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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Department of Modern Languages

**The construction of identity and community –
Performing ethnicity: Who are the Colombian-Lebanese?**

by

Esteban Devis-Amaya

Thesis for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014

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ABSTRACT

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**THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY –
PERFORMING ETHNICITY: WHO ARE THE COLOMBIAN-
LEBANESE?**

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The aim of this thesis is to investigate the Colombian-Lebanese community in Bogota, and specifically the identities of a particular group of Colombian-Lebanese. I explore the role of ethnicity in the construction of their identities, through the concepts of space, performance and community.

The Colombian-Lebanese community has a particular position within Bogota society as part of Bogota's elite. This privileged position means the Colombian-Lebanese community is a confident group that does not have to endure the negative aspects of ethnic labelling that other less privileged communities may have to sustain. Most of the Colombian-Lebanese participants in this study have been successfully upwardly socially mobile whilst keeping a connection with their ethnic community. At the same time, less upwardly mobile descendants of Lebanese immigrants are more likely to completely assimilate into Colombian society, or if they are recent Muslim immigrants, maintain their religious identity but their ethnic identity is likely to gradually dilute.

By adopting an ethnographic approach, with an emphasis on interviews and participant observation, I focus on the Colombian-Lebanese organisations that work within this ethnic community, including a social club, a Maronite parish, a charitable organisation, and a cultural association. I analyse a number of activities and events organised by the Colombian-Lebanese, observing the locations where these take place, their participation in the events, as well as how identity is performed within them.

There have been few studies of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia, most of those focussing on the history of migration and settlement. This thesis aims to address this by adding a contemporary view of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota. Moreover, it contributes to the growing literature on migrant communities investigating whether upward mobility is compatible with ethnic identification. I argue that social status is as important to Colombian-Lebanese identity as ethnicity, and that the two combine in order to belong to the organisations that work within the community. The social positioning of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota's society positively influences their relationship with their ethnic identity, which they can choose deliberately when and where to perform.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Esteban Devis-Amaya declare that the thesis entitled '**The construction of identity and community – Performing ethnicity: Who are the Colombian-Lebanese?**' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission

Signed: ...Esteban Devis-Amaya.....

Date:29/05/2014.....

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I seek to explore the identities of a group of Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota, Colombia, investigating the role that social status and ethnicity have had in constructing these identities. The Colombian-Lebanese have been present in Colombia since the late nineteenth century when the first Lebanese migrants arrived (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992). They prospered as they settled in Colombia with their families, often marrying locals (Vargas and Suaza 2007). The Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota also progressed and by the turn of the twentieth century there were several Lebanese migrants with businesses in the main trading centres of Bogota. They also set up various social organisations and based their community around these. This migration history of the Lebanese in Colombia, and their process of integration into Colombian society, has been the focus of a variety of academic studies (for example Fawcett 1992; Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992 and 1998; Vilorio de la Hoz 2003; and Vargas and Suaza 2007). This thesis draws on these studies to focus on the current situation and, in particular, the activities of the self-declared Colombian-Lebanese community in Bogota, which belongs predominantly to the upper/upper-middle classes in Bogota and is composed of different generations, from a small number of first generation migrants to larger numbers of third and fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese. The informants who I interviewed for the research for this thesis form part of the social, economic and political elite of the city, and in some cases, the country. The large majority of them are descendants of Maronite Christians, though participation in religious services varies. It must be noted that my study does not cover all the individuals of Lebanese descent in Bogota, largely because they do not consciously include themselves, or are not included in this community. This is due to a combination of lack of identification with the community, lack of knowledge of their ancestry or the community, as well as social and religious differences (see Chapters Three, Four and Seven). Those individuals not included are far less visible than my participant group – some may not know of their Lebanese ancestry, whilst others may prefer not to be identified as Colombian-Lebanese, precisely for the same reasons that are attractive for my participant group and which are explored here. My participants are those who, to varying extents and in various contexts, actively perform their Colombian-Lebanese identity.

In this thesis I explore the roles of ethnicity and social status in constructing the identities of the Colombian-Lebanese group within this study, particularly through the concepts of space, performance and community. To explore these concepts, I focus on the organisations that work within this self-identifying ethnic community, including a social club, a religious parish, a charitable organisation, and a cultural association, and on the Colombian-Lebanese individuals that participate in them and take part in their activities. I chose to focus on these organisations as not only are they visible Colombian-Lebanese entities, but they also acted as a way for me to access individuals, meetings and activities within the community. My data set is a sub-group of the wider upper-middle class Colombian-Lebanese community in Bogota, and it is based on participation in and connection to these organisations. These Colombian-Lebanese organisations operate within the section of Bogota's society to which their members belong: namely, the upper/upper-middle class, based in neighbourhoods in the north of the city.

My interest in the Colombian-Lebanese community arises partly out of my personal experience. I am a fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese, my paternal great-grandfather having migrated to Colombia in the first decade of the twentieth century. As I grew up, I became aware of my Lebanese heritage and of the existence of other Colombian-Lebanese families, although my own family was never actively involved with other Colombian-Lebanese or any of their organisations. Therefore, my initial interest came out of my own positioning as a Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota – a positioning which, as I discuss in Chapter Two, offered a particular view into this community.

In addition, different developments in Colombia and Lebanon contribute to my interest in the topic. In Colombia, political changes have been giving way to social and cultural developments. In the 1990s the country changed its democratic system with the signing of a new constitution; opening up its economy to free trade and neo-liberalism; and developing a discourse of multiculturalism. However, it also saw an increase in violence and insecurity, and consequently developed a negative image, both for Colombians and the international community. During the 2000s the government took several actions to tackle these security issues, with the aim of improving the image of the country and by encouraging Colombian patriotism. Therefore, during the second half of the 2000s,

Colombians, including the Colombian-Lebanese, found themselves in an environment of patriotic and pluralistic rhetoric.

Lebanon's destructive and bloody civil war in the 1970s and 1980s has had a continued impact on many Colombian-Lebanese. The 1990s witnessed a reconstruction process in Lebanon which was matched by political developments in the 2000s. The threat of renewed conflict together with the intervention of neighbouring countries led many Lebanese to mobilise politically, both at home and abroad. Therefore, as I started my research, I found a Colombian-Lebanese community that was experiencing a renewed Colombian patriotic drive promoted by the government, coupled with an awakening solidarity with the Lebanese, which continued to work within the upper socio-economic sections of Bogota. This dichotomy proved interesting, as in terms of their sense of ethnic identity, both their connections to Colombia and to Lebanon were experiencing changes, whilst their social status in Colombia maintained, and even reinforced itself. Their activities and participation in events during the following years would replicate this situation.

The theoretical concepts I consider are drawn directly from my fieldwork. As I began the data collection, I searched for an ethnic Colombian-Lebanese community and ways of finding it. It became apparent early on that the Colombian-Lebanese social organisations offered the richest entry into the community, and were an important focus for community belonging. My participants often referred to these organisations during the interviews and most of their meetings and events were organised by and around them, all of which are influenced by the elite social status of my participants. I will examine these organisations from the perspective of concepts of space, both physical and metaphorical, and look into the ways in which the Colombian-Lebanese (re)construct these spaces. The physical spaces are the buildings that house two of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. The most significant for this community is the social club, called the *Club Colombo-Libanés*, as it has been a constant gathering point since its foundation in the 1950s. The other is the church that hosts the Maronite Parish, a Christian branch of Catholicism in Lebanon (see Chapters Two and Six), only recently founded in 2008.

Metaphorical spaces are created by the Colombian-Lebanese as they portray their Lebaneseness through the events and activities arranged by the Colombian-Lebanese organisations: the *Club Colombo-Libanés*; the Maronite Parish; the charitable *Colombian-*

Lebanese Ladies Association,¹ and the cultural association *World Lebanese Cultural Union – Colombian Chapter*.² In these spaces the Colombian-Lebanese ‘perform’ their ethnicity both to the general Colombian public, and to themselves, within the paradigms of their socio-economic status. The performances include events such as political demonstrations; religious ceremonies; dance classes and artistic performances; film premieres; cooking classes; and cultural activities as fund raisers. The constant backdrop to these spaces and performances is the concept of community. On the one hand, communities are central for the construction of identity, and on the other, they are also constructed through a combination of these concepts of spaces and performances.

Emerging from this context and conceptual framework outlined above I have developed these research questions which underpin my analysis throughout the following chapters:

- What characteristics mark out this Colombian-Lebanese community?
- What are the roles of ethnicity and social status in identity-construction for this Colombian-Lebanese community?
- How does this Colombian-Lebanese community perform its identity?
- What is the role of space and place in this performance and identity construction?

