# The Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox: how they view their language and identity

Sandy Michael Habib

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER DEGREE

University of Haifa
Faculty of Humanities
Department of English Language and Literature

April, 2008

# The Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox:
# how they view their language and identity

By: Sandy Michael Habib

Supervised by: Prof. John Myhill

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER DEGREE

University of Haifa
Faculty of Humanities
Department of English Language and Literature

April, 2008

Approved by: _____ Date: _____
            (Supervisor)
Approved by: _____ Date: _____
         (Chairperson of M.A. Committee)

# Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Lord for all the graces He has been giving me and without which I would not have been able to finish this thesis.

I am also in debt to Prof. John Myhill for his guidance, encouragement, and wise comments, which kept me on the right track and helped me to write this thesis.

My gratitude also goes to my parents Michael & Madeline, my aunt Mary, my siblings Caroline, Shukry, Clair & Catherine, my brother-in-law Sharbel, and my cousins Shadi & Shadia for their love and support.

I should also like to extend my thanks to Prof. Kurzon and Prof. Laufer for their fascinating courses which will continue to inspire me.

I will always be grateful to Ms Moran Schwartzer for her support and to Mr Amir Khaloul for helping me gather the research data.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Bishop Boulus Sayah, Fr Bishara Sulayman, Fr Samer Zaknoun, sister Saide Tannous, and sister Vivian Malouf for their constant moral support.

# Table of Contents

# The Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox:
# how they view their language and identity

Sandy Michael Habib

## Abstract

*The aim of this thesis is, first, to examine how different members of the Maronite and Syriac Orthodox communities in Israel define themselves and what role Syriac, their ancestral and sacred language, has in their identity, and second, to find out if these people are interested in having their children speak the Syriac language natively. 272 Maronites and Syriac Orthodox participated in this study. The results show that the overwhelming majority of the Maronite and the Syriac Orthodox respondents do not define themselves as Arabs, Israelis, or Palestinians, but rather as Christians and Syriac respectively. In addition, it has been found that the overwhelming majority of the respondents regard Syriac as important for their identity, and that the Syriac Orthodox overwhelmingly want it to be their their children's native language while the majority of the Maronite respondents do not. It has been also found that the majority of the Maronite respondents would like to send their children to a Syriac-medium church kindergarten, but they reject the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium public kindergarten or school.*

# List of Tables

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the history of the Maronites, the Syriac Orthodox, and the Syriac language (Dibs 1905, Murad 1974, Fahed 1985, Moosa 1986, Uwet 1987, Palmer et al. 1993, Abouna 1996, Wehbe 2001). However, very little has been written about how Maronites and Syriac Orthodox in modern time view their identity (McKay 1985, Khashan 1990, Haddad 2001, Krindatch 2002) and nothing has been written about their view of the role of Syriac in their identity.

The aim of this thesis is twofold: first, to examine how different members of the Maronite and  Syriac Orthodox communities in Israel define themselves and what role Syriac, their ancestral and sacred language, has in their identity, and second, to find out if these people are interested in having their children speak the Syriac language natively.

## 1.1. General Background

### 1.1.1. The Syriac Language

The Aramaic language is a group of Northwest Semitic dialects which were originally spoken by Aramaic tribes who lived in the Levant (Abouna 1996, Binns 2002); it was also used as a lingua franca in the region that extends from present-day Egypt to present-day Pakistan between 600 BCE and 600 AD (Murad 1974, Abdu 1997, Bae

2004). One of the Aramaic dialects is Syriac, the Christian version of Western Aramaic.

Like Arabic and Hebrew, Syriac is a Semitic language that has a consonantal writing system in which consonants are represented but vowels are frequently omitted (Levin 2005, Chan et. al. 2006). Like its Arabic counterpart, Syriac writing is cursive and is written from right to left; however, unlike the Arabic letters, which can have up to three different shapes depending on their positions (initial, medium, final), the Syriac letters, like the Hebrew letters, can have at most two different shapes depending on whether the letter is in final position or not (Kherallah et. al. 2005). Like Hebrew, Syriac has 22 consonants; in addition, there are five vowel diacritics which are placed above the consonants and which are divided into two groups, short and long, as can be seen in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**: Syriac consonants and vowels

| CONSONANTS | | | | | | VOWELS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ܐ | [ʔ] | ܛ | [t ] | ܦ | [f] | ܲ | [ə], [ɑ] |
| ܒ | [b] | ܝ | [j] | ܨ | [s ] | ܘ | [ʊ] |
| ܓ | [g], [ɣ] | ܟ | [k], [x] | ܩ | [q] | ܗ | [ɪ] |
| ܕ | [d] | ܠ | [l] | ܪ | [r] | | |
| ܗ | [h] | ܡ | [m] | ܫ | [ʃ] | ܹ | [ɪː] |
| ܘ | [w] | ܢ | [n] | | | | |
| ܙ | [z] | ܣ | [s] | ܬ | [t] | ܼ | [ʊː] |
| ܚ | [ħ] | ܥ | [ʕ] | | | | |

2

Syriac literature, which was highly affected by Greek influence, burgeoned between the third and eighth centuries AD. In fact, it was through Syriac that Greek learning and thought were passed on to the Islamic world; it was Syriac scholars who translated the late Hellenistic science texts from Syriac into Arabic. Nevertheless, following the Arab invasion of the Levant in the 7th century AD, Syriac began to decline (Barbi 2000, Wright 2001, Clocksin and Fernando 2003). Today Syriac is still spoken in some villages in Syria and Turkey and among some members of the Syriac Orthodox community in Jerusalem[1] and in other parts of the world.

Despite its decline, Syriac has been maintained as the sacred language of some Christian communities, such as Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, and Maronites. Syriac Orthodox and Catholics use Syriac more than Maronites do, both in their daily life and in their liturgy. Maronites, on the other hand, have not spoken Syriac since the 16th century; they use Syriac only in their liturgy, and the amount of Syriac used in this context has been deteriorating.

Besides being the sacred language of Maronites and Syriac Orthodox, Syriac is also the ancestral language of both communities. This is what makes it more important to their identity than is, e.g. Greek to Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox or Latin to Arabic-speaking non-Uniate Catholics,[2] as the ancestors of these peoples spoke Syriac rather than Greek or Latin.

---

[1] It is estimated that there are 500-700 Syriac Orthodox in East Jerusalem today (see, http://www.hcef.org/index.cfm/ID/130.cfm).
[2] The non-Uniate Catholic community is called in Arabic *latin*; the Church in the West came to be called the Latin Church after the Church of Rome passed on the Latin language to the illiterate German tribes (Kuiper 1951). However, due to the ambiguity of the term 'Latin', I will use the term 'non-Uniate Catholic' instead. The non-Uniate Catholic community is the largest Catholic community in the world and is headed directly by the Pope of Rome, who is

### 1.1.2. The Maronites

The origin of the term Maronite is contested. The most widespread opinion is that the word is derived from the monastery of Maroun, which was named after St. Maroun, a fifth century ascetic who lived in Syria. All who followed the faith of the monks of that monastery were called Maronites (Ad-Dibs 1905, Moosa 1986).

Although the ecclesiastical Maronite leaders teach that the Maronite Church appeared with the emergence of St. Maroun and his followers in the 5th century, and thus its emergence was on religious grounds (Ad-Dibs 1905, Fahed 1985), some scholars believe that the Maronite Church appeared as a response to the Islamic invasion of the Middle East in the 7th century, and thus political and not religious factors prompted this emergence (Moosa 1986, Rustum 1988, Khashan 1990 Myhill 2006). Nevertheless, both sides agree that the Maronites physically resisted Islamic rule. The Maronites were initially aidedin their struggle against the Arabs by the Greeks and established their first state by the end of the 7th century. Later, they cooperated with the crusaders, being the only Christian community in the Middle East to do so; their homeland on Mount Lebanon was only conquered by the Muslims in 1305 (Phares 1995). During the Crusades, the Maronites enhanced their relationship with Europe, a relationship that continued to develop during Ottoman rule and after its collapse, culminating in the declaration of the establishment of Lebanon in 1920 under the French mandate, which had been the dream of the Maronites (Khashan 1990, Phares 1995, Myhill 2006).

---

also the Supreme Head of the entire Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Uniate Churches are headed directly by their archbishops and only indirectly by the pope.

Maronites have had Syriac as their sacred language since the beginning of their existence. They maintained it as their spoken language until Mount Lebanon was conquered by the Arabs at the beginning of the 14th century. The Arabs then began to impose their language on the Maronites, and Syriac began to decline as their spoken language, as it already had among other peoples of the Levant, although in a few places in Lebanon the language continued to be spoken until the 16th century (Fahed 1985, Ad-Dibs 1905). The Maronites tried to maintain the language, and although they started to pray in both Arabic and Syriac, all the prayers, whether in Arabic or Syriac, were written in the Syriac script. This continued to be the case until the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, when the Arabic script began to appear next to the Syriac script in the prayer-books.

The status of the Syriac language in the Maronite Church continued to decline. Before 2005 the liturgical prayer book included prayers written in both the Arabic and Syriac scripts. However, in 2005 the Maronite Liturgical committee removed all the Syriac script from the prayer-book used by the congregation, in which Syriac was retained in only five prayers and these were written in the Arabic script; in the appendix, however, these five prayers appear in the Syriac script.[3] The prayer-book of the priest, on the other hand, has both Syriac and Arabic prayers, each in its own script. In spite of the decline in the use of Syriac, Maronites still feel an attachment to this language much more than non-Uniate Catholics feel towards their sacred language, Latin.

---

[3] The rest of the appendix is in the Arabic script.

Maronites' use of Syriac and their attachment to it, however, pose a problem since they claim to have been loyal to the Church of Rome since the beginning of their existence[4] (Ad-Dibs 1905, Fahed 1974), but the latter did not allow any language other than Latin to be used in any liturgical celebration until the 16th century AD, when the Church of Rome began to recognize the Uniate Churches. This, among other reasons, has motivated some scholars, such as Moosa (1986), to believe that Maronites have not always been in communion with the Church of Rome. Moosa's argument explains why Maronite priests, unlike their non-Uniate Catholic counterparts, can be ordained after they get married and why Syriac is the Maronites' sacred language; if Maronites have been in communion with the Church of Rome since the beginning of their existence as a Christian group, their priests would not have been able to get married before receiving the holy orders. It can also be claimed that the Maronites' attachment to Syriac is due to the fact that they resisted Muslim domination more than any other Christian group in the Middle East (Khashan 1990), and consequently, they have maintained their attachment to their identity and their sacred and ancestral language. This might explain why Maronites, especially in Lebanon, reject labeling themselves as Arabs (Khashan 1990, Myhill 2006).

Maronites still live mainly in Lebanon, their ancestral homeland. But many Maronites have emigrated to other countries, and as a result there are Maronite communities in Mexico, Venezuela, Uruguay, Ghana, Sierra Leon, Liberia, Egypt, Sudan, Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, England, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, Cyprus, Canada, USA, and Israel.

---

[4] This does not make sense because the Church of Rome did not exist as an independent church until the 11th century, which the average person wither does not know or doe not think about.

According to Wehbe (2001), there are about 4,500 Maronites who live in Israel, and more specifically in Haifa, Jish, Nazareth, Usfia, Akko, Maker, and Jaffa, as can be seen in Table 1 below:

**Table 2**: Distribution of Maronites in Israel

| Place of Residence | N (approximately) |
|:---:|:---:|
| Haifa | 2500 |
| Jish | 1500 |
| Nazareth | 100 |
| Usfia | 200 |
| Akko | 110 |
| Maker | 80 |
| Jaffa | 60 |
| **Total** | **4,550** |

(Wehbe 2001)

### 1.1.3. The Syriac Orthodox

The Syriac Orthodox have also been known as the Syrian Orthodox or the Jacobites (Kayal 1973, Palmer et. al 1993). However, the terms Syrian Orthodox and Jacobites are problematic because the former can mistakenly be associated with Syria, while the latter is derived from the name of Jacob Baradai, who is regarded as a heretic by Catholics, who are nowadays in communion with the Syriac Orthodox Church, as will

be shown later. Therefore, the term 'Syriac Orthodox' will be used throughout the thesis to refer to this group.

The Syriac Orthodox Church can be traced back to the mid-sixth century. Until the 6th century AD, there were five Christian patriarchates whose followers confessed the faith of the first three ecumenical councils, i.e. the council of Nicaea (325), the council of Constantinople (381), and the council of Ephesus (431); the sees of these patriarchates were in Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The five patriarchates suffered a great schism in the fifth century, following the fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon (451), which convened to condemn Eutyches, an abbot of a monastery in Constantinople who had declared that the divine nature of Jesus absorbed his human nature, and consequently, Jesus had only one nature. The council of Chalcedon condemned Eutychianism and declared that Jesus had two natures, one divine and one human. This declaration caused a rupture within the Church. While Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem accepted Chalcedon, Antioch and Alexandria rejected it because they adhered to St. Cyril's formula, which stated that there is one incarnate nature of Divine Logos (Frend 1972, Moosa 1986).

Despite the schism, the five patriarchates did not split; they remained five, but the patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople alternated between monophysitism[5] and dyaphysitism until the mid-sixth century. During this period, monophysites and dyaphysites fought, and as a result, many of the monophysite bishops, priests, and monks were persecuted and killed by the dyaphysites. Due to this

---

[5] Monophysite is a Greek word which means one nature (mono=one; physite=nature). Those who rejected the Council of Chalcedon were called monophysites, while those who accepted it came to be known as dyaphysites (Bevan 2005, Bethune-Baker 2005).

persecution, the Syriac Church lost many of its bishops and priests. In the sixth century, a Syriac monk, Jacob Baradai (hence the name Jacobites), emerged and revived monophysitism, and with the aid of Theodora, wife of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, he was ordained bishop, and subsequently consecrated other bishops and ordained priests who adhered to monophysitism. In the thirty years of his activity, Jacob Baradai brought what I am referring to as the Syriac Orthodox Church into existence with a monophysite patriarch. This patriarch was in theory the legitimate patriarch of Antioch (though in practice he was a rival to the dyaphysite patriarch of Antioch), but his actual residence was in the monastery of Gubba Barraya between Aleppo and Maboug and not in Antioch (Frend 1972, Moosa 1986). Since then, the monophysite patriarchate of Antioch has continued to install its own patriarchs, and today this Church is called the Syriac Orthodox Church.

The Syriac Church survived under the rule of the Arabs, Saljuks, Mamluks, and Ottomans, but suffered much from these regimes. After the Islamic invasion in the 7th century, some of the Syriacs escaped to the Byzantine Empire while others resisted the Muslims, by fleeing to Mount Lebanon, where they made a stand to maintain a sovereign Christian presence in the East (Phares 1995, Myhill 2006). Nevertheless, there were periods in which the Syriacs lived peacefully under Muslim rule and were even asked to contribute to the Arabic culture by translating Syriac writings into Arabic. There were also periods of time in which the Syriacs stood on the side of the Muslims against dyaphysite Christians, especially during the crusades. On the whole, however, the Muslim persecution of the Syriacs was greater than the benefits they offered them, with perhaps the worst case being Ottoman rule, and more specifically during World War I, as many Syriacs were killed by the Ottoman Turks, who

massacred about 250,000 of them, wiped out many villages, and destroyed many monasteries and churches (Rustum 1988, Abdu 1997).

As can be seen, the Syriac Orthodox suffered not only from the Muslims, but also from dyaphysite Christians. Therefore, no contact was made between the Syriac Orthodox Church and the present-day Catholic Church until the year 1964, when dialogue between the two began with unofficial meetings. In 1971, theologians from the two Churches met together unofficially and finally declared that they share the same Apostolic tradition, believe in the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed, and confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD), and Ephesus (431 AD). In addition, they affirmed the importance of deeper understanding of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christologies which separated the two. Non-official meetings continued to be held and they finally led to the historic visit of Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I to Rome on June 23, 1984 and the signing of a declaration[6] of communion between the two Churches, ending a schism which had lasted for more than 1400 years (Brock 2004).

Today the Syriac Orthodox live in the Middle East, India, Europe, the United States, and Brazil, and their number amounts to approximately 300,000, among whom there are about 2,000 Syriac Orthodox living in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Their patriarchate, which was transferred to different monasteries for centuries, is nowadays in Damascus (Abdu 1997).

---

[6] See: http://syriacchristianity.org/PZakka/joint_declaration.htm

**1.2. Aim of the present study**

As has been discussed, the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox have had Syriac as their sacred and ancestral language since the beginning of their existence. Unlike the Maronites, who have not spoken Syriac natively since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many Syriac Orthodox still speak the language as a mother tongue. Having Syriac as their sacred and ancestral language makes the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox different from Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox (*rum*) or non-Uniate Catholic Christians (*latin*), whose sacred languages (i.e. Greek and Latin respectively) are not their ancestral languages. There is good reason to believe that the Maronites and Syriac Orthodox would tend to identify themselves differently from Greek Orthodox and non-Uniate Catholics. Therefore, this study will aim to examine how members of the Maronite and Syriac Orthodox communities in Israel identify themselves and find out how many of these people are interested in having their children speak Syriac natively.

## 2. THE STUDY

**2.1. Research questions**

The specific research questions which will be addressed are as follows:

  i.    How do different members of the Maronite and Syriac Orthodox communities who live in Israel define themselves?

 ii.    How do they think that members of their community should be identified?

iii.    How do they view the Syriac language?

iv.    Do they want to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue? And if yes, would they prefer their children to learn this language in a public or a private gan[7]/school?

## 2.2. Respondents

The respondents were 231 Maronites and 41 Syriac Orthodox. The Maronite respondents were from three places in Israel, Jish (109), Usfia (22), and Haifa (100), while all of the Syriac Orthodox respondents were from the Old City in Jerusalem.

## 2.3. Research Instrument and Procedures

The data were collected by means of a questionnaire that included nine questions. The questions elicited personal information (age, gender, etc.), information about the self-identification of the respondents and their identification of members of their community, their knowledge of the Syriac language, the importance of Syriac for their identity as Maronites/Syriac Orthodox, their interest in having their children speak Syriac natively, and their readiness to send their children to a Syriac-medium gan or school.

---

[7] The Hebrew word 'gan' was used instead of the English word 'kindergarten' because the former encompasses the meaning of 'preschool' and 'kindergarten'. A gan is a program or class intended for children aged two to six, while a kindergarten is for children aged five to six.

### 2.3.1. Questionnaire

**1)** Personal Information:

**Gender**

1. Male          2. Female

**Communal Affiliation**

1. Maronite          2. Syriac Orthodox

**Place of Residence**

1. Jish          2. Usfia          3. Haifa          4. Jerusalem

**Age**

1. 15-18          2. 19-29          3. 30-49          4. 50+

**Education**

   1. Never attended a school     2. Elementary school   3. Junior-high school

   4. High school                 4. Vocational          5. Academic

**Religious Activeness**

   1. I always attend Church

   2. I sometimes attend Church

   3. I do not go to Church

**2)** How do you identify yourself? _____

**3)** How are members of your community to be defined?

1. Arabs          2. A people with a special identity

**4)** To what extent do you know Syriac?

1. Don't know

2. Know some words

3. Know how to, a little bit, read and write

4. I speak the language natively

**5)** To what extent is Syriac important for the Maronites'/Syriac Orthodox's identity?

1. important          2. not important

**6)** Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

1. Yes          2. No

**7)** Do you know that before the Islamic invasion, people in the Levant spoke Syriac natively?

1. Yes          2. No

**8)** Would you agree to send your children to a Syriac-medium church gan?

1. Yes          2. No

**9)** Would you agree to send your children to a Syriac-medium public gan?

1. Yes          2. No

**10)** Would you agree to send your children to a Syriac-medium public gan?

1. Yes          2. No

After asking the seventh question, the respondents were told that before the Islamic invasion, people in the Levant had spoken Aramaic/Syriac, a fact which was not necessarily known to them. After giving this piece of information, the participants were asked whether they wanted to change any of their answers, and any changes which they mentioned were noted. The purpose behind this was to examine the effect of historical information on the respondents, that is, to check whether the respondents would change their minds after learning the historical facts.

The questions regarding the self-identification of the respondents and the way the respondents identify members of their community are analyzed in the first four subsections (3.1.-3.4.), which will present (1) the role of Arabism in the respondents' identity, (2) the role of Israeli and Palestinian identities in the respondents' identity, (3) the role of religious affiliation in the respondents' identity, and (4) the way the respondents view members of their community, i.e. as Arabs or as peoples with special identities. Subsections 3.5. and 3.6. deal with how much Syriac the respondents know and to what extent they believe Syriac is important to their identities. Subsection 3.7. analyzes data concerning the desire of the respondents to have their children speak Syriac natively, while the last subsection will discuss the readiness of the respondents to send their children to a Syriac-medium gan or school.

