared their ethno-religious identity. The house, now occupied by a family that is not the rightful owner, is now mousadar. Al-Bouyout al-Mousadara, therefore, as Robert’s mom notes, played a role in the contemporary segregation of Beirut’s neighborhoods. “It is rare,” she says, “for the previous owners to come back and claim their property.”

_Al-Bouyout al-Mousadara_ is evidence that Christians and Muslims lived in a pluralistic city before the civil war. My participants noted that many families left their homes and moved across the Green Line to a neighborhood where they felt safe. Therefore, it only stands to reason that Christians and Muslims lived with each other before the civil war. As Mona, an elder participant, noted to me: “You could go to the market on Wednesdays when they brought fresh fruits and vegetables and you couldn’t tell who was Muslim and who was Christian. There wasn’t this strong showing of one’s religion before the civil war that there is today. Many Muslim women did not veil like they do today; Muslim women played sports with Christian women. Men played sports
with Muslim men. No one wore a Hijab, and no one used a person’s religion against them. But after the civil war, both sides got more aggressive with their religion. You started to see more Islamic influence in Muslim communities, and more Christian influence in our communities. The Maronite church always played a major role in Lebanese politics, but never as openly and publicly on the television as they do today.”

She continues saying “Yes, you could go to the market or go walk on the beach and buy ice-cream or corn and butter from one of the carts and you didn’t think to yourself ‘what is he?’ or ‘what is she?’ Nowadays, you can’t go to the market anymore because there isn’t a market in downtown anymore where farmers come to sell their produce. Today, your neighborhood has a local grocery store and usually you will go to someone from the same ethno-religious group as you to shop for groceries. There are two Egyptian brothers up the street from here, yes? I think their vegetables are better than the grocery store here, but if I go and I buy my groceries from them then people in this building are going to talk about why I went and I gave money to Muslim Egyptians instead of an elderly Lebanese Christian man.”

Mona explains that Christians before the war thought of themselves in terms of Phoenicianism and Christian faith, and the Muslims probably viewed themselves in terms of Arabism and Muslim faith. “The civil war however” she says, “hardened these lines and made it so that if you were Christian, Muslims were your enemy; and if you are Muslim, Christians are your enemy. It wasn’t always like that, Muslims and Christians were far more civil with one another than we are today.” Mona finishes by saying that the civil war divided the different Lebanese communities; ethno-religious identity
became much more invasive and influenced daily life much more than before. “I am not remembering it better than it was, and I am not changing the truth. I was alive before the civil war, and maybe it wasn’t in all of Beirut where neighborhoods were 50-50, but Christians and Muslims lived with each other. The civil war changed that, families moved from one side of the city to the other to feel safe. You can see the change because you have families living in homes and they don’t have the ownership deeds for them” – Mona was referencing *Al-Bouyout Al-Mousadara*.

A resident of Ayn-al-Remmaneh, a neighborhood right alongside the Green Line, an elderly participant Badiaa told me: “There are many tales of such homes becoming the place of residence for families who were displaced; most of these families abandoned their homes in unfriendly neighborhoods, usually due to their ethno-religious identity not being shared by the majority of the other residents, and moved into other homes similarly abandoned by other families.” The result of this then became a homogenization of neighborhoods where one ethno-religious group or another became dominant as a result of ‘the other’ packing up and moving. This process then, *al-bouyout al mousadara*, undoubtedly made the cantonization of Beirut easier for the sectarian militias: neighborhoods adopted homogenous ethno-religious identities.

During the process of drawing Beirut’s neighborhoods from a Maronite perspective, there was the possibility of nostalgia and imagined geographies in the back of my mind. I looked for other research that could have possibly mapped out the ethno-religious make-up of Beirut’s neighborhoods so that I could compare it to the map I drew of Beirut from a Maronite perspective. I found Yasmina el-Chami’s (2013)
illustration of post-civil war (See Figure 5.7 below) Beirut and found it not too far-removed from the description given to me by my Maronite participants.

**Figure 5.7:** el-Chami’s (2013) post-civil war map illustrates the major ethno-religious groups in the various Beiruti neighborhoods and districts. Furthermore, el-Chami’s illustration demonstrates the neighborhoods density and economic status as well.

The only major difference is the predominantly Druze neighborhood, Zaqaq el-Blat, she has in the north-western part of Beirut. In her study, el-Chami (2013) notes that as much as 25% of the city’s population had been displaced due to the civil war. El-Chami (2013) argues that it resulted in the change of communal distribution of not only
Beirut’s neighborhoods and districts, but the whole country as well. The congregation of people among people of similar ethno-religious backgrounds spread outwards from Beirut, happening in all parts of Lebanon (el-Chami, 2013).

As Demonstrated by Figure 5.8, ethno-religious identities go beyond confessional rites and political affiliation. Ethno-religious labels are even attributed to various civic institutions. El-Chami (2013) in her research also has maps detailing Christian hospitals and Muslim hospitals in the city. What is important in relation to education systems being categorized into Christian and Islamic natures is the fact that one is preferred over the other. As demonstrated by my young participants in the next chapter, the French curriculum of Christian schools is preferred to that of Islamic schools. Whereas the Christian schools teach Arabic, French, and English, Arab “Islamic” schools typically stick to Arabic.

Furthermore, Christian schools teach STEM fields in English or French which opens the door for academic and job opportunities abroad – mainly in the United States or Europe. In contrast, with Islamic schools using Arabic to teach STEM fields, the graduating student is less competitive in the academic and job markets. Tanya, Jean-Paul’s girlfriend who sat with us during the interview, says: “the education systems also further keep us divided. It is hard to get a good salary job if you only speak Arabic – most will ask for English and French fluency on top of Arabic. With the two education systems, I can sort of understand some of their resentment.” Tanya and Jean-Paul then

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54 Jean-Paul, one of my young participants, who studied at the University of Saint Joseph graduated their Pharm.D. program with a year at the University of Texas. His degree is accredited here in the United States and allows him to work without the need to have it evaluated.
go on to explain that the system privileges Christians and the wealthy who can afford Christian and Western-oriented curriculums while public schools and Islamic schools adopt the less-desired Arabic curriculum.

**Figure 5.8:** In this map, el-Chami (2013) marks modern-day schools and universities in Beirut. It is interesting to see that the center of Beirut, and west of the Green Line, the education institutions are predominantly Islamic (with the exception of A.U.B. in the big red and white area in north-eastern Beirut). In contrast, all the schools in Eastern Beirut are Christian in nature. Most notable, however, is that there are no Islamic schools or universities in Eastern Beirut while there are a quite a few Christian schools in the western parts. It is quite possible that these schools are a remnant of the pre-civil war demographics of the city; a time when Orthodox Christians and Catholics lived among the majority-Sunni neighborhoods.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In summary, as demonstrated by the maps and my participants, Beirut’s ethno-religious segregation and heavy use of confessional identity serves to reinforce the
sectarian divide of the city, and the country as a whole. The cantons of the civil war have
given Beirut’s contemporary neighborhoods the foundation with which ethno-religiously
segregated neighborhoods exist. First, the dominant homogenous groups in
contemporary Beirut function in a way that emphasizes ethno-religious identity,
whether through symbols, language, – a process that sharply hastened during the civil
war because of ethno-religious identity being a primary cause of migration and
displacement. Examples of this phenomenon were given by my participants and my
experience when shops and restaurants were designated Christian or Muslim based on
the religious identity of the owned.

Second, language is used as a means to construct arbitrary, mobile boundaries.
As evidenced by the lady at the restaurant, and the names of places, and the close
association of French with Phoenician nationalism and Lebanese particularism, language
is used as a designator of ethno-religious identity. Pharmacies, for example, will usually
have Christian or Arab names, a signifier of the owner’s ethno-religious identity and of
who belongs and who does not belong. Furthermore, as Renée said, there are
Maronites who use churches and bell tolling as a means to designate who belongs and
who does not belong.

Third, although the Maronite illustration of Beiruti place and space might have
nostalgia and bias embedded in its recollection, it is not too far removed from el-
Chami’s objective depiction of Beirut’s ethno-religious make-up. What is significant,
however, is that ethno-religious identity has permeated educational institutions – a civic
entity that should remain secular as education is a human right. What we see, however,
as told by my younger participants, is that education is used to keep the divide amongst the younger generation; a divide further highlighted by the post-civil war depiction of Beirut that shows that neighborhoods are more segregated today. As we are about to see in the next chapter, the homogenous bubbles that make up Beirut are detrimental to the future well-being of the city and the country. Because these neighborhoods are exclusive, and because they form contested boundaries, what is happening inside is that the population is fostering the exclusive traits of their identity that separate them from ‘the other.’ There is no interaction with the ‘other.’
CHAPTER 6

REINFORCING MARONITE IDENTITY IN BEIRUT’S ACHRAFIEH NEIGHBORHOOD

“For us Maronites, Achrafieh is our constitution.”

- Maroun, a Maronite civil war veteran.
  Interview with author, July 2016

This chapter mobilizes literature that addresses identity theory, and theories of space, place, and belonging in cultural geography toward an examination of Maronite identity and processes of identity-making in Achrafieh. To recall a key argument from Chapter 2, identity is a continually evolving, and fluid process that requires an arena, or space, in which the process occurs. That space, in turn, contributes to and is also changed by that process. Achrafieh is the space and place in Beirut most important to processes of shaping Maronite identity.

The general consensus that can be extracted from my conducted interviews is that while Beirut itself does not shape Maronite identity, the various neighborhoods and districts in Beirut laden with Christian memory and nostalgia inform Maronite identity. Every neighborhood or district described to me as playing a role in shaping, or informing Maronite identity, was cited in relation to the civil war; something happened there that still influences Maronite identity in the city today. Achrafieh – a district in Beirut – surfaced in my interviews as the district that most shapes and informs Maronite
identity.\textsuperscript{55} Maronites from all three participant categories mentioned Achrafieh. Interestingly, however, Achrafieh’s role is perceived differently by the different generations.

Maronite identity appears to be undergoing a change when we compare the older generation who lived during the civil war and the younger generation that did not. The data gathered from my interviews demonstrates that the role of Achrafieh in informing Maronite identity is mainly political and religious for the older generations. In contrast, Achrafieh’s influence on the younger generation, that never experienced the civil war, it is more cultural than it is political. For example, older Maronites would use Achrafieh to talk about the civil war; perceived by many as the bedrock of Lebanese Forces ideology and support. For younger Maronites, Achrafieh is important to them because unlike al-Dahiya, you can meet foreign students who rent in local dorms, or foreigners who come down to Achrafieh’s pubs at night. The perception of Maronite youth is that you would not find this in Shi’a areas.

Achrafieh is a district with an almost completely Christian identity. Historically, it was a district of wealthy Orthodox Christians before Maronites migrated from the mountains after the events of 1860. The signs are in French, hospitals and schools have French names, and Gemmayzeh street on the weekend is arguably the prime night-life spot in all of Lebanon. A progressive, ‘othered,’ Hezbollah-voting Shi’ite may come down to Achrafieh, however attachment to place, groups, and cultures plays a role in belonging (Cresswell, 1996; Antonsich, 2010). It may be believed that a transgression is

\textsuperscript{55} See Appendix A: Questions 21; 22
not occurring; on the other side, however, a hardcore Lebanese Forces-voting, conservative Maronite will perceive the Shi’a as transgressing simply by belonging to a different ethno-religious or political party.