Alongside these concepts, other notions are also considered, including the relationship between the Lebanese ethnic heritage of my participants with the social context they inhabit; the consciousness and visibility of their portrayals of identity; as well as the boundaries of the spaces and the commonalities constructed within the community.

This thesis builds on Alfaro-Velcamp’s (2011; 2013) argument that those descendants of Lebanese migrants who are part of the elite have used their Lebaneness as a mark of foreignness to strengthen their position in society. I argue that they use their elite position to promote and highlight their Lebanese identity within Colombian society and to further their causes connected to this identity (see Chapters Four and Five). Moreover, some emphasise their Colombian-Lebanese identity and differentiate themselves from other group-identities, such as Colombian-Arab, to maintain both their social and ethnic statuses (see Chapter Eight).

¹ Asociación de Damas Colombo-Libanesas

² Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial – Capítulo Colombia

1.1. Selection of Terms

Throughout the thesis I use a variety of terms to refer to the data, participants and the organisations – terms which I have chosen for a number of reasons. The social club, *Club Colombo-Libanés*, is referred to simply as the ‘Club’ and the Lebanese Ladies Association as the ‘Ladies Association’, following my participants’ customary usage. The World Lebanese Cultural Union (Colombian Chapter) is reduced to its acronym in Spanish ULCM (*Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial*), and the Maronite Parish is simply referred to as the ‘Parish’.³

There is no agreement among academics on the terminology when referring to Lebanese migrants in Colombia or Latin America. Different and even conflicting terms have often been employed. The geopolitical changes that took place in the Middle East since the late 19th Century have created terminological challenges (Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). Some studies have used the term ‘Syrian-Lebanese’ (see Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992 and 1998) in order to incorporate both the Lebanese and Syrian immigrants; as well as to account for the fact that during much of the time of the Ottoman Empire and during the French Mandate in the region there was little official distinction between what later became the countries of Syria and Lebanon. This, however, is not the case today, as the term is a combination of the denonyms of two separate countries. At the same time, many of my participants disagree with being called Syrian-Lebanese. My participant Jacqueline (discussion panel 2008)⁴ expressed her disagreement with the term ‘Syrian-Lebanese’ at a public event when she argued that: ‘sería como hablar de Colombo-Venezolanos’,⁵ which she explained as a historically accurate but contemporarily misleading term.

³ My participants refer to the ULCM as *La Unión* (the union) and the Parish as both *La Parroquia* and *La Iglesia* (the church). I decided not to employ the term *Unión* as it could be confused with the idea of unity, and the term *Iglesia* as it could be mistaken with the Maronite Church. The term parish is used by the Catholic Church to delineate an area of worship within a locality, usually a number of neighbourhoods within a city or of small towns in a region. Hence it is not confined to a particular building. My use of the term Parish refers to the Maronite organisation in Bogota.

⁴ Jacqueline was part of a discussion panel following a showing of the film *Caramel* at the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogota. She was answering a question from the floor (12 August 2008)

⁵ ‘it would be like talking of Colombian-Venezuelans’ - Jacqueline

Likewise, my participant Ana (2009)⁶ expresses similar sentiments as she remembers her father's position on the subject:

'... cuando les decían... los sirio-libaneses [se sentían] ofendidísimos. Y mi papá siempre nos decía "es como si nos dijeran a nosotros colombo-venezolanos", igual de ofensivo. Somos libaneses punto. Somos país independiente...'⁷

Partly for this reason, and partly not to exclude Palestinians and others, some writers have chosen to use the term Arabs (see Vargas and Suaza 2007; Karam 2007), or Middle Easterners (see Alfaro-Velcamp 2007), even when the studies continue to focus mainly on the Lebanese⁸. Some of my participants also had reservations about the term Arab, in terms of a lack of connection to it:

'Más que árabe, libanés. No tengo tanta conexión con árabes, pero con libaneses sí tengo una empatía y un orgullo'⁹ (Carlos 2008)

'...somos libaneses antes que todo... [pero unos dicen] no, que somos primero árabes... [pero yo digo] somos primero libaneses después árabes'¹⁰ (Jose 2008)

The dislike for the term Arab was also noticed by Arjouch and Jamal (2007: 876):

'It should be noted there are deep divisions among those of Middle Eastern ancestry regarding the term "Arab." Many Maronite Lebanese, for example, do not view themselves as Arab, but nonetheless have very strong ethnic identities'.

Indeed, as I mentioned above, the majority of the participants in this study are descendants of Maronite Christians and this argument suggests they share the objection to the term Arab with other descendants of Lebanese Maronites elsewhere. Likewise, these strong ethnic identities that the authors refer to are also noticeable in some of my participants and their organisations, particularly in the ULCM. As seen in Chapter Seven, the

⁶ I use the format name (year) when I quote my participants. The names are pseudonyms to protect their identity and the year is when the interview took place. For a biography of each of my participants see Appendix One. For longer extracts of the interviews see Appendix Two.

⁷ '... When they were called... Syrian-Lebanese [they felt] really offended. And my dad would always say to us "it's like they would call us Colombian-Venezuelan", just as offensive. We're Lebanese, full stop. We're an independent country...' - Ana

⁸ For a discussion on the use of different terms used see Klich and Lesser (1998)

⁹ 'I feel more Lebanese than Arab. I have no connection with Arabs, but with the Lebanese I have empathy and pride' - Carlos

¹⁰ '...we are Lebanese before anything else ... [but some say] we're Arabs first... [but I say] we're Lebanese first and then Arabs...' - Jose

ULCM endeavours to be seen distinctly as Lebanese, separate from other countries in the region and more exclusive than the term Arab, both for political and social motives.

Participant Jacqueline, a ULCM member, reiterated her views against the terms during our interview:

'Los sirio-libaneses no existen, o unos u otros... Pero no es gentilismo. Turcos peor, porque étnicamente también es incorrecto... Árabe es como latinoamericanos, libanés es una comunidad adentro de árabe. No se pueden contrarrestar'¹¹

(Jacqueline 2008)

I refer to my participants throughout as Colombian-Lebanese. This is a study about a particular group of descendants of Lebanese in Bogota and the term Colombian-Lebanese acknowledges the combination of their Lebanese heritage and the Colombian context in which they live, regardless of their generation, religion, political affiliation or time of migration. This conscious labelling of my participants as Colombian-Lebanese also follows the views they have of themselves, and serves to delineate my study, as many of them see themselves as part of a distinct community. This self-identifying term works both as an inclusionary and exclusionary word: it is a mark of difference from general Colombian society and a way to generate a commonality with others who express it.

It must be noted, however, that not all Colombian-Lebanese feel the same degree of Lebaneseness. It could be argued that some of these descendants would be more accurately described simply as Colombians, despite their foreign-sounding surnames, rather than as Colombian-Lebanese because their connection, sense of belonging, identity, etc. with Lebanon and/or the Colombian-Lebanese community have not been as significant as that of other descendants. Nevertheless, all of the participants in this study have some connection with Lebanon and/or the Colombian-Lebanese community in Bogota, even if their degree of Lebaneseness varies. For these reasons, they are all referred to as Colombian-Lebanese.

Different terms have also been used in studies involving Lebanese migrants to refer to the region where they came from. Instead of using the name of a specific country, terms

¹¹ 'The Syrian-Lebanese do not exist; it's either one or the other... but it's not a denonym. Turcos is worse, as ethnically it's also incorrect... (and) to say Arab is like saying Latin-American, the Lebanese are a community within the Arabs, one can't counteract one with the other' – Jacqueline. *Turcos* is the denonym for the people of Turkey. As at the time of the migration much of the Middle East was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, many migrants came to be known as *Turcos*.

such as 'The Levant', 'Mount Lebanon', 'Greater Syria' or 'Greater Lebanon' have been used to account for the lack of specific borders throughout most of the historical period of migrations, making the region larger or smaller than what would later become individual countries. As this study looks at those who migrated from what was to become the state of Lebanon and to their current connections to that country, the term Lebanon is used both as reference to the area of emigration and to the country.