## 3. RESULTS

## 3.1. The role of Arabism in the respondents' identity

In this section I will present data showing how the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem view the role of Arabism in their identity. This section will comprise five subsections and a discussion; in the first four subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.1.1. Jish

**Table 3**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | % Arab | N |
|-----------|--------|-----|
| 15-18 | 65.7 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 55.6 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 64.3 | 28 |
| 50+ | 36.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **109** |

On the whole, a slight majority of 57.8% of the Jish respondents viewed themselves as being Arabs. Although the 50+ group differs from the rest of the groups, no statistically significant difference was found between the age groups when all four groups were distinguished. But after grouping the 15-49 age groups together, there

16

was found to be a significant, albeit weak, correlation between Arab identity and age ($\tau=.038$; $p<.05$), as shown in Table 4:

**Table 4**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| 15-49 | 62.1 | 90 |
| 50+ | 36.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **109** |

This means that the extent of excluding the term Arab is correlated with the age of the person; Jish Maronites who are above the age of 50 are more likely to exclude Arabism from their self-identification, and vice versa. No apparent reason seems to explain the difference between the 50+-year-old respondents and their 15-49-year-old counterparts. One might be tempted to think that part of the difference is because the majority (63.2%) of the former group knew the historical facts while only 20% of the 15-18 age group, 33.3% of the 19-29 age group, and 32.1% of the 30-49 age groups knew the historical information. However, it will be shown later (see Table 6) that even after the historical facts were told, there was still a relatively big difference between these two groups.

**Table 5**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Gender | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 48.1 | 54 |
| Female | 67.3 | 55 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **109** |

In addition, there was also found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between the gender and Arab variables ($\tau=.036$; $p<.05$). In most cases, females would tend to define themselves as Arabs, while men would not. This is in line with Moore (2000), who shows that Israeli Arab women, whether religious or secular, are traditionally oriented in terms of their identity. Accordingly, females in Jish seem to follow the Arab mainstream in Israel, which maintains that Arabs are those who speak Arabic natively, so that most Maronite women in Jish perceive themselves as being Arabs.

After the respondents were informed of the historical facts, a number of the respondents who had viewed themselves as Arabs changed their minds and began thinking of themselves as non-Arabs, so that a majority of the respondents regarded themselves as not being Arabs. As is shown in Table 6 below, the biggest change occurred in the 50+ age group, as 21% of its members changed their minds, while the smallest change took place in the 15-18 age group, among whom only 2.8% changed their minds. It seems that telling the historical facts had much more influence on the 19+-year-old respondents than on their 15-18-year-old counterparts, despite the fact that the majority of the latter group did not know these facts. In addition, there was found a statistically significant difference between the 15-49-year-old respondents and their 50+-year-old counterparts ($\tau=.07$; $p<.01$).

**Table 6**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | Before % Arab | After % Arab | N |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|-----|
| 15-18 | 65.7 | 62.9 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 55.6 | 40.7 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 64.3 | 50 | 28 |
| 50+ | 36.8 | 15.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **45.9** | **109** |

In order to compare between the 15-18 age group and the rest of the groups, the respondents whose ages were 19 and above were categorized together. The results are presented in Table 7 below:

**Table 7**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | Before %Arab | After %Arab | N |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----|
| 15-18 | 65.7 | 62.9 | 35 |
| 19+ | 54.1 | 37.8 | 74 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **45.9** | **109** |

There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between the age and Arab variables ($\tau=.055$; $p<.05$), which indicates that self-identification is correlated with age group.

The change in attitudes shows that lacking the knowledge of their history made the majority believe that they were Arabs, but upon providing the historical information, 11.9% changed their minds and joined those who from the beginning had stated that they were not Arabs. Nonetheless, this change almost did not occur in the 15-19 age group. It seems that the younger generation is less attached to their history and Maronite identity. This might be ascribed to the increasing detachment of young people from the Church. In Jish, as old people in the village tell, more young people were interested in attending masses and other liturgical celebrations in the past, while today, as can be observed on Sundays, the attendance of young people to their religious beliefs is declining.

**Table 8**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Gender | Before<br>% Arab | After<br>% Arab | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 48.1 | 42.6 | 54 |
| Female | 67.3 | 49.1 | 55 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **45.9** | **109** |

Table 8 shows that after being told the historical facts, about half of the female respondents continued to identify themselves as Arabs, while a moderate majority of males continued to view themselves as non-Arabs. The historical information, which the vast majority of males and females did not know, had more effect on females than on males. While there was only a decrease of 5.5% among males who believed that they were Arabs, there was a decrease of 18.2% among females.

### 3.1.2. Usfia

While reading through this sub-section, it should be born in mind that the number of the Usfia respondents was relatively small, and therefore, the percentages are not highly representative.

**Table 9**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | Before<br><br>% Arab | After<br><br>% Arab | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 60 | 40 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 20 | 5 |
| 50+ | 50 | 33.3 | 6 |
| **Total** | **40.9** | **31.8** | **22** |

On the whole, and as can be seen from Table 9 above, most of the Usfia respondents (59.1%) rejected Arab identity. If the 50+ age group is excluded, it would seem that as Usfia Maronites grow up, get out of their home environment, and come into contact with Jews, in the university or work, they begin to be more hesitant about their Arab identity. An additional reason for why the majority did not identify themselves as Arabs might stem from the fact that Usfia Maronites are a minority living among a majority of Druze, who tend not to identify themselves as Arabs, either (Abu-Rabia 1996).

Unlike their Jish counterparts, the great majority (68.2%) of the Usfia respondents knew the historical facts. Therefore, only one respondent from the 15-18 age group and another from the 50+ group changed their minds after telling the information. The change did not result in any statistically significant differences.

**Table 10**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Gender | Before<br>% Arab | After<br>% Arab | N |
|:------:|:------:|:------:|:------:|
| Male | 38.5 | 30.8 | 13 |
| Female | 44.4 | 33.3 | 9 |
| **Total** | **40.9** | **31.8** | **22** |

Table 10 above presents the results before and after telling the historical information. As can be seen, the majority of males and females did not define themselves as Arabs either before or after telling the information. There was not found to be any significant influence of gender on the responses of the respondents.

### 3.1.3. Haifa

**Table 11**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | % Arab | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 24 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 25 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 39.1 | 23 |
| 50+ | 50 | 12 |
| **Total** | **31** | **100** |

On the whole, most of the Haifa respondents (69%) excluded the term Arab from their self-identification. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the different age groups. There was not also found to be a statistically significant difference between the 15-49 and the 50+ groups nor between the 15-29 and 30+ groups, although it seems that the members of the 30+ group did identify themselves as Arabs more than did the others.

When the gender variable was taken into account, there was found to be a statistically significant difference between men and woman ($p<.05$), as shown in Table 12:

**Table 12**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Gender | % Arab | N |
|--------|--------|---|
| Male | 21.8 | 55 |
| Female | 42.2 | 45 |
| **Total** | **31** | **100** |

Although in both gender groups the majority excluded the term Arab from their self-identification, there was found to be a significant, albeit weak, correlation between the gender and Arab variables ($\tau$=.048; p<.05). This means that men seem to exclude the term Arab more than women do, a pattern which was also found in Jish.

Telling the historical information did not result in any change. While it might be expected that the majority of the 19+-year-old respondents would not change their minds because they knew the historical facts, it was unexpected that their 15-18-year-old counterparts, 60% of whom did not know this information, would also not change their minds after being informed of the facts.

### 3.1.4. Jerusalem

**Table 13**: Do you view yourself as being an Arab?

| Age group | % Arab | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 0 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 13.3 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 33.3 | 12 |
| 50+ | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **14.6** | **41** |

As can be seen from Table 13, the great majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents (85.4%, 35 out of 41) did not identify themselves as Arabs. This finding is interesting because all of the 41 respondents have spoken Arabic natively since they were children[8], and by definition, Arabs are those people who speak Arabic as their mother tongue. However, the Syriac Orthodox respondents seem to reject this notion and underscore the fact that although they speak Arabic as mother tongue, they are not to be considered Arabs. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between different age or gender groups. In addition, the results did not change after telling the historical facts; this can be ascribed to the fact that the overwhelming majority (92.7%) of the Syriac Orthodox respondents knew that people in the Levant spoke Syriac natively before the Islamic invasion.

---

[8] It should be noted that 29.3% of the Syriac Orthodox participants spoke both Syriac and Arabic natively.

### 3.1.5. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.1.5.1. Comparing between gender groups

**Table 14**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (Male) | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 48.1 | 54 |
| Usfia | 38.5 | 13 |
| Haifa | 21.8 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 12.5 | 24 |
| **Total** | **31.5** | **146** |

The majority of males in general, and in each place of residence, did not identify themselves as Arabs. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between the place of residence of males and the extent to which males exclude the term Arab from their self-identification ($\tau$=.093; p<.01). The Jish males were the most attached to Arab identity, the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, and the Usfia males were more attached to this identity than their Haifa counterparts. Telling the historical information did not result in much change; only 5.5% of the Jish males and 7.7% of the Usfia males changed their minds and did not include the term Arab after being asked the same question again.

**Table 15**: Female groups: place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (Female) | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 67.3 | 55 |
| Usfia | 44.4 | 9 |
| Haifa | 42.2 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 17.6 | 17 |
| **Total** | **50** | **126** |

As can be seen from Table 15 above, the majority of the Jish females identified themselves as Arabs while the rest of females did not. There was found to be a significant moderate correlation ($\lambda=.3$; $p<.05$) between the place of residence of females and the extent to which females exclude the term Arab from their self-identification. The Jish females were the most attached to Arab identity, the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, and the Haifa females were less attached than their Usfia counterparts, a pattern which is similar to the one found among males.

Tables 14 and 15 show that, based on the gender of a person and his/her place of residence, one can predict the extent to which he/she will include or exclude the term Arab. Both the Jish males and females were the most attached to the Arab identity, the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, and the Usfia respondents were more attached to this identity than were their Haifa counterparts.

**Table 16**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (Female) | Before % Arab | After % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 67.3 | 49.1 | 55 |
| Usfia | 44.4 | 33.3 | 9 |
| Haifa | 42.2 | 42.2 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 17.6 | 17.6 | 17 |
| **Total** | **50** | **41.3** | **126** |

Telling the historical information made 18.2% of the Jish females and 11.1% of the Usfia females change their minds and exclude the term Arab from their self-identification. This change influenced the overall percentage of females who excluded the term Arab from their self-identification, as is shown in Table 16 above. Notwithstanding the differences in the percentages, there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the female groups.

### 3.1.5.2. Comparing between age groups

**Table 17**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (15-18) | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 65.7 | 35 |
| Usfia | 60 | 5 |
| Haifa | 24 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **47.8** | **67** |

When comparing the 15-18 age groups, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\lambda$=.375; p=.05) between the place of residence of these groups and the perception of their Arab identity. The Jish and Usfia respondents were the most attached to this identity, as the majority of them identified themselves as Arabs, while the Haifa respondents were less attached, as only 24% of them stated that they are Arabs. Among all the Syriac Orthodox respondents, there were only two respondents whose ages were between 15-18 and they did not define themselves as Arabs at all.

**Table 18**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (15-18) | Before % Arab | After % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 65.7 | 62.9 | 35 |
| Usfia | 60 | 40 | 5 |
| Haifa | 24 | 24 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **47.8** | **44.8** | **67** |

After being told the historical information, the percentage of Jish respondents who defined themselves as Arabs dropped by 2.8%, while among the Usfia respondents it dropped by 20%. Nonetheless, the change is not meaningful because among the Jish respondents the percentage is very low and among the Usfia respondents only one respondent (20%) changed his mind.

**Table 19**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (19-29) | % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 55.6 | 27 |
| Usfia | 33.3 | 6 |
| Haifa | 25 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 13.3 | 15 |
| **Total** | **33** | **88** |

On the whole, the vast majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents did not define themselves as Arabs. However, the majority of the 19-29-year-old Jish respondents did state that they are Arabs. There was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.114; p<.05) between place of residence and the extent to which the members of each 19-29 age group excluded the term Arab from their self-identification. The 19-29 Jish respondents were the most attached to Arab identity, the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, and the Haifa respondents were less attached than their Usfia counterparts.

After telling the historical facts, the only change that occurred was among the 19-29 Jish respondents, as 14.9% of them changed their minds, and consequently the percentage of those who defined themselves as Arabs dropped to 40.7%. But in general, after telling the historical information, there was not found to be statistically significant difference among the 19-29 age groups.

**Table 20**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (30-49) | % Arab | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Jish | 64.3 | 28 |
| Usfia | 20 | 5 |
| Haifa | 39.1 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 33.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **47.1** | **68** |

Except for the Jish respondents, the rest of the 30-49 respondents did not view themselves as Arabs; this was the same pattern as we have seen for the 19-29 age group. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between these groups. Nonetheless, it can be seen in Table 20 that the Jish respondents have the tendency to view themselves as Arabs much more than do the other respondents. Subsequently, after grouping the 30-49 age groups from Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem and comparing between them and their Jish counterparts, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.083; $p$<.01) between these two groups. After being told the historical information, only 14.3% of the 30-49 Jish respondents stopped defining themselves as Arabs. No statistically significant difference, however, was found among the 30-49 age groups.

**Table 21**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence vs. Arab

| Place of residence (50+) | Before % Arab | After % Arab | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 36.8 | 15.8 | 19 |
| Usfia | 50 | 33.3 | 6 |
| Haifa | 50 | 50 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **32.7** | **22.4** | **49** |

There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.172; $p$<.05) between their place of residence and level of attachment to Arab identity. The 50+ Haifa and Usfia respondents were the most attached to Arab identity, the Jish

respondents were less attached, and the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, as none of them defined him/herself as being an Arab.

After being told the historical facts, one Usfia respondent (16.7%) and four Jish respondents (21%) changed their minds. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant weak correlation ($\tau$=.196; p<.05) between place of residence and the level of attachment to Arab identity.

**DISCUSSION**

The fact that, before telling the historical information, the majority (57.8%) of the Jish respondents stated that they were Arabs highlights the "centrality of the Arabic language as a unifying force" for those who speak it (Dawisha 2000); that is, a slight majority, in this case, believed that they were Arabs because they speak the Arabic language, and this is actually the generally accepted definition of Arab identity (Rodinson 1981, Abel 2003). On the other hand, 42.2% of the Jish respondents and the majority of the respondents of Usfia (59.1%), Haifa (69%), and Jerusalem (85.4%) did not define themselves as Arabs, which means that they believe that speaking Arabic as a mother tongue is not a crucial factor in determining their identity.

The difference between the Jish respondents and the other respondents can be partially ascribed to the fact that most of the Jish respondents (66.1%) had not known the historical facts. As soon as they were given the information, 11.9% of them changed their minds and excluded the term Arab. This quick change indicates the

shallow commitment of some Jish Maronites to Arab identity; it seems as if those Maronites were waiting for somebody to inform them that they were not Arabs in order for them to give up Arabism.

Nonetheless, this change did not occur in the 15-19 age groups in either Jish or Usfia, as most of the respondents in this age group continued to identify themselves as Arabs. It seems that only after they graduate from their village schools and join a college or start working do most Maronites start viewing themselves as being non-Arabs. It might be that while they are at their village schools, Maronites do not have any reason for rejecting Arab identity, as they speak the Arabic language and nobody discriminates against them. However, after they graduate from school and come into contact with Jews, Maronites seem to begin considering the ramifications of stressing or giving up their Arab identity.

Moreover, gender was found to play a substantial role in Jish and Haifa, as males identified themselves as Arabs less than females did. The place of residence of the respondents was also found to play a considerable role in determining the extent of excluding Arabism from the respondents' self-identification. On the whole, the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached to Arab identity, the Jish Maronites were the most attached, and the Haifa Maronites were less attached to Arabism than their Usfia counterparts.

Those who have excluded the term Arab from their self-identification might have done so for several reasons. First, the worldwide negative vision of Arabs as terrorists (Heredia & Blumentritt 2002, Chang & Kleiner 2003, Al-Hazza and Lucking 2005)

and the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts contribute to the fact that Israeli Maronites try to dissociate themselves from Arab identity because they do not want to be labeled as anti-Israel or terrorists. Second, the terms Arab and Muslim highly overlap (Issawi 1955, Totah 2002); that is, people would assume that a person is Muslim if s/he tells them that s/he is an Arab. Third, there are Arabic-speaking communities living in or outside Israel and whose members do not define themselves as Arabs, such as the Druze  in Israel and the Maronites in Lebanon (Salibi 1971, Kennedy 1984, Amara and Schnell 2003, Clark 2003, Zisser 2003).

These three factors, however, can also be applied to non-Maronite Christians in Israel; nevertheless, non-Maronite Christians in Israel would tend to define themselves as Arabs. Therefore, I would argue that these factors are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for Arabic-speaking Christians to relinquish Arabism and instead emphasize their Christian identity. Put differently, the political conflicts cannot alone push Arabic-speaking Christians in Israel to reject Arabism; hence, they are not sufficient. On the other hand, they are necessary conditions, i.e. if the Israeli-Arab and Christian-Muslim conflicts had not existed, Maronites would have defined themselves differently. The uniqueness of Maronite identity will be discussed at length in subsection 3.3. and 3.4. as well as in the final discussion.

## 3.2. The role of the Palestinian Israeli identities in the respondents' identity

In this section I will present data showing how the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem view the role of Palestinian and Israeli identities in their identity. This section will comprise five subsections and a discussion; in the first four subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.2.1. Jish

Table 22: Do you view yourself as being Palestinian?

| Age group | % Palestinian before | % Palestinian after | N |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| 15-18 | 14.3 | 14.3 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 25.9 | 18.5 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 10.7 | 10.7 | 28 |
| 50+ | 10.5 | 0 | 19 |
| **Total** | **15.6** | **11.9** | **109** |

The overwhelming majority of the respondents in each age group excluded the term Palestinian from their self-identification, and no statistically significant difference was found between the age groups. After being told the historical facts, four people changed their minds and excluded the term Palestinian, two from the 19-29 age group

36

and two from the 50+ group. This change revealed a significant but weak correlation ($\lambda$=.22; p<.001) between the two variables, Arab and Palestinian, as can be seen from Table 23 below:

**Table 23**: Correlation between Palestinian & Arab identities

|  | Arab Before | Arab After | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Respondents who labeled themselves as Palestinian** | 88.2% | 92.3% | 13 |
| **Respondents who did not label themselves as Palestinian** | 52.2% | 39.6% | 96 |

The results obtained after telling the historical information mean that the tendency of those who identify themselves as Palestinians is to also view themselves as Arabs, while those who exclude the term Palestinian from their self-identification are also likely to exclude the term Arab. This is the case with Palestinians in general, i.e. those who identify themselves as Palestinians also view themselves or are viewed as Arabs (Said and Hitchens 1988, Dwairy 1998, Bligh 2003, Nydell 2006).

**Table 24**: Do you identify yourself as being Israeli?

| Age group | % Israeli | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 37.1 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 40.7 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 42.9 | 28 |
| 50+ | 68.4 | 19 |
| **Total** | **45** | **109** |

The majority of the respondents in the 15-49 age groups did not include the term Israeli in their self-identification. In the 50+ age group, on the other hand, a majority (68.4%) identified themselves as Israelis. Although there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between age in general and Israeli identity, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between age and Israeli identity ($\lambda=.143$; $p<.05$) if the distinction is made between 15-49 and 50+ age groups, as shown in Table 25 below:

**Table 25**: Do you identify yourself as being Israeli?

| Age group | Israeli | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-49 | 40 | 90 |
| 50+ | 68.4 | 19 |
| **Total** | **45** | **109** |

This means that people above the age of 50 would tend to view themselves as Israelis, while the majority of younger people would not. No statistically significant difference

was found to be after informing the respondents of the historical facts. In addition, gender was not found to have a statistically significant influence on the respondents.

### 3.2.2. Usfia

While reading through this subsection, it should be born in mind that the number of the Usfia respondents was relatively small, and therefore the percentages are not highly representative.