When I was in Lebanon, one of my best friends here in the United States travelled down to Lebanon at the same time to visit family in the south. My friend is a devout Shi’ite; in public, it is obvious he is because he wears an Imam Ali sword necklace and his wife dresses in conservative robes and a hijab. In Achrafieh, they stand out. We went out to a restaurant one night, and you could feel everyone looking over at our table. To the Christian crowd at the restaurant, my friend and his wife were transgressing simply by virtue of being Muslims in Achrafieh. The perception is that Muslims fought Christians in the civil war, and Shi’ites are political and ideological opponents of the Kataeb and Lebanese Forces political parties; their view of Lebanon’s identity is incompatible. The very fact that my friend bore his Imam Ali dagger and his wife was veiled could be perceived as offensive because they dared to do it openly in Achrafieh.

For some Maronites, even other Christians could be considered as transgressing if they are pegged to be supporters of General Aoun and anti-Lebanese Forces; in this case, the exclusion is political in nature. The Christian transgressor does not belong because it is perceived that their political ideals clash with the political ideals that Achrafieh itself represents. Transgression and belonging go beyond conformity: what place, or group, or culture do you belong to? Compared to other neighborhoods, and districts, even Maronite neighborhoods like Ayn al-Remmaneh, or Haddath, you will find
in those places Maronites who disagree politically; Maronites on completely different ends of the spectrum ranging between those who support Hezbollah, and those who view it as a terrorist organization.

Maronite youth learn about the 1975 civil war from stories that depict Christians and ‘others.’ Within Lebanon’s Christian communities there are many prominent Maronite leaders, tied to the civil war, who are revered; leaders like Pierre Gemayel, Camille Chamoun, Suleiman Franjieh, and later Michele Aoun. These leaders, at one point, believed in al-Qadiyyah (Arabic: القديّة; translation: the cause) – the fight for a sovereign non-Arab Lebanese state. The belief in al-Qadiyyah is one of the exclusive forms of political thought fostered in Achrafieh. When I asked my Maronite participants what place in Lebanon mostly informed Maronite identity, the unanimous answer was Achrafieh. Of the 28 people I asked during my field research, all 28 invoked Achrafieh as ‘the place’ that most informs Maronite identity in Beirut. For the older generation, and civil war veterans, it is because the district represents the Christian militias’ struggle for the cause. For the younger generation, it is Achrafieh’s cosmopolitan aura and its nightlife scene: the pubs and the nightclubs; it is Achrafieh’s progressive, liberal attitude that does not exist in the more orthodox Muslim parts of Beirut.

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56 Maronites who support Hezbollah are usually part the March 8th coalition; this is the modern-day pro-Syrian, pro-Iran political alliance.
57 Maronites who are against Hezbollah are usually Maronites who are independent or part of the March 14th coalition.
58 As stated in Chapter 2, the events of the 1975 are not taught in school. Therefore, the Lebanese youth comes to adopt the event through their parents’ and the older generations’ learned memories. These learned memories are inherently tinted with bias and pre-conceptions made of the ‘other’ based on civil war events.
59 Al-Qadiyyah was primarily fought for by the Christian militia groups that later formed the Lebanese Forces.
Maroun, a civil war veteran, described Achrafieh so: “You’re from America. You have a constitution. For us Maronites, Achrafieh is our constitution. You asked me what place in Beirut represents me as a Maronite, and it is without a doubt Achrafieh. Anyone who tells you different is lying. Achrafieh represents the ideas and values we fought for.” For many Maronites, the hope for al-Qadiyyah started with the young charismatic Maronite leader Bashir Gemayel and ended with him. After his death, some Maronites argue that the civil war continued as a struggle for power between the Maronite warlords and not as a struggle towards the cause. Members of the Lebanese Forces during the civil war I interviewed argue that the Lebanese resistance – as the Christian resistance was colloquially known – began with Bashir and the Kataeb party in Achrafieh and ended with him on the day of his assassination in the bombing of Achrafieh’s Kataeb headquarters two weeks after he was elected president. To this day, Maronites and Christians lament the assassination of Bashir Gemayel and talk of what could have been.

Based on the data gathered from my older participants who were members of the Lebanese Forces during the civil war, the assassination of Bashir, then the president-elect, cemented Achrafieh’s place in Maronite memory as the place that most informs their identity in Beirut. Bashir embodied al-Qadiyyah and a sovereign non-Arab Lebanon. Therefore, in the minds of the older Maronite community, his assassination was perceived as an attack on their identity and their vision for Lebanon. This memory, and the meanings it carries, serves as a means for Maronites to create the ‘other.’ It
becomes a tool through which to measure those whose values are not compatible with their Christian values and political vision.

As some of my participants put it, the ‘other’ dresses differently. Tim Box, a younger participant, says: “They (Shi’a) wear these jeans with bedazzles on the back-pockets with formal dress shoes. We would never wear something like that. I don’t have to talk to them to know they aren’t Christian.”60 The ‘other’ smells differently. Marwan, an older participant says: “they use these Arab hand-crafted colognes. If you cannot tell from the way they dress, sometimes you can tell from their cologne because it smells different.” All of my participants also agreed that the ‘other’ talks differently. My participants agreed that they can usually tell a Shi’a from their Arabic dialect; in contrast, Sunnis are harder to make-out in conversation – especially if they are educated – because their pronunciation is similar to Christians. Druze, unless from rural areas, are the hardest to peg for my participants because their pronunciation is almost identical to Christians and they tend to be educated so they are also fluent in French. The older participants also highlighted the fact that the ‘other’ eats differently, referring to Halal meat.

Achrafieh is the “Maronites’ and Christians’ socio-economic powerhouse district in Beirut. “Our political power stems from the president’s palace in Baabda, but our social and economic power rests in Achrafieh. It is our schools and businessmen that

60 Tim Box was talking about identifying male Shi’a out on the streets. For many younger participants, females were easier to identify mostly due to the hijab or the burka. My participants generally agreed that the hijab was equally worn by Sunnis and Shi’a – if it is tight, it meant the family was devout or orthodox in their faith; if it was loose it meant that the family was more moderate, and progressive. The Burka was almost always identified with Shi’a exclusively; most citing that they only see it in al-Gharbiyyeh when going to the post office or the airport.
keep Beirut a powerhouse today,” as André, a Maronite Lebanese Forces civil-war
veteran told me. Achrafieh, for him like many others, is the place in Beirut most
Maronites take pride in. As recounted by my research participants: It is the birthplace of
the 2005 cedar revolution that ousted the Syrian armies from Lebanese territory. It is
the place where Hassan Nasrallah’s authority, and the ideology of Hezbollah, does not
dare extend.61 Achrafieh is “Christian land that promotes and reinforces strong
Maronite leadership,” André said.62

As stated earlier, the district of Achrafieh was overwhelmingly cited by all three
groups of my research participants: the authoritative, the older, and the younger
groups, as the place in Beirut that played a role in informing Maronite identity.
Achrafieh, after all, is renowned for being a Christian district. Geographically, it is in
Eastern Beirut – it is therefore assumed, based on the Green Line that materialized
during the civil war, that it has a Christian population and identity. As such, this chapter
will extract personal and cultural memories recounted by Maronites in my interviews
and analyze and contextualize them in order to better understand the role Achrafieh
plays in informing and reinforcing Maronite identity. Achrafieh, therefore, will be
examined as a homogenous space that reinforces Maronite identity through communal
sharing of learned cultural memories.

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61 When asked why Achrafieh was their nominated place in Beirut that most informs, or represents,
Maronite identity, a common response was that it was a refuge from Hezbollah’s influence and ideology.
Many comparisons were made conversely by the younger Maronite generation about Achrafieh’s
progressive nature as opposed to Hezbollah’s al-Dahiya neighborhood and their ‘regressive’ nature.
62 Many of the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb’s political speeches, gatherings, and festivals are held in
Achrafieh’s Sassine Square. Achrafieh is the bedrock of support for them.
6.1 Identity

To better understand the Maronite community of Achrafieh, it is important to reiterate that Maronites trace their origins to the early fourth Century and Mar (Saint) Maroun.\(^6^3\) Every single participant affirmed that Maronites are not Arab and cite Syriac, the almost-forgotten language of the Maronites, as proof; Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, a Semitic language. To further uphold the argument that Maronites are not Arab, many of the older participants informed me that Syriac is being taught in rural Maronite churches again and that there is hope for it to be taught in schools soon; those participants even seemed to take pride in the fact.\(^6^4\) As it stands, however, Syriac is mostly used today in Maronite church liturgy and Maronite bibles. Amongst themselves, Maronites will typically speak a mix of English, French, and Arabic.\(^6^5\)

Although there is disagreement over their origin, the identity of Maronites has been an ever-evolving process, shaped and molded by navigating complex social, political, and economic variables encountered over the centuries, resulting in a complex contemporary identity. The 1975 civil war further complicates matters for the younger generation owing to the learned memories of the civil war – these memories, informing their identity, convey the bias inherent to the lived experience of the previous

\(^{63}\) This assertion was reinforced by many of my participants; some of whom even went beyond the fourth century and stressed that Maronites are descended from the Aramaic Tribes and Ancient Assyria.

\(^{64}\) As demonstrated later in this chapter, language seems to play a major role in Maronite identity; whereas Christians prefer to identity with the French and English languages, they perceive Arabic to be the language of Muslims and others (for example, the Druze). Many of the younger Maronites increasingly use English words in their communication; replacing words that previously would have been in Arabic or French.

\(^{65}\) The common joke is that a typical Maronite greeting is: “Hi, Kifak, çà va?” with Hi being an English greeting, Kifak being Levantine Arabic for ‘how are you,’ and çà va being French for ‘everything’s is okay?’
generation. Many scholars are in agreement in the fact that these two political ideologies are incompatible, and increasingly embody an ethno-religious tone and identity (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995; Sirriyeh, 1998; Firro, 2004; Kaufman, 2004; Weiss, 2004; Salameh, 2015). On the one hand, the Christians’ Lebanese particularism is an attempt at creating a unique Lebanese identity that is separate from the majority Sunni Arab majority. On the other hand, the Muslims’ Pan-Arabism has its loyalties lying outside the borders of Lebanon, aimed towards the broader identity of the Middle Eastern region, and Arab countries as a whole. Maronite youth, therefore, comes to view anyone who supports pan-Arab views as the ‘other,’ and by virtue of this fact, they are viewed as someone who is against their own political views.