I refer to the Colombian-Lebanese community as the *Colonia* (colony in Spanish), the name they use for their community, which encompasses all the Lebanese and their descendants, regardless of their level of participation in the community. It is a term used by academics (see Fawcett 1992; Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992; Vilorio de la Hoz 2003; Vargas and Suaza 2007) and also often used by my participants, not only during our interviews but also when they talked about the community in general, during their meetings and events. I asked my participants about the use of this term:

'Comunidad y Colonia son lo mismo, simplemente comunidad es más actual. Colonia se hablaba desde antes'¹² (Jacqueline 2008)

'Toda la vida, desde que nacimos, se dijo la Colonia libanesa y los paisanos. Toda la vida. Tanto, que mucha gente amiga me dice, "¿usted por qué cuando dice Colonia o cuando dice paisanos de una vez piensa que son paisanos libaneses?"... jamás se me ha ocurrido decirle a alguien de Girardot paisano, no...'¹³ (Monica 2008)

Second generation participant Monica also comments on the word *paisano*, which is a term given to the Colombian-Lebanese by the Colombian-Lebanese. For example, my participants began to introduce me as a *paisano* when they found out my Lebanese ancestry. These terms, therefore, are not only about a simple definition but also about inclusion and exclusion. By labelling the community as *Colonia* and the Colombian-Lebanese as *paisanos* they are setting themselves apart as a distinct ethnic community of people that belong together. The distinctiveness was also expressed during my interview with these two first generation Colombian-Lebanese who are siblings:

¹² 'Community and *Colonia* are the same thing. It's just that community is more modern. *Colonia* comes from before' - Jacqueline

¹³ 'All our lives, since we were born it was Lebanese *Colonia* and *paisanos*. All our lives. So much so that many friends ask me 'why when you say *Colonia* or when you say *paisanos* you assume that they are Lebanese?'... I've never thought about calling someone from Girardot *paisano*, no' – Monica; Girardot is a town near Bogota where Monica grew up.

Isaac: 'La Colonia se considera la Colonia libanesa, todo apellido árabe'

Sofia: 'Libanés'

Isaac: 'todo apellido libanés'¹⁴

(Sofia and Isaac 2008)

Sofia was quick to correct her brother Isaac when he stated that the *Colonia* is composed of those with Arab surnames. He rectified it as those with a Lebanese surname. This suggests again the separation of the terms Lebanese and Arab, and significantly, a boundary of the *Colonia*, where those that belong are the Lebanese surnames and not all Arabic ones.¹⁵ The boundary, however, is blurred as it is not clear how one can differentiate between Lebanese and Arab surnames. Moreover, some of these surnames do not even sound foreign in Colombia anymore, as they have long been in the public sphere and now 'sound' very much Colombian.¹⁶ This argument also suggests the term *Colonia* is assigned to those who may not want to be included in it, as long as they have an appropriate surname, and that there may even be individuals who are not aware of their inclusion within this Colombian-Lebanese boundary. Nevertheless, their statements still suggest the nature of the terms as boundaries that grant or deny belonging to the community.¹⁷

It is important to highlight that the term *Colonia* is not confined to the Colombian-Lebanese or Colombian-Arabs, as other ethnic communities in Colombia are also referred to as *Colonias*, not only by the members of the community themselves but also by academia and the press¹⁸. Furthermore, other Latin American countries also refer to the Lebanese and Arab communities as *Colonias* (see Bray 1962 for Chile; Bejarano 1997 for Ecuador; Zeraoui 2006 for Mexico; Karam 2007 for Brazil; Klich and Lesser 1998 for various Latin American countries, who also translated the word as 'Colony').¹⁹

¹⁴ Isaac: 'the *Colonia* is considered the Lebanese *Colonia*, every Arab surname'

Sofia: 'Lebanese'

Isaac: 'every Lebanese surname'

¹⁵ The boundaries of the community are further discussed in Chapter Six.

¹⁶ See Chapter Two for more on this issue

¹⁷ Furthermore, the surname explanation is problematic, as there were some active individuals whose Lebanese ancestry came from the maternal side, making their Lebanese surname come fourth or even further back, but they were still considered part of the *Colonia*.

¹⁸ For example, Capelli (2006) uses the word *Colonia* to describe the Italian community in Colombia in a journal article about the history of the community in the north of Colombia; and Montoya-Gómez (2010) uses it in a newspaper article to report the congregation of the German community to watch a World-Cup football game against Argentina and the celebrations of their victory.

¹⁹ This definition is also included in the dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* as: 'Conjunto de los naturales de un país, región o provincia que habitan en otro territorio' (group of individuals that inhabit a different territory from the country, region or province of which they are native) – (RAE online 2012)

Other terms I use are patriarch, *damas*²⁰, and *jóvenes*²¹. Patriarch is the term given in the *Colonia* to older Colombian-Lebanese men who have had a prominent position in the Colombian-Lebanese organisations, they might have been presidents of the Club, the ULCM, or very active in their participation. The name is reserved for men, usually over the age of 70 and carries prestige and respect. For example, it was common for the Colombian-Lebanese to get up from their seats when a patriarch entered the restaurant and to approach and greet him. Therefore, the term 'patriarch' combines gender, participation and age. I believe this is a representation of the hierarchical and patriarchal structure present within Colombian and Lebanese families. There is no use of the term matriarch in the *Colonia*, but women who participate in the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association are referred to as *damas*. The term is conditional on participation in the Association, regardless of age. Other terms used in the *Colonia* are not specific to the Colombian-Lebanese: young Colombian-Lebanese are referred to generically as *los jóvenes*, older Colombian-Lebanese as *los viejos*, whilst younger Colombian-Lebanese generally refer to their parents' generation as *los adultos*. These terms are conditional on age, regardless of participation, however, I only use the term *jóvenes* as it is useful when explaining the Youth-wing of the ULCM.

The terms I use here have been chosen to suit the nature of my study which looks at belonging, boundaries and performance. I use the terms Colombian-Lebanese to refer to my participants; Lebanon to refer to the country and area of origin; and *Colonia* for the Colombian-Lebanese community. These terms set out those that belong to the ethnic community, the location of its boundaries, and the performance of identity, ideas which I expand further in the subsequent chapters.

1.2. Chapter outline

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter One sets out the broad framework for the thesis and introduces the key research questions that I will explore. Chapter Two details the methodology which is the basis of my data collection and analysis: it presents an in-depth

²⁰ Ladies

²¹ Young people

account of the relevant Colombian-Lebanese organisations for the data and explains my own positioning within the study.

Chapters Three and Four give an overall context for the study. Chapter Three examines the history of migration of the Lebanese to Colombia, the reasons for migration, the country they encountered, their numbers and settlement patterns, their integration story, and their success in the field of politics. This is explained by comparing the Colombian-Lebanese history with other Latin American countries and drawing on relevant migration theories. Chapter Four gives an explanation of the relevant current context of Colombia and Lebanon, and the current situation of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia. It then looks at how issues of religion, race and socio-economic status in Colombia and Bogota impact on the Colombian-Lebanese.

Chapter Five examines the conceptual ideas that underpin my study: it explores relevant issues of identity, its construction and visibility; the construction of the spaces where the Colombian-Lebanese portray these identities; the performances of the identities and their relationship with belonging; and the construction and boundaries of this community.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight examine the data I have collected. Chapter Six focuses on the Club as a Colombian-Lebanese space, as well as on the Ladies Association, and enquires into the relationship between ethnicity and social status in constructing Colombian-Lebanese identity. Chapter Seven looks at the Maronite Parish, analysing the performances that occur in its spaces and how these help construct the Colombian-Lebanese identity, its visibility and invisibility. Chapter Eight focuses on particular events, external to the *Colonia*, which influence the construction of Colombian-Lebanese identity. The ULCM organisation features heavily in this chapter, which also looks into the boundaries and divisions amongst the Colombian-Lebanese.