**Table 26**: Do you view yourself as being Palestinian/Israeli?

| Age group | % Palestinian | % Israel | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 0 | 60 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 0 | 16.7 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 80 | 28 |
| 50+ | 0 | 66.7 | 19 |
| **Total** | **4.5** | **54.5** | **109** |

The overwhelming majority of the Usfia Maronites (95.5%, 21 out of 22) did not include the term Palestinian as part of their identity. As has been discussed in the previous section, this might be attributed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which the respondents do not want to take part in. An additional reason might be the influence of the Druze, who are a majority in Usfia and who generally do not label themselves

as Arabs and almost never as Palestinians. No significant difference was found between males and females.

Table 26 above shows that, on the whole, a moderate majority of the Usfia respondents define themselves as Israelis. When looking at different age groups, it can be seen that only in the 19-29 age group did the majority (5 out of 6) state that they are not Israelis. This is interesting because almost the same majority from this group also rejected the terms Palestinian and Arab. No significant difference was found between males and females. After being told the historical information, only one person from the 50+ age group changed his mind.

### 3.2.3. Haifa

**Table 27**: Do you view yourself as being Palestinian/Israeli?

| Age group | % Palestinian | % Israel | N |
|-----------|---------------|----------|-----|
| 15-18 | 12 | 12 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 5 | 40 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 13 | 34.8 | 23 |
| 50+ | 8.3 | 33.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **9** | **31** | **100** |

As can be seen from Table 27, the overwhelming majority of the Haifa respondents (91%) did not identify themselves as Palestinians, and there was not found to be a

statistically significant difference between the four age groups. In addition, the majority of the respondents also did not label themselves as Israelis. The 15-18 age group is the least attached group to Israeli identity. After grouping the 19+ age groups together and comparing between them and the 15-18 age group, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.057; p<.05) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they view themselves as Israelis. This means that the 15-18-year-old informants tend to define themselves as Israelis less than do their 19+-year-old counterparts.

**Table 28**: Correlation between Palestinian & Arab identities

|  | **Arab** | **N** |
|---|---|---|
| **Respondents who labeled themselves as Palestinian** | 66.7% | 9 |
| **Respondents who did not label themselves as Palestinian** | 27.5% | 91 |

Like the results obtained from Jish, there was found to be among the Haifa respondents a significant, albeit weak, correlation between the variables Palestinian and Arab ($\tau$=.059; p<.05), which indicates that those who tend to label themselves as Palestinians also label themselves as Arabs, and vice versa.

### 3.2.4. Jerusalem

**Table 29**: Do you view yourself as being Palestinian?

| Age group | % Palestinian | N |
|-----------|---------------|---|
| 15-18 | 0 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 20 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 25 | 12 |
| 50+ | 16.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **19.5** | **41** |

Table 29 above demonstrates an interesting finding, as the great majority of the respondents (80.5%) did not consider themselves Palestinians. While it is expected that Arabic-speaking people who live inside Israel might hesitate on whether they are Palestinians or Israelis, it would be expected that non-Jewish people who live in East Jerusalem would consider themselves to be Palestinians, but in fact the opposite was found.

**Table 30**: Do you view yourself as being Palestinian?

| Gender | % Palestinian | N |
|--------|---------------|---|
| Male | 8.3 | 24 |
| Female | 35.3 | 17 |
| **Total** | **19.5** | **41** |

There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.112; p<.05) between the gender of the respondents and the extent to which they exclude

the term Palestinian from their self-identification. Males tend to label themselves as Palestinians less than females do. Hence, females seem to be affected by the Palestinian mainstream more than males are, which supports the findings of Moore (2000), mentioned in the previous section.

There was not found to be a significant difference between the age groups, and the results did not change after telling the historical facts. Moreover, none of the Syriac Orthodox respondents identified themselves as Israelis, because they live in East Jerusalem which is not considered by Palestinians to be part of Israel.

### 3.2.5. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.2.5.1 Comparing between gender groups

**Table 31**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (Male) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 11.1 | 44.4 | 54 |
| Usfia | 7.7 | 46.2 | 13 |
| Haifa | 7.3 | 29.1 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 8.3 | 0 | 24 |
| **Total** | **8.9** | **31.5** | **146** |

As can be seen from Table 31, the majority of the males identified themselves neither as Palestinians nor as Israelis. Nevertheless, while there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the male groups regarding their self-identification as Palestinians, there was found to be a statistically significant difference regarding their self-identification as Israelis (p=.001). There was also found a significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.114; p=.001) between the place of residence of males and the extent to which they defined themselves as Israelis. The Jish and Usfia respondents were the most attached to the Israeli identity, their Haifa counterparts were much less attached, while the Syriac Orthodox did not define themselves as Israelis at all.

**Table 32**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (Female) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 20 | 45.5 | 55 |
| Usfia | 0 | 66.7 | 9 |
| Haifa | 11.1 | 33.3 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 35.3 | 0 | 17 |
| **Total** | **17.5** | **36.5** | **126** |

The majority of females (52.4%, 66 out of 126) did not define themselves as Palestinians or Israelis either before or after being told the historical facts. Although there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the female groups with respect to their self-identification as Palestinians, there was found to be a

significant but weak correlation (τ=.122; p=.002) between the place of residence of the females and the extent to which they defined themselves as Israelis. The Usfia females were the most attached to Israeli identity, the Jish respondents were more attached than their Haifa counterparts, while the Syriac Orthodox females did not define themselves as Israelis at all.

### 3.2.5.2 Comparing between age groups

**Table 33**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (15-18) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Jish | 14.3 | 37.1 | 35 |
| Usfia | 0 | 60 | 5 |
| Haifa | 12 | 12 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **11.9** | **28.4** | **67** |

The vast majority of the 15-18-year-old respondents did not view themselves as Palestinians, and there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between these groups. However, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation (τ=.118; p=.05) between the place of residence of these groups and the extent to which they view themselves as Israelis. The Usfia respondents were the most attached to this identity, the Jish respondents were much more attached than their Haifa counterparts, and the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, as none of them identified him/herself as Israeli.

**Table 34**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (19-29) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 25.9 | 40.7 | 27 |
| Usfia | 0 | 16.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 5 | 40 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 20 | 0 | 15 |
| **Total** | **13.6** | **31.8** | **88** |

Like their 15-18-year-old counterparts, the overwhelming majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents also did not view themselves as Palestinians, and there was not found to be any statistically significant difference between them. On the whole, they were about as attached to the Israeli identity as their 15-18-year-old counterparts. The 19-29-year-old respondents in Haifa in particular, however, were much more attached to this identity than were their 15-18 counterparts. In addition, with respect to Israeli identity, there was found to be a statistically significant correlation ($\tau$=.112; p<.05) between the place of residence of the 19-29 age groups and the extent to which they identify themselves as Israelis; the Jish and Haifa respondents were the most attached to this identity, the Usfia respondents were much less attached, and the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached.

**Table 35**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (30-49) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 10.7 | 42.9 | 28 |
| Usfia | 20 | 80 | 5 |
| Haifa | 13 | 34.8 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 25 | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **14.7** | **35.3** | **68** |

On the whole, the majority of the 30-49-year-old respondents (55.8%, 38 out of 68) defined themselves neither as Palestinians nor as Israelis. With respect to Palestinian identity, there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the 30-49 age groups in terms of their place of residence. On the other hand, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.171; p=.01) between the 30-49-year-old respondents' place of residence and the extent to which they defined themselves as Israelis. The Usfia respondents were the most attached to this identity, the Jish respondents were more attached than their Haifa counterparts, and the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached.

**Table 36**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence vs. Palestinian/Israeli

| Place of residence (50+) | % Palestinian | % Israeli | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 10.5 | 68.4 | 19 |
| Usfia | 0 | 66.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 8.3 | 33.3 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 16.7 | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **10.2** | **42.9** | **49** |

Like the majority of their 30-49-year-old counterparts, the majority of the 50+-year-old respondents (53.1%, 26 out of 49) viewed themselves neither as Palestinians nor as Israelis. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between these respondents regarding their self-identification as Palestinians. There was found to be a significant but moderate correlation ($\tau$=.334; p<.01) between their place of residence and the extent to which they view themselves as Israelis. The Jish and Usfia respondents were the most attached to the Israeli identity, their Haifa counterparts were much less attached, and the Syriac Orthodox were the least attached, as none of them defined him/herself as Israeli.

**DISCUSSION**

As has been shown, the overwhelming majority of the respondents did not identify themselves as Palestinians. This might have been the case either because they do not live in a place, country, or state that is called Palestine, or because of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict which the respondents may not want to take part in. Another reason might be that Christians are viewed as crusaders, traitors, or outsiders by the Muslim Palestinians (Merkley 2001). Texts written by Hamas, for example, tend to assume that being a Palestinian requires being a Muslim (Munson 2003).

Unlike the Usfia Maronites, the majority of the Jish and Haifa Maronites also rejected Israeli identity, probably because Israel is defined as the state of Jews, and some people feel that Jews are preferred, as a group and as individuals, over the other citizens, who are classified as second-class citizens (Peled a Shafir 1996, Ghanem 1998, Levin et. al 1998, Sa'ar 1998). The difference between the Usfia Maronites and the rest of the respondents might be ascribed to the fact that Maronites in Usfia are a minority living among a majority of Druze, who tend to define themselves as Israelis (Abu-Rabia 1996). However, it should be noted that the number of the Usfia respondents was small, and therefore the percentages cannot be regarded as necessarily representative.

In addition, no statistically significant differences were found between the different age groups regarding their self-identification as Palestinians, either within a certain place of residence or between the three places of residence. The overwhelming majority of each age group did not identify themselves as Palestinians. With regard to Israeli identity, age and place of residence were found to have an effect on the respondents. The 15-18 and 50+-year-old respondents from Jish and Usfia were more inclined to identify themselves as Israelis than their Haifa counterparts, while the 29-49-year-old respondents from Jish and Haifa were less inclined to identify themselves as Israelis than were their Usfia counterparts. The Syriac Orthodox respondents, on

the other hand, did not identify themselves as Israelis at all, because they live in East Jerusalem.

Although the overall majority of the Maronite respondents defined themselves neither as Palestinians nor as Israelis, the percentage of those who defined themselves as Israelis was higher than the percentage for those who defined themselves as Palestinians. This can be attributed to several reasons: (**1**) Maronites do not live in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip; (**2**) they live in Israel and have Israeli identity cards; (**3**) they recognize, as other Christians, that they need to engage in social and cultural contact with Jews in order to access to important resources such as education and work (Horenczyk & Munayer 2007); (**4**) many Maronites, especially those who are committed to their religious beliefs, feel that they are attached to Lebanon more than to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Maronite bishop and the nuns in Israel are Lebanese, and in some hymns Maronites, no matter where they are, pray for Lebanon; (**5**) Some Maronites have relatives in Lebanon but none have relatives in the Palestinian territories; and (**6**) many Maronites watch the Lebanese Maronite Channel *Telelumier*, which focuses on religious matters and thus corroborates and promotes Christian identity. Except for the fourth and fifth factors, all the other factors also apply to non-Maronite Christians living in Israel. Maronites, however, tend to reject Palestinian identity much more than do non-Maronite Christians. Therefore, I would argue in the final discussion that the six factors mentioned above are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for a Christian living in Israel to reject being labeled as Palestinian.

## 3.3. The role of religious affiliation in the respondents' identity

In this section I will present data showing how the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem view the role of religious affiliation in their identity. This section will comprise five subsections and a discussion; in the first four subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.3.1. Jish

**Table 37**: Do you identify yourself as being a Christian/Catholic/Maronite?

| Age group | % Christians | % Catholics | % Maronites | N |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| 15-18 | 88.6 | 2.9 | 14.3 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 88.9 | 11.1 | 37 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 82.1 | 7.1 | 46.4 | 28 |
| 50+ | 89.5 | 10.5 | 52.6 | 19 |
| **Total** | **87.2** | **7.3** | **34.9** | **109** |

Table 37 above demonstrates the strong attachment of Maronites to the sectarian side of their identity. The overwhelming majority (87.2%) viewed Christianity as part of their identity, irrespective of their age, gender, or religious activeness. On the other hand, Catholicism does not have a formative role in the identity of the overwhelming majority (92.7%). This is not because they are not Catholics, nor is it because they are not committed to Catholicism. It seems that the majority of the respondents have not

included this term in their identity either because they perceive that it is already included in the wider term Christian or because the distinction between them as Christians and their Muslim neighbors is the most important parameter for them. The results did not change after telling the historical facts.

Although all the Jish respondents were Maronites, only 34.9% of them viewed the term Maronite as an integral part of their identity. There was not found to be a significant effect of gender on the responses; however, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation between the age and Maronite variables ($\tau$=.1; p<.05), which means that the younger the respondents are, the more likely they are to exclude the term Maronite from their self-identification. This finding can be interpreted in two different ways, either that young people might  put more emphasis on their Maronite identity as they grow older or that future Maronite generations in Jish might put less and less emphasis on their Maronite identity as long as the political atmosphere does not change radically. After informing the respondents of the historical facts, only two respondents changed their minds and identified themselves as Maronites.

**Table 38**: Correlation between Maronite and Arab identities

| | Arab before | N | Arab after | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Respondents who labeled themselves as Maronites** | 39.5% | 38 | 25% | 40 |
| **Respondents who did not label themselves as Maronite** | 67.6% | 71 | 58% | 69 |

As is shown in Table 38 above, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, negative correlation between the Maronite and Arab variables both before ($\tau$=.074; p=.005) and after ($\tau$=.102; p=.001) telling the historical information. This means that the majority of those who identified themselves as Maronites did not identify themselves as Arabs, and vice versa.

### 3.3.2. Usfia

**Table 39**: Do you identify yourself as a being Christian/Catholic/Maronite?

| Age group | % Christians | % Catholics | % Maronites | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 100 | 40 | 60 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 100 | 16.7 | 66.7 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 80 | 0 | 60 | 5 |
| 50+ | 66.7 | 0 | 50 | 6 |
| **Total** | **86.4** | **13.6** | **59.1** | **22** |

Like their Jish counterparts, the vast majority of the Usfia Maronites (86.4%) identified themselves as Christians, regardless of their age or gender. This underscores the strong attachment of Usfia Maronites to their religious identity. Nevertheless, very few defined themselves as Catholics, not because they are not Catholics, but because they might perceive that the term Catholic is already included in the wider term Christian. After being told the historical information, only one respondent from the 50+ age group changed his mind and identified himself as Christian.

Most of the Usfia respondents (59.1%) identified themselves as Maronites irrespective of their age or gender. After being told the historical information, only one respondent changed his mind and identified himself as Maronite. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate negative correlation ($\tau$=.389; p<.01) between the Maronite and Arab variables both before ($\tau$=.389; p<.01) and after ($\tau$=.338; p<.01) telling the historical information, as may be seen from Table 40 below:

Table 40: Correlation between Maronite and Arab identities

| | Arab before | N | Arab after | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Respondents who labeled themselves as Maronites** | 15.4% | 13 | 13.3% | 15 |
| **Respondents who did not label themselves as** | 77.8% | 9 | 71.4% | 7 |

| Maronite | | | | |
|----------|--|--|--|--|
|          |  |  |  |  |

This means that the majority of those who identified themselves as Maronites did not identify themselves as Arabs, and vice versa.

### 3.3.3. Haifa

**Table 41**: Do you identify yourself as being a Christian/Catholic/Maronite?

| Age group | % Christians | % Catholics | % Maronites | N |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| 15-18 | 68 | 0 | 44 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 82.5 | 7.5 | 67.5 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 78.3 | 0 | 30.4 | 23 |
| 50+ | 83.3 | 0 | 41.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **78** | **3** | **50** | **100** |

The overwhelming majority of the Haifa respondents defined themselves as Christians but not as Catholics; no statistically significant difference was found between the four age groups. Only half of the respondents identified themselves as Maronites. There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.091; $p<.05$) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they defined themselves as Maronites. As is shown in Table 41 above, the 15-18 and the 50+ age groups were similar in terms of their responses; in both of these groups, a moderate majority excluded the term Maronite from their self-identification. The 30-49 age group put even less emphasis on their Maronite identity, as only 30.4% of this group identified themselves as Maronites. On the other hand, the majority of the 19-29 age group

defined themselves as Maronites. Gender did not have a statistically significant effect on the responses.

When comparing between the three Maronite communities, it can be seen that, on the whole, the Maronite respondents from Jish and Haifa stressed their holistic Christian identity more than their communal one, while their Usfia counterparts stressed both their Christian and their Maronite identities. Further comparative analysis between same-sex and same-age groups will be provided in the comparison subsection 3.3.5.

### 3.3.4. Jerusalem

**Table 42**: Do you identify yourself as being a Christian/Syriac (Suryani)?

| Age group | % Christians | % Syriac | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 50 | 100 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 53.3 | 80 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 58.3 | 75 | 12 |
| 50+ | 25 | 83.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **46.3** | **80.5** | **41** |

Unlike their Maronite counterparts, the Syriac Orthodox respondents put much less emphasis on their Christian identity, as only 46.3% of them stated that they are Christians. The vast majority of the 50+ age group did not identify themselves as Christians, while a slight majority of each of the other age groups did. Nonetheless,

there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the age groups even after grouping the 15-49-year-old respondents together.

Despite the low percentage of those who defined themselves as Christians, the Syriac Orthodox were found to be highly attached to their religious identity, as 80.5% of them  defined themselves as Syriac. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the age or gender groups. In addition, the results did not change after telling the historical facts.

The difference between the Syriac Orthodox respondents and their Maronite counterparts might be attributed to the fact that the former respondents are more conscious than are Maronites about their being an ethnic group, particularly because a third of them have as their mother tongue Syriac which is ethnically specific to them, and even those who do not speak it can often understand it or at least hear it spoken regularly in their lives, so that they are conscious of the fact that it is specific to their ethnic group.

### 3.3.5. Comparison between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.3.5.1 Comparing between gender groups

**Table 43**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. Christian identity

| Place of residence (Male) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 83.3 | 54 |
| Usfia | 84.6 | 13 |
| Haifa | 72.7 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 37.5 | 24 |
| **Total** | **71.9** | **146** |

The vast majority of the male respondents identified themselves as Christians. There was found to be a statistically significant correlation ($\tau$=.128; p<.001) between communal affiliation and the extent to which males viewed themselves as Christians. Table 43 above shows that the great majority of the Jish, Usfia, and Haifa respondents identified themselves as Christians, while the majority of the Syriac Orthodox did not. This, however, does not mean that the Syriac Orthodox are less attached to their religious identity; it just means that they stressed their holistic Christian identity less than their ethnically specific Syriac identity. After being told the historical

information, only one Usfia respondent changed his mind and identified himself as a Christian.

**Table 44**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of residence (Male) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 37 | 7.4 | 54 |
| Usfia | 69.2 | 23.1 | 13 |
| Haifa | 56.4 | 1.8 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 87.5 | --- | 24 |

While the Syriac Orthodox males did not stress their holistic Christian identity, they did stress their communal identity, as the overwhelming majority of them identified themselves as Syriac. The majority of the Jish males did not identify themselves as Maronites, whereas the majority of the Usfia and Haifa males did. Thus it can be seen that the Haifa and Usfia males stressed both their holistic Christian identity and their communal one, but they put more emphasis on the former. However, the vast majority of the Maronite males did not identify themselves as Catholics.

The difference between the Jish males and their Haifa and Usfia counterparts might stem from the fact that Maronites in Jish constitute an overwhelming majority of the Christian population, which includes them and a very small minority of Greek Catholics. This would encourage them to focus more on the Christian-Muslim axis rather than the Maronite-Greek Catholic one, in particular because Muslims constitute about 40% of the Jish population.

As has been mentioned, a number of the respondents seem to perceive that their communal identity is included in their holistic Christian identity, and consequently they do not mention the former when they defined themselves. The Syriac Orthodox, on the other hand, stressed their communal identity, either because identifying oneself as Syriac stops him/her from being viewed as Arab, or because they live in Jerusalem and they want to distinguish themselves from other Christians there. Another reason might be that some of them speak Syriac natively and the others hear it spoken; this probably increases their sense of attachment to Syriac identity.

With regard to Maronite identity, there was found to be a statistically significant correlation between the place of residence of Maronite males and the extent to which they identified themselves as Maronites. The Usfia males were the most attached to Maronite identity while their Jish counterparts were the least attached. After being told the historical facts, only one Usfia male changed his mind and identified himself as Maronite.

**Table 45**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. Christian identity

| Place of residence (Female) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 90.9 | 55 |
| Usfia | 88.9 | 9 |
| Haifa | 84.4 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 58.8 | 17 |
| **Total** | **84.1** | **126** |

Like the males, the overwhelming majority of females identified themselves as Christians. There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.081; p<.05) between the females' communal affiliation and the extent to which they identified themselves as Christians. Table 45 above shows that Maronite females, like Maronite males, tend to identify themselves as Christians more than Syriac Orthodox females do.