Today, Lebanese society remains divided in spite of the across-the-aisle political coalitions formed by the political elite. The differences among the different ‘mansions’ have come to be reflected geographically. As discussed in the previous chapter, the effective cantonization of Lebanon, and the massive population movement between Christian and Muslim areas have hardened the lines of division and served to further highlight the differences amongst the ethno-religious groups as a form of political identity (Salibi, 1988; Kaufman, 2004; Fregonese, 2009). This image appears to be changing though, as many of the participants in my younger generation groups noted: they have more interaction with non-Christians than their parents, and as a result have more non-Christian friends with whom they communicate and hang out. Older and younger participants also noted that Sunnis, more-so than Shi’ites, are increasingly moving into their neighborhoods.
One participant, even, who wished to be identified as Sari says that he is a constituent of the Progressive Socialist Party – headed by Walid Jumblatt, a Druze. 30 years prior this would have been almost unheard of because Christians were on one side of the political isle, and the Druze with the Palestinians and Sunnis on the other. Even today, this is an extremely rare occurrence: in Lebanese politics, political parties tend to be associated with one or more ethno-religious groups based on the majority base of said political party. The Progressive Social Party, for example, tends to be associated with the Druze ethno-religious group that makes up the majority of its constituency.

As many interviewed participants recounted, Achrafieh is where the Lebanese resistance started. Achrafieh, therefore, is symbolic in that it is regarded as the vanguard for the Christians’ vision of Lebanese particularism. The interviewed participants broadly assert that the Muslims’ loyalties lay elsewhere – outside the borders of Lebanon. To illustrate: many of those interviewed contend that the loyalty of Shi’a Muslims is not to Lebanon but to Iran and their Grand Ayatollah, or to Hezbollah whose standalone militia and economy in al-Dahiya as viewed as a “state within a state.” Marwan said to me: “How can you build a sovereign nation, deserving of the 21st century, when your own civil servants are afraid to bring law and order to al-Dahiya?” The difference, he says is that “Maronites are loyal to our borders, it is true that we look outward for support but our priority is the Lebanese state. The Shi’as’ priority is their Ayatollah in Iran, and what he says, his puppets Hezbollah do.” Similarly, the same participants view Sunnis as loyal to Saudi Arabia and acting on their orders; the

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66 The majority of the party’s base is also Druze; their base is in Alley – a Druze district in Mount Lebanon.
perception is that Sunni politicians receive their direction from Riyadh. The Druze, however, which mainly the older group talked about in length, appear for them to be loyal to Lebanon; some noted that this was true only so far-in as the loyalty to Lebanon benefitted them. There was agreement among all participant categories, however, that the loyalty of the Druze community, in comparison to Sunnis and Shi’as, lay within the borders of Lebanon.

The incompatibility of the Maronites’ Lebanese particularism and the Sunnis’ pan-Arabism came to a head in 1977 when Christian militias began to target the Syrian Army who had intervened on behalf of the Palestinians in Lebanon (Salibi, 1988; Phares, 1995 Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004; Kaufman, 2014). In the recollection of the Maronites, this was the turning point of the civil war where sectarian undertones began to manifest themselves. Up to that point, the conflict had largely been confined to the Christian militias and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. During the time I spent between Achrafieh, and Ain-el-Remmaneh – the first an overwhelmingly Christian district and the second a majority Maronite neighborhood steeped in civil war nostalgia and Lebanese Particularism ideology – I got the feeling from talking to people on the street, and families of interviewed participants that the P.L.O. was the perpetrator of the civil war. The majority of my participants and people I talked to blamed the civil war on the Palestinians; the idea was that Palestinians wanted to throw the Christians to the sea and take over Lebanon since Palestine was taken from them. Once that viewpoint was echoed, the usual follow-up was that the civil war of 1975 became a pro-West
versus pro-Arab because Muslims rallied around the Palestinians against the Christians who received aid from the West and Israel.

To this day, in the eyes of the Maronite community, Palestinians are still seen as solely responsible for instigating the 15-year conflict that turned into a sectarian civil war. However, while the older interviewed participants argue that the Christian militias were set up to protect and safeguard the Christian neighborhoods and communities, many of the younger interviewed participants disputed the fact. Instead, the younger participants admitted that political aspirations, and lust for power played a role – especially when Maronite leaders turned on each other towards the end of the civil war.

Originally a small-scale conflict, mostly about the future of Lebanon, the intervention of the Syrian Army on behalf of the Palestinians, and the involvement of Iraqi and Libyan mercenaries, painted a sectarian background to the war. Maronites in the interviews argue that the Syrians intervened on behalf of the Palestinians in order to prop up their neighboring Muslims; a fact that did not sit well with the Catholic Maronites. Achrafieh, therefore, is seen as the birthplace of armed resistance that fought to preserve Maronite and Lebanese identity; it is “the pride of the Christian resistance in Lebanon” and the reason Christians remain in the Middle-East according to André, a Maronite civil war veteran participant.

Achrafieh, because of its ties to Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Forces, is therefore depicted as a district that fought for the Christians’ Lebanese particularism. This idea of Lebanese particularism resurfaced time and again whenever I interviewed a
veteran of the civil war’s Christian militias, or a participant from a known Lebanese-Forces neighborhood. As Elias, one former member of the Lebanese Forces told me, 1977 marked the start of a “pre-emptive war to protect Christian identity against the Muslim, Pan-Arab movement. We felt that they wanted to throw us in the sea and take over. We defended ourselves.” For many Maronites the civil war extended beyond politics. To Elias, Achrafieh was the “beacon of hope because no enemy was able to break us there until one of our own assassinated Sheikh Bashir.”

The Maronite memory of the civil war, therefore, is a struggle to protect their existence and identity against a pan-Arab ideology they believed threatened their way of life. “We fought for our way of life, a Christian way of life and that of Christian values,” Elias said. “We never tried to force them to come to our restaurants and drink alcohol, or spend the night smoking and listening to loud Western music. But we saw their (Muslims) pan-Arab ideology as a dangerous regressive step towards forcing us to conform to their way of life.” Elias, from the mountainous village of Batroun – a predominantly Maronite village – moved to Achrafieh shortly after the civil-war fighting began. By his own admittance, he had become an atheist and resented the Christians and favored the secular socialist parties but the death of his father steered him back

67 It was not as strong a focal point when the participant was part of the Lebanese Army as opposed to the coalition of Christian Militias – known as the Lebanese Forces.

68 Bashir Gemayel was sometimes referred to as Sheikh Bashir – owing to his Family’s heritage and political prowess in Lebanon’s Bekfaya town. Many political leaders are referred to as Sheikh, a remnant of the Ottoman occupation that charged political elites in keeping their ethno-religious groups in check.

69 Many Maronites cite the harassment of Restaurants open during the daytime in the holy month of Ramadan; they argue that if this happens when the powers are balanced, what would happen if the scales were tipped in favor of the Muslims over the Christians?
towards his faith and the cause. He joined the Kataeb political party’s militia before it merged into what later became the Lebanese Forces. “The cause,” he says “reignited the fire of faith in me. I joined the Lebanese Forces when I saw with my own eyes Christians being captured at checkpoints for the only reason that their I.D. cards showed they were Christians. We were fighting for our faith, and our way of life and in these parts of the world the two are one and the same.”

**Figure 6.1:** The Lebanese Forces cross is usually seen spray-painted around Beirut’s conservative Christian neighborhoods. Usually those closely associated with the Lebanese Forces. In Arabic under the cross, it reads: “So that our church bells may keep tolling.” Originally the symbol of the Lebanese Forces, it has since been replaced at the request of the Maronite Patriarch. At the time of its conception, however, the cross had three main meanings: First, the cross was a representation of the militias’ Christian faith; it is red to honor the martyrs who died for the cause. The second meaning of the cross was an illustration of Jesus Christ carrying the cross – an illustration of Eastern Christians’ suffering for their faith throughout history. The third, and final, meaning of the cross is the cut at its base – it signifies that Christians will remain planted / rooted in this region.
Jean-Paul, and a group of his friends, mirrored a viewpoint similar to Elias when they collectively argued that they do not have an issue with Muslims coming over to Achrafieh as long as they assimilate. “How can you tell that someone is Muslim if they dress like you, and they are dancing, and drinking, and smoking? You cannot, and it does not matter what their religion is when they share the same values and lifestyle as you,” Jean-Paul Said. “The problem is when they come over, 10-15 of them on motorbikes and they play loud Hassan Nasrallah speeches and Hezbollah glory songs and start harassing you because of your lifestyle and different political views.” The problem, therefore, for Maronite youth as opposed to the older generation, is concerning the idea of who belongs and who doesn’t belong. Unlike the older participants, they do not care about the ‘other’ coming over to Achrafieh, even if they were not Christian, as long as they assimilate and act as they do. The problem, for Maronite youth, is with the ‘other’ coming over and attempting to force a way of life, and political ideology, upon them; this, then, reflects what Elias was talking about earlier when he mentioned his fear of Muslim ideology that would force him (and by virtue the Christians) to conform to a more conservative, Arab way of life.

Memories like Elias’ and countless others who were members of Christian militias and who believed in their cause, are powerful forces cultivated by lived experiences, and emotions (Johnson, 2003; 2012; Hall, 2006); these memories were passed down from one Maronite generation to the next. The strong identification of Maronite identity with Achrafieh further exacerbates these memories because Maronite youth is constantly reminded that Achrafieh is where the Christian resistance and its
ideology began, and this creates a type of pride, and pressure, to live up to such a legacy; there is a pressure to safeguard Christian identity and pride in the fact that, according to the older Maronite participants, Lebanon remains one of the only countries in the Arab world where Christians are not persecuted. In contrast to Elias’ recollection of Achrafieh’s role in safeguarding Christian values and way of life, Maronite youth appeared to echo a similar viewpoint of Achrafieh.

As one participant noted: “At least in Lebanon, Christians can build, repair, and maintain churches unlike the Copts of Egypt. At least here we have a voice, not like the Assyrians and Chaldeans of Iraq.” These are the stories Maronite youth grow up hearing. The problem with these stories, however, is that they depict the Christians on one side, and an aspiring oppressor in the other. This matter is further exacerbated by the simple fact that Lebanon is a post-conflict society, so although there exists a ‘self’ and an ‘other,’ there also lingers a sense of distrust and resentment between them; sentiments further exacerbated by the homogeneous neighborhoods where there are no competing counter-memories.

For the younger generation, however, these memories further complicated their navigation of daily-life because unlike their parents, they have daily public encounters with people from other ethno-religious groups: whether it’s at school, university, or out in public. As a majority of my younger participants noted, it is difficult or awkward for them when their parents first learn of the ‘other’ nature of the friend coming over; the immediate parents’ reaction is to ask where they are from because by knowing the town, or neighborhood they are able to guess the person’s ethno-religious identity and
the severity of the political and religious beliefs. This, in itself, serves to highlight the
importance of ethno-religious identity because it is usually the first thing parents want
to know, according to my young participants. These civil war memories and bias
adopted from lived experiences, or learned experiences, work as a sensory cue that
provides certain feelings or emotions. In day-to-day public encounters with ‘the other,’
the memories instill a deviation from normative thought processes (Drozdewsky et al.
2016).