Finally, Chapter Nine concludes the thesis as I draw together the different arguments used in my chapters and suggest some answers to the research questions outlined above, by providing the findings of the data analysis of this study. I reflect on the significance of the study, as well as its limitations, and end with a number of suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCHING THE COLOMBIAN-LEBANESE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the methodological approaches I used in this study for my data collection. I first explain my choice of ethnography for the study, with an emphasis on participant observation and a selection of interviews. Next, I explain my choice to focus on the Colombian-Lebanese organisations, the way I approached their events and the format of my interviews. I subsequently move on to give an explanation of the various Colombia-Lebanese organisations that are the centre of this research, including: the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, its foundation and the reasons behind its relocation to its current location; the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association, with an explanation of their events and charitable activities; the World Lebanese Cultural Union (ULCM), with a brief comment on its history, its activities, and its focus on the promotion of culture and Lebanese national sovereignty; the Maronite Parish and its development as religious and ethnic space. I also address the methodological limitations I encountered, in terms of accessing informants and my own positioning within the research. The former gives explanations of how I approached Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, as well as non-active Colombian-Lebanese. The latter includes both my insider and outsider status coming from my Lebanese heritage, my Colombian nationality, and my studies in the UK. Finally, I examine the ethical and methodological considerations that have come up during my fieldwork and subsequent analysis of the data, focusing on the importance of my own social status for this study into an upper-middle class Colombian-Lebanese community.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the identities of the Colombian-Lebanese, I took an ethnographic approach with a combination of semi-structured interviews and participant observation for the data collection. The former were conducted with Colombian-Lebanese individuals or sometimes couples, whilst the latter took place at the different activities, events and meetings of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. This allowed me to get closer to the community and obtain valuable information. However, I do not argue that my

approach has given me a complete picture of either the Colombian-Lebanese or of the *Colonia*. Indeed, as Clifford argues, ethnography is a 'partial truth' where no single account can be recorded as wholly accurate, stating that 'ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial – committed and incomplete' (1986: 7) and that 'in cultural studies at least, we can no longer know the whole truth, or even claim to approach it' (Clifford 1986: 25). He suggests that the research is influenced by a variety of factors, including: the context when the research is carried out, written and read; the positioning of the researchers and their relationship of power with the participants; and even the writing style and techniques used, from the fieldwork notes to the final product. My research exemplifies this argument. It is not a complete account of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia: it is restricted to a particular area of a single city, the upper-class neighbourhoods in the north of Bogota (see Chapter Three); it is also restricted to a particular group of Colombian-Lebanese within that area, i.e. those that participate in the Colombian-Lebanese organisations that work within the city's upper class societal constraints. Moreover, the fieldwork is carried out in Spanish but the thesis is written in English, by a Colombian of Lebanese heritage living and studying in the UK, only spending some months in Colombia for the data collection. Hence, I do not claim to represent the whole truth about the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota, but rather to examine particular practices of a group of individuals that claim identity as Colombian-Lebanese. Moreover, as already suggested, ethnography is not only about my participants but also about me as a researcher. As Gans (1997: 886) argues: '...researchers must study their own research methods as well as themselves'. Therefore, I also analyse my own particular positioning within the research which has been very significant from the beginning of my studies.

My research focuses on the Colombian-Lebanese organisations as they provided me access points to the community. It was in these events that I met most of my key informants. Some of them acted as gatekeepers, granting me greater access to the organisations, activities or other participants. Other studies have also focused on ethnic organisations for their research (see Fortier 2000; Nagel and Staeheli 2004; Karam 2007). Indeed, on their decision to focus on ethnic organisations Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 10) argue:

'[we] target organisations because they provide an easily identifiable pool of people who claim Arab origins. By joining the organisation or participating in its activities, individuals act on the basis of affinity with Arabness and therefore actively negotiate issues of community, membership and citizenship'.

Likewise, the Colombian-Lebanese organisations on which I focused, gave me the opportunity to access a number of individuals of Lebanese heritage with connections to the community and to address issues surrounding ethnic identity, space, performance and community. Nagel and Staeheli (2004) also argue that although they would have liked to research the reasons behind people not asserting their Arab origins, they found it inappropriate to randomly select Arab surnames given the attitudes in the US towards Arabs at the time of their study. I also chose not to randomly select Arab surnames, but not because of the perceived attitudes towards them. My reasons for not just using surnames to identify my informants were: first, individuals with Arab surnames can be descendants of migrants from different Arab countries, not just Lebanese; second, as I explain in Chapter Three, some Lebanese migrants Latinised their surnames, which would have been invisible with this approach; and third, some of them might not even be aware of their Lebanese ancestry.¹

I carried out a number of interviews with the Colombian-Lebanese. The first were set up with individuals that actively participate in the different Colombian-Lebanese organisations, including the organisations' leaders, and then with individuals connected to my participants, some of whom were less active in their participation. My access to participants also worked as a 'snowball', with more access to individuals and the community being gained the more interviews I conducted, and the more I participated in the events. Most of the interviews took place either at the Club or the homes of the Colombian-Lebanese. I also interviewed a couple of my participants at their places of work. Therefore, most of my interviews took place in spaces the Colombian-Lebanese felt comfortable with and to which they were accustomed. At the same time, the Club and some of the homes/offices of my participants also had visual connections to their ethnic identity, such as items depicting cedar trees² or having *narghiles*³ as decorative objects. This proved helpful to approach a number of issues and also influenced the way some of the answers were

¹ In addition, security issues also restricted this approach, not only for me as a researcher but for Colombians in general, e.g. the phone-books in Bogota used to carry the names of individuals and businesses, but now mainly only the latter use this service as individuals try to prevent unwanted attention and potential security risks (e.g. kidnappings).

² The Cedar tree is the national symbol of Lebanon and features in the Lebanese flag

³ *Narghiles* are smoking devices with one or more hoses used to smoke *shisha* (flavoured tobacco) and are commonly used in Lebanon and the Middle East.

given by my participants, i.e. by taking for granted issues surrounding visiting the Club and the events that took place there.

I used semi-structured interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of their views on identity and the community, which according to Pierce (2008: 118) allow for the formulation of 'topic-related questions and pre-determined, alternative supplementary questions'. Hence, I had a number of base questions I wanted to ask, together with accompanying follow-ups depending on the answers. In fact, most of the time my questions derived from the answers of my participants and not the pre-written script, as at times their answers took interesting turns for which I could not have prepared, leading to spontaneous questions which also brought about new insights into my research. I learnt to use open ended questions with the aim of getting long answers. This is because, at the beginning of my research, I used some questions which allowed only for short answers and did not give me as much information as I would have liked. Therefore, I began posing questions that enquired into their beliefs and feelings, or that asked for further explanations (see Pierce 2008).

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, a language I share with all of my participants. The fact I am from Bogota also helped me understand the meaning of colloquialisms and turns-of-phrase they used. It also meant that I was able to notice the influence of the Arabic language on the Spanish of my first generation participants. I transcribed these interviews in Spanish and then translated the sections I have found particularly relevant to English. I give the original Spanish quotation throughout the thesis and the English translation in the footnotes. I believe this gives a more authentic account of my participant's arguments and beliefs, whilst the footnoted translation is given to ease understanding. I have also included in Appendix Two extracts from the interviews which will help the reader understand the context of what I have quoted in the text.

I interviewed 28 Colombian-Lebanese individuals, 15 men and 13 women who had varying levels of participation in the organisations and their events and activities. They are of different ages, from a third generation 18 year old young woman to a first generation man in his late 70s.⁴ 26 of them are descendants of Christians and two are Muslim.⁵ The

⁴ Six of my participants are first-generation migrants (including the Maronite priest and a Muslim imam); eight are second-generation; ten are third-generation; and four are fourth-generation.

breakdown roughly follows the makeup of the *Colonia*, with most individuals being second and third generation Colombian-Lebanese descendants of Maronite migrants. I have compiled a list of my participants and a short biography of each of them in Appendix One. The biography includes the date and place of the interview, their age, generation, membership to Colombian-Lebanese organisations and participation on events by the *Colonia*.

The majority of my participants have been successful in Colombia in terms of economic, social and, for some, political achievement. They are university educated (many having studied abroad), speak two or more languages, and generally live comfortable lives. The professions of my participants include lawyers, doctors, journalists, senior civil servants and diplomats. Others are entrepreneurs that set up successful family businesses, ranging from textiles to automobiles. Their children attend private schools and universities. Some of them belong to selective groups, including religious organisations or, as seen in Chapter Three, elite social clubs, and many follow political parties that promote maintaining the status quo.⁶ Most of my participants belong to the socio-economic and political elite in Bogota and are different from migrant groups who are discriminated against by mainstream society.

The Colombian-Lebanese have formed various organisations, some of which reflect their improved status in society. My research focuses on specific Colombian-Lebanese organisations and on interviews with individuals who belong to the organisations and/or participate in the events they organise. The following organisations are of particular importance to my research: the social Club *Colombo-Libanés*, the *World Lebanese Cultural Union* (ULCM), the *Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association*, and the Maronite Parish. Nagel and Staeheli (2004) also based their study of Arab communities in the US on the organisations within these communities which they discovered had varying goals, such as

⁵ 24 of them are descendants of Maronite migrants; one is descendant of Druze but converted to Maronite Christianity; one is Christian Orthodox; both my Muslim participants are Sunni Muslim. I also interviewed a Sunni imam and a Shiite imam who are Colombian converts. 20 of them are descendants of the first wave of Lebanese immigrants (before 1930), three arrived in-between the waves (1940s and 50s), and three migrated in the second wave, after 1975 (see Chapters Three and Four).