**Table 46**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of residence (Female) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 32.7 | 7.3 | 55 |
| Usfia | 44.4 | 0 | 9 |
| Haifa | 42.2 | 4.4 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 70.6 | *** | 17 |

Regarding communal identity, the majority of the Maronite females did not include the terms Maronite or Catholic in their self-identification. The majority of the Syriac Orthodox females, on the other hand, identified themselves as Syriac. Thus the majority of the Maronite females stressed their holistic Christian identity and ignored their communal one, whereas the Syriac Orthodox females stressed both identities but put slightly more emphasis on the communal one.

After being told the historical facts, two females from Jish and one from Usfia changed their minds and defined themselves as Maronites. Nevertheless, neither

before nor after telling the information was there found to be a statistically significant difference between the female Maronite groups.

### 3.3.5.2 Comparing between age groups

**Table 47**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Christian

| Place of residence (15-18) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 88.6 | 35 |
| Usfia | 100 | 5 |
| Haifa | 68 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 50 | 2 |
| **Total** | **80.6** | **67** |

Table 47 shows that the 15-18-year-old Maronites are highly attached to their Christian identity, as the great majority of them defined themselves as Christians. On the other hand, only half of the 15-18-year-old Syriac Orthodox identified themselves as Christians; this, however, does not indicate that they are less attached to their religious identity than their Maronite counterparts, because they are particularly attached to their religious communal identity, as may be noticed from Table 48 below. No statistically significant difference was found after telling the informants the historical information.

**Table 48**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of residence (15-18) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 14.3 | 2.9 | 35 |
| Usfia | 60 | 40 | 5 |
| Haifa | 44 | 0 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | *** | 2 |

Table 48 shows that, on the whole, the attachment of the 15-18-year-old Maronite respondents to their communal identity is weak. The great majority of the 15-18-year-old Maronites did not define themselves as Catholics, and the majority of the Jish and Haifa groups did not define themselves as Maronites. There was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.134; p<.05) between the place of residence of the 15-18-year-old respondents and the extent to which they identified themselves as Maronites. In addition, there was found to be a significant, albeit weak, correlation between the place of residence of the Maronite groups and the extent to which they viewed themselves as Catholics. After being told the historical facts, only one Usfia respondent changed his mind and identified himself as Maronite.

**Table 49**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. Christian identity

| Place of residence (19-29) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 88.9 | 27 |
| Usfia | 100 | 6 |
| Haifa | 82.5 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 53.3 | 15 |
| **Total** | **80.7** | **88** |

The vast majority of the respondents identified themselves as Christians. Nevertheless, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.112$; $p=.02$) between the communal affiliation of the 19-29-year-old respondents and the extent to which they identified themselves as Christians; the overwhelming majority of the Maronite respondents viewed themselves as Christians while only a slight majority of the Syriac Orthodox did. No change occurred after telling the informants the historical facts.

**Table 50**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of residence (19-29) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 37 | 11.1 | 27 |
| Usfia | 66.7 | 16.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 67.5 | 7.5 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 80 | *** | 15 |

The overwhelming majority of the 19-29-year-old Maronites did not define themselves as Catholics. In addition, the majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents from Jish did not define themselves as Maronites, while the majority of the Usfia and Haifa Maronites did. There was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation between the place of residence of the 19-29-year-old Maronites and the extent to which they defined themselves as Maronites. Like their Usfia and Haifa counterparts, the 19-29-year-old Syriac Orthodox stressed their communal identity, as the vast majority of them defined themselves as Syriac. After being told the historical facts, only one Jish respondent changed her mind and identified herself as Maronite.

**Table 51**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. Christian identity

| Place of residence (30-49) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 82.1 | 28 |
| Usfia | 80 | 5 |
| Haifa | 78.3 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 58.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **76.5** | **68** |

The overwhelming majority of the 30-49 respondents identified themselves as Christians. No statistically significant difference was found between the four groups, and no change occurred after telling the informants the historical facts.

**Table 52**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of residence (30-49) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 46.4 | 7.1 | 28 |
| Usfia | 60 | 0 | 5 |
| Haifa | 30.4 | 0 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 75 | *** | 12 |

The majority of the Haifa and Jish respondents did not define themselves as Maronites or Catholics; the majority of their Usfia respondents did, however, identify themselves as Maronites but not as Catholics, while the majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents defined themselves as Syriac. Hence, the Syriac Orthodox and Usfia respondents stressed their communal identity more than their Haifa and Jish counterparts did. There was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the 30-49 Maronite age groups.

**Table 53**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence vs. Christian identity

| Place of residence (50+) | % Christian | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 89.5 | 19 |
| Usfia | 66.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 83.3 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 25 | 12 |
| **Total** | **69.4** | **49** |

The majority of the 50+ Maronite respondents identified themselves as Christians, while the majority of their Syriac Orthodox counterparts did not. Consequently, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit moderate, correlation ($\tau$=.324; p=.001) between the communal affiliation of the respondents and the extent to which they defined themselves as Christians. After being told the historical information, only one Usfia respondent changed his mind and identified himself as a Christian.

**Table 54**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence vs. communal affiliation

| Place of Residence (50+) | %Maronite/Syriac | %Catholic | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 52.6 | 10.5 | 19 |
| Usfia | 50 | 0 | 6 |
| Haifa | 41.7 | 0 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 83.3 | *** | 12 |

While a slight majority of the 50+-year-old respondents from Jish and half of the Usfia respondents identified themselves as Maronites, the majority of the Haifa respondents did not. Nevertheless, there was not found to be a statistically significant difference between the 50+ Maronite groups. In addition, the vast majority of the 50+-year-old Maronite respondents did not define themselves as Catholics. Thus the attachment of the 50+-year-old Maronites to their communal identity is, on the whole, relatively weak. The Syriac Orthodox respondents, on the other hand, were much more attached to their communal identity, as 83.3% of them defined themselves as Syriac.

**DISCUSSION**

The data presented above show that the respondents are strongly attached to the religious or spiritual side of their identity. The attachment of the Syriac Orthodox to their religious identity can be explained either by the deportation and slaughter that they had faced by Muslims during their history, especially during the Ottoman period (Sato 2003, 2005) or due to the fact that some of the Syriac Orthodox speak Syriac natively or hear it spoken in their everyday life. The attachment of the Jish, Usfia, and Haifa respondents to their religious identity can be attributed to the confusion that Maronites in Israel have regarding their identity. They are conflicted with whether they are Arabs and/or Palestinians or not. Because they are viewed as crusaders or traitors by some Arabs, Maronites in Israel feel that the only safe identity that they can resort to is their religious one.

While the Syriac Orthodox stress their communal identity, Maronites stress their holistic Christian identity; the reason for this difference between the Syriac Orthodox and the Maronites is not clear. One might think that this difference stems from the fact that the Syriac Orthodox respondents live in Jerusalem, where many Christian communities live. In order for the Syriac Orthodox to distinguish themselves, they emphasize their communal religious identity rather than their holistic Christian identity. Nevertheless, Haifa also has several Christian communities, but the Maronites there tend to identify themselves as Christians rather than Maronites. Moreover, in Jish and Usfia there are only two Christian communities, the Maronites and the Greek Catholics, with the Maronites being a majority in Jish but a very small minority in Usfia. However, it would be wrong to think that the Usfia Maronites stress

both their Christian and Maronite identities because they are a minority; this is because the Maronites in Haifa are also a minority among the other Christian communities, but they define themselves as Christians rather than Maronites. The only reason which might explain the difference between the Maronites and Syriac Orthodx is the fact that the latter group either speak Syriac natively or hear it spoken in their everyday life, which corroborates their attachment to Syriac identity.

Focusing on religious identity makes the respondents in this study different, in terms of their self-identification, from other Arabic-speaking Christians who live outside Israel. Haddad (2000) carried out research in two Christian communities in north Jordan, one which lives as a minority among a majority of Muslims in the town of El-Husn, and another which constitutes a majority in the village of Shatana. The Christian community in El-Husn comprises Arabic-speaking Greek Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants, while the Christian community in Shatana comprises Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and non-Uniate Catholics. Haddad's findings show no differences between the two Christian communities regarding their self-identification as Christian Arabs. One might assume, though, that they identify themselves as Arabs either because they believe and were educated that those who speak Arabic as mother tongue are Arabs, or because they are afraid of facing resentment and persecution from their Muslim neighbors if they declare that they are not Arabs.

On the other hand, Khashan (1990) conducted a study in a Maronite community of college students in Lebanon. The majority of the respondents (61.1%) expressed their very strong attachment to their Maronite affiliation, and 75.7% rejected the idea of

secularizing Lebanon; however, it is not mentioned whether or not the respondents would define their nationality in terms of religious affiliation, i.e. Christian or Maronite. The overwhelming majority identified themselves as Lebanese nationalists, and only 0.7% expressed Arab nationalist orientation.

Thus it can be seen that the Maronites in Israel are confused about their identity; they do not resemble their counterparts in Lebanon, nor are they similar to the non-Maronite Christians in Jordan.

## 3.4. Are Maronites and Syriac Orthodox Arabs or peoples with special identities?

In this section I will present data showing how the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem view members of their community. This section will comprise five subsections and a discussion; in the first four subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.4.1. Jish

**Table 55**: How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 28.6 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 44.4 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 39.3 | 28 |
| 50+ | 31.6 | 19 |
| **Total** | **35.8** | **109** |

Irrespective of their age or gender, the vast majority of the respondents in Jish viewed Maronites as a people with a special identity and not as Arabs. This is, however, contradicted by the way the respondents identified themselves. Before telling the historical facts, the majority of the respondents (57.8%) identified themselves as Arabs even though they are Maronites and view Maronites as a people with a special identity. Table 56 below shows the difference between the responses of each age

group to the two questions: (1) "Do you define yourself as Arab?" and (2) "How are Maronites to be defined?"

**Table 56**: Do you define yourself as Arab? vs. How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | % I am Arab | % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 65.7 | 28.6 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 55.6 | 44.4 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 64.3 | 39.3 | 28 |
| 50+ | 36.8 | 31.6 | 19 |
| **Total** | **57.8** | **35.8** | **109** |

As can be seen from Table 56 above, the responses of the 15-49 age groups in Jish are contradictory. 37.1% (65.7% - 28.6%) of the 15-18 age group, 11.2% of the 19-29 age group, and 25% of the 30-49 age group believe that they themselves are Arabs but that Maronites in general are not Arabs but rather a people with a special identity. The contradiction can be ascribed to the fact that Maronites in Jish live with Muslims, who constitute about 40% of the Jish population. Because the Maronites do not want to offend their neighbor Muslims, they tend to define themselves as Arabs; however, when it comes to Maronites in general, the Maronites in Jish define them as a people with a special identity.

**Table 57**: How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | *Before* % Maronites are Arabs | *After* % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 28.6 | 17.1 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 44.4 | 25.9 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 39.3 | 14.3 | 28 |
| 50+ | 31.6 | 15.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **35.8** | **18.3** | **109** |

After telling the historical facts, the overall percentage of those who believed that Maronites are a people with a special identity rose from 64.2% to 81.7%. No statistically significant difference was found among the age groups.

**Table 58**: Do you define yourself as Arab? vs. How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | *After* % I am Arab | *After* % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 62.9 | 17.1 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 40.7 | 25.9 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 50 | 14.3 | 28 |
| 50+ | 15.8 | 15.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **45.9** | **18.3** | **109** |

The same contradiction that had been found before telling the historical facts was also found after telling the facts. As can be seen from Table 58, the Jish Maronites seem to be inconsistent regarding how they define themselves and how they define Maronites in general. Gender was not found to have a statistically significant effect on the respondents, either before or after telling the historical information.

**Table 59**: How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Age group | *Before* % Maronites would still be Arabs | *After* % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 17.1 | 11.4 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 11.1 | 7.4 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 10.7 | 3.6 | 28 |
| 50+ | 31.6 | 15.8 | 19 |
| **Total** | **16.5** | **9.2** | **109** |

The data presented in Table 59 above demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of the respondents, on the whole and in each age group, believe that Maronites would be a people with a special identity if they switched to speaking Syriac as a mother tongue. After being told the historical facts, the overall percentage of those who believed that Maronites would become a people with a special identity rose from 83.5% to 90.8%. The greatest difference occurred in the 50+ age group, among whim about 15% changed their attitudes after learning the historical information. Gender

was not found to have a statistically significant effect on the respondents, either before or after telling the historical information.

### 3.4.2. Usfia

**Table 60**: How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|:---------:|:---------------------:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 40 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 33.3 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 5 |
| 50+ | 100 | 6 |
| **Total** | **50** | **22** |

According to Table 60, most Usfia respondents whose ages ranged between 15 and 49 agreed that Maronites are not Arabs but a people with a special identity. On the other hand, all respondents whose ages are 50 and above agreed that Maronites are to be considered Arabs. This is not consistent with the findings presented in the second section, according to which three out of the six 50+-year-old respondents rejected being identified as Arabs. After being told the historical facts, only one person from the 50+ age group changed his mind and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity. Gender was not found to have a statistically significant effect on the respondents.

**Table 61**: How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Age group | % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 20 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 33.3 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 5 |
| 50+ | 50 | 6 |
| **Total** | **31.8** | **22** |

Table 61 above clearly demonstrates that the Syriac language is a crucial factor in determining the identity of Maronites exactly as Arabic is for Arabs. The great majority of the respondents agree that if Maronites begin speaking Syriac as a mother tongue, they would be considered a people with a special identity rather than Arabs. This supports the notion that the Arab identity is perceived to be based primarily on the Arabic language (Haeri 2000). After being told the historical information, two respondents from the 19-29 and 50+ age groups changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity.

**Table 62**: How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 20 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 10 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 47.8 | 23 |
| 50+ | 58.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **27** | **100** |

The majority of the respondents in Haifa stated that Maronites are a people with a special identity. Nevertheless, this was not the case for the 50+ age group, as the majority of its members declared that Maronites were to be viewed as Arabs.

**Table 63**: Do you define yourself as Arab? **vs.** How are Maronites to be defined?

| Age group | % I am Arab | % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 24 | 20 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 25 | 10 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 39.1 | 47.8 | 23 |
| 50+ | 50 | 58.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **31** | **27** | **100** |

On the whole, the Haifa respondents were much more consistent than their Jish counterparts, as the majority of them viewed neither themselves nor Maronites in

general as Arabs. Nevertheless, the 19-29 and 50+ age groups were not consistent regarding their responses. The vast majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents did not view themselves as Arabs, while only a moderate majority of them viewed Maronites as a people with a special identity. The case of the 50+ age group is the opposite, as half of the respondents in this age group viewed themselves as Arabs while only 35.8% of them viewed Maronites in general as Arabs. Unfortunately, no apparent reason seems to explain these discrepancies. The results did not change after telling the historical facts, and gender was not found to have a statistically significant effect on the responses.

On the whole, the Haifa respondents were more consistent than their Jish counterparts in terms of their self-identification and the identification of Maronites in general. This can be attributed to the fact that Haifa is a city where Maronites live among a majority of Jews; consequently, Maronites would feel more comfortable declaring themselves not to be Arabs than would their Jish counterparts, who live in a village with a large minority of Muslims.

**Table 64**: Correlation between how the Haifa respondents viewed themselves **vs.** how they viewed Maronites in general

|  | **Haifa respondents who defined Maronites as Arabs** | **N** |
|---|---|---|
| **Haifa respondents who defined themselves as Arabs** | 61.3% | 31 |
| **Haifa respondents who did *not* define themselves as Arabs** | 11.6% | 69 |

There was also found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\tau$=.3; p<.001) between how the Haifa respondents viewed themselves and how they viewed Maronites in general. As is shown in Table 64 above, those who defined themselves as Arabs were more likely to define Maronites in general as Arabs, while those who did not define themselves as Arabs were more likely to define Maronites in general as a people with a special identity.

**Table 65**: How are Maronites to be defined?

| **Gender** | **% Maronites are Arabs** | **N** |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 18.2 | 54 |
| Female | 37.8 | 55 |
| **Total** | **27** | **109** |

In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.048; p<.05) between the gender of the respondents and the extent to which they

viewed Maronites as Arabs. As can be seen from Table 65 above, males are less likely than females to view Maronites as Arabs. These results are consistent with the results regarding how males and females from Haifa view themselves.

**Table 66**: How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Age group | % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 8 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 2.5 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 43.5 | 23 |
| 50+ | 25 | 12 |
| **Total** | **16** | **100** |

The vast majority of the Haifa respondents agree that if Maronites begin to speak Syriac natively they would be viewed as a people with a special identity; this feeling is much stronger among those who are under the age of 29. These findings demonstrate that the Arabic language is the major determining factor that forms the Arabic identity. Once Arabic is replaced by another language in a certain community, the members of the community would stop being viewed as Arabs.

### 3.4.4. Jerusalem

**Table 67**: How are Syriac Orthodox to be defined?

| Age group | % Syriac Orthodox are Arabs | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 0 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 6.7 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 25 | 12 |
| 50+ | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **9.8** | **41** |

Only 9.8% of the Syriac Orthodox respondents viewed members of their community as Arabs. This finding is in conformity with those presented in the second section. Since most of the respondents identified themselves as Syriac, it would be expected that they would also insist that members of their community be identified not as Arabs but as a people with a special identity.

The question which was asked to the rest of the respondents—regarding how members of their community would be viewed if they started speaking Syriac—was not asked to the Syriac Orthodox respondents because a number of their community members already speak the language.

### 3.4.5. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.4.5.1 Comparing between gender groups

**Table 68**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (Male) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 48.1 | 33.3 | 54 |
| Usfia | 38.5 | 46.2 | 13 |
| Haifa | 21.8 | 18.2 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 12.5 | 12.5 | 24 |
| **Total** | **31.5** | **25.3** | **146** |

The vast majority of males defined members of their community as a people with a special identity. Nonetheless, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.057$; $p<.05$) between the place of residence of males and the extent to which they viewed members of their community as Arabs. As is shown in Table 68 above, the Haifa and Jerusalem respondents were less likely to define members of their community as Arabs than were their Jish and Usfia counterparts. In addition,

males were found to generally be consistent regarding how they viewed themselves and how they viewed members of their community; the Jish males, however, were less consistent than the other male respondents.

**Table 69**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (Male) | After % I am Arab | After % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 42.6 | 18.5 | 54 |
| Usfia | 30.8 | 38.5 | 13 |
| Haifa | 21.8 | 18.2 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 12.5 | 12.5 | 24 |
| **Total** | **28.8** | **19.2** | **146** |

After being told the historical information, 8 males from Jish and one from Usfia changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity. When comparing these results with those regarding how males viewed themselves after being informed of the historical information, only the males from Jish seem to have provided contradictory answers, as 42.6% of them defined themselves as Arabs while only 18.5% of them defined Maronites in general as Arabs.

**Table 70**: Male groups: Place of residence vs. How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (Male) | % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 18.5 | 54 |
| Usfia | 23.1 | 13 |
| Haifa | 5.5 | 55 |
| **Total** | **13.9** | **122** |

With regard to how Maronites would be viewed if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue, the overwhelming majority of the Maronite males said that Maronites in general would be viewed as a people with a special identity. After being told the historical information, four males from Jish (7.4%) changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity. No statistically significant difference was found between the male Maronite groups, either before or after telling the historical facts.

**Table 71**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (Female) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 67.3 | 38.2 | 55 |
| Usfia | 44.4 | 55.6 | 9 |
| Haifa | 42.2 | 37.8 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 17.6 | 5.9 | 17 |
| **Total** | **50** | **34.9** | **126** |

Except for the Usfia females, the majority of females in each place of residence defined members of their community as a people with a special identity rather than Arabs. The results obtained from Jish seem to be inconsistent, as 67.3% of the females from Jish defined themselves as Arabs while only 38.2% of them viewed Maronites in general as Arabs. As has been mentioned earlier, this might stem from the fact that Maronites in Jish live among a large minority of Muslims, and as a result they do not want to offend them by claiming that their Maronite counterparts in Jish are not Arabs. The Jish males show the same pattern although it is not as strong as for the females.

On the whole, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau=.14$; $p<.001$) between how females viewed themselves and how they viewed members of their community; the results are presented in Table 72:

**Table 72**: Correlation between how females viewed themselves vs. how they viewed members of their community

|  | Females who defined members of their community as Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| **Females who defined themselves as Arabs** | 52.4% | 63 |
| **Females who did *not* define themselves as Arabs** | 17.5% | 63 |

The results above show that the majority of females who defined themselves as Arabs also defined members of their community as Arabs and vice versa. Moreover, except for the female respondents from Jerusalem, the females from the three Maronite communities were more likely than males to view members of their community as Arabs.