I asked Jean-Paul if he would mind if a Muslim came to his residential building
and he answered: “it depends. We have a Muslim neighbor now on the 5th floor but you
can’t really tell. Their children go to our schools, they speak French, and they dress like
us. I don’t mind Muslims moving to our neighborhoods if they act as we do.” Other
younger participants also echoed similar sentiments, the general consensus of Maronite
youth was that they don’t mind Muslims moving to their neighborhoods as long as they
conform and assimilate. Jean Paul’s girlfriend was sitting with us and she agreed. “Like
Jean-Paul said, I don’t mind if they live like we do. I have to tell you, however, that I
think we would have a bigger problem if a Shi’a family moved to our neighborhood
compared to a Sunni family. Shi’a families tend to be a lot bigger, they usually have
more children and the neighborhood here is quiet and clean. If you’ve ever been to
Dahiya to get to the airport, or to get to the post office, you would know that Shi’a
neighborhoods are not quiet, and they’re not clean. I think Shi’a moving to our
neighborhoods would disrupt our way of life. Not religion, and not politics, but just the
way of life would change if they move to our neighborhood.”
An important note here is that Jean-Paul, being a resident of Achrafieh, lives in one of the wealthiest districts in all of Beirut. When I was in Lebanon, the square meter in Achrafieh was selling for $3,200. I note this because the Muslim family that Jean-Paul mentioned is wealthy, otherwise they wouldn’t be able to afford being their neighbors on the 5th floor. The relevance of this is important because the distinction between wealthy and educated Muslims as opposed to uneducated Muslims is an important one. When my Maronite participants mentioned educated Muslims, they meant Muslims who attended private French or American schools and not the public Lebanese schools. Being educated meant being articulate in French and English beyond the spoken Arabic. Being educated, and being wealthy, therefore come hand-in-hand for Muslims because those who are wealthy can afford the education my participants talk about; those who aren’t moderately financially set, are unable to afford the schools that would classify them as educated.

Both Jean-Paul, and Tanya have friends who are not Christian. Jean-Paul’s best friend is Druze and he met him at the Lebanese American University in medical school. Their favorite hangout spots with their friends are in Gemmayzeh or in Downtown Beirut: both places where it is really hard to tell the ethno-religious group a person belonged to – unless a religious symbol was displayed, for example: a rosary around the neck, or a hijab. In Gemmayzeh, Jean-Paul, Tanya, and their friends usually hang out at Coup D’état – a really hipster spot that doesn’t play Arabic music and has European beer. The food at Coup D’état is also foreign, the menu contains items like Mac and Cheese, Tacos, and Nachos. The place isn’t exclusive to anyone in particular; not on the
surface. Gemmayzeh, itself a street in Achrafieh, by virtue embodies much of the imagined geographies that outsiders would attribute to Achrafieh. Although it doesn’t exert boundaries and symbolisms that actively exclude anyone, its nightlife inadvertently does.

Coup D’état, although it has no religious symbolism or political connotations, excludes those who aren’t able to read the Latin alphabet. Coup D’état’s menu is in English. A person educated in what Maronites call “Muslim schools” – Arabic curriculum schools – does not learn English or French; the Latin alphabet is therefore foreign to them and they are unable to read it. Coup D’état does not refuse service to anyone, it however excludes those who are unable to afford a French or English private school. This is a major problem for many of the “inclusive” places where you find it hard to identify the ethno-religious group a person belongs to.

Public places where mixed ethno-religious groups hang out tend to welcome those who are “educated” and exclude those who are “not.” Generally speaking, the wealthier a participant was, the less likely they were to be more exclusive in their beliefs. The wealthier, and more educated a person was, the more they were willing to accept the ‘other.’ Perhaps it is because they are progressive in their thinking, with most of them having been educated in the United States, France, or England. Or perhaps it is because they do not follow the politicians and religious orthodoxy as closely as the middle-class and lower-class do. It is the less- ‘educated,’ and the less-financially stable who tend to be more bullish in their political views and more orthodox in their faith.
Financially stable, and wealthy youth, therefore tend to be more open to the idea of ‘mixing’ with other ethno-religious groups and tend to have more friends from other-ethno-religious groups than their less-educated, less-financially stable counterparts. A main reason for this is because those ‘other’ friends have the same lifestyle they do; they do not feel out-of-place when they visit them, and nothing is disturbed. The conception about who belongs and who doesn’t belong, for Maronite youth, is about who can assimilate and conform. Maronite youth, in comparison to their parents and the older generation, do not weight religious identity as heavily as the previous generation; what matters to them is compliance with their way of life and integrating rather than disturbing what is already there. In Lebanon, socio-economic class is a strong actor in determining this as the important of religion and politics diminish as the socio-economic status increases.

A young interviewee, Tim Box told me: “Religious, political, and cultural identity in Lebanon [are] one; very hard to draw a line between them. Identifying as one, automatically tacks on an assumption of the other two unto you. Many who lived the civil war will ask you where you are from so that they can assume your ethno-religious identity.” The idea that religious, political, and cultural identity intertwined in Lebanon was unanimous amongst the participants. In Achrafieh, it is no different: if you were to tell someone that you were from Achrafieh, they will assume that you are either a Maronite, a Catholic, or a Greek Orthodox; that your political affiliation is for either the Kataeb or Lebanese Forces; and that you adhere to “Christian values.”
The process of discovering and defining who, or what someone is, is heavily influenced by political ideology as “societies, or groups within [these societies], strive for some coherent identity” (Johnson 2012, p. 240). In many cases political memory is (re)created through stories passed on from generation to generation about a certain place, or certain people. Tim Box identified this as a problem, noting that the civil war is not taught in schools. “We never learned about the war in school,” he said. “I grew up in Achrafieh and you know what that is like. Everyone is always talking about them (Muslims) around 8 O’clock news and what could have been if Bashir did not die. I did not even ever really talk to Muslims until I went to A.U.B. (American University of Beirut). I had Muslim and Druze friends in school but groups of friends tended to consist of mostly people who shared your background. Most of my friends now are either Muslim or Druze. I just feel like both sides misunderstand each other because of the civil war stories that both sides grow up hearing from their parents and communities. Growing up in Achrafieh especially, it would probably be different growing up in a neighborhood that is not so richly steeped with Christian history and that is not predominantly made-up of one group.”

Thus, although an individual may not have personal lived experience with an ‘other’ or a place, they subconsciously hold and reinforce certain prejudices based on these political memories (Said, 1979; Maalouf, 1984; Slyomovics, 1994; Chakrabarty 1996; Slyomovics, 1998; Gregory; 2004; Kaufman, 2004; Mills, 2008; 2010; Neyzi, 2008; Larkin, 2010; Johnson, 2012); or in Tim Box’s case, interact with the ‘other’ and create their own political memory. According to Johnson (2012) this is known as a ‘trained
memory’ (p. 237). A trained memory, he says, is an “instructed memory; [a] forced memorization enlisted in the service of the remembrance of those events belonging to a common history which are held to be remarkable, even founding, with respect to the common identity” (Johnson, 2012, [p. 237).

For Maronites, the civil war is a particular trained memory through which one may explore Maronite identity. As Tim Box mentioned, the 1975 civil war is not taught in schools; neither in Achrafieh’s Christian-dominated, private French-curriculum schools, nor in its shunned, (considered) sub-par, public school Arab-Curriculum. Thus, everyone in Lebanon, and in this specific case the Maronite youth of Achrafieh, adopts an instructed, trained memory from their parents. Maronite youth, therefore, is taught this civil-war memory and its meaning from parents who, in all likelihood, still hold a certain prejudice from their experience of the violent sectarian civil war. The fact that this Maronite youth is relatively isolated by growing up in Achrafieh further intensifies the effects due to the history of Achrafieh, its memory, and what it stands for. Moreover, although Achrafieh is homogenous in the sense that its population is almost exclusively Christian in nature, it is heterogeneous in the sense that not all Christians are of the same denomination, or political affiliation. The Christian Orthodox of Achrafieh, for example, are viewed as the original inhabitants and the ‘old money’ who welcomed the Maronites who sought refuge after the events of the 19th and 20th century. As such, Achrafieh seems to be homogeneous on the surface, but is very-much heterogeneous on the inside with different Christian sects and denominations. Although Maronite

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70 Evidenced by their asking where someone is from when they are invited over.
youth frequently interacts with the ‘other’ in places like Gemmayzeh street in Achrafieh, there is a strong pushback by the older generation.

Although there seems to be an immerging change in ideology about the ‘other’ between the older participants, and the younger participants, the older generation does not believe that Achrafieh will change anytime soon. Maroun, the civil war veteran who claimed that Achrafieh is the constitution of Maronites says: “We are prohibited from selling our houses to Muslims. The Maronite church has requested that Christian families stop selling our homes to Muslims so that they do not invade our neighborhoods. There are some families who will sell to Muslims, but they will do it quietly because they do not want to admit that they are accepting Muslim money. I do not blame them, some of them may be in tough spots. I understand that these buyers are coming with a lot of money from Iran and from Saudi Arabia. Christian families may not admit to doing it, but how else do you explain Muslims moving into our neighborhoods and houses where Christian families used to live?”

Maroun goes on to explain that this cannot happen in Achrafieh however. “But they will never come here,” he says. “If they are strong supporters of Hezbollah, or their ideology does not align with Achrafieh’s they will never move here. Achrafieh is more than just a residential neighborhood. Achrafieh is rich with Christian history and Christian ideology; them moving here would be like me moving to al-Dahiya or to Tripoli. I would never move there because all the mosques, the history, it is not mine and Achrafieh is not theirs.” Elias, who became an atheist but rediscovered his faith and joined the Christian militias during the civil war says: “They don’t dare step foot in
Achrafieh. They can move to any neighborhood they want, but not Achrafieh. They know they aren’t welcome here so why would they move here with their families?”

I took a taxi cab ride once from where I was living with my grandmother to meet Jean-Paul, Tanya, Timbox, and their Druze friends at Coup D’état. We drove past a balcony that had a General Aoun poster hanging from the rails; and I remember the taxi driver saying that he wished the resident didn’t live there. If the resident was a supporter of General Aoun, then the resident did not belong in Achrafieh. The mere act of him displaying a General Aoun poster, an ally of Hezbollah and by extension Syria and Iran, is an insult to the martyrs of the Lebanese Forces and those who died resisting Muslim militias and the Syrian Army during the civil war. If the driver’s sentiment was that way towards a Christian, then it is not at all strange for residents of Achrafieh who are strong supporters of Christian identity, and Phoenicianism, to be opposed to Shi’a moving to their neighborhoods.

In Achrafieh, however, there is no ‘other’ competing argument, debate, or contest regarding the matter. The older generation would see a sizeable Muslim migration as a disruption to the neighborhood. If there are Muslim residents, Sunni or Shi’a, they are a relatively small number, or they have assimilated and are hard to point out. The narrative of Achrafieh, therefore, remains unchallenged: it is whatever the older Christian generation says it is. In the pursuit of a common ‘Maronite’ identity, many of the events and incidents related to Achrafieh will be recollected, within the Maronite community, in a way that creates and reinforces one common history, the Maronite history. This Maronite history then works to create a Maronite identity which
contests, and disputes the “other” history and identity – that which is recounted and embodied by the other.

The problem with this, however, is that Maronites are divided between themselves.  