⁶ Some of the Colombian-Lebanese are members of the Opus Dei and others are members of the most traditional and exclusive social clubs in Bogota. Even though many have supported the Liberal political party in Colombia, its policies rarely deviate from status-quo. However, it must be noted that it is only a minority of Colombian-Lebanese that follow this type of religious organisations and only some are members of these traditional social clubs. Just as in the elite in Bogota, there is a variety of membership to groups and organisations. Nevertheless, these elite groups and organisations are available for them to join.

promoting the understanding of the Arab world to other groups, or showing their culture in a positive light, as well as aiding in the creation of a community for Arab immigrants and their descendants. The Colombian-Lebanese organisations in Bogota follow a similar set of goals.

Other significant areas for my research were the meetings, events and activities organised by these different Colombian-Lebanese organisations. My data collection for these was based on participant observation, including watching dance classes and film premieres; witnessing AGM's; taking part in religious services and political demonstrations. Because of my own insider position, I was a participant myself in some of these activities, such as a demonstration in which I walked alongside the Colombian-Lebanese; film showings which I watched sitting beside them; and some meetings where I was asked for my input. However, due to some of my personal characteristics a number of the activities were not accessible to me, especially those related to the Ladies Association due mainly to my gender, but also to my age. The ways of accessing these different events varied. Some, such as those at the Parish or the demonstration were events open to the public. In fact, my first approach was to the inaugural service of the Maronite Parish which was not only a significant event to participate in, but also led to acquire a number of important contacts. Other events, such as the dance classes or the film premieres, I was invited to either by those organising them or those participating in them. All of these were important as they provided a context in which I conducted my research and which I could refer back to during my interviews. These events gave me an insight into the way the Colombian-Lebanese portray their identities through them, as well as the significance of the spaces where they took place.

2.3. Colombian-Lebanese Organisations⁷

2.3.1 *The Club Colombo-Libanés*

The Club has been the ethnic and social centre of the Colombian-Lebanese since its foundation in the 1950s. It has been a place of gathering for the Colombian-Lebanese and the other Colombian-Lebanese organisations use its facilities for their events. It has been

⁷ As has been seen, there have been few studies of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia, most of those focussing on the history of migration and settlement. Therefore, most of the references I use for the Colombian-Lebanese organisations come from my participants or from other primary sources, such as newspaper articles or websites.

very important for the *Colonia* as a constructed Colombian-Lebanese ethnic and social space, where the Colombian-Lebanese often perform their ethnic and social identities.

The Club has been the institutional base of the *Colonia*. It has continued to exist despite economic or political turmoil in either Colombia or Lebanon, such as the economic crisis in Colombia at the end of the 1990s which saw numbers reduced from around 300 to less than 50 (see Chapter Three), or the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970-80s which divided the *Colonia* (see Chapter Seven). Moreover, it was also the only physical place for the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota until the formation of the Maronite Parish in 2008.⁸ In addition, the Club is supposed to be a members-only social club, but in reality its facilities are available to all in the *Colonia*, and the Club's spaces are also rented for external private events as a way of generating income.

The foundation of the Club

According to Jose, one of my eldest interview participants, it was not until the 1950s that the idea of an actual social club for the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota came about when he and other Colombian-Lebanese men got together to form a Colombian-Lebanese social club. They bought a large piece of land in the northern outskirts of Bogota to build a *Club Campestre* or country club, not only for social activities but also for sports.

'...yo aspiraba a un club [social]... fuera de Bogotá donde podían los hijos crecer mucho más abiertos a los deportes al aire libre, que son necesarios para la juventud...'⁹ (Jose 2008)

Jose had envisioned the Club as a space within a large location that would serve several generations, which would combine the performance of Lebanese heritage with social and sporting activities.¹⁰ However, he stressed that there was not enough support from the *Colonia* to build a large country club in the outskirts of Bogota. First because:

⁸ This is different to the *Colonias* in other Latin American cities which have had more than one physical base, such as Sao Paulo which has numerous social clubs, including country clubs and city social clubs (see Karam 2007); Mexico City which has a large social club as well as two well established Maronite churches (see Alfaro-Velcamp 2007); or Buenos Aires which apart from religious and cultural centres also has a school (see *Misión Libanesa Maronita en la Argentina* 2001).

⁹ '...I was hoping for a [social] club... outside of Bogota where the children can grow playing sports outside, which are necessary for young people'

¹⁰ According to *El Tiempo* newspaper this large location for the Club was over 55 hectares – or 35 *fanegadas* (Romero 2007)

‘La Colonia en Bogotá todavía estaba con un complejo del nombre turco por la cosa de la política que había todavía, de no mucha aceptación de los turcos y no había mucha gente que estaba entusiasmada con tener un club [social] propio’¹¹

And second:

‘Porque la mayoría de la Colonia estaban metidos en *Los Lagartos*, en *El Country*¹²... estaban metidos en todos los clubes entonces no había un club específico. Entonces era más fácil entrar a cualquier club que montar un club nuevo con tan poca gente, porque no había más de 100 personas que estaban haciendo el club campestre y esto es poco. Se necesitan 500 socios para que puedan andar.’¹³
(Jose 2008)

Jose argues that they were not able to gather up enough people to support the project, his two reasons for this, however, seem somewhat contradictory. First he suggests there was still social discrimination which he expressed as the stigma attached to the label *turco* – as many Middle Easterners were called (see Chapter One)¹⁴ – suggesting that the Colombian-Lebanese did not want to have a social club that would attach an ethnic label to them, which could have a negative impact on their social status.¹⁵ His second reason is that there was a lack of interest from the Colombian-Lebanese to be part of a country club as they were already members of other established country clubs in Bogota. Access to these social clubs would have been difficult if the Colombian-Lebanese were suffering from social discrimination, so if ‘the majority’ of the *Colonia* were members of other exclusive country clubs, then it would suggest that they had already acquired a ‘high’ social status which

¹¹ ‘The *Colonia* in Bogota still had a complex with the name ‘turco’, because of politics because there was not much acceptance of ‘Turcos’ and there wasn’t much enthusiasm for having our own [social] club’ – Jose

¹² *Los Lagartos* and *El Country* are exclusive traditional social country clubs in Bogota (see Chapter Three).

¹³ ‘Because the majority in the *Colonia* were [members] of *Los Lagartos*, of *El Country*... they were in all the clubs so there wasn’t a specific club [for Lebanese]. So it was easier to get into any other club than to set up a new one with so few people, because there weren’t more than 100 people in favour of the country club and that’s too little. At least 500 members are needed for it to function’ – Jose.

¹⁴ Jose also refers to politics. As seen in the Chapter Three, a number of Colombian-Lebanese politicians reached powerful positions in Colombia, from the 1930s onwards. However, as Vargas and Suaza (2007) argue, the early politicians suffered from attacks that labelled them as *Turcos*.

¹⁵ Lucia reiterates this perception of discrimination when she relates that her father and her uncle founded a social club in the town of Ocaña in Norte de Santander in 1945 after not being allowed into a party at a traditional social club for being *turcos*, even though she says they were ‘already theoretically accepted in the society’:

‘en alguna ocasión cuentan que había una gran fiesta en el Club Ocaña y mi papá y mi tío, que teóricamente ya estaban aceptados dentro de la sociedad quisieron ir a la fiesta y no los dejaron entrar por ser turcos. Pues eso dio lugar a que al día siguiente mi papá y mi tío decidieron fundar un club en donde fuera bienvenido todo el mundo, incluyendo los extranjeros, y es el club que hoy en día existe que se llama el Club del Comercio de Ocaña’ – (Lucia 2008)

granted them access. Nevertheless, Jose's arguments can be reconciled if they are taken as a demonstration of fragility of the social status of the Colombian-Lebanese at the time, and their way to protect it was by staying in the already established country clubs and thus avoiding being labelled as different. As Vallejo argues immigrants may be perceived in a negative image or 'immigrant shadow':

'...as they climb the mobility ladder and feel that they must distance themselves from negative perception of immigrants to achieve upward mobility' (Vallejo 2009: 149)

Jose argues that for these reasons, they decided in 1964 to found a small city club instead of the country club. This social club was called *Centro Unión*, an ethnically neutral name which addressed the concern of the *turco* label, and was located in a house in the centre of Bogota, on 39th and 20th street. Jose relates that the Club was popular as a space to gather socially, have events and parties, which made them realise a larger social club was indeed viable:

'viendo que sí se necesitaba un club, en cambio de hacer un club campestre [hicieron] un club urbano, digamos de club social, resolvieron vender el Club... y compramos la casa de un señor Shaio, de apellido oriental judío.¹⁶ Y metimos la plata de la venta, que fue por un millón setecientos mil pesos de aquel entonces, era mucha plata... la invertimos en la casa, ya reformándola y haciéndola más adecuada a un club... para fiestas y cosas por el estilo.'¹⁷ (Jose 2008)