**Table 73**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (Female) | After % I am Arab | After % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 49.1 | 18.2 | 55 |
| Usfia | 33.3 | 55.6 | 9 |
| Haifa | 42.2 | 37.8 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 17.6 | 5.9 | 17 |
| **Total** | **41.3** | **26.2** | **126** |

After being told the historical facts, 11 females from Jish changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity. The gap widened between how females from Jish and Usfia viewed themselves, on the one hand, and how they viewed members of their community, on the other hand. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.1; p<.001) between the place of residence of females and the extent to which they viewed members of their community as Arabs. The Usfia females were the most attached to the idea that members of their community are Arabs, the Jish females were much less attached to this notion than their Haifa counterparts, while the Syriac Orthodox females were the least attached, as only 5.9% of them viewed members of their community as Arabs.

**Table 74**: Female groups: Place of residence vs. How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (Female) | *Before* % Maronites are Arabs | *After* % Maronites are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 16.4 | 7.3 | 55 |
| Usfia | 44.4 | 22.2 | 9 |
| Haifa | 28.9 | 26.7 | 45 |
| **Total** | **23.9** | **16.5** | **109** |

The overwhelming majority of the Maronite females agreed that if Maronites began to speak Syriac as a mother tongue, they would be viewed as a people with a special identity. After telling the historical information, the overall percentage of females who agreed with this idea rose from 76.1% to 83.5%. No statistically significant difference was found, either before or after telling the historical facts.

### 3.4.5.2 Comparing between age groups

**Table 75**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (15-18) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 65.7 | 28.6 | 35 |
| Usfia | 60 | 40 | 5 |
| Haifa | 24 | 20 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **47.8** | **25.4** | **67** |

Most of the 15-18-year-old respondents defined members of their community as a people with a special identity. From Table 75 above, it can be seen that only the 15-18-year-old respondents from Jish were not consistent in their responses regarding how they viewed themselves, on the one hand, and how they viewed members of their community, on the other hand. While the majority of them (65.7%) defined themselves as Arabs, only 28.6% viewed Maronites in general as Arabs. This discrepancy can be best explained based on the fact that Maronites in Jish live among Muslims and they do not want to offend them. Though the Usfia respondents also seem to be inconsistent, it should be born in mind that their number is very small, and therefore the percentages are not necessarily representative.

**Table 76**: Correlation between how 15-18 age groups view themselves vs. how they view members of their community

|  | 15-18 who defined members of their community as Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| **15-18 who defined themselves as Arabs** | 46.9% | 32 |
| **15-18 who did *not* define themselves as Arabs** | 5.7% | 35 |

Despite the inconsistency found among the Jish respondents, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.223; p<.001) between the way the 15-18-year-old respondents define themselves and the way they view members of their community. As is shown in Table 76 above, those who defined themselves as Arabs were much more likely to define members of their community as Arabs and vice versa.

**Table 77**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/

How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (15-18) | *After* % I am Arab | *After* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 62.9 | 17.1 | 35 |
| Usfia | 40 | 40 | 5 |
| Haifa | 24 | 20 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Total** | **44.8** | **19.4** | **67** |

After being told the historical facts, only four (11.5%) respondents from Jish changed their minds, dropping the percentage of 15-18-year-old Jish respondents who defined Maronites as Arabs to 17.1%. As can be seen, telling the historical information did not have much effect, but it widened the gap between how the 15-18-year-old respondents from Jish view themselves and how they view Maronites in general.

**Table 78**: 15-18 age groups: Place of residence vs. How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (15-18) | *Before* % Maronites would still be Arabs | *After* % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 17.1 | 11.4 | 55 |
| Usfia | 20 | 20 | 9 |
| Haifa | 8 | 8 | 45 |
| **Total** | **13.5** | **9.2** | **109** |

With respect to how Maronites would be viewed if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue, the vast majority (86.5%) reported that Maronites would be defined as a people with a special identity. Telling the historical information resulted in two respondents from Jish and one from Haifa changing their minds and stating that Maronites would become a people with a special identity. No statistically significant differences were found between the 15-18 age groups, either before or after telling the historical information.

**Table 79**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/ How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (19-29) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 55.6 | 44.4 | 27 |
| Usfia | 33.3 | 33.3 | 6 |
| Haifa | 25 | 10 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 13.3 | 6.7 | 15 |
| **Total** | **33** | **21.6** | **88** |

Like the 15-18 age group, only a small minority (21.6%) of the 19-29-year-old respondents stated that members of their community are to be viewed as Arabs. Aside from this, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau=.167$; $p<.001$) between the place of residence of the 19-29 age groups and the extent to which the respondents of these groups viewed members of their community as Arabs. The Jish and Usfia respondents were more likely to view members of their community as Arabs than were their Haifa and Jerusalem counterparts. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\tau=.3$; $p<.001$) between the way the 19-29-year-old respondents defined themselves and the way they defined members of their community.

**Table 80**: Correlation between how 19-29 age groups view themselves vs. how they view members of their community

|  | 19-29 who defined members of their community as Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| 19-29 who defined themselves as Arabs | 51.7% | 29 |
| 19-29 who did *not* define themselves as Arabs | 6.8% | 59 |

Table 80 above demonstrates that the 19-29-year-old respondents who view themselves as Arabs are much more likely to view members of their community as Arabs, while those who do not define themselves as Arabs are more likely to view members of their community as a people with a special identity.

After being told the historical facts, five respondents from Jish changed their minds, dropping the percentage of the 19-29-year-old respondents from Jish who view Maronites as Arabs from 44.4% to 25.9%. No statistically significant difference was found between the 19-29 age groups after telling the historical information.

**Table 81**: 19-29 age groups: Place of residence vs. How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (19-29) | *Before* % Maronites would still be Arabs | *After* % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 11.1 | 7.4 | 27 |
| Usfia | 33.3 | 16.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 2.5 | 2.5 | 40 |
| **Total** | **8.2** | **6.8** | **73** |

When asked about how Maronites would be viewed if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue, the overwhelming majority stated that Maronites would be viewed as a people with a special identity. After being informed of the historical facts, one respondent each from Jish and Usfia changed their minds and stated that Maronites were to be viewed as a people with a special identity if they spoke Syriac as a mother tongue. No statistically significant difference was found between the 19-29 age groups, either before or after telling the historical information.

**Table 82**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/

How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (30-49) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 64.3 | 39.3 | 28 |
| Usfia | 20 | 20 | 5 |
| Haifa | 39.1 | 47.8 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 33.3 | 25 | 12 |
| **Total** | **47.1** | **38.2** | **68** |

The majority of the 30-49-year-old respondents view members of their community as a people with a special identity. Except for the Jish respondents, the other respondents are consistent in terms of how they define themselves and how they define members of their community. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.168; p<.001) between the way the 30-49-year-old respondents define themselves and the way they define members of their community.

**Table 83**: Correlation between how 30-49 age groups view themselves vs. how they view members of their community

|  | **30-49 who define members of their community as Arabs** | **N** |
|---|---|---|
| **30-49 who define themselves as Arabs** | 51.7% | 29 |
| **30-49 who do *not* define themselves as Arabs** | 6.8% | 59 |

As is shown in Table 83 above, the majority of those who define themselves as Arabs are more likely to view members of their community as Arabs and vice versa.

After being told the historical facts, seven (25%) respondents from the Jish 30-49 age group changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity, resulting in only 14.3% of all the Jish 30-49-year-old respondents defining Maronites as Arabs. This widened the gap between the way they view themselves and the way they view Maronites in general, as 50% continued to define themselves as Arabs. No statistically significant difference was found between the 30-49 age groups, either before or after telling the historical information.

**Table 84**: 30-49 age groups: Place of residence vs. How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (30-49) | *Before* % Maronites would still be Arabs | *After* % Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 10.7 | 3.6 | 28 |
| Usfia | 20 | 20 | 5 |
| Haifa | 43.5 | 43.5 | 23 |
| **Total** | **25** | **21.4** | **56** |

Regarding how Maronites would be viewed if they started speaking Syriac as a mother tongue, the vast majority of the 30-49-year-old respondents stated that Maronites would be viewed as a people with a special identity. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.13; p<.05) between the place of residence of the respondents and the way they believe that Maronites would be viewed if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue. As can be seen from Table 84 above, the Jish and Usfia respondents of this age group were more likely to view Maronites as a people with a special identity than were their Haifa counterparts. After being told the historical facts, two respondents from Jish changed their minds and stated that Maronites would become a people with a special identity if they began to speak Syriac as a mother tongue.

**Table 85**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence vs. Do you define yourself as Arab?/

How are members of your community to be defined?

| Place of residence (50+) | *Before* % I am Arab | *Before* % Members of my community are Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 36.8 | 31.6 | 19 |
| Usfia | 50 | 100 | 6 |
| Haifa | 50 | 58.3 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **32.7** | **38.8** | **49** |

As with the other age groups, the majority of the 50+-year-old respondents define members of their community as a people with a special identity. Nevertheless, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit moderate, correlation ($\tau$=.4; p<.001) between the place of residence and the extent to which the respondents viewed members of their community as Arabs. The majority of the Usfia and Haifa respondents state that members of their community are to be defined as Arabs, the Jish respondents, however, are much less attached to this idea, and the Syriac Orthodox respondents are the least attached, as none of them viewed members of their community as Arabs. After being told the historical facts, three respondents (15.8%) from Jish and one from Usfia changed their minds and defined Maronites as a people with a special identity.

**Table 86**: Correlation between how 50+ age groups view themselves **vs.** how they view members of their community

|  | 50+ who define members of their community as Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|
| **50+ who define themselves as Arabs** | 75% | 16 |
| **50+ who do *not* define themselves as Arabs** | 21.2% | 33 |

There was also found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\lambda=.42$; $p<.05$) between the way the respondents viewed themselves and the way they viewed members of their community. The 50+-year-old respondents who define themselves as Arabs are much more likely to also define members of their community as Arabs and vice versa.

**Table 87**: 50+ age groups: Place of residence **vs.** How would you view Maronites if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue?

| Place of residence (50+) | Before<br>% Maronites would still be Arabs | After<br>% Maronites would still be Arabs | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 31.6 | 15.8 | 19 |
| Usfia | 50 | 33.3 | 6 |
| Haifa | 25 | 25 | 12 |
| **Total** | **32.4** | **21.6** | **37** |

When asked how members of their community would be viewed if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue, the vast majority of the respondents stated that they would be viewed as a people with a special identity. After being told the historical information, three respondents from Jish and one from Usfia changed their minds, raising the percentage of those who believe that members of their community would be viewed as a people with a special identity to 78.4%. No statistically significant difference was found between the 50+ age groups for different places, either before or after telling the historical facts.

**DISCUSSION**

On the whole, the vast majority of the respondents stated that members of their communities, whether Maronites or Syriac Orthodox, are to be viewed and defined as a people with a special identity and not as Arabs, especially if they switched to speaking Syriac as a mother tongue. In some cases, this finding contradicts findings presented in section 3.2., because there were respondents who viewed themselves as Arabs but viewed their community members as a people with a special identity. The 15-49-year-old respondents from Jish and the 19-29 and 50+-year-old respondents from Haifa were the least consistent in terms of how they viewed themselves, on the one hand, and how they viewed Maronites in general, on the other hand. These respondents were more likely to define themselves as Arabs but define members of their community as a people with a special identity. One reason that can explain this discrepancy is the fact that Maronites in Israel live among Muslims and non-Maronite Christians who define themselves as Arabs. As a result, Maronites in Israel would tend to define themselves as Arabs in order not to offend their non-Maronite "Arabs" neighbors.

In addition, the findings in this section contradict the common definitions of Arab identity, according to which Arabs are those who speak Arabic (Suleiman 2003, Milton-Edwards 2006) or those who share Arabic as their mother tongue along with a common cultural heritage and  historical memory (Issawi 1955, Barnett 1993, Lewis 2002). The overwhelming majority of the respondents, however, viewed members of their community as a people with a special identity even though they speak Arabic natively and share, as might be argued, a cultural heritage with those who define

themselves as Arabs. The finding demonstrates that speaking Arabic is not a sufficient condition for Arabic identity; even if someone speaks Arabic natively and also shares traditions and a historical memory with people who identify themselves as Arabs, it does not mean that s/he is an Arab.

While the majority of the respondents defined members of their community as a people with a special identity, the rest of the respondents (35.8%, 50%, 27%, and 9.8% of the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem respectively) did not. However, most of the latter group stated that members of their community would become a people with a special identity if they started to speak Syriac as a mother tongue. This shows that, for a number of the respondents, Arabic is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for Arab identity; in order for someone to be viewed as Arab, s/he must speak Arabic as a mother tongue, but this is not necessarily enough, and if the element of speaking Arabic natively disappears, the person stops being viewed as an Arab.

## 3.5. Knowledge of the Syriac language

This section deals with the respondents' knowledge of the Syriac language. The section will comprise four subsections and a discussion. In the subsections I will present data from each place of residence.

### 3.5.1. Jish

**Table 88**: To what extent do you know Syriac?[9]

| Age group | %<br>Do not know | %<br>Know some words | %<br>Know how to read and write a little | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 54.3 | 45.7 | 0 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 7.4 | 77.8 | 14.8 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 0 | 92.9 | 7.1 | 28 |
| 50+ | 0 | 89.5 | 10.5 | 19 |
| **Total** | **19.3** | **73.4** | **7.3** | **109** |

The majority of the participants from Jish are familiar with some Syriac words which they hear when attending mass or other liturgical celebrations at the church. A moderate majority of the 15-18 age group, on the other hand, expressed complete ignorance of the language. This can be attributed to two reasons. First, 38.5% of this group barely go to church, and another 34.3% go to church on Sundays only

---

[9] The Arabic word used in the questionnaire is "Suryani."

occasionally; consequently, either those young people do not hear Syriac at all or they do not hear it enough for them to intentionally or unintentionally acquire some words; it should be noted, however, that no statistically significant correlation was found between religious activeness and knowledge of the Syriac language. Second, the Maronite priest who had taught catechism in the local public school in Jish for about 30 years retired in 2002 and was replaced by a Greek Catholic priest. The Maronite priest used to teach Syriac to 8th graders, and therefore some of the 19-29-year-old respondents still know how to read and write the language, and the majority of them are familiar with some Syriac words, even though 51.8% of the group members barely go to church. Because the Maronite priest has retired and the Greek Catholic priest does not know Syriac, the younger generation is not taught Syriac, and unless they go to church, they will not acquire any knowledge of this language. Aside from this, it is worth mentioning that most of the 19-49 year-old respondents are Syriac-illiterate because they learned how to read and write the language only in the 8th grade and they did not practice it afterwards.

**Table 89**: To what extent do you know Syriac (Suryani)?

| Age group | % Do not know | % Know some words | % Know how to read and write a little | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 0 | 60 | 40 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 16.7 | 50 | 33.3 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 60 | 20 | 5 |
| 50+ | 0 | 100 | 0 | 6 |
| **Total** | **9.1** | **68.2** | **22.7** | **22** |

Like their Jish counterparts, the majority of the Usfian participants know only some words in Syriac while only a very small minority (22.7%) know how to read and write. In addition, it can be seen from Table 89 that the younger generation know Syriac better than the older generation. No statistically significant correlation was found between religious activeness and knowledge of the Syriac language.

**Table 90**: To what extent do you know Syriac (Suryani)?

| Age group | %<br>Do not know | %<br>Know some words | %<br>Know how to read and write a little | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 4 | 80 | 16 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 10 | 60 | 30 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 8.7 | 60.9 | 30.4 | 23 |
| 50+ | 0 | 100 | 0 | 12 |
| **Total** | **7** | **70** | **23** | **100** |

Like the Jish and Usfia participants, the vast majority (70%) of the Haifa respondents stated that they know a few words in the Syriac language. However, the percentage of Haifa respondents who know how to read and write Syriac is higher than that of the Jish respondents. This is because the Maronites in Haifa have the opportunity to learn how to read and write Syriac at church. In the last five years, at least five courses were taught at the Maronite Cathedral in Haifa for any person who wanted to learn Syriac. Each course comprised about twelve one-hour lessons and aimed to teach the Syriac alphabet and how to read and write the language. The courses were open to anyone who wanted to learn Syriac, irrespective of his/her age; nevertheless, young people whose ages were less than 30 constituted the highest percentage of the attendees.

Unlike the cases of Jish and Usfia, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.156, p<.001) between the Haifa respondents' religious activeness and their knowledge of Syriac.

**Table 91**: Correlation between religious activeness and knowledge of Syriac

| Religious activeness | Do not know | Know some words | Know how to read and write a little | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequently go to church | 5.1% | 53.8% | **41%** | 39 |
| Sometimes go to church | 3.5% | **84.2%** | 12.3% | 57 |
| Do not go to church | **75%** | 25% | 0% | 4 |

As is shown in Table 91 above, those who frequently go to church are more likely to know how to read and write Syriac, while those who sometimes go to church are likely to know some words, and those who do not attend church are not likely to know anything in Syriac. The difference between the Haifa Maronites and the Jish Maronites can be attributed to the fact that the former have the opportunity to be exposed to Syriac only at church while the latter have had such an opportunity in and outside the church.

### 3.5.4. Jerusalem

**Table 92**: To what extent do you know Syriac (Suryani)?

| Age group | %<br><br>Do not<br><br>know | %<br><br>Know some<br><br>words | %<br><br>Know how<br><br>to read and<br><br>write a<br><br>little | %<br><br>Can speak | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 50 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 0 | 66.7 | 13.3 | 20 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 8.3 | 41.7 | 25 | 25 | 12 |
| 50+ | 0 | 33.3 | 25 | 41.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **2.4** | **48.8** | **19.5** | **29.3** | **41** |

Unlike their Maronite counterparts, some of the Syriac Orthodox participants (29.3%) not only know how to read and write the language but can also speak it in a non-standard dialect. As can be seen from Table 92 above, the older generation has a better mastery of the language than do the younger generations. It seems that the younger generations are prone to lose the ability to speak the language over the course of time. This might be attributed to the fact that the new generations focus more on other languages that they need for their higher education and future work. No statistically significant correlation was found between religious activeness and knowledge of the Syriac language.

**DISCUSSION**

As can be seen from the results above, most of the respondents have some knowledge of the Syriac language, and a few are literate in the language. The only group among whom there were some respondents who could speak the language natively was the Syriac Orthodox one. The low percentage of literacy in Syriac among the Maronite respondents is an outcome of not having been taught Syriac in school. Only in Haifa and recently in Jish has basic Syriac been taught in the churches. It should be noted, however, that only very few people attend such courses and they might not practice reading and writing Syriac afterwards, so that they tend to forget the alphabet and lose their literacy skills.

## 3.6. The importance of the Syriac language for the identity of the respondents

In this section I will present findings regarding how the respondents from Jish, Usfia, and Haifa view the importance of the Syriac language for Maronite identity. Because the question regarding the importance of Syriac was inadvertently omitted from the questionnaire given to the Syriac Orthodox, no results were obtained from this group. Hence, this section will comprise four subsections and a discussion; in the first three subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fourth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the three places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.6.1. Jish

Table 93: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Age group | *Before* % Important | *After* % Important | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 71.4 | 77.1 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 88.9 | 88.9 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 89.3 | 92.9 | 28 |
| 50+ | 100 | 100 | 19 |
| **Total** | **85.3** | **88.1** | **109** |

The vast majority of the Jish respondents agree that the Syriac language is an essential component of Maronite identity. In addition, there was found to be a statistically

significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau=.085$; $p<.05$) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they viewed Syriac as important for Maronite identity. As is shown in Table 93 above, older people were more likely to emphasize the importance of the Syriac language for Maronite identity than were younger people. A surprising finding, however, is that of the 15-18 age group. Although the majority of this group identified themselves as Arabs (see Table 3), most of the members of this group (71.4%) viewed the Syriac language as an important component of Maronite identity. After being told the historical facts, two respondents from the 15-18 age group and one from the 30-49 age group changed their minds and stated that Syriac is important to Maronite identity.

**Table 94**: Correlation between religious activeness and the extent to which Syriac is important for Maronite identity

|  | **Important** | **N** |
|---|---|---|
| **Frequently go to church** | 85.7% | 28 |
| **Sometimes go to church** | 91.35% | 69 |
| **Do not go to church** | 50% | 12 |

Moreover, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.13$; $p<.001$) between religious activeness and the extent to which Syriac is important for Maronite identity. Those who go to church are much more likely to view Syriac as an important part of Maronite identity than those who do not go to church.