During the civil war, and prior to the consolidation of the different Christian militias into one force known as the Lebanese Forces, there were the Cedar Guardians, Ahrar, Tanzim, and the Kataeb. In order to consolidate these different factions, the future Lebanese Forces conducted many heinous acts to bring them around, including an infamous massacre of Ahrar members who refused to join them. In the interest of preserving the common ‘Maronite’ memory of the Lebanese Forces and their integrity, this event was usually omitted by many Maronites I interviewed.

Achrafieh Maronites who were typically members of Kataeb’s armed wing before joining with the umbrella group known as the Lebanese Forces seem to omit this fact. Although I knew about the event going into this research, Marwan, a veteran of the civil war but the only Ahrar member I spoke to, was the only one to tell me about the Safra massacre. He recalls Ahrar militiamen being killed in order to coerce Camille Chamoun (Political leader of Hezb al-Ahrar) and his son Dory Chamoun (Leader of Noumour al-Ahrar, the armed wing of Hezb al-Ahrar) into merging with the Kataeb

71 Just as there can never be one Maronite identity, there is no “one” political vision amongst the parties today either.
72 In general, the only difference and reason for the different Christian militias is that everyone was established locally in different parts of Lebanon before they were later coalesced into the Lebanese Forces. Ahrar and Tanzim were the two born out of Beirut; Ahrar in Achrafieh and Tanzim in Dekwaneh.
73 Known as The Safra Massacre, the tragedy is regarded as a major reason among my participants, both the older generation and the new generation as the chief reason for the rift between the different Christian parties – Many lost loved ones on the hands of other Christians during this consolidation, and they hold resentment for the other side to this day. For example, many of the Aouni constituents I interviewed cited the Lebanese Forces killing one of their own for their political choice.
under the banner of the Lebanese Forces – an act that would consolidate two of the most prominent Christian militias in Beirut.\textsuperscript{74}

Conflict, and hence the competing memories and counter-memories, tend to be embedded in a disputed place or territory that was central to an ethno-national conflict (Nagel, 2002; Neyzi, 2008; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010; Bakshi, 2012) Furthermore, segregation as a result of past conflicts intensifies many aspects of memory, to include forgetting and nostalgia (Neyzi, 2008; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010; Bakshi, 2012). The borders that bound the space within which these memories manifest become a borderline that not only reflects a division between differing political opinions, but also the divided paradoxical national identities (Kaufman, 2004).

The Safra Massacre, therefore, is an example of competing memories and counter-memories. This event can also be viewed in terms of Bakshi’s (2012) ‘forgetting.’ The event itself is not discussed in a nostalgic manner; it is omitted completely by Lebanese Forces veterans and is therefore a form of forgetting rather than nostalgia. Achrafieh, therefore, a district of Beirut where the Lebanese Forces are revered, is a place where the Safra Massacre is omitted completely because it reflects a negative light upon the legend and reverence with which the older generation talks about its Christian militias – mainly the Lebanese Forces.

I went into my research expecting nostalgia to surface when Achrafieh’s Maronites discuss what life was like before the civil war.\textsuperscript{75} I also expected forgetting to

\textsuperscript{74} The rarity of Ahrar members, as I encountered it, stems from the divide that occurred during the civil war. Those who pledged loyalty of the Lebanese Forces refer to themselves as such, while those who remained loyal to the Chamoun family refer to themselves as Ahrar members.
materialize as well, but I expected it to be in the form of the ‘other’ and not within the Maronite and Christian community. The Lebanese Forces militiamen omitting the Safra massacre, thus, caught me by surprise; it became apparent that there not only is a division between different ethno-religious groups in the form of memories and counter-memories: there were opposing memories, and counter-memories within the homogenous Maronite ethno-religious group as well. When pressed about the Safra massacre, one Lebanese Forces veteran, Joe, claimed that the “Ahrar militiamen were not really Christians because they were dealing drugs out of the ports; they were ‘thugs’ and deserved it.” As a result, this leads to the conclusion that there was a designed Christian identity and you were not a Christian if you deviated from it. This divergence in identity then, no longer exists exclusively between Christians and the other, but rather it exists amongst Christians as well. In essence, although the ethno-religious groups of Lebanon tend to view the ‘other’ ethno-religious groups as one homogenous group, the truth of the matter is that every ethno-religious group has diverging identities within it; a Maronite from Beirut’s Dekwaneh neighborhood is not the same as a Maronite from Achrafieh’s neighborhood. The reality, however, does not echo this truth. In reality, there are stereotypical assumptions and presumptions tacked on to the different ethno-religious groups without careful consideration that not everyone who falls within every group is the same.

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75 See Appendix A: Questions 7;10
6.2 Imagined Geographies and Belonging

Many participants interviewed expressed the view that Achrafieh, in contrast with al-Dahiya, is civilized due to the Orthodox Christians and Maronites’ sophistication, their ability to articulate the French and English languages, as well as their socio-economic status among other things (Said, 1979; Harvey, 2000; Matejskova and Leitner, 2011). There is the common-held belief that Achrafieh is better than the neighboring Beirut districts – except for maybe Solidere; the French hospitals, schools, and roads (Fawaz, 1984) make up a physical landscape that Maronites are so proud of. It is a Western-influenced landscape and therefore it is taken for granted by the Maronites who consider it to be better than the public hospitals and schools of al-Dahiya. As such, it is imperative to understand that the colonial history plays a role in the imagined geography and belonging of Achrafieh.

Many of the monuments and names in Achrafieh are either French or Christian in nature; the physical landscape therefore works to reinforce Maronite belonging and the exclusion of the ‘other.’ Of the participants with whom I spoke, all of those from Achrafieh relied heavily on the French language to articulate their thoughts. French, in Lebanon, is seen as the language of the elite and is perceived as a status symbol when spoken in public. In Achrafieh, however, hearing French while out in public is common.

Most notable of the colonial heritage in Achrafieh is the French Embassy in the Badaro neighborhood; one of the few embassies not in the downtown district.

76 A strongly cosmopolitan, intricately planned residential and business district in the northern parts of Beirut funded by Sunni Arab-Gulf money.
77 A common recurring theme amongst the participants was that anything Western was better than anything local.
Achrafieh’s residents take pride in that; they see themselves as the conduit between the French government and the Christian community in Lebanon. The prestigious Grand Lycée Franco-Libanais, a French-curriculum school: another example of the French colonialist heritage ever-present in Achrafieh. It is operated by La Mission Laïque Française. Headquartered in Paris, the mission of this organization is to spread secularism and the French language. Furthermore, a diploma from the Grand Lycée is recognized and accepted in France as much as any diploma granted by a French educational institution. Like many other private schools in Achrafieh, it is based on France’s education system – a system privileged by both public, and private institutions, over the Arabic-curriculum employed by the majority of public schools.

Another example of the French colonialist heritage is l’Université Saint-Joseph. Built in 1875, it is a French-curriculum university located on Rue Monnot (Monnot Street). The street is named after the Jesuit priest who founded the university: Father Ambroise Monnot. A street intersecting Rue Monnot is Rue Huvelin – named after French law historian Paul Huvelin who founded Université Saint-Joseph’s law school. For many, Rue Huvelin is the stepping stone from which the 2005 cedar revolution took off. Many of the Maronites who vividly recall recent events – participants who are well older than my generation – argue that the student movement out of Rue Huvelin, in Achrafieh, against the Syrian occupation during the 90’s is what led to the massive 2-million demonstrators on March 14th, 2005. “Young people, mostly educated university students would protest there. Many of them encountered unjustified shootings, tear gas, and firetrucks with water hoses during the Syrian occupation,” one participant,
Tanya, said of Rue Huvelin. “Some were kidnapped and never seen again,” she finished.

Other examples of French colonialist heritage in Achrafieh include: Avenue de l’Independence, the avenue taken by French troops on their way out of Lebanon after the country declared independence in 1943 and Collège de la Sagesse – an international French university.

French is not the only foreign presence per se in Achrafieh. American schools have been all the rage in Lebanon lately. Some of the newer private schools in Achrafieh follow a more American curriculum where the concepts of ‘elective’ classes, and lockers are new; but none are Arabic-based, a system typically adopted by Lebanon’s poorly-funded public schools. Achrafieh does not have a private school where Arabic is the primarily language of education – English, and French languages take precedence. In pre-school (referred to locally as Petit Jardin and Grand Jardin), students enrolled typically learn the Latin alphabet even before the Arabic alphabet – an evident legacy of French colonialism and its after-effects amongst the Christian communities in Lebanon (Fawaz, 1984; Salibi, 1988; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004). Maronites learn their math and sciences either in English or French; depending on the school’s curriculum and the university they plan on attending. For example, the American University of Beirut uses English in its classrooms while Université Saint-Joseph uses French.

As many of my interviewees said, the difference in language further separates them from the Arab identity (Fawaz, 1984; Salibi, 1988; Sirriyeh, 1998; Kaufman, 2004).

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78 My use of primary language in this context is that French or English are the languages in which students learn STEM fields in school. Although Arabic is learned as well, it tends to be confined to literature, grammar, poetry and dictation. French and English are also taught in terms of literature, grammar, poetry, and dictation; but depending on the school, one of the two is used to also teach maths and sciences.
Marwan, the Ahrar militiaman, told me: “Why should my kids learn Arabic? We are not Arab, and we are not Muslim. I want my children to learn the language of their ancestors. The language our ancestors were forced to forgo in public in fear of paying the jizya (Arabic: الجزية; meaning: a tax that was historically levied by certain Islamic states on non-Muslims). Why should we speak their language and forego ours?”

Another reason for it, mentioned often by the interviewed youth, is as simple as landing a job. According to them, it is almost impossible today to get a job in the government’s public or in the private sector without being fluent in three languages: English, French, and Arabic; especially in Achrafieh they say, where the average person is more educated than other parts of the city and knowing all three languages is the standard and nothing special.

As demonstrated then, many of the physical urban landscapes and landmarks in Achrafieh serve as an homage to French colonialism – a crucial aspect of Maronite identity in Achrafieh. Many of the participants with whom I conducted interviews articulated gratitude towards France’s colonialism and the schools, hospitals, and railroads which they built. The connection to France is rather evident when even the word ‘street’ is in French. In the examples cited above, many of the streets use rue to reference a street – the French word for street. In Arabic, the word for street is cherih (Arabic: شارع); it is therefore interesting that many streets in Achrafieh are named Rue Huvelin, Rue Monnot, Rue Gouraud instead of Cherih Huvelin, Cherih Monnot, or Cherih Gouraud like they would in other parts of the city. As such, it is evident that there is a

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79 80 years ago, during the French Mandate, these institutions gave a significant advantage to the Christians. Beirut, at the time, was still emerging as a cosmopolitan and global capital.
strong rejection in Achrafieh for the Arabic language. Compare this to a Maronite-dominated Ain-el-Remmaneh neighborhood where people use the word *cherih* to denote a street as opposed to *rue*.