It was in 1967 that they moved the Club to the north within the city, to 87th and 9th street in the wealthier and more prestigious *El Chicó* neighbourhood. They also changed its name to Club *Colombo-Libanés*, an ethnically charged name. Jose says that since its beginnings, it was designed as a social club, a place for events and parties. The change in location also situated the Club in a more prestigious area of Bogota,¹⁸ in a traditionally wealthy neighbourhood called *El Chicó*. This change seems to have been a trend among wealthy Bogotans who were reported to move northwards as the city expanded (Amato 1970: 104). This suggests that about a decade later, the apprehension towards the negative perception

¹⁶ Mr Shaio was a Sephardic Jew as well as Colombian-Lebanese

¹⁷ 'Seeing that a club was indeed necessary, instead of doing a country club they did a city social club. They sold the Club... and bought the house of a Mr Shaio, a Jewish oriental last name. And we put the money of the sale that was for one million seven hundred thousand pesos from that time which was a lot of money... we invested on the house, refurbishing it and making it more suitable for a club... for parties and similar things' – Jose

¹⁸ The Club is situated right next to what used to be the Hacienda Chico, which began to be urbanized in the late 1950s (see Suarez-Gomez 2009). This is likely to have greatly increased the value of the property. Nowadays the neighbourhood continues to be a well-to-do area of Bogota.

of the *turco* label diminished amongst the Colombian-Lebanese and they were able to reject that 'immigrant shadow' (Vallejo 2009). As part of the socio-economic elite, the Colombian-Lebanese were more comfortable performing their ethnicity

The Club is still housed there and its facilities include a large restaurant and kitchen, a bar, several multipurpose rooms used for business meetings, conferences and playing cards, a wide room with reflective windows used for dance classes and private parties, squash courts, and a playground for children. Current building plans, already underway, include a spa, a billiards room, and a larger events room among others. The facilities and its expansions suggest the Club aims to continue being space for the Colombian-Lebanese, as well as a space to be rented out to outsiders. The Club currently has only around 100 members, although many more Colombian-Lebanese individuals frequent it and use its facilities, their connection to it being based on their perceived common Lebanese ancestry.

Other Colombian-Lebanese clubs in Colombia include the *Club Unión* in Cartagena founded in 1933; the *Club del Comercio* in Ocaña, Santander, founded in 1945; and the *Club Campestre del Caribe* founded in Barranquilla in 1964.

2.3.2. The Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association

The Ladies Association, often referred to by my participants simply as *las damas*,¹⁹ is a charitable organisation founded in 1987 and led by Colombian-Lebanese women. Its charitable causes are directed towards both the Colombian-Lebanese community and to Colombian society in general (see Chapter Five). Their activities are mostly for fundraising and take place at the Club, including kermesses²⁰ where they sell food and handicrafts, seasonal bingos and raffles. They have also published Arabic language and Lebanese cook books. As with the rest of these organisations, the members of the Ladies Association are upper-class Colombian-Lebanese, but in this case, membership is restricted to women. This type of organisation is not restricted to the Colombian-Lebanese. Indeed, Fortier (2000) notes how an Italian women's organisation in London who also call themselves 'the Ladies', works as a charitable organisation and its committee is made up of 'middle class' women.

¹⁹ Literally 'the Ladies'

²⁰ Kermesses is a term used by the *Colonia* (though not exclusively) to denote fair-like events organized as fundraisers. These usually provided different stalls with food, beverages, and different items for sale, as well as raffles and games where prizes can be won.

Moreover, there are also other 'Ladies' associations in Bogota such as the Association of Colombian-Palestinian Ladies or the Association of Argentinian Ladies. Fortier (2000: 124) argues that the Italian Ladies Association in London:

'...still fashions itself on the ideas of respectability invested in this eighteenth-century term 'lady'... Today, the term remains inflicted with ideas of refinement, elegance and superiority'.

The term '*dama*' in Spanish has similar connotations of a 'Mujer noble o distinguida' (RAE Dictionary n.d.).²¹ Most of the *Ladies* members are older women, either housewives or already retired, with time and resources to fund their participation in this organisation, who certainly see themselves as respectable individuals in Bogota's society. Their charitable activities reflect these ideas of respectability, superiority, etc. as participant Lucia (2008) expressed: 'Trabajamos para personas menos favorecidas'.²² By differentiating themselves from those 'less fortunate' the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies perform their privileged socio-economic status.

Their fundraising activities not only provide funds for these activities but also provide spaces for the Colombian-Lebanese to perform and reinforce their ethnic identity by connecting them to Lebanon:

'... ¿entonces qué hacemos para lograr esa plata? hacemos bingos, hacemos bazares, se hizo esa excursión al Líbano... con esa plata compramos artesanías en el Líbano y la trajimos para acá a vender, entonces ahí iniciamos también la traída de artesanías del Líbano, de manteles, de cosas típicas de allá, y entonces eso es otra forma también de coleccionar fondos para las actividades'²³ (Sofia 2008, former president of the Ladies Association)

These activities, constructed as ethnic spaces, help to bring the community together; reconnect the Colombian-Lebanese to the land of their ancestors; and can share common memories. Some of the money collected is used for the children's wing of the *Santa Clara* Hospital, a poor hospital in the centre of Bogota. By helping the hospital, these Colombian-

²¹ 'noble and distinguished woman' – RAE Dictionary

²² 'We work for less privileged individuals' - Lucia

²³ '...And what do we do to get money? We do bingos, bazars, we organized that excursion to Lebanon... with (some of) that money we bought handicrafts in Lebanon and we brought them to Colombia to sell, and we organized the import of handicrafts to sell here, and all of these forms part of the ways to raise money for the activities' - Sofia

Lebanese women are 'crossing' their regular spaces to poorer neighbourhoods and performing a combination of their social and ethnic identities. Significantly, they also give financial assistance to Colombian-Lebanese families who belong to the *Colonia*, usually upper-class families who, as my participant Angelica put it, 'han quedado en mala situación'.²⁴ In this sense, these Colombian-Lebanese women are showing solidarity with other Colombian-Lebanese individuals with a similar socio-economic background to them, and they are also creating a boundary between those helped on the outside, and those on the inside.

2.3.3. The World Lebanese Cultural Union – Colombia Chapter (ULCM)

The ULCM was first founded in the 1950s in Mexico by the Mexican-Lebanese, and its Colombian-Chapter was set up soon after. It promotes sovereignty for Lebanon whilst claiming to be an inclusive organisation, regardless of political orientation or religious beliefs. However, it suffered from internal divisions due to the Lebanese Civil War and, at least in Colombia, it ceased activities for a number of years (see Chapter Seven). According to my participant Jacqueline (2008), the different conflicts in Lebanon disillusioned many individuals and impacted on participation. It was not until 2006 that the ULCM was reorganised in Bogota:

'El Líbano después de la guerra (civil) estuvo bajo dominio sirio, y no sabían hacia donde iba, y estuvieron quietos (la ULCM)... Ahora hay más estabilidad en Líbano, más madurez de los miembros de la Unión (ULCM), y una nueva reactivación del deseo de volver a las raíces...' ²⁵ (Eduardo 2008, one of the ULCM directors)

It was re-organised after the 2006 July War in Lebanon and its members often expressed this idea of the need to 'return' to the roots, suggesting they see fragility in the makeup of the community and feel a need to strengthen it (see Chapter Seven). Their first unofficial activity was organising a protest during the summer of 2006, in which they demanded cessation of all hostilities in Lebanon and arranged a rescue operation for the Colombians that were in Lebanon at the time. Since then they have organised trips to Lebanon; setup *dabkeh* dance lessons (from which a dance group was formed and has had several

²⁴ 'have end up in a bad situation' - Angelica

²⁵ 'Lebanon after the (civil) war was under control by the Syrians and no-one knew where it was heading, so they were static (the ULCM)... now there's more stability in Lebanon, more maturity in the union (ULCM) members, and a new reactivation of the wish to go back to the roots...' - Eduardo

performances to the general public in Bogota); taken Lebanese films to Colombian cinemas; and organised several seminars to present and discuss various historical and cultural aspects of Lebanon, using the Club as its base. They have also presented themselves as representatives of the *Colonia* to Colombians, generally by setting up public performances of their Lebaneseness, through cultural events as well as political demonstrations, where they portray different aspects of both their ethnic and social identities.