### 3.6.2. Usfia

**Table 95**: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Age group | % Important | N |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| 15-18 | 100 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 100 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 80 | 5 |
| 50+ | 66.7 | 6 |
| **Total** | **86.4** | **22** |

Like their Jish counterparts, the vast majority of the Usfia respondents view the Syriac language as an important constituent of Maronite identity. No statistically significant difference was found, and nothing changed after telling the historical information. In addition, neither gender nor religious activeness was found to have a statistically significant effect on the responses.

### 3.6.3. Haifa

**Table 96**: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Age group | % Important | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 92 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 100 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 73.9 | 23 |
| 50+ | 66.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **88** | **100** |

Like their Jish and Usfia counterparts, the overwhelming majority of the Haifa respondents regard Syriac as important for Maronite identity. As is shown in Table 96 above, the 15-29-year-old respondents view Syriac as important more than their 30+-year-old counterparts do. In fact, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.14; p<.001) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they viewed Syriac as important for Maronite identity. The difference between the 15-29-year-old respondents and their 30+-year-old counterparts might stem from the fact that the majority of those who attend the Syriac classes held in the Maronite Church in Haifa are teenagers or in their twenties.

**Table 97**: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Gender | % Important | N |
|--------|-------------|---|
| Male | 94.5 | 55 |
| Female | 80 | 45 |
| **Total** | **88** | **100** |

There was also found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.05; p<.05) between the gender of the respondents and the extent to which Syriac is important for Maronite identity. The male respondents are more likely to view Syriac as important than are females.

**Table 98**: Correlation between religious activeness and the extent to which Syriac is important for Maronite identity

|  | % Important | N |
|--|-------------|---|
| **Frequently go to church** | 100 | 39 |
| **Sometimes go to church** | 80.7 | 57 |
| **Do not go to church** | 75 | 4 |

There was also found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.09; p<.02) between religious activeness and the importance of Syriac for Maronite identity. As can be seen from Table 98 above, those who frequently go to church are

the most attached to the idea that Syriac is an important part of Maronite identity, while those who sometimes or never go to church are less attached.[10]

### 3.6.4. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.6.4.1. Comparing between gender groups

**Table 99**: Male groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (Males) | % important | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 83.3 | 54 |
| Usfia | 92.3 | 13 |
| Haifa | 94.5 | 55 |
| **Total** | **89.3** | **122** |

The overwhelming majority of males view Syriac as an important part of Maronite identity, irrespective of their place of residence. After being told the historical facts, only three respondents from Jish changed their minds, raising the percentage of Jish males who believe in the importance of Syriac to 88.9%. In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.11; p<.001) between religious

---

[10] The question regarding the importance of Syriac for Syriac Orthodox identity was inadvertently omitted from the questionnaires that were given to the Syriac Orthodox respondents. Therefore, no results were obtained.

activeness and regarding Syriac as important. Those who go to church are more likely to view Syriac as an important part of Maronite identity than those who sometimes or never go to church.

**Table 100**: Female groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (Females) | % important | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 87.3 | 55 |
| Usfia | 77.8 | 9 |
| Haifa | 80 | 45 |
| **Total** | **83.5** | **109** |

Like their male counterparts, the vast majority of the female respondents stated that the Syriac language is an important element of Maronite identity. No change occurred after telling the historical information, and no statistically significant difference was found between the female groups. However, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau=.08$; $p<.02$) between religious activeness and the extent to which Syriac is important for Maronite identity. Like the males, the females who attend church are more likely to emphasize the importance of the Syriac language than females who do not go to church.

### 3.6.4.2. Comparing between age groups

**Table 101**: 15-18 age groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (15-18) | % important | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 71.4 | 35 |
| Usfia | 100 | 5 |
| Haifa | 92 | 25 |
| **Total** | **81.5** | **65** |

The great majority of the 15-18-year-old respondents stated that Syriac has an important role in the identity of the Maronites, irrespective of their place of residence. After being told the historical facts, two 15-18-year-old respondents from Jish changed their minds and agreed that Syriac constitutes an important part of the identity of Maronites. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the 15-18 age groups from different places, either before or after telling the historical information. In addition, no statistically significant correlation was found between religious activeness of the 15-18-year-old respondents and the extent to which they viewed the Syriac language as important to Maronite identity.

**Table 102**: 19-29 age groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (19-29) | % important | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 88.9 | 27 |
| Usfia | 100 | 6 |
| Haifa | 100 | 40 |
| **Total** | **98.9** | **73** |

Like their 15-18-year-old counterparts, the overwhelming majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents stated that Syriac constitutes an integral part of Maronite identity. No change occurred after telling the historical facts and no statistically significant difference was found between the 19-29 age groups. However, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\tau$=.3; $p$<.001) between religious activeness and importance of Syriac; the 19-29-year-old respondents who go to church are more likely to view Syriac as an important part of Maronite identity than their counterparts who do not go to church.

**Table 103**: 30-49 age groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (30-49) | % important | N |
|---|---|---|
| Jish | 89.3 | 28 |
| Usfia | 80 | 5 |
| Haifa | 73.9 | 23 |
| **Total** | **82.1** | **56** |

The vast majority of the 30-49-year-old respondents also stated that Syriac plays an important role in the identity of the Maronites. After being told the historical facts, only one respondent from Jish changed his mind; however, no statistically significant difference was found between the age groups, either before or after telling the historical information. Nonetheless, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau=.13$; $p<.05$) between religious activeness and the importance of Syriac; those 30-49-year-old respondents who attend church are more likely to emphasize the importance of Syriac for Maronite identity than those who do not go to church.

**Table 104**: 50+ age groups: To what extent is Syriac important for Maronite identity?

| Place of residence (50+) | % important | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Jish | 100 | 19 |
| Usfia | 66.7 | 6 |
| Haifa | 66.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **83.8** | **37** |

Like the other age groups, the vast majority of the 50+-year-old respondents stated that Syriac constitutes an important element of Maronite identity. Unlike the other age groups, however, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.21; p<.025) between the place of residence of the 50+ respondents and the extent to which they viewed Syriac as an important part of Maronite identity. There was not found to be a statistically significant correlation between religious activeness and the importance of the Syriac language.

**DISCUSSION**

Irrespective of their gender, place of residence, or age, the vast majority of the respondents considered the Syriac language to be an important constituent of Maronite identity. Only among the 50+ age groups was there found a statistically significant difference between the Jish respondents and their Usfia and Haifa counterparts, as the former respondents emphasized the importance of Syriac for Maronite identity more than the latter. In addition, attending church, whether

frequently or occasionally, had a statistically significant effect on the Haifa and Jish respondents; those who attended church were more likely to state that Syriac is important for Maronite identity than those respondents who did not go to church. Regarding Syriac as an important element for Maronite identity, even though it is barely used among Maronites, demonstrates the attachment of Maronites to their heritage and their ancestral language.

Such an attachment can be best explained by the self-categorization theory, according to which different peoples seek different elements to distinguish their identities from the identities of others (Turner et. al, 1994, Hogg et. al 1995, Akerlof and Kranton 2000, Huddy 2001). Maronites, especially those who live in Israel, also follow this same pattern and they consider Syriac an important factor that differentiates them from others. It has been shown that language plays an important role in establishing and displaying social identities (Ochs 1993, Peirce 1995, Norton 1997, Holmes 1997, Miller 2000).

In addition, Maronite attachment to the Syriac language supports the notion that language and nationalism are highly interconnected. Researchers agree that language plays an important role in forming nationalism (Goldie and Richard 1982, Blommaert 1996, Barbour and Carmichael 2000, Kamusella 2001). Williams (1994), for example, argues that ancestral language binds peoples to their past, and nationalism, which is highly connected to the past, advocates cultural concerns and champions salient aspects of a threatened indigenous culture, such as a minority language. This can explain why Maronites are attached to Syriac, their ancestral language, while Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and non-Uniate Catholics are not attached to Greek and

Latin. It seems that the Syriac language binds Maronites to their past and reminds them of their heritage which was threatened by the Islam invasion of the Middle East. Nowadays, the fear of the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism or the desire to avoid being labeled or viewed as terrorists because of speaking Arabic motivates Maronite nationalist to emphasize the linguistic aspect of the Maronite identity, i.e. the Syriac language. Addressing this linguistic aspect and working on revitalizing Syriac among Maronites might change the political order in Lebanon, where Maronites are now a minority living among a majority of Muslims.

## 3.7. Syriac as a mother tongue

In this section I will present data regarding the interest of the respondents from Jish, Usfia, Haifa, and Jerusalem in having their children speak Syriac natively. This section will comprise five subsections and a discussion. In the first four subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.7.1. Jish

**Table 105**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Age group | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 14.3 | 17.1 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 29.6 | 44.4 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 21.4 | 46.4 | 28 |
| 50+ | 31.6 | 63.2 | 19 |
| **Total** | **22.9** | **39.4** | **109** |

The results presented in Table 105 above show that the majority of the respondents in Jish do not want to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue, regardless of their age. After telling the historical facts, however, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.12$; $p<.01$) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they wanted Syriac to be their children's mother tongue; while

124

the overwhelming majority of the 15-18-year-old respondents remained reluctant, more respondents whose ages were 19 and above embraced it. On the whole, however, the majority of the respondents remained indisposed to having Syriac as their children's mother tongue.

**Table 106**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Gender | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|--------|---------------|--------------|-----|
| Male | 31.5 | 51.9 | 54 |
| Female | 14.5 | 27.3 | 55 |
| **Total** | **22.9** | **39.4** | **109** |

Unlike age, gender had a statistically significant effect on the respondents prior to telling the historical information; there was found to be a statistically significant difference between males and females ($p<.05$), as can be seen from Table 106 above. This means that females are more likely to reject having Syriac as the mother tongue of their children than are males. After being told the historical facts, 20.4% of the Jish males and 12.8% of the females changed their minds. Thus it can be seen that the historical information made a slight majority of the males disposed towards having Syriac as their children's mother tongue, while the majority of the females were still reluctant about it.

## 3.7.2. Usfia

**Table 107**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Age group | %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 0 | 5 |
| 19-29 | 0 | 6 |
| 30-49 | 20 | 5 |
| 50+ | 33.3 | 6 |
| **Total** | **13.6** | **22** |

Like their Jish counterparts, the vast majority of the Usfia respondents rejected the idea of having Syriac as the mother tongue of their children. No statistically significant difference was found between the age groups. The results did not change after telling the historical facts, and gender did not have a statistically significant effect on the respondents.

### 3.7.3. Haifa

**Table 108**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Age group | %Yes | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-18 | 72 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 52 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 34 | 23 |
| 50+ | 41.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **52** | **100** |

Unlike their Jish and Usfia counterparts, the majority of the Haifa respondents wanted to have Syriac as the mother tongue of their children. No statistically significant difference was found between the age groups. However, after comparing between the 15-29-year-old respondents and their 30+ counterparts, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.05; p<.05) between the age of the respondents and the extent to which they were willing to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue. The difference between the 15-29 and 30+-year-old respondents might stem from the Syriac lessons that were taught at the St. Louis Maronite Church in Haifa (see subsection 3.5.3.); although these lessons focused mainly on teaching the Syriac language, they provided some information about the Maronites' history and the importance of Syriac for Maronites. The results did not change after telling the historical facts.

**Table 109**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Age group | %Yes | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 15-29 | 60 | 65 |
| 30+ | 37.1 | 35 |
| **Total** | **52** | **100** |

Table 109 above shows that the 15-29-year-old respondents are much more willing to have their children speak Syriac natively than are their 30+ counterparts. In addition, it should be noted that the 15-18-year-old respondents from Haifa are extremely different in terms of their responses from their Jish and Usfia counterparts. No change occurred after telling the historical facts.

**Table 110**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Gender | %Yes | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Male | 63.6 | 55 |
| Female | 37.8 | 45 |
| **Total** | **52** | **100** |

In addition to the age effect, gender was found to have a statistically significant influence on the respondents ($\tau=.07$; $p<.01$). Table 110 above shows that, like their Jish counterparts, the Haifa males are more willing to have their children speak Syriac natively than are females.

### 3.7.4. Jerusalem

**Table 111**: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Age group | %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 100 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 86.7 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 66.7 | 12 |
| 50+ | 100 | 12 |
| **Total** | **85.4** | **41** |

The great majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents wanted to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue. Such a finding is not unexpected, since the vast majority of the respondents defined themselves as Syriac and 29.3% of all the respondents speak Syriac natively. No change occurred after telling the historical information and neither age nor gender had a statistically significant effect on the respondents.

## 3.7.5. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

## 3.7.5.1. Comparing between gender groups

**Table 112**: Male groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (Male) | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 31.5 | 51.9 | 54 |
| Usfia | 7.7 | 7.7 | 13 |
| Haifa | 63.6 | 63.6 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 87.5 | 87.5 | 24 |
| **Total** | **50.7** | **58.2** | **146** |

When comparing between the male respondents, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\lambda$=.43; p<.001) between the place of residence and the extent to which the males wanted to have Syriac as the mother tongue of their children. From Table 112 above, it can be seen that the Syriac Orthodox were the most supportive of this idea, the Usfia respondents were the least supportive, while the Haifa respondents supported this idea more than their Jish counterparts. After being told the historical facts, 20.4% of the Jish males changed their minds and expressed their willingness to have their children speak Syriac natively.

In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit moderate, correlation ($\lambda$=.33; p<.001) between the attachment of the respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the respondents' children, as shown in Table 113 below:

**Table 113**: Male groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the male respondents' children

|  | *Before*<br>**Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | **N** | *After*<br>**Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | **N** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 23.9% | 46 | 31% | 42 |
| **I am not Arab** | 63% | 100 | 69.2% | 104 |

As is shown in Table 113 above, those who defined themselves as Arabs were much less likely to accept the idea of having their children speak the Syriac language natively, while those who rejected Arabism were much more likely to support having Syriac as their children's mother tongue.

**Table 114**: Female groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (Female) | Before %Yes | After %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 14.5 | 27.3 | 55 |
| Usfia | 22.2 | 22.2 | 9 |
| Haifa | 37.8 | 37.8 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 82.4 | 82.4 | 17 |
| **Total** | **32.5** | **38.1** | **126** |

Unlike their male counterparts, a clear majority of the female respondents rejected the idea of having Syriac spoken natively by their children. However, when comparing between the female groups, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\lambda$=.3; p<.01) between the place of residence of the females and the extent to which they were willing to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue. As can be seen from Table 114 above, the overwhelming majority of the Syriac Orthodox females supported this idea, their Haifa counterparts were much less supportive, while the Jish and Usfia females were the least supportive of this idea. After being told the historical facts, seven females from Jish changed their minds and expressed their willingness to have their children speak Syriac natively.

**Table 115**: Female groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the respondents' children

| | *Before* <br> **Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | **N** | *After* <br> **Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | **N** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 14.3% | 63 | 15.4% | 52 |
| **I am not Arab** | 50.8% | 63 | 54.1% | 74 |

As with the males, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation (τ=.2; p<.001) between the attachment of the female respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have Syriac spoken natively by their children. Those females who defined themselves as Arabs were much less likely to accept the idea of having their children speak Syriac natively, and vice versa.

### 3.7.5.2. Comparing between gender groups

**Table 116**: 15-18 age groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (15-18) | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 14.3 | 17.1 | 35 |
| Usfia | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Haifa | 72 | 72 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 2 |
| **Total** | **37.3** | **38.8** | **67** |

Table 116 above shows that the majority of the 15-18-year-old respondents rejected the idea of having their future children speak Syriac as a mother tongue. However, when comparing between the 15-18 age groups, there was found to be a statistically significant correlation ($\lambda$=.52; p<.01) between the place of residence of the 15-18 year-old respondents and their willingness to have their future children speak Syriac natively. The Jerusalem and Haifa respondents supported this idea much more than their Jish and Usfia counterparts. After being told the historical facts, only one respondent from Jish changed his mind.

**Table 117**: 15-18 age groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the male respondents' children

| | *Before* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N | *After* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 18.8% | 32 | 20% | 30 |
| **I am not Arab** | 54.3% | 35 | 54.1% | 37 |

There was also found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.14; p<.01) between the attachment of the 15-18-year-old respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of their children. Those who viewed themselves as Arabs were much less likely to agree to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue, and vice versa.

**Table 118**: 19-29 age groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (19-29) | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 29.6 | 44.4 | 27 |
| Usfia | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Haifa | 52.5 | 52.5 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 86.7 | 86.7 | 15 |
| **Total** | **47.7** | **52.3** | **88** |

Like their 15-18-year-old counterparts, the majority of the 19-29-year-old respondents rejected having their children speak Syriac natively. Nevertheless, comparing the 19-29 age groups reveals a statistically significant difference (p<.001) between them. The Haifa and Jerusalem respondents support having their children speak Syriac natively much more than do their Jish and Usfia counterparts; this is the same pattern we saw for the 15-18 age group. After being told the historical facts, only six respondents from Jish changed their minds.

**Table 119**: 19-29 age groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the male respondents' children

|  | *Before* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N | *After* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 24.1% | 29 | 28% | 25 |
| **I am not Arab** | 59.3% | 59 | 61.9% | 63 |

In addition, as is shown in Table 119, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau$=.1; p<.01) between the attachment of the respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have their children speak Syriac natively.

**Table 120**: 30-49 age groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (30-49) | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 21.4 | 46.4 | 28 |
| Usfia | 20 | 20 | 5 |
| Haifa | 34.8 | 34.8 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 66.7 | 66.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **33.8** | **44.1** | **68** |

Like their 18-29-year-old counterparts, the vast majority of the 30-49-year-old respondents do not want to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue. However, there was found to be a statistically significant difference between the Maronite respondents and their Syriac Orthodox counterparts, as the former were much less willing to have their children speak Syriac natively. After being told the historical information, only seven respondents from Jish changed their minds and expressed their willingness to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue.

**Table 121**: 30-49 age groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the male respondents' children

| | *Before* **Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | N | *After* **Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue** | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 15.6% | 32 | 21.4% | 28 |
| **I am not Arab** | 50% | 36 | 60% | 40 |

Moreover, as can be seen in Table 121, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation (τ=.132; p<.01) between the attachment of the respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have their children speak Syriac natively. Those who are more likely to identify themselves as Arabs are also more likely to reject having their children speak Syriac natively and vice versa.

**Table 122**: 50+ age groups: Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue?

| Place of residence (50+) | *Before* %Yes | *After* %Yes | N |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Jish | 31.6 | 63.2 | 19 |
| Usfia | 33.3 | 33.3 | 6 |
| Haifa | 41.7 | 41.7 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 12 |
| **Total** | **51** | **63.3** | **49** |

Unlike their 15-49-year-old counterparts, the majority of the 50+-year-old respondents wanted to have Syriac as the mother tongue of their community's children. There was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation (τ=.32; p<.01) between the place of residence of the 50+-year-old respondents and their willingness to have their community's children speak Syriac natively. As is shown in Table 122 above, the Syriac Orthodox respondents are much more supportive of this idea than are their Maronite counterparts. After telling the historical facts, a statistically significant change occurred among the 50+-year-old respondents from Jish as 31.6% of them changed their minds and expressed their willingness to

have Syriac as the mother tongue of their community's children; this change affected the overall percentage, which increased from 51% to 63.3%.

**Table 123**: 50+ age groups: correlation between Arabism and willingness to have Syriac as the mother tongue of the male respondents' children

| | *Before* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N | *After* Do you want Syriac to be your children's mother tongue | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am an Arab** | 12.5% | 16 | 18.2% | 11 |
| **I am not Arab** | 69.7% | 33 | 76.3% | 38 |

In addition, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\lambda$=.4; p<.05) between the attachment of the respondents to Arab identity and their willingness to have their children speak Syriac natively. Those who identified themselves as Arab are more likely to reject having Syriac as their children's mother tongue and vice versa.

**DISCUSSION**

Revitalizing the Syriac language is a necessary condition for Maronites to avoid being labeled as Arabs. Sections 3.1.-3.4. have demonstrated that the Maronite respondents are confused about their identity. While the majority of the Maronite respondents did not label themselves as Arabs, Palestinians, or Israelis, the overwhelming majority defined themselves as Christians. However, Christianity cannot normally be used as a national identity; therefore, it seems unlikely that non-Maronites would define

Maronites distinctly from other Arabic-speaking people unless they revitalize Syriac and begin to speak it as a mother tongue.