Therefore, in Achrafieh, not only is the French word for ‘street’ used, but the names of the streets themselves serve to rebuke against Arab heritage and Arab identity. Among the Maronite community, and all of my participants, there is an agreement in that religious, political, and cultural identity in Lebanon is one – they intertwine and interconnect to the point that a religious identity is synonymous with a certain political and cultural identity (Hall, 2006; Makdisi and Silverstein, 2006; Mills, 2010). This sentiment echoed by them is true in the sense that “what happens in our house, stays in our house,” meaning that there can be disagreement between the one ethno-religious group but there must be agreement when addressing the ‘other.’

As stated earlier by Tim Box, it is very difficult to draw a line between religion, political, and cultural identity in Lebanon; and the assumption that falling within one category automatically determines your status in the other categories is valid. As such, the use of French names for the streets, of French priests and lawyers and generals inadvertently rebukes the Muslim association that comes with the Arab heritage by virtue of their embodiment of Christian, European, colonial, and anti-Muslim representations; Huvelin, Monnot, Gouraud, all French Christian figures whose names are used to simultaneously honor the work their namesakes did for the Maronite and Christian communities and rebuke the Muslim Arab heritage; the ‘other.’
Although many of the Maronites were quick to praise French colonialism, it should be noted that the French did privilege their ‘civilized’ Christian kin of the Middle-East (Said, 1979; Fawaz, 1984; Harvey, 2000; Kaufman, 2004). The preference by the French shown towards Christians fueled Muslim resentment. As mentioned earlier, physical landscapes can be just as nostalgic as memory. Imagined geographies can be countries, regions or cities, and they can include both urban, built-up neighborhoods and ‘empty’ rural spaces. As such, one can argue that Achrafieh’s physical landscape is one of perpetual contested and nostalgic memory. On one side, the Maronites view it as the vanguard of Christian identity while the other side, mainly Muslims, view it as a remnant of an ugly past where their country-kin were privileged over them simply due to religious beliefs. Today, French relations have improved with the Sunni population. Sunni political leader Saad al-Hariri has a home in France and regularly hosts official aid summits for France to invest in Lebanon. Furthermore, there are yearly aid packages sanctioned by the French government in support of all Lebanese citizens and not just the Christians.

Symbols, memories, and histories all serve to create perceived and conceived spaces (Larkin, 2010). In Achrafieh, the convergence of the perceived and conceived spaces produces a boundary designating who belongs and who does not belong. These boundaries, in turn, are reinforced by human agents – most of whom are Maronites, or Christians – through daily interactions. When asked about what it means to be a Maronite, Marwan who had previously talked about Syriac being the language of

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80 See Appendix A: Question 1
Maronites and not Arabic, told me that greetings matter. The basic act of saying hello, he says, defines you. Being a Maronite “means that I say Marhaba, and not Al Salamu Alaykom.” He explains to me that Marhaba (Arabic: مرحبًا) is a Syriac greeting that means peace be with you; Al Salamu Alaykom (Arabic: السلام عليكم), in contrast, is a similar Arabic greeting that means peace be upon you. “This simple word,” Marwan says, “saying Marhaba, connects me to the centuries-old history of our people; I am not Arab, nor Muslim. You will not find a Maronite who says Al Salamu Alaykom. If I walk into a café and someone says Al Salamu Alaykom, I guarantee you that they are not Christian. A Christian will greet you with Marhaba because that is the greeting of our ancestors.” Achrafieh, therefore, becomes a place where language is a tool that denotes who belongs and who does not belong. One form of speech, the Arabic greeting, becomes an identifier then for Achrafieh residents of who belongs and who does not belong.

A simple word, therefore, becomes an identifier of ‘the other’ in Marwan’s eyes, and perhaps countless others. One simple word, a simple greeting, comes to define your identity. As Marwan later explains, Marhaba is an Aramaic word in the Syriac dialect. It is used as a greeting and it means ‘peace be upon you’ in Aramaic. Conversely, Al Salamu Alaykom is also a greeting that means ‘peace be upon you;’ the only difference is that one is in Syriac and is identified with the Maronite ethno-religious group, and the other is in Arabic and assumed to be that of Muslim ethno-religious groups.

In essence, Marwan explains what it is to be a Maronite in relation to the ‘other.’ Maronites, as Marwan said, greet you with the greeting of their Syriac-speaking
ancestors as opposed to how Muslims would greet you with Al Salamu Alaykom. Elie, an older participant I spoke with also explained to me who Maronites in relation to the ‘other’ when he explains: “We send our children to the best schools. Maronite parents will sit without eating if it meant we could send our children to the best schools. They (Muslims) won’t do that. Do you see those kids walking between cars trying to sell you gum, flowers, and 10$ trinkets? That’s what they do when they can’t afford to send their kids to school. Instead of the parents sacrificing for their children, they will sacrifice their children’s future and send them to the street to make money.”

Elie goes on to explain that Sunni Muslims are closer to Maronites and Christians than the Shi’as, and that’s because of Christian influence on Sunni Muslims in Beirut – he explains the close connection between the Orthodox Christians of northern Beirut and the Sunni Muslims. Elie therefore tells me that Sunnis will send their children to the same private schools that Christians send their kids to if they can afford it. Elie clarifies further saying that the kids who sell trinkets in the streets between traffic would be more likely to be Shi’a than Sunni, since Sunnis are closer to the Christian and Maronite way of life.

Explaining Maronite identity in relation to the ‘other’ is not exclusive to the older generation, however. As I mentioned earlier, Tim Box who is a younger Maronite explains that Shi’as dress different than Maronites when he says that they wear jeans with bedazzles on the pockets. For Maronite youth, therefore, the ‘other’ dresses differently. For all of my participants, the ‘other’ also talks differently. All of my participants agreed that you can tell someone is not a Christian, usually, just my talking
to them. The Christian pronunciation of words is ‘lighter’ on the tongue because Christians – and Muslims who study at Christian schools – are articulate in French and it therefore renders their spoken Arabic smoother, and softer, than the ‘other.’ The ability to afford private schools therefore, is important to who Maronites are, and who belongs and who does not. A Muslim educated at a private school along with Christians is more likely to be welcomed by Maronites than those who are less fortunate and therefore unable to afford schools where the curriculum is in French or English.

As Achrafieh demonstrates, it is therefore possible for a nostalgic memory to simultaneously be a disputed and contested memory (Nagel, 2000; 2002; Hall, 2006; Neyzi, 2008; Mills, 2008; 2010; Fregonese, 2009; Larkin, 2010) Maronites may have a nostalgic recollection of Achrafieh being the crown jewel of Beirut, but the ‘other’ ethno-religious groups view the same district differently – a difference stemming from the disputed and contested memories. As such, Achrafieh’s urban and physical landscapes are affected by imagined geographies. In a post-conflict city, societies can seek to imbed nostalgia into the physical landscape of the city (Johnson, 2003; Fregonese 2009; Larkin, 2010; Mills, 2010; Johnson, 2012). This may take many forms: in the context of Achrafieh, a statue may be erected post-conflict like Bashir Gemayel’s memorial statue in Achrafieh’s Sahat Sassine (Arabic: ساحة ساسين; translation: Sassine Square) as a symbol that serves to reinforce collective memories (Johnson, 2003; 2012).

Many residential buildings in Achrafieh, and other Christian neighborhoods and districts, have a shrine for Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary either outside the building or right after the entrance inside. This serves to create a collective Christian identity for the
whole building, and the neighborhoods of the Achrafieh district as well. These shrines are typically made up of a statue of the Virgin Mary, and the cross of Jesus Christ and every day the residents make sure to light a candle and say a prayer. These shrines are symbols that signal at once both a Christian residential building and not a mixed ethno-religious residential building; at the same time creating a boundary excluding those who do not conform and fall within the declared identity.

Figure 6.2: A photo of Sassine Square in Achrafieh. A memorial to Bashir Gemayel can be seen in the background. The square is well-known in Eastern Beirut for being a major commercial hub with A.B.C. Achrafieh being the most prominent. In the past, Sassine square garnered a reputation for being the locale of anti-Syrian protests mostly by college-aged youth as seen in the movie Rue Huvelin.

Looking beyond these shrines many streets will have Christian symbols such as civil war memorials for those who died: Christian symbols, for Christian martyrs of a Christian cause. The shrines at the entrance of buildings in Achrafieh, and the memorials for Christian martyrs work to include one group (The Maronites and Christians), while simultaneously excluding the ‘other.’ The memories provoked by similar symbols are
further intensified due to the ‘post-conflict’ status of a fragmented Beirut; as such, the events of the civil war further reinforce and exacerbate the contested memories and disputed histories (Johnson, 2003; Slyomovics, 1994; Neyzi, 2008; Fregonese 2009; Larkin, 2010; Mills, 2010; Johnson, 2012). Achrafieh, as a rather enclosed and exclusive district, fails to allow for post-conflict discourse – Maronite memories and histories are not contested with the ‘other’ because the district is almost homogenous with its Christian population. Until you step out of Achrafieh, there is one common memory, one common history, and one common identity. Beyond ethnic and religious homogeneity, Achrafieh is also homogenous politically as in the past, and present, it has always been dominated by the Gemayel’s Kataeb and Lebanese Forces party. As such, there are no contested memories and counter-memories being heard by those who grow up there. Achrafieh, therefore, fails in allowing for post-conflict discourse because Maronite youth grow up learning and adopting a memory that remains uncontested until early adulthood when they encounter the ‘other’ in Universities and outside public spaces.

Much like Marwan identifies certain words with certain ethno-religious groups, many of Beirut’s neighborhoods are also associated with certain ethno-religious groups. For example: a Maronite from Achrafieh will typically not cross into al-Dahiya, not only because the neighborhood’s entrances are decorated with Hezbollah and Amal flags, or because they are plastered with posters of Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini and Hezbollah’s Sayyed Nasrallah, but also because a Maronite who grew up in Achrafieh, or any other part of Eastern Beirut, grows up hearing from their parent that they do not belong there
and that it is a different, and dangerous area. Tim Box, and Thaleesi, two young participants with whom I conducted a joint interview both note that they just “feel different and out of place; it is a gloomy place” when they have to go through al-Dahiya to get to the airport, or the post office. Both of them even noted that they would not like it if a Shi’a moved-in nearby. “Our way of life is different; Sunnis are moving into our neighborhoods, but they do not have the same negative presence in the neighborhood that a Shi’a would,” Thaleesi said. “Sunnis are more moderate if we are talking about day-to-day life. They are opening up to the West just as we have. The Shi’as are more conservative in that sense, they are anti-West and their presence in our neighborhoods disrupts our daily life.”