The ULCM has also been one of the driving forces promoting the Lebanese ethnic identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota, which is connected to the idea of strengthening the community:

‘... (la ULCM) retomaron principios filosóficos de la Unión, para fomentar lazos entre libaneses y el país que los acogió; entre libaneses y generaciones futuras; promocionar la cultura’²⁶ (Jacqueline 2008)

Indeed, their activities are based around ‘performing’ Lebanese identity as well as the construction of community through cultural events that create commonality. They also set up a Youth Committee in 2009 to ‘revivir el sentimiento Libanés’²⁷ amongst the young Colombian-Lebanese. Their drive to strengthen the community is also a desire to ensure its continuity.

2.3.4. The Maronite Parish

In 2008 a Maronite parish was created in Bogota, the first of its kind in Colombia. It shares the *Santa Clara* church with a Catholic parish in the North of the city (see Chapter Six). The Maronite parish is headed by Father Najji, a Lebanese-born Maronite priest trained in Argentina. The *Association of Our Lady of Lebanon*²⁸ was created in 2007 and has been the driving force in Bogota behind this religious connection with Lebanon. The Association holds coffee receptions every Sunday after mass, where not only coffee and biscuits are available, but one also has the opportunity to buy Lebanese food, religious relics such as scapulars of San Charbel the Maronite Saint, as well as merchandise with Lebanese symbols on it. These receptions are open to the public though most of the merchandise for sale is directed

²⁶ ‘... (the ULCM) retook its philosophical principles to foment the ties between the Lebanese and the country that welcomed them; between the Lebanese and future generations; and to promote the culture’ - Jacqueline

²⁷ ‘revive a sense of Lebaneseness’ – Alejandro (2009)

²⁸ Asociación de Nuestra Señora del Líbano

solely to the Colombian-Lebanese. On the first Sunday of every month a lunch is held where a variety of cooked Lebanese food is served, prepared by members of the Association and other participants. A hall in the church is set up with Lebanese flags and ornaments, and a buffet of Lebanese food. These receptions are used as social gatherings both to provide contact within the *Colonia* and promote the Parish, within a temporarily constructed Colombian-Lebanese space. Together with the Father Naji, the Association have also organised trips to Lebanon, where the emphasis is again on seeking out the roots, but this time with a focus on religion. The Association is also contemplating building a new church to house the Maronite parish separately, an endeavour which has so far been unsuccessful to gather much support.

The Parish has endeavoured to be seen as part of the Catholic Church and not as a fringe religious sect. As seen in Chapter Three, religion has been important in the construction of a common identity in Colombia, and the Parish seems aware of this by actively avoiding being seen as ‘the other’. At the same time, it has combined Maronite and Roman Catholic practices in its services and the Father is keen for the Parish to be seen as a place of gathering for all the Colombian-Lebanese. As I have explained, most of these organisations operate within and for a particular sector of society in Bogota, i.e. the upper-classes, but the Parish claims to be more open. Nevertheless, its location in the North of Bogota, in a wealthy neighbourhood, reduces its chances of inclusivity.

2.3.5. Other Colombian-Lebanese Organisations

These are not the only ethnic organisations set up by the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota. Some have ceased to exist; others still operate but only sporadically and due to their reduced significance in the *Colonia* compared to the other organisations, they do not figure prominently. Other organisations also mentioned in this thesis include the *Colombian-Arab/Lebanese Chamber of Commerce (CACC)* which was setup in 2009 to promote business links between Colombia and different Arab countries and has held its meetings at the Club. The *Colombian-Arab National Congress* has organised three large events since 2004 which have aimed to gather the descendants of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian migrants etc. They have used the Club for the launching of the events, which combine cultural and academic activities and are widely advertised, not only within the ethnic communities. However, they are otherwise largely inactive in the *Colonia*. The ULCM

currently opposes to the ideas of this organisation as it sees it as a threat to Colombian-Lebanese identity as something separate (see Chapter Seven).

As can be seen, the Club is the central focus for most Colombian-Lebanese organisations and it is widely used by them for their events. It is also used by individuals not only for their personal enjoyment but also as a way of expressing their Lebaneseness. These organisations, therefore, are not independent from each other: not only do they share the Club's spaces but they also help one another, and individuals can belong to several of them.

2.3.6. Muslim organisations

There are no solely Muslim Colombian-Lebanese organisations in Bogota, and no Muslims participate in the social activities or established organisations. There are also no Muslim members in the *Club Colombo-Libanés*, the Ladies Association, or the ULCM branch in Colombia. As seen below, the only Muslims my participants knew were outside these organisations, and even historically, none of them could point to Muslim individuals who might have been members in the past. However, I was able to access two mosques, which are attended by Lebanese descendants, and an Islamic Cultural Centre.

I interviewed the imams of both mosques: Khalid, a Lebanese immigrant heads the new mosque, which is still being built; and Eugenio, a Colombian convert heads the Istanbul mosque. Both mosques are Sunni. I was also able to converse with the directors of the Islamic Cultural Centre, a family of Colombian converts to Shiite Islam. Imam Eugenio says that the first record they have of an active Muslim community in Bogota is in the 1950s, when Palestinian immigrants prayed in their own houses. It was not until 1979 that the first mosque was established in the fourth floor of a building in the centre of Bogota, on 11th and 9th street, and according to Imam Khalid, it purposely located there as it was near the shops the Muslims owned, in the centre of the city. He explained that this mosque was established under the *Asociación Benéfica Islámica*, a charitable organisation founded that same year. Imam Khalid arrived in 1992, first serving for a year as imam in the town of Maicao, in the north of Colombia, and then moving to Bogota.

Imam Eugenio states that disagreements on the way the association and the mosque were conducted led to a division within the Muslim Sunnis:

‘Después de un tiempo entonces por inconvenientes ya en el manejo de la divulgación del Islam yo hice un grupo aparte de musulmanes y empezamos con unas mezquitas en el centro también de Bogotá, donde alquilamos unas oficinas... y de hace 8 años estamos aquí en la mezquita Estambul, calle 45^a 14-81.²⁹ (Eugenio 2013)

The mosque is located in a house in a residential neighbourhood on 45th and 14th street, and Imam Eugenio argued that the Istanbul mosque, founded in 2005, has no connection to Turkey³⁰, and instead that it was given the name to attract more followers (see Chapter Seven). Imam Eugenio says that a handful of Lebanese Muslims attend the mosque, but that the numbers fluctuate:

Todo este tiempo sí he conocido bastantes libaneses, bastantes, pero como le digo en el momento ellos fluctúan, vienen van salen...³¹ (Eugenio 2013)

The rest of the Sunni Muslims continued praying in the original fourth floor ‘mosque’, until 2012 when they moved to the new mosque, on 80th and 30th street, which is still under construction. Imam Khalid referred throughout our interview to the mosque as the Mosque of Bogota, even though its official name is Abu Bakr, one of the companions of the prophet Muhammad. The mosque is the only in Bogota with an Islamic architecture, including a minaret and facing towards Mecca. The construction of the mosque has suffered severe delays since it was started. *El Tiempo* newspaper reported that the inauguration was supposed to take place in May 2012 but it was delayed until March 2013 (Galindo 2012). Similarly, Imam Khalid told me the inaugurating should take place within four months of our interview (before May 2013); however, it was still under construction in 2014. Nevertheless, it has been used for prayers since 2012. Lebanese descendants seem more likely to use this new mosque for prayers than the Istanbul mosque (see Chapter Seven); however, the

²⁹ ‘After some time and because of some problems in the way Islam was being divulged I created a separate group of Muslims and we set up some mosques in the centre of Bogota, where we rented some offices... and eight years ago we are here in the Istanbul mosque in street 45 with 14th’

³⁰ As I discuss in Chapter Eight, all of the Muslim organisations deny any direct connections with Muslim countries, as well as refute claims of financial contributions from them.

³¹ ‘Throughout this time, yeah I have known plenty Lebanese, plenty, but as I say, nowadays they fluctuate, they come and go...’ – Imam Eugenio

numbers are still low – Khalid argues there are no more than 100 Muslim Lebanese in Bogota.

The Islamic Cultural Centre is the only significant Shiite organisation in Bogota. It used to be located in a large house in the centre of the city, in front of Bogota's City Council, however, it moved to the town of Chia, to the north of Bogota, and it is now located in a larger house in a remote area of the town. The organisation is led by Imam Ernesto, a Colombian convert. He participated in the founding ceremony of the CACC, but he said no Lebanese Muslims, or Colombian-Lebanese, were members of his organisation.

As can be seen, these mosques and organisations cater to Muslims in general, including migrants and converts, but not particularly to Lebanese/Colombian-Lebanese. In fact, according to all of the imams, there is either little participation or the numbers are relatively small – compared to the total number of Muslims that participate. This small numbers created difficulties in terms of data collection, and my endeavours are explained below.

2.4. Finding the Colombian-Lebanese not active within the organisations

As I have previously stated, my entrance to the Colombian-Lebanese community took place through their organisations: I contacted the Club *Colombo-Libanés* and its directors, the ULCM through its Facebook page, and I went to the inaugural service at the Maronite Parish. I was able to contact members of the Ladies Association, as well as the rest of my participants, through either my contacts in these organisations or my participation in their events. These contacts were relatively easy, as I shared the same socio-economic circles and background as those that attended the events, and in some cases, we knew people in common. Also during my first research trip, I began searching other possible organisations or sectors within the *Colonia* that were not part of, or connected to, the organisations named above. This included finding Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, Colombian-Lebanese not active in the *Colonia*, and Colombian-Lebanese not part of the elite. These proved more difficult, not only because of their reduced visibility compared with the already mentioned organisations, but also, as seen below, because I could no longer take advantage of the shared social background.

2.4.1. Muslim Colombian-Lebanese

At the beginning of my first research trip I found it difficult to locate Muslim Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota. Part of this was due to the small number of Colombian-Lebanese Muslims in the city (see Chapter Four). Authors argue that even though some early Lebanese immigrants to Colombia were Muslim, most converted to Catholicism after their arrival, however, they also indicate the existence of a Muslim presence Bogota (Garcia 2007; Bruckmayr 2010). I was able to find the contact numbers of two Muslim organisations in Bogota, the *Asociación Benéfica Islámica*, a Sunni organisation, and the *Centro Cultural Islámico* – a Shiite organisation. However, neither endeavour proved fruitful: the listed contact numbers for the former organisation did not work; and the directors of the latter were Colombian converts working out of their house who were not able to direct me to any Muslim Colombian-Lebanese. Later on I found out that the contact numbers of the former were not working as they were in the process of moving locations and constructing a new mosque, and the latter reflected the religious and political differences within the Muslim community in Bogota, as most Colombian-Lebanese in the city are Sunni (see Chapter Four)³².

At the same time, I tried finding Muslim contacts through my participants, however, most claimed not to know any Muslims in Colombia. My first positive lead came during my next research trip when, after being prompted by me, my participant Cristina informed me that the owners of an Arab bakery near her house were Lebanese Muslims. I visited the shop several times, however my visits were unsuccessful: unsurprisingly, the workers were not able to provide names or contact numbers of the owners; the messages and business cards I left went unanswered; and when I finally managed to talk with the wife of the owner, a second generation Colombian-Lebanese, she also proved to be largely unhelpful and again, simply agreed to pass my message to her husband – with the same results.

Eventually, towards the end of the research trip, I was able to get an interview with both the husband and the wife through Jimena, another of my participants and a client of the bakery. She is a senior civil servant and personally called the bakery to set up the interview. I conducted the interview in their bakery, both were welcoming and ready to answer my questions, however, they refused to have their voices recorded claiming they had sore

³² During my second research trip I met Imam Ernesto from the *Centro Cultural Islámico* during the inauguration of the CACC. He informed me that no Lebanese immigrants or Colombian-Lebanese descendants were part of his Centre.

throats.³³ The fact I was only able to interview them after the intervention of one of my influential participants suggests the dynamics of the relationship between the wealthy descendants of first wave Christian migrants and the newly arrived second wave Muslims, as well as their relative positions in society. Whilst my positioning in the research eased my access into the Christian Colombian-Lebanese community and its organisations, it was of little help when attempting to access Muslim Colombian-Lebanese individuals. The bakery owners were able to supply me with the names and numbers of two other Muslim Colombian-Lebanese; however, I was not able to set-up interviews with them.³⁴

During my final fieldwork trip, as I was collecting data for my thesis corrections, I was able to contact the bakery owners once again. This time they were more forthcoming than in my previous approaches and they were able to facilitate the contact with the Imam at the *Asociación Benéfica Islámica*. I was able to interview him and assist a number of prayers at new mosque, which was still under construction. He gave me the contacts of two other Muslim Colombian-Lebanese and introduced me to two more during my visits to the mosque. Unfortunately, I was again unable to set up interviews with these contacts.³⁵ My inability to access these Muslim individuals may also suggest a difference with my Christian participants. As seen in Chapter Four, the latter are part of the Colombian elite and have the time, and the money, to pursue ethnic activities, including giving me interviews. This may not be the case with the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, who are less likely to be a part of the Colombian elite, or enjoy the socio-economic freedoms related to it.

Finally, I was able to contact the imam of the other Sunni mosque, a Colombian convert, who was able to explain how the Muslim community worked and claimed to have known Lebanese Muslims in the past, but not so anymore. As seen in Chapter Seven, he claims most of the members of his mosque are Colombian converts to Islam. In the thesis I include the interviews with three Muslim participants, as well as ethnographic observations from visiting the different mosques, the Arab bakery, and from attending prayers.

³³ I am still unclear about the reasons behind their refusal. Possible answers include being intimidated by the recording device, perhaps seeing it as a (further) intrusion of their privacy; maybe fear of having something they said recorded which could be used negatively against them; even perhaps felt pressured to concede the interview but not wanting to go on record; and of course, even though it sounds unlikely, they might have actually had sore throats and may not have wanted that to show on tape.

³⁴ One contact never answered, and the second claimed not to be in Bogota.

³⁵ Again, the telephone contact never answered, and the other declined to participate due to work commitments. One of the men the imam introduced me to declined to participate claiming his Spanish abilities were not good enough; and the second postponed the interview several times, claiming not to have free time, and asked me to contact him after some time (unfortunately after I would have ended my research trip).

2.4.2. Invisible non-participant Colombian-Lebanese

The main task with trying to find non-active Colombian-Lebanese was where to start. I successfully contacted a number of family members or friends of those active in the *Colonia*, individuals who did not actively participate in the events. However, they still had connections to the organisations, even if they were not actively participating. Other options included finding Colombian-Lebanese surnames in the phone book for Bogota and asking my own friends and family for individuals they believed were Colombian-Lebanese. As discussed above, I opted against the first option due to its intrusive nature. The second option led me through a number of obstacles and diversions, including individuals who argued they were mistakenly thought to be descendants of Arabs, but were actually descendants of Spanish *marranos*³⁶ fleeing the inquisition; individuals who were descendants of Arabs but not of Lebanese (i.e. mostly Palestinians and Syrians); as well as individuals who were unwilling to talk, saying they either were not aware of their heritage or did not have enough information.³⁷ I decided that it was more effective to focus on those who did take part in the community, in one way or another, rather than randomly contacting individuals.

Non-elite Colombian-Lebanese

As I have stated, my participants are part of the socio-economic elite in Bogota and part of my research was attempting to find those not in the elite. Unfortunately, my endeavours were not successful. Most of my participants claimed that either there were no 'poor' Colombian-Lebanese, or that if there were, they had no knowledge of them or any contacts. For example, I asked my participant Daniel about my difficulty in finding 'poor' Colombian-Lebanese and I asked him why he thought there were none active. He answered:

'No sé, a mí me parece que eso ha sido muy bueno de los libaneses ¡Yo no tengo porque decir que porque no hay pobres si no hay!'³⁸ (Daniel 2009)

³⁶ *Marrano* is the name given to Jewish individuals in Spain forced to convert to Catholicism. Many migrated to Latin America.

³⁷ For example, I was able to contact one individual who was willing to give me a telephone interview, but not a face-to-face one. He seemed standoffish during the conversation, and later he explained that he used to be active in the *Colonia*, but that he had 'left a girl at the altar' and hence had severed his ties with the community.

³⁸ 'I don't know. I think that has actually been something good about the Lebanese. I don't have to explain why there aren't any poor if there just aren't any' - Daniel

His reasoning was that the Lebanese immigrants and their descendants have been economically successful in Colombia hence there were no 'poor' Colombian-Lebanese. Others acknowledged their existence, but labelled them '*pobres vergonzantes*', i.e. those from wealthy families who had financial difficulties, but could not be seen to have them (see Chapter Five). In both cases, the Colombian-Lebanese in general were considered to be part of the social, if not economic, elite of Bogota by my participant Colombian-Lebanese.

I also discussed this issue with authors Pilar Vargas and Luz Marina Suaza, authors of the book '*Los árabes en Colombia*', in 2008. They argued they were aware of a 'significant group of Arabs' in *Ciudad Bolívar*, a shanty town neighbourhood in the south of Bogota. Pilar Vargas stated:

'... parece que hay una persona que los tiene localizados que es un grupo, pues no grande, pero es