The state of confusion about their identity from which a number of the respondents suffer or the fact that some of the respondents speak the Syriac language natively may prompt them to accept the idea of having Syriac as their children's mother tongue. On the other hand, several other reasons might deter the respondents from accepting it. Among these reasons are the fear of being separated from, or losing communication with, the society they are living in. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that a number of Maronites would indeed prefer to be separated from Arabic-speaking Muslims.

Second, in Jish, Christians live peacefully with Muslims. Speaking Syriac as a mother tongue would deepen the differences between Maronites and Muslims and subsequently bring conflicts to the village. In fact, different cases from the world, such as the cases of immigrants or other minorities, support the idea that speaking a certain language within a community that speaks a different language can bear negative consequences (Wright 1997, Schmid 2001, Suleiman 2004, Joseph 2006).

Third, if Maronites in Israel start speaking Syriac as a mother tongue, they need to learn non-standard Arabic in order to communicate with Arabs who surround them; in addition, they need to learn standard Arabic in order to take the Bagrut (matriculation) exams, and they also need to learn Hebrew and English. Although this reason seems justifiable, research shows that learning more than one language does not necessarily place a linguistic burden on children if the languages are taught correctly; rather,

children transfer proficiency from one language to another provided there is adequate exposure and adequate motivation to learn the additional language (Cummins 1989, Wade-Woolley 1999, Abu-Rabia & Siegel 2002, Abu-Rabia and Siegel 2003, Abu-Rabia 2004, Abu-Rabia and Kehat 2004).

When comparing between the different age groups, irrespective of their place of residence, it can be seen that, after being told the historical facts, the majority of the 19-29 (52.3%) and the 50+ (63.3%) -year-old respondents support having Syriac as the mother tongue of their children, while the majority of the 15-18 (61.2%) and 30-49 (55.9%) -year-old respondents did not. Unfortunately, no apparent reason seems to justify the difference between the 19-29 and 50+-year-old respondents, on the one hand, and their 15-18 and 30-49-year-old counterparts, on the other hand.

Regarding gender differences, the majority of the male respondents (58.2%) expressed their interest in having their children speak Syriac natively, while the majority of the females (61.9%) did not. This difference supports the notion that females in Israel are more tradition-oriented than males, and consequently, they are less likely than males to go against the mainstream (Moore 1998, 2000).

With respect to the place of residence, the overwhelming majority of the Jish (60.6%) and Usfia (86.4%) respondents rejected the idea of having Syriac as the mother tongue of their children, while the majority of the Haifa respondents (52%) and the vast majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents (85.4%) expressed their support for this idea.

The willingness of the Syriac Orthodox to have their children speak Syriac natively can be ascribed to two reasons: first, a number of the Syriac Orthodox respondents already speak Syriac natively, and second, the vast majority of the respondents define themselves as Syriac.[11] On the other hand, the willingness of the Haifa respondents to revitalize the Syriac language can be attributed to the state of identity confusion that Maronites in Israel suffer from, which I have noted in sections 3.1.-3.4.. Once Maronites start speaking Syriac as a mother tongue, they would be able to identify themselves as Maronites or Syriac. However, it should be noted that the Haifa respondents who wanted to have their children speak Syriac natively were mostly 15-29-years old, while the majority of the 30+-year-old Haifa respondents were against the idea. This might be explained by the fact that the majority of the people who attend the Syriac lessons in St. Louis Church in Haifa are in their twenties (see section 3.5.).

On the other hand, the unwillingness of the vast majority of the Jish and Usfia respondents to have their children speak Syriac natively can be attributed to fear of conflict with their non-Christian neighbors or concern about a cognitive overload that their children might suffer from if they learn too many languages. This unwillingness will definitely lead to the rejection of the idea of sending children to a private or public gan/school, which means that Maronites who do not want their children to speak Syriac natively will not be able to revitalize Syriac; as a result, they will continue to be labeled as Arabs, even if they do not like this idea.

---

[11] The Arabic term which they use is *Suryani*

## 3.8. Revitalizing the Syriac language

In this section I will present data regarding the interest of the respondents from Jish, Haifa, and Jerusalem to send their children to a church gan,[12] public gan, or public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction. This section will comprise four subsections and a discussion; in the first three subsections, I will present data from each place of residence, and in the fifth subsection, I will compare the respondents, from the four places of residence, based on their gender and age.

### 3.8.1. Jish

**Table 124**: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Age | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 54.3 | 22.9 | 20 | 35 |
| 19-29 | 76.9 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 27 |
| 30-49 | 77.8 | 25 | 10.7 | 28 |
| 50+ | 94.7 | 26.3 | 10.5 | 19 |
| **Total** | **72.9** | **20.2** | **12.8** | **109** |

---

[12] The Hebrew word 'gan' was used instead of the English word 'kindergarten' because the former encompasses the terms 'preschool' and 'kindergarten'. A gan is a program or class intended for children aged two to six, while a kindergarten is for children aged five to six.

The great majority of the respondents from Jish stated that they would agree to send their children to a church gan where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. However, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.11$; $p<.01$) between the age of the respondents and their willingness to send their children to such a gan. The 50+ year old respondents were the most willing to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan, their 19-49 year-old counterparts were less willing, and the 15-18 year-old respondents were the least keen on such a project.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the respondents reject the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school, irrespective of their age or gender.[13]

---

[13] The questions—regarding having a public or private gan/school in which Syriac is used as the medium of instruction—were not asked to the Usfia respondents because such a project is not feasible due to the small number of Maronites in Usfia (fewer than 200), which means that the number of Maronite children is much smaller, and a gan cannot be opened for them.

### 3.8.2. Haifa

**Table 125**: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Age | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 68 | 32 | 32 | 25 |
| 19-29 | 52.5 | 17.5 | 15 | 40 |
| 30-49 | 34.8 | 26.1 | 26.1 | 23 |
| 50+ | 41.7 | 33.3 | 8.3 | 12 |
| **Total** | **51** | **25** | **21** | **100** |

The majority of the Haifa respondents stated that they would agree to send their children to a church gan where Syriac is used as a medium of instruction. There was found to be a statistically significant difference (p<.05) between the 15-29 year-old respondents and their 30+ year-old counterparts, as the majority of the former group supported the idea of sending their children to such a gan, while the majority of the latter group did not.

Like their Jish counterparts, however, the vast majority of the Haifa respondents do not want to send their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school. No statistically significant difference was found between the different age groups. Nevertheless, there was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.075, p<.01; $\tau$=.05, p<.01; $\tau$=.048, p<.05) between the gender of the respondents

and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan,  public gan, or public school, respectively, as shown in Table 126.

**Table 126**: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Gender | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|--------|------|------|------|------|
| Male | 60 | 34.5 | 30.9 | 55 |
| Female | 40 | 13.3 | 8.9 | 45 |
| **Total** | **51** | **25** | **21** | **100** |

As can be seen from Table 126 above, the male respondents are more likely than their female counterparts to want to send their children to a gan/school where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. It should be noted that this pattern has recurred, though not invariably, throughout the study and it demonstrates that males are usually more likely than females to accept and initiate change in their society.

## 3.8.3. Jerusalem

**Table 127**: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Age | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15-18 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 2 |
| 19-29 | 100 | 100 | 80 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 91.7 | 91.7 | 75 | 12 |
| 50+ | 100 | 100 | 91.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **97.6** | **97.6** | **82.9** | **41** |

Unlike their Maronite counterparts, the overwhelming majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents want to send their children not only to a gan but also to a school where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. Neither age nor gender had a statistically significant effect on the responses.

## 3.8.4. Comparisons between the communities

In this subsection, I will compare the answers of the respondents based on their place of residence, gender, and age.

### 3.8.4.1. Comparing between gender groups

**Table 128**: Male groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (Males) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 80.8 | 25.9 | 18.5 | 52 |
| Haifa | 60 | 34.5 | 30.9 | 55 |
| Jerusalem | 95.8 | 95.8 | 75 | 24 |
| **Total** | **74.8** | **42.1** | **33.8** | **131** |

Table 128 above shows that the overwhelming majority of the male respondents want to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan. Nevertheless, there was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.1$, $p<.01$) between the place of residence of the male respondents and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to such a gan. The Syriac Orthodox males are the most supportive of this project while the Haifa male respondents are the least supportive. In addition, unlike the vast majority of their Syriac Orthodox counterparts, the majority of the Jish and Haifa males reject the idea of sending their children to a public gan or school where Syriac is the medium of instruction. Obviously there was found to be a statistically significant difference ($p<.001$) between the Maronite males and their Syriac Orthodox counterparts.

148

**Table 129**: Female groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (Females) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 65.5 | 14.5 | 7.3 | 55 |
| Haifa | 40 | 13.5 | 8.9 | 45 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 94.1 | 17 |
| **Total** | **60.7** | **26.5** | **20.5** | **117** |

Like their male counterparts, the majority of the female respondents stated that they would agree to send their children to a church gan, but not to a public gan or school, where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. There were found to be statistically significant correlations ($\tau=.2$, $p<.001$; $\tau=.5$, $p<.001$; $\tau=.6$, $p<.001$) between the place of residence of females and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan, public gan, or public school, respectively. With regard to sending their children to a church gan, the Syriac Orthodox females are the most supportive while their Haifa counterparts are the least supportive of this project. With respect to sending their children to a public gan or school, the Syriac Orthodox females are much more supportive of this idea than are their Jish and Haifa counterparts.

### 3.8.4.2. Comparing between age groups

**Table 130**: 15-18 age groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (15-18) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 54.3 | 22.9 | 20 | 35 |
| Haifa | 68 | 32 | 32 | 25 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 100 | 2 |
| **Total** | **61.3** | **29** | **27.4** | **62** |

The majority of the 15-18 year-old respondents want to send their future children to a church gan where Syriac is the medium of instruction; no statistically significant difference was found between the three 15-18 age groups. On the other hand, the majority of the 15-18 year-old Maronite respondents are reluctant to send their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school, while their two Syriac Orthodox counterparts are supportive of this idea.

**Table 131**: 19-29 age groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (19-29) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 76.9 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 26 |
| Haifa | 52.5 | 17.5 | 16 | 40 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 80 | 15 |
| **Total** | **69.1** | **29.3** | **24.4** | **81** |

As is shown in Table 131 above, the vast majority of the 19-29 year-old respondents stated that they would agree to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan. There was found to be a statistically significant, albeit weak, correlation ($\tau$=.16; p<.01) between their place of residence and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to such a gan; the Syriac Orthodox respondents are the most supportive while the Haifa respondents are the least supportive of this idea. With regard to sending children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school, there was found to be statistically significant correlations ($\tau$=.6, p<.001; $\tau$=.4; p<.001) between the place of residence of the 19-29 year-old respondents and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to a public gan or a public school, respectively. The overwhelming majority of the 19-29 year-old Maronite respondents were against the idea, while the great majority of their Syriac Orthodox counterparts were supportive of it.

**Table 132**: 30-49 age groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (30-49) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 77.8 | 25 | 10.7 | 28 |
| Haifa | 34.8 | 26.1 | 26.1 | 23 |
| Jerusalem | 91.7 | 91.7 | 75 | 12 |
| **Total** | **64.5** | **38.1** | **28.6** | **63** |

Like their 15-29 year-old counterparts, the majority of the 30-49 year-old respondents want to send their children to a church gan where Syriac is the medium of instruction. There was found to be a statistically significant but weak correlation ($\tau=.24$; $p<.001$) between the place of residence of the respondents and the extent to which they would agree to send their children to such a gan; the Syriac Orthodox are the most supportive of this idea, while their Haifa counterparts are the least supportive. With respect to sending their children to a public gan or school, there was found to be a statistically significant difference ($p<.001$) between the 30-49 age groups, as the overwhelming majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents are supportive of this idea while the vast majority of the Maronite respondents are against it.

**Table 133**: 50+ age groups: Would you agree to send your children to a church gan/ public gan/ public school in which Syriac is the medium of instruction?

| Place of residence (50+) | %Yes church gan | %Yes public gan | %Yes public school | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 94.7 | 26.3 | 10.5 | 19 |
| Haifa | 41.7 | 33.3 | 8.3 | 12 |
| Jerusalem | 100 | 100 | 91.7 | 12 |
| **Total** | **81.4** | **48.8** | **32.6** | **43** |

As can be seen from Table 133 above, the vast majority of the 50+ year-old respondents support the idea of sending their children to a church gan, but not to a public gan or school, where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. With regard to sending their children to a Syriac-medium church gan, there was found to be a statistically significant but moderate correlation ($\tau$=.41; p<.001) between the place of residence of the 50+ year-old respondents and their willingness to send children to such a gan; the vast majority of the Syriac Orthodox and the Jish respondents support the idea, while the majority of their Haifa counterparts reject it. With respect to sending children to a public gan or school, there were also found to be significant correlations ($\tau$=.41, p<.001; $\tau$=.62, p<.001) between the place of residence of the respondents and the extent to which they would agree to send children to a public gan or a public school, respectively. The overwhelming majority of the Syriac Orthodox respondents support the idea, while the majority of their Maronite counterparts do not.

**DISCUSSION**

As has been mentioned in section 3.7., revitalizing the Syriac language is a prerequisite for Maronites to avoid being labeled as Arabs. Reviving or revitalizing a language requires special efforts and tasks, such as conducting bilingual education programs, training teachers, supporting people in restoring their communal language, and writing and publishing grammar books, dictionaries, and other curriculum materials (Crawford 1995, Walsh 2001, Liddicoat and Bryant 2001, Chrisp 2005). However, Syriac will only be revitalized if it is taught to children. The examples of Hebrew, Maori, and Arapaho[14] show that these languages could be revived/revitalized and spoken natively because children learned them (Anonby 1997, Nahir 1998, Amery 2001, Spolsky 2003). When children acquire a language at a mother tongue level, they speak it among themselves and later with their future children and grandchildren, and this is how a language can be revived/revitalized and again become the mother tongue of a people.

Having a Syriac-medium church gan would definitely help in getting the Maronite children to acquire the Syriac language as a mother tongue; however, if the children did not continue to use Syriac in school, they would soon stop using it and subsequently forget it. Therefore, if Maronites want to revitalize the Syriac language and have their children speak it natively, they need to expose their children to the language not only in gan but also in school.

---

[14]  Arapaho is a North American Indian language spoken in Wyoming and Oklahoma (Anonby 1997).

Comparison between the three places of residence shows that the Syriac Orthodox respondents showed much more enthusiasm than their Maronite counterparts with respect to sending their children to a gan/school where Syriac is used as the medium of instruction. The responses of the Syriac Orthodox respondents are actually expected, as about a third of them speak the Syriac language natively and the overwhelming majority of them want to revitalize Syriac and have their children speak it as a mother tongue (see Tables 91 and 111).

Like their Syriac Orthodox counterparts, the majority of the Maronite respondents stated that they would agree to send their children to a Syriac-medium church gan. However, the vast majority rejected sending their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school. This rejection might stem either from the fear of a conflict with Muslims or from the misconception that teaching too many languages would place a heavy burden on their children. The Haifa respondents' rejection of the idea of sending their children to a public gan or school can also be related to the fact that Christians in Haifa usually send their children to private gans and schools (Sa'ar 1998).

The Maronite respondents' rejection of the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium school means that their children would not be able to speak the Syriac language natively after they grow up. Consequently, they will continue to have Arabic as their mother tongue and will continue to be labeled as Arabs and not as a people with a special identity; this, however, is in conflict with their general feeling, as has been seen in section 3.4.

# 4. FINAL DISCUSSION

This thesis has aimed at examining how the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox view their language, Syriac, and their identity. More specifically, I have discussed: (1) how different members of the Maronite and Syriac Orthodox community who live in Israel define themselves, (2) how they think that members of their community should be identified, (3) how they view the Syriac language, and (4) whether they want to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue, and if so, whether they prefer for their children to learn this language in a public or a private gan/school. I will conclude by summarizing and discussing the findings.

## 4.1. Nationality

With regard to their self-identification, the overwhelming majority of the Maronite and the Syriac Orthodox respondents did not define themselves as Arabs, Israelis, or Palestinians, but rather as Christians and Syriac respectively. Table 134 summarizes the results:

**Table 134:** Place of residence vs. self- identification

| | Arab % | Palestinian % | Israeli % | Christian % | Maronite/Syriac % | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 45.9 | 11.9 | 45 | 87.2 | 34.9 | 109 |
| Usfia | 31.8 | 4.5 | 54.5 | 86.4 | 59.1 | 22 |
| Haifa | 31 | 9 | 31 | 78 | 50 | 100 |
| Jerusalem | 14.6 | 19.5 | --- | 46.3 | 80.5 | 41 |
| **Total** | **34.5** | **8.1** | **35.1** | **77.6** | **49.3** | **272** |

With respect to how the respondents viewed members of their community, we have seen that only 29.7% of the respondents identified members of their community as Arabs. Table 135 below shows the difference between how the respondents viewed themselves and how they viewed members of their community. This difference might stem from the fact that Christians in Israel live among Muslims, whom they do not want to offend by stating that they are not Arabs.

**Table 135:** Place of residence vs. self-identification and identification of Members of the same community

| | Self-identification as Arab % | Identification of members of the same community as Arab % | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 45.9 | 35.8 | 109 |
| Usfia | 31.8 | 50 | 22 |
| Haifa | 31 | 27 | 100 |
| Jerusalem | 14.6 | 9.8 | 41 |
| **Total** | **34.5** | **29.7** | **272** |

On the whole, the respondents emphasize their religious identity much more than any other identity. Several reasons have been suggested as an explanation of this phenomenon; among these reasons are the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the negative vision of Arabs as terrorists, and the association of Arabism with Islam. However, it has been argued that these reasons are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for rejecting Arab or Palestinian identity and emphasizing their sectarian identity instead, because Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox, non-Uniate Catholics (*latin*), and Greek Catholics (*katolik*) would, in almost all cases, state that they are Arabs despite the reasons mentioned above. Therefore, there must be a reason for the difference between the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox, on the one hand, and the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox, non-Uniate Catholics, and Greek Catholics, on the other. In section 4.1.1., I will present a theory that explains this difference.

### 4.1.1. The Separation theory

A group of people (GP) who are living with at least one group of people (GP') in a certain place would separate from them in terms of their self-identification if the following two conditions are satisfied:

1) The relation between GP and GP' is brought into conflict either because of negative relationships between GP and GP' or because GP' are viewed negatively by other groups of people and GP believe that this would affect them negatively;

2) GP can point out at least one feature that differentiates between them and GP', and the feature is not universal and is indigenous to GP, i.e. it was not imposed on them by another group of people.

The first condition is necessary but not sufficient, i.e. its existence does not necessitate the separation of GP from GP', in terms of identity. However, since it is necessary, if it does not hold, separation does not take place, that is GP will only feel themselves to be different on the basis of some negative experience with GP'. Furthermore, it should be noted that the theory does not necessitate that GP define themselves based on the feature that differentiates them from GP'.

In light of the theory above, one can understand the difference between the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox, on the one hand, and the Greek Orthodox, non-Uniate Catholics, and Greek Catholics, on the other. Some members of both groups live among Arab Muslims, who are viewed negatively by other groups of people. However, only the first groups can separate themselves from Arab identity because they have Syriac as their sacred and ancestral language which is indigenous to them. The Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics use Greek as their sacred language and the non-Uniate Catholics use Latin, and these are not ancestral languages for Arabic-speaking Christians while Syriac is. Thus Syriac is a differentiating feature that can be used to distinguish between those who have it as a sacred and ancestral language and those who do not.

Apparently, the theory seems to fail to explain the difference between Israeli Maronites and their Lebanese counterparts, but it actually does not. Lebanese

Maronites define themselves based on the territory they live in, i.e. Lebanon, and not religion because otherwise Muslims would take over Lebanon with the excuse that Maronites cannot be viewed as a people but rather as a religious group and they should not have their own country. Thus Lebanese Maronites need state-based nationalism in order not to irritate their Muslim and Druze "allies." Nevertheless, when reading the history of Lebanon, one cannot fail to notice that during times of peace Lebanese Maronites define themselves as Lebanese, while during times of war they tend to define themselves as Christians, as was the case during the Lebanese Civil War (Phares 1995).