The Maronite community, both the older generation and the younger generation, distinguishes Muslims between Sunni and Shi’a. Understanding the difference from a Maronite perspective is also a complicated one because there are Maronites who are pro-Hezbollah and anti-Sunni, and there are Maronites who are pro-Sunni anti-Hezbollah. The Maronites who are pro-Hezbollah and anti-Sunni are the Maronites who support General Aoun and the Free Patriotic Movement. These Maronites, although they are opposed to Shi’as moving to their neighborhoods, are supporters of Hezbollah because General Aoun, their za’im, is a political ally of

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81 A Game of Thrones fan, obviously!
82 Lebanese politics are tribal in the sense that ethno-religious communities will follow one za’im (leader) or another; any criticism of the za’im is taken personal by the constituent and the accusation is usually deflected back onto the other person’s za’im. One of the more common examples of this is Maronites telling Free Patriotic Movement constituents that their political leaders are stealing government money; how does one politician go from having a car loan declined one year, and then he has a private jet and three multi million dollar homes the next year on a $5,000 monthly salary (the salary of a parliament
Hezbollah. This group of Maronites, therefore, although they would be opposed to welcoming Shi’a to their neighborhoods, they nonetheless support Hezbollah and repeat the same reasons that General Aoun espouses in his political speeches. Maronites who support Hezbollah will say that they support Hezbollah because he is the only protector of Lebanon capable of repelling Israel – for that reason, the resistance is necessary, and any Lebanese government should give them legitimacy and political cover on the international stage. Furthermore, this group of Maronites would argue that Hezbollah is made-up of two entities: the military wing, and the political wing, and they both operate independent of one another. This group of Maronites may support Hezbollah politically, but they still perceive them as less educated than the Lebanese Sunnis.

On the opposite end of Maronites’ perception of the Shi’a are those who support March 14th political parties, and therefore allied with the Sunni Future Movement. Maronites in this category are also opposed to Shi’a moving to their neighborhoods, perceive them as less educated than the Sunnis, and also are opposed to Hezbollah politically as well. Unlike the Free Patriotic Movement Maronites, this group does not distinguish between Hezbollah’s political wing and its armed wing. To this group of Maronites, Hezbollah is one singular entity and one branch does not operate without the other; the political wing and the armed wing are not separate. Marwan says: “You cannot distinguish between them. The leadership of each might be different with militants on one side and politicians on the other, but the politicians of Hezbollah give cover to the militants and so you cannot separate the two sides. What modern-day representative)? The constituent will usually deflect this by saying: “What about your za’im? You want to tell me he doesn’t steal either?”
country are you going to build when you have a militia on your land, stronger than your military, openly conducting military parades in the streets of Beirut?” The common Maronite assumption of the anti-Hezbollah group is that Hezbollah wants to establish Wilayat al-Faqih in Lebanon, and they will usually point you to the Hezbollah political party constitution that has it listed at the top of its charter. Finally, this group of Maronites does not make a distinction between Hezbollah’s political aims and the political aims of Shi’as. Most Maronites in this group lump all Shi’as as one: they are all pro-Iranian, pro-Wilayat al-Faqih, living outside Lebanese law.

The Maronite community, therefore, is split between the pro-Hezbollah camp that says March 14th Christian leaders are Western and Saudi puppets, while the anti-Hezbollah camp accuses the march 8th Christian leaders of being Iranian and Syrian puppets. What both sides agree on, however is that neither would like for the Shi’a to move to their neighborhoods. Both sides would rather a Sunni move to their neighborhood. It is important to note, however, that when Maronites talk about Sunnis being welcomed to their neighborhoods, they are usually talking about the educated Sunnis who have attended western schools, or who have attended private schools along with Christians. It is the educated Sunnis that Maronites would welcome, and not Sunnis educated in Lebanon’s Arabic-curriculum schools who are seen as less educated, and perceived to be more disruptive and more orthodox in their religious practice.

Maronite perception of Hezbollah therefore plays an important role. This perception of Hezbollah, in turn, influences the imagined geography and pre-conceived notions that many Maronites attributes to al-Dahiya. Their militant nature, and the
perception by many of Hezbollah as an extended arm of Iranian influence is why many Maronites do not feel welcome in their neighborhoods, and they would not be likely to welcome them to theirs. The same, however, is probably true for a Shi’ite who looks across the street and sees a Lebanese Forces cross spray-painted on a crossing in Achrafieh, or a poster of Bashir Gemayel hanging from a residential building. These images displayed in public create tangible boundaries, a very real division between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ (Lefebvre, 1991; Slyomovics, 1994; Larkin, 2010; Johnson, 2012). Conversely, however, a Maronite not from Achrafieh, perhaps a Maronite who votes for the Free Patriotic Movement – a Maronite party allied with Hezbollah – may in contrast be perfectly okay with going to Dahiya, and their parents (if they were of the younger generation) may not find it outside the norm for them to have a Shi’ite friend.83 One important fact to note, however, all of the younger participants attended private universities, like the American University of Beirut and l’Université Saint Joseph. I was made aware that a majority of Shi’as – except for the elites – cannot afford to attend private universities and so most attend the public Lebanese University.84 The Maronite youth’s interaction, therefore, occurs more frequently with Sunni youth than it does with Shi’a youth – unless said Maronite youth attends a public university.

83 This may be highly unlikely due to the ethno-religious segregation of Lebanon as a whole, and not only Beirut – based on my interviews with college-aged youth, their first real communication with the ‘other’ occurred at universities. A common theme that surfaced in my discussion with younger generation Maronites is that they have Sunni and Druze friends, but not so many Shi’a friends.

84 That is if they have the grades: the Lebanese University typically only grants admission to the top students of any given graduating class. Whereas my participants view the ‘foreign’ universities as more prestigious whose admission relies mostly on connections and wealth, acceptance into the Lebanese University is perceived as a meritorious achievement because the school only accepts the top students of any graduating class.
Transgression, therefore, is an act of breaking rules, or exceeding boundaries (Cresswell, 1996). In the context of imagined geographies, transgression can be as simple as a Shi’a, or Sunni, crossing over into Achrafieh. Memories of place establish norms and rules, and in turn, the norms and rules come to reinforce the memories – it is a perpetual circle (Hall, 1997); Maronite identity in Achrafieh, as influenced by the civil war of 1975, starts to establish what is acceptable and what is not, what is prohibited and what is not. A Maronite church in al-Dahiya ringing its bells is a transgression, similarly a Mosque’s Adhan in al-Sharkiyyeh is also a transgression; it is a break of the norm and what is acceptable. Many participants, mostly the ones who identified as religious Maronites as well as ethnic Maronites, cited the safe tolling of Church bells in Achrafieh and public celebration of Christian holidays as a major part of the district’s Maronite identity. Much like belonging and boundaries unequivocally create inclusion and exclusion, transgression illustrates the taboo and the norm. Space, therefore, is the arena in which transgression is played out.

Transgression is different than resistance in that the effect and reaction of a particular act are more defined (Cresswell, 1996). It is not so much the lead-up to breaking the norm and the reasoning behind it, but rather the after-effects of the taboo and results of it. Furthermore, transgression is typically defined by the power-dynamics at play. It is usually the powerful, the more dominant, who creates the established memories and norms that color a space (Cresswell, 1996). In the case of Achrafieh, it is the Maronites and the Christians who are most powerful. Therefore, it is they who determine the spatial order: Is it acceptable close shop on Friday and not Sunday, or is it
normal to prohibit the sale of alcohol and gambling like in Dahiya. Essentially, Transgression is the conduct that connects imagined geographies and belonging, to the city of Beirut as a place. All the disputed narratives and contested memories, confined to a place create a sense of belonging. If you fall within the norm, you belong; if at any point you break the norm, you suddenly are transgressing and do not belong. Owning to the rich history, and the ethno-centric memories of Achrafieh, simply by virtue of your religious identity you may be a transgressor. In many cases, belonging is associated with identity (Hall, 1997; Harvey, 2000; Kaufman, 2004; Neyzi, 2008; Antonsich, 2010; Larkin, 2010; Mills, 2010; Matejkova and Leitner, 2011; Rabil, 2011; Bakshi, 2012). Like Marwan and Elias said, identity plays a major role in who belongs and does not belong in Achrafieh; the decision is made along the lines of ethno-religious identity.

6.3 Conclusion

Beirut, unto itself, does not play a major role in influencing and forming Maronite identity. Rather, according to many who were interviewed, it is Beirut’s Achrafieh district and other Christian neighborhoods that influences Maronite identity. The civil war period between 1975-90 is seen as a struggle for the Maronite identity in Beirut and Lebanon – a struggle that started in Achrafieh in 1977 with the creation of the Lebanese Forces. The interviewed participants identified Achrafieh as the Christian stronghold without which Lebanese particularism would have succumbed to the Pan-Arab movement of the 1970s. Although the civil war did not
end until February of 1990, many Maronites consider September 1982 as the end of hope with the assassination of Bashir Gemayel.

Bashir Gemayel, Achrafieh, and the Maronite community believed that Lebanese particularism served as a vanguard against Pan-Arab movements which they feared would bring Islamist ideologies to the country’s government and their way of life. It is very difficult to draw a line between religion, political, and cultural identity in Lebanon; and there is an assumption that falling within one category automatically determines your status in the other categories. These assumptions are further reinforced by the inclusive and exclusive nature of Achrafieh; assumptions further compounded by nostalgic (or contested) memories and histories.’
CHAPTER 7

FINAL THOUGHTS

As evidenced by my research, sectarian polarization is the norm. We see this in Beirut’s urban landscape where different neighborhoods and districts have ethno-religious identities attributed to them. The sectarian urban landscape reflects and reinforces the problematic sectarian political structure institutionalized by Lebanon’s Ta’if Accord and confessional democracy. Although neighborhoods tend have a predominant ethno-religious presence, there are some neighborhoods in flux; as my participants have indicated these are mostly encounters of Sunni Muslims and Christians of all denominations. Furthermore, Maronites in Beirut are more likely to know or have Sunni Muslims friends or Druze acquaintances than they are having Shi’a friends.

What is at stake here is the future of Lebanon. Beirut’s segregated neighborhoods are a symptom of the larger problem in Lebanon; the different ethno-religious communities still do not trust each other and most refuse to live next to one another almost 26 years after the civil war. Although we see some neighborhoods getting more diversified with Sunni and Christian residents, the socio-economic status of these neighborhoods is one that can be described as middle-class and above; furthermore, these residents who are willing to live next to someone who doesn’t share their ethno-religious identity, they tend to be more moderate in their way of thinking.
The Sunnis and Christians and Druze who live next to one another are not the conservatives who are preserving and reinforcing the segregated neighborhoods in Beirut. Maronite stories matter in this case because they are an essential component of the Lebanese government and of the Lebanese society. Their particular brand of nostalgia gives us one lens through which to study Beirut’s urban landscape and the failure of consociational democracy in Lebanon.

There are current divisions between Christians and Muslims – mainly Shi’a Muslims who are viewed as loyal to Iran and Sunni Muslims who are loyal to Syria. There are also divisions among Christians themselves, the division is also political in nature. One side of the Christian divide are the followers of General Michel Aoun, a Maronite Christian and founder of the Free Patriotic movement; he is also an ally of Hezbollah. The other side of the Christian divide are the followers of Samir Geagea, also a Maronite Christian and current chairman of the Lebanese Forces; the party most opposed to Hezbollah.