Unlike their Lebanese Maronites, the Maronites in Israel cannot be state-based nationalists because: (1) they live in Israel, which is defined as a Jewish state, and therefore, they cannot emphasize their Israeli identity, and (2) they do not live in Lebanon, from where they immigrated three centuries ago, and therefore, they cannot identify with Lebanon either. In addition, Israeli Maronites might avoid labeling themselves as Maronites and prefer to identify themselves as Christians, which is a universal and not an indigenous feature, because they belong to the Catholic Church, whose members are urged to transcend sectarian boundaries and emphasize their holistic Christian identity.

To conclude, it can be said that the political conflicts that the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox have been witnessing have had a dramatic effect on the shaping of their identities. Political conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Arab ones, combined with the status of Syriac as their ancestral as well as sacred language,

have pushed the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox into embracing their religious identity more than any other identity.

## 4.2. Revitalizing Syriac

As has been discussed in section 3.8., a language can only successfully be revived or revitalized as the mother tongue of a certain people if it is taught to children. In addition, the exposure to the target language only in gan will not guarantee the use of the language by the children after they finish gan and start school. Therefore, a successful process of reviving or revitalizing a language, such as Syriac among Maronites and Syriac Orthodox, should include 'sufficient' exposure to the language in both the gan and school. Revitalizing Syriac and having it as the mother tongue of the Maronites and the Syriac Orthodox would definitely help these two peoples to form an unambiguous identity, i.e. an identity which non-Maronites and non-Syriac Orthodox would recognize without debate.

It seems, however, that the Maronite respondents, unlike their Syriac Orthodox counterparts, are not aware of the importance of revitalizing Syriac. Although the overwhelming majority of the them (87.8%) regarded the Syriac language as important for Maronites identity, only 42.3% (of the Maronite respondents) agreed to have Syriac as their children's mother tongue. In addition, the majority of the respondents (67.6%), including the Syriac Orthodox, agreed to send their children to a

161

Syriac-medium church gan, but they rejected the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school. Table 136 below summarizes the results:[15]

**Table 136**: Place of residence vs. Syriac as a mother tongue/ church gan/ public gan/public school

| | Syriac as a mother tongue % | church gan % | public gan % | public school % | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jish | 39.4 | 72.9 | 20.2 | 12.8 | 109 |
| Usfia | 13.6 | --- | --- | --- | 22 |
| Haifa | 52 | 51 | 25 | 21 | 100 |
| Jerusalem | 85.4 | 97.6 | 97.6 | 82.9 | 41 |
| **Total** | **48.8** | **67.6** | **34.8** | **27.6** | **272** |

It should be noted that while the Haifa respondents reject the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium public gan or school because they prefer private gans and schools to public ones, the Jish respondents probably reject this idea because they fear having a conflict with Jish Muslims. I believe that if there were no Muslims in Jish, Maronites would not reject having a Syriac-medium gan or school. Additionally, such a project seems to be possible in Lebanon because most of the Lebanese Maronites do not live among Muslims. Rejecting the idea of sending their children to a Syriac-medium gan and afterwards to a Syriac-medium school means that Maronites

---

[15] These are the results regarding whether the respondents want to have their children speak Syriac natively, and whether they would agree to send their children to a church gan, public gan, and/or public school where Syriac is the medium of instruction.

will not be able to successfully revitalize the Syriac language, and so they will continue to be viewed as Arabs by non-Maronites.

Unlike most of the Maronite respondents in this study, the ecclesiastical leaders of the Maronite Church seem to be more aware of the importance of learning and acquiring the Syriac language. The Patriarchal Maronite Synod, which convened in Lebanon between 2003 and 2006, decided to put more emphasis on the importance of the Syriac heritage. In fact, one of the four objectives that the Synod set itself was exploring the Maronite heritage and traditions in an attempt to consolidate Maronite identity (see *The Patriarchal Maronite Synod Texts*). The Synod stresses that the Maronite Church is a Syriac Church and Syriac is its liturgical language which must be used in all Maronite churches in the world.[16] Arabic, on the other hand, is not more than a local language which Maronites living in non-Arabic-speaking countries can replace with another local language when they pray (section 1.4.28 of *The Patriarchal Maronite Synod Texts*).[17] In addition, the Synod requires holding a program that teaches, among other things, Syriac for liturgical purposes to Maronite seminarians (section 2.7.53).

Following the instructions of the Synod, a group of Maronites from Haifa launched a project to establish what they call "The Aramaic Maronite Society," whose main aim is to revitalize the Syriac language among the Maronites in Israel. This society has not been given official status yet, but its members have begun to talk with Maronite

---

[16] The synod stresses that there are four prayers that must always be said in Syriac.

[17] It should be noted, however, that in 2005 the Maronite Liturgical Committee, which is headed by his Excellency Bishop Butrus Aljumayyel, had taken off most of the Syriac texts, which were written with Syriac script, from the service book. This seems to contradict the decisions of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod.

priests in Israel in order to lecture about Maronite history and the Syriac language and teach the basics of this language in the Maronite parishes. These endeavors, which are aimed to raise the Maronites' awareness regarding their history and to teach them the basics of the language, will not be enough by themselves to lead to the revitalization of Syriac and to viewing Maronites as a people with a special identity rather than as Arabs. In order for Maronites to get rid of their national identity conflict, they need to revitalize the Syriac language and have it as their mother tongue. Therefore, if Maronites wish to be identified as a people with a special identity, they need to revitalize the Syriac language by utilizing it as the medium of instruction not only in gans but also in schools.

REFERENCES

Abdu, S. (1997). *Assuryan Qadeeman wa-Hadeethan.* Amman: Almaa'had Almalaki Liddirassat Addiniyyah.

Abel, E. (2003). *Arab Genetic Disorders*. McFarland & Company.

Abouna, A. (1996). *Adab Al-lug'a Al-Aramiyya.* Beirut: Dar Al-Mashriq.

Abu-Rabia, S. and Kehat, S. (2004). "The Critical Period for Second Language Pronunciation: Is There Such a Thing? Ten Case Studies of Late Starters Who Attained a Native-Like Hebrew Accent". *Educational Psychology* 24(1), 77-98.

Abu-Rabia, S. and Siegel, L. (2002). "Reading, Syntactic, Orthographic, and Working Memory Skills of Bilingual Arabic-English Speaking Canadian Children". *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 31(6), 661-678.

Abu-Rabia, S. and Siegel, L. (2003). "Reading Skills in Three Orthographies: The Case of Trilingual Arabic-Hebrew-English-Speaking Arab Children". *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 16, 611-634.

Abu-Rabia, S. (1996). "Druze Minority Students Learning Hebrew in Israel: The Relationship of Attitudes, Cultural Background, and Interest of Material to Reading Comprehension in a Second Language". *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 17(6), 415-426.

Abu-Rabia, S. (2004). "Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety Among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL". *Educational Psychology* 24(5), 711-720.

Akerlof, G. and Kranton, R. (2000). "Economics and Identities". *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CXV(3), 715-753.

Al-Hazza, T. and Lucking, R. (2005). "The Minority of Suspicion: Arab Americans". *Multicultural Review* 14(3), 32-38.

Amara, M. and Schnell, I. (2003). "Identity Repertoires among Arabs in Israel". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30(1), 175-193.

Amery, R. (2001). "Language Planning and Language Revival". *Current Issues in Language Planning* 2(2&3), 141-221.

Anonby, S. (1997). *Reversing Language Shift: Can Kwak'wala be Revived?* A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of North Dakota. Available at: http://www.und.edu/dept/linguistics/theses/1997Anonby.PDF

Bae, C. (2004). "Aramaic as a Lingua Franca During the Persion Empire (538-333 B.C.E.". *Journal of Universal Language* 5, 1-20.

Barbi, Y. (2000). "Mar Afram As-Suryani". *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa Al-Masihiyya*. Beirut: Dar Al-Mashriq, 1-43.

Barbour, S. & Carmichael, C. (2000). *Language & Nationalism in Europe*. UK: Oxford University Press.

Barnett, M. (1993). "Institutions, Roles, and Disorders: The Case of the Arab States System". *International Studies Quarterly* 37(3), 271-296.

Bethune-Baker, J.F. (2005). *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Bevan, W.L. (2005). *Church History: Mediaeval and Modern*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Binns, J. (2002). *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bligh, A. (2003). "Israeli Arab Members of the 15th Kenesset: Between Israeli Citizenship and Their Palestinian National Identity". *Israel Affairs* 9, 1-15.

Blommaert, J. (1996). "Language and Nationalism: Comparing Flanders and Tanzania". *Nations and Nationalism* 2(2), 235-256.

Brock, S. (2004). "The Syriac Churches and Dialogue with the Catholic Church". *The Heythrop Journal* 45(4), 466-476.

Chan, J., Ziftci, C. & Forsyth, D. (2006). "Searching Off-line Arabic Documents". *IEEE Computer Society Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition* 2(CVPR'6), 1455-1462.

Chang, S.H. and Kleiner, B.H. (2003). "Common Racial Stereotypes". *Equal Opportunities International* 22(3), 1-9.

Chrisp, S. (2005). "Maori Intergenerational Language Transmission". *International Journal of Language and Society* 172, 149-181.

Clark, J. (2003). "Frequent Incompatibilities: Ethnic and Religious Diversity and the Nations of the Middle East". *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22(1&2), 36-42.

Clocksin, W.F. and Fernando, P.P.J. (2003). "Towards Automatic Transcription of Syriac Handwriting". *12$^{th}$ International Conference on Image Analysis and Processing (ICIP'03)*, 664-669.

Colbi, P. (1969). *Christianity in the Holy Land*. Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer Publishers LTD.

Crawford, J. (1995). "Endangered Native American Languages: What is to be Done, and Why?". *The Bilingual Research Journal* 19(1), 17-38.

Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering Minority Students*. Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Children.

Dawisha, A. (2000). "Arab Nationalism and Islamism: Competitive Past, Uncertain Future". *International Studies Review* 2(3), 79-90.

Dibs, Y. (1905). *Al Jame al Mufassal Fee Tareekh al Mawarina*. Beirut: Catholic Press.

Dwairy, M. (1998). *Cross-Cultural Counseling: The Arab Palestinian Case*. New York: The Haworth Press.

Fahed, B. (1974). *Liber Brevis Explicationis De Maronitarum Origine Eorumque Perpetua Orthodoxia Et Salute Ab Omni Haeresi Et Supestitione*.

Fahed, B. (1985). *Kitab al Huda: Dustoor at-Ta'ifa al Marooniyya Fee al Quroon al Wusta*. Beirut: Dar ALhuda Khater Press.

Frend, W.H.C. (1972). *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries.* Cambridge: University Press.

Ghanem, A. (1998). "State and Minority in Israel: the Case of Ethnic State and the Predicament of its Minority". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(3), 428-448.

Goldie, S. and Richard, G. (1982). "Language, Nationalism, and Political Conflict in Spain". *Comparative Politics* 14(4), 443-477.

Haddad, M. (2000). "Christian Identity in the Jordanian Arab Culture: A Case Study of Two Communities in North Jordan". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 20(1), 137-146.

Haeri, N. (2000). "Form and Ideology: Arabic Sociolinguistics and Beyond". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29, 61-87.

Heredia, R.R and Blumentritt, T.L. (2002). "On-line Processing of Social Stereotypes During Spoken Language Comprehension". *Experimental Psychology* 49(3), 208-221.

Hog, M., Terry, D., and White, K. (1995). "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory". *Social Psychological Quarterly* 58(4), 255-269.

Holmes, J. (1997). "Women, Language, and Identity". *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 1(2), 195-223.

Horenczyk, G. and Munayer, S. (2007). "Acculturation Orientations toward Two Majority Groups: The Case of Palestinian Arab Christian Adolescents in Israel". *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology* 38(1), 76-86.

Huddy, L. (2001). "From Social to Political Identity:A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory". *International Society of Political Psychology* 22(1), 127-156.

Issawi, Ch. (1955). "The Bases of Arab Unity". *International Affairs* 31(1), 36-47.

Joseph, J. (2006). *Language and Politics*. Cambridge: Edinburg University Press.

Kamusella, T. (2001). "Language as an Instrument of Nationalism in Central Europe". *Nations and Nationalism* 7(2), 235-251.

Kayal, P.M. (1973). "Religion and Assimilation: Catholic 'Syrians' in America". *International Migration Review* 7(4), 409-425.

Kennedy, R.S. (1984). "The Druze of the Golan: A Case of Non-Violent Resistance". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13(2), 48-64.

Khashan, H. (1990). "The Political Values of Lebanese College Students". *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34(4), 723-744.

Kherallah, M., Bouri, F. and Alimi, A.M. (2005). "Toward an On-line Handwriting Recognition System Based on Visual Coding and Genetic Algorithm". *Adaptive and Natural Computing Algorithms* 4, 502-505.

Krindatch, A.D. (2002). "Orthodox (Eastern Christian) Churches in the United States at the Beginning of a New Millennium: Questions of Nature, Identity, and Mission". *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(3), 533-563.

Kuiper, K.B. (1951). *The Church in History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Levan, C. (2005). *The Old Testament: A Brief Introduction*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Levin, S., Sidanius, J., Rabinowitz, J, and Federico, C. (1998). "Ethnic Identity, legitimizing Ideologies, and Social Status: A Matter of Ideological Asymmetry". *Political Psychology* 19(2), 373-404.

Lewis, B. (2002). *The Arabs in History*. UK: Oxford University press.

Liddicoat, A.J. and Bryant, P. (2001). "Language Planning and Language Revival: A Current Issue in Language Planning". *Current Issues in Language Planning* 2(2&3), 137-140.

McKay, J. (1985). "Religious Diversity and Ethnic Cohesion: A Three Generational Analysis of Syrian-Lebanese Christians in Sydney". *International Migration Review* 19(2), 318-334.

Merkley, P.C. (2001). *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Miller, J. (2000). "Language Use, Identity, and Social Interaction: Migrant Students in Australia". *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 33(1), 69-100.

Milton-Edwards, B. (2006). *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Moore, D. (1998). "No Longer Complacent?: Why Israeli Women Did Not Rebel". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 28(2), 169-192.

Moore, D. (2000). "Gender Identity, Nationalism, and Social Action among Jewish and Arab Women in Israel: Redefining the Social Order?" *Gender Issues* 18(2), 1-25.

Moosa, M. (1986). *The Maronites in History*. USA: Syracuse University Press.

Munson, H. (2003). "Islam, Nationalism and Resentment of Foreign Domination". *Middle East Policy* 10(2), 40-53.

Murad, K (1974). *Tareekh Al-Adab As-Suryani*. Cairo: Manshurat Dar Ath-Thaqafa.

Myhill, J. (2006). *Language, Religion and National Identity in Europe and the Middle East: A Historical Study*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Nahir, M. (1998). "Micro Language Planning and the Revival of Hebrew: A Schematic framework". *Language and Society* 27, 235-257.

Norton, B. (1997). "Language, Identity, and the Ownership of English". *TESOL Quarterly* 31(3), 409-429.

Nydell, M. (2006). Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times. Boston: Intercultural Press.

Ochs, E. (1993). "Constructing Social Identity: A Language Socialization Perspective". *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26(3), 287-306.

Palmer, A., Brock, S., & Hoyland, R. (1993). *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Peirce, B. (1995). "Social Identity, Investment, and Language Learning". *TESOL Quarterly* 29(1), 9-31.

Peled, Y. and Shafir, G. (1996). "The Roots of the Peacemaking: The Dynamics of Citizenship in Israel, 1948-93". *International Journal of Middle east Studies* 28(3), 391-413.

171

Phares, W. (1995). *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*. Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner.

Rodinson, M. (1981). *The Arabs*. (translated by Arthur Goldhammer). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1-189.

Rustum, A. (1988). *The Church of the City of God Great Antioch* (in Arabic). Beirut: Editions St. Paul.

Sa'ar, A. (1998). "Carefully on the Margins: Christian Palestinians in Haifa between Nation and State". *American Ethnologist* 25(2), 215-239.

Said, E and Hitchens, Ch. (1988). *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*. USA: Verso.

Salibi, K. (1971). "The Lebanese Identity". *Journal of Contemporary History* 6(1), 76-86.

Sato, N. (2003). "On the Horns of the Terrorist Dilemma". *History and Anthropology* 14(2), 141-155.\

Sato, N. (2005)."Memory and History of the Urfalli Syrian Orthodox Christians". *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 12(3), 315-333.

Schmid, C. (2001). *The Politics of Language: Conflict, Identity and Cultural Pluralism in Comparative Perspective*. US: Oxford University Press.

Spolsky, B. (2003). "Reassessing Maori Regeneration". *Language in Society* 32, 553-578.

Suleiman, Y. (2003). *The Arabic Language and National Identity: a Study in Ideology*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.

Suleiman, Y. (2004). *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Totah, Kh. (2002). *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education.* Gorgias Press LLC.

Turner, J, Oakes, P., Haslam, S.A., & McGarty, C. (1994). "Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context". *Society for Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20(5), 454-463.

Uwet, M. (1987). *Al Mawarina: Man Hum wa Maza Yureedoon*. Junni: Al-Kraym Press.

Wade-Woolley, L. (1999). "First Language Influence on Second Language Word Reading: All Road Lead to Rome".

Walsh, M. (2001). "A Case of language Revitalization in 'Settled' Australia". *Current Issues in Language Planning* 2(2&3), 251-258.

Wehbe, L. (2001). "The Maronites of the Holy Land: A Historical Overview". *The Journal of Maronite Studies* 5(2). Available at: http://www.mari.org/docs/july01/MaronitesEnglish.doc

Williams, C. (1994). *Called into Liberty!: On Language and Nationalism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Wright, S. (1997). "Language as a Contributing Factor in Conflicts between States and Within States". *Current Issues in Language & Society* 4(3), 215-237.

Wright, W. (2001). *Short History of Syriac Literature*. London: Gorgias Press LLC.

Zisser, E. (2003). "The Mediterranean Idea in Syria and Lebanon: between Territorial Nationalism and Pan-Arabism". *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18(1), 76-90.

(2006). *The Patriarchal Maronite Synod Texts* (In Arabic). Beirut: Raidy Printing Press. Available at: http://www.maronitesynod.com/

(2003). *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. USA: St. Martin's Press.

http://sor.cua.edu/Intro/

http://syriacchristianity.org/PZakka/joint_declaration.htm

http://www.hcef.org/index.cfm/ID/130.cfm

# המרונים והסוריאנים האורתודוקסים:
# איך הם תופסים את שפתם וזהותם

**סנדי מיכאל חביב**

## תקציר

מטרתה של עבודת המחקר הזאת היא לבדוק איך המרונים והסוריאנים האורתודוקסים בישראל מגדירים עצמם ואיזה תפקיד מהווה השפה הסוריאנית, שהיא שפת שושלתם והשפה הקדושה שלהם, בהגדרת זהותם של בני שתי העדות. בנוסף, עבודה זו בודקת אם המרונים והסוריאנים האורתודוקסים מעוניינים שבניהם ירכשו את השפה הסוריאנית כשפת אם. 272 מרונים וסוריאנים אורתודוקסים השתתפו במחקר זה. מהממצאים עולה שהרוב המכריע של המשתתפים לא מזהים עצמם כערבים, ישראליים, או פלשתיניים, אלא כנוצרים או סוריאנים. בנוסף, נמצא שרובם הגדול של המשתתפים מתייחסים לשפה הסוריאנית כאלמנט חשוב בזהותם. עוד נמצא שהרוב המכריע של המשתתפים הסוריאנים אורתודוקסים רוצים שבניהם ידברו את השפה הסוריאנית כשפת אם, בעוד שרוב המשתתפים המרונים דחו רעיון זה. למרות זאת, רוב המשתתפים המרונים הביעו רצון לשלוח את בניהם לגן ילדים השייך לכנסייה ושבו השפה הסוריאנית היא שפת ההוראה, אבל התנגדו לשלוח אותם לגן ילדים ממלכתי או בית-ספר ממלכתי שבו השפה הסוריאנית היא שפת ההוראה.

המרונים והסוריאנים האורתודוקסים:
איך הם תופסים את שפתם וזהותם

מאת: סנדי מיכאל חביב
בהנחיית: פרופ' ג'ון מייהל

עבודת גמר מחקרית המוגשת כמילוי חלק מהדרישות
לקבלת התואר "מוסמך האוניברסיטה"

אוניברסיטת חיפה
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
החוג לשפה וספרות אנגלית

אפריל, 2008

המרונים והסוריאנים האורתודוקסים:
איך הם תופסים את שפתם וזהותם


סנדי מיכאל חביב


עבודת גמר מחקרית המוגשת כמילוי חלק מהדרישות
לקבלת התואר "מוסמך האוניברסיטה"


אוניברסיטת חיפה
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח
החוג לשפה וספרות אנגלית


אפריל, 2008