In order to promote a more post-conflict society, I propose that the Lebanese political system slowly move away from the consociational democracy; as I have explained in my research, and as evidenced by the segregated neighborhoods of Beirut, the political system keeps society divided along ethno-religious lines. In turn, the divided society propagates the ethno-religious identity as the primary lens through which they navigate everyday encounters. As evidenced by my younger participants, the further we move away from the Lebanese civil war, the more the circle of friends and acquaintances becomes diverse and inclusive. As more Maronites encounter the ‘other,’
we should start thinking of a political system that can replace the institutionalized divide prevalent in the government. The presidency should not be restricted to Maronites only; rather, the highest office in the country should be obtained based on merit and not ethno-religious identity. The same needs to be applied to the positions of speaker of parliament and prime minister; these positions should not be reserved for Shi’ites and Sunnis, but should also be obtained based on merit rather than ethno-religious identity.

I also propose that Christians and Muslims alike learn about each other’s histories and faiths in order to bypass the preconceptions both communities have of each other. I attended College Melkart before my parents and I immigrated here, and I believe their approach to this issue should be adopted countrywide. Once per week, we would have a Catholic priest come to class and talk to us about Christian history in the Middle East, and about the Christian faith; during that time, Muslim students would be in the class. At the same time, a Muslim imam would come to class, and he would teach us all about Muslim history in the Middle East, and about the Muslim faith. We never really approached the civil war, but we did learn about one another’s history in a civilized and educational matter while we were young. There needs to be a way for schools in Lebanon to address this societal disconnect in order to move forward.

Finally, my hope is that the Lebanese citizens stop following “zou’ama” for the sole reason that they are “zou’ama.” The same political leaders and their families have been in charge of Lebanon for over 300 years – since the Ottoman period. These political leaders, as my participants pointed out, have traded in religion in return for political gain and that has not nothing but divide the country and the society even
further. In the 2018 elections, for the first time in history, Lebanon had a political party come forward and present an inclusive secular political agenda aimed at everyone – no matter the religious affiliation; unfortunately, they were only able to win one parliamentary seat.

Lebanon is beginning to see this change, however. Whereas the previous generation had a divide along ethno-religious lines, the data from my interviews shows that the new frontier emerging in the young generation is not ethno-religious in nature. The new divide surfacing in Lebanese politics is between the youth who support the traditional confessional parties and the progressive secular parties. The election of journalist Paula Yaacoubian on behalf of Hezeb Sab’a – the secular party – is evidence that the political landscape is changing, and Maronite youth are hopeful that Lebanon can move away from the current “mafia” ruling the country. Tim Box, who voted for Paula says: “We need to move forward. Right now, you have a mafia ruling the country. They disagree on the surface, but they work together when their rule is in danger. Look at the Beirut mayoral elections; when Beirut Madinati’s (pre-cursor to Hezeb Sab’a) list seemed like it was close to winning, you saw March 14th and March 8th political parties work together and come out with one list; they are afraid to lose power.”

Tim Box was not the only younger participant to note that the politicians are a mafia. Many of my young participates mentioned that the politicians work together and give each other business, and nothing happens without their approval and without them making money from it. Jean-Paul, a participant who received his doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Texas here in the United States says: “I have a degree from the
Pharmacy school in Texas, and it is the only program in the world where I can go and practice pharmacy without having to go through a country’s credential process. I come back home, and I want to open my own pharmacy, and the municipality wants one million dollars in exchange for the signature on registration and license paperwork.”

Beiirut Madinati was the result of pent-up anger people held towards the politicians after almost a year of garbage crisis where the politicians could not agree on a solution. Thaleesi says: “Do you know why they couldn’t agree? Because they couldn’t agree on how much money they were all going to make. They are talking about projects costing close to a billion dollar for a solution, all of these solutions by the way, somehow cost more than it costs to sanitize and pick-up garbage in Saudi Arabia. Think about that; Lebanon, a much smaller country, much smaller population than Saudi Arabia but somehow garbage collection and sanitation costs more here. Do you want to know how we know they steal? Look at the energy ministry. They all hand it off to one another, and since I can remember we have never had electricity 24/7; Or water 24/7.” Jean-Paul intervenes here and says: “Yes, you get these politicians who come into this ministry, and propose all these projects, in the end they all fail and the minister walks away with millions in his pocket. The ministry of energy is their gold mine. Look at Fatima-Ghul: They brought these ships from Turkey, they were supposed to give us electricity 24/7 while we fix the electrical power grid. The ships don’t work, and our reliance on generators has grown. Angela Merkel and Siemens proposed a project that would provide electricity to the whole country, for something like 750 million, and they would maintain it for 15 years; of course, our politicians declined. They make more money
from backroom deals bringing Turkish electricity ships than they would making a deal with a German company. They do the same with water, why do you think some people have dirty water, or no water at all? Because they own the water distribution trucks, so they cut your water supply forcing you to buy water from their companies.”

Maronite youth is therefore waking up and breaking away from their parents’ political thought. As I mentioned, the previous rift along ethno-religious lines is fading and the new rift is between those who still advocate for the old political parties, and those who want to move forward and look to target different challenges. Whereas the older generation was concerned with ethno-religious identity, the new generation is more concerned about what the older generation would term ‘western ideas.’ These ‘western ideas’ include the debate over capitalism and socialism, the ideas also include social welfare and environmentalism. Joe, an older participant says: “You have these young ones talking about what the west talks about when we don’t ever have electricity and water. How can you debate the Lebanese economic system, when government employees aren’t even guaranteed to receive their checks on time? Look at public sector teachers, they are demonstrating because they haven’t received a paycheck in 3 months. And these young ones want to debate environmental protection laws and welfare programs? Let us fix our problems first before we adopt the west’s problems.”

Nagel and Staeheli (2016) explore this growing shift in public policy debate. The interviewees in their article (Nagel and Staeheli, 2016) echo some of the same thoughts my participants voiced concerning the changing rift and shifting discourse among the youth: the youth is open to communicating understanding the ‘other,’ the youth is
concerned about the environment, and the ruling political class is only concerned about money. As my older generation mentions, and as Nagel and Staeheli (2016) point out, many of these ideas are coming from the ‘west,’ through NGOs or through the youth being more connected with the west through the internet.

Lebanon definitely needs to tackle environmentalist policies and regulations; Lebanon desperately needs welfare programs, and a higher standard of living – especially with electricity and water. Before Lebanon can tackle this, however, they need to tackle the problem in parliament and they need to break the corruption of the ruling political elite. The older generation and the younger generation are both right; you cannot tackle environmental regulations when the majority of people only gets 6 hours of electricity, and less than 2 hours of water a day. You cannot tackle welfare programs when the ruling elite constantly increase taxes because the government coffers are empty, while they pad their pockets.

Moving forward, the younger generation has the right idea, they need to come out and vote for political parties like Hezeb Sab’a, and they need to get involved in the mayoral elections of cities like they did with Beirut Madinati. The youth however, is facing an obstacle in their parents who would say that voting for a secular party is wasting the vote because ‘the other side’ is united. The further we move away from the civil war, however, the more we see a change in political ideology. My hope is that in the future, more Lebanese are able to consider these “new” ideas, than rely on the older divisive political parties that have done nothing to mend the rift of the Lebanese society.
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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please note that where the question specifies Muslims, the intent was to address both Sunnis and Shi’as. Otherwise, the question is specifying which ethno-religious group is intended. The average time of my interviews was 97 minutes.

Q 1 - What does it mean to be a Maronite?

   * Derive common traits. E.g. religious, cultural, political.

Q 2 - In your opinion, how do the Sunnis view Maronites?

   *How do you view the Sunnis?

Q 3 - In your opinion, how do the Shi’as view Maronites?

   *How do you view the Shi’as?

Q 4 - In your opinion, how do the Druze view Maronites?

   *How do you view the Druze?

Q 5 - In your opinion, how do the Orthodox Christians view the Catholic Maronites?

   *How do you view the Orthodox Christians?

Q 6 - In your opinion, how do the Armenians view the Catholic Maronites?

   *How do you view the Armenians?

Q 7 - What was Beirut like before the civil war of 1975?

   * Cultural geography, urban geography, urban landscape, physical and built landscape.
Q 8 - What was Beirut like during the civil war of 1975?
* Cultural geography, urban geography, urban landscape, physical and built landscape.

Q 9 - What was Beirut like after the civil war of 1975?
* Cultural geography, urban geography, urban landscape, physical and built landscape.

Q 10 - Before the civil war, would you say different neighborhoods identified with a specific religion or ethnicity?
* To what degree?
* Give an example.

Q 11 - During the civil war, would you say different neighborhoods identified with a specific religion or ethnicity?
* To what degree?
* Give an example.

Q 12 - After the civil war, would you say different neighborhoods identified with a specific religion or ethnicity?
* To what degree?
* Give an example.

Q 13 - Why do you think neighborhoods / districts of Beirut were as they were before?
* Most important factors
* Social / Spatial reasons
Q 14 - Why do you think neighborhoods / districts of Beirut are as they are now?

  * Most important factors? E.g. key events?
  * Social / Spatial reasons
  * Is there segregation? Was there always segregation?

Q 15 - Do you believe there is a difference in encountering a Sunni on a Beirut street compared to encountering a Maronite?

  * Would this encounter be different depending on the neighborhood?
  * Can you give me an example?

Q 16 - Do you believe there is a difference in encountering a Shi’a on a Beirut street compared to encountering a Maronite?

  * Would this encounter be different depending on the neighborhood?
  * Can you give me an example?

Q 17 - Can you tell which social group a person belongs to by looking at them?

  * Can you tell a Sunni apart from a Maronite?
  * Can you tell a Shi’a apart from a Maronite?

Q 18 - Can you tell which social group a person belongs to by talking to them?

  * Can you tell a Sunni apart from a Maronite?
  * Can you tell a Shi’a apart from a Maronite?

Q 19 - Describe the Maronite community, in your own words.

  * How do Sunnis view the Maronite community?
  * How do Shi’as view the Maronite community?
  * How do Druze view the Maronite community?
*How do Orthodox Christians view the Maronite community?

*How do Armenians view the Maronite community?

P.S: Although a similar question was asked before, the previous question was about the individual whereas this question is about the collective community as a whole. It is also intentionally towards the end of the interview, so as to avoid the canned response given earlier for the 'individual' Maronite.

Q 20 - Describe, in your own words, the Maronite Church.

* How do the Sunnis view the Maronite Church?

* How do the Shi’as view the Maronite Church?

* How do the Orthodox Christians view the Maronite Church?

* How do the Armenians view the Maronite Church?

P.S: With the Maronite church playing an advisory role to the Maronite parties, the idea behind this is to find out if there are implications on the segregation of the city? This question is also intentionally in this part of the interview, to avoid the canned response about the different communities and how they view Maronites.

Q 21 - Is there a specific place in Beirut that, in your opinion, is essential to the Maronite community?

* Does it shape / inform Maronite identity?

Q 22 - Would you say Beirut plays a role in shaping / informing Maronite identity?

*If so, what / how?

Q 23 - Would you say Maronites play a role in shaping Beirut? If so, what / how?

*Rights to the city. How does the community shape the city?
Q 24 - Can you tell me of a time when you felt most strongly about being a Maronite?

*Elicit memory and identity *

Q 25 - When did you first understand that you were a Maronite and others were not?

*Also, elicits memory and identity.

Q 26 - What is your strongest memory of the war? Where did it happen?

_P.S: Only the Authoritative / Older group would be able to answer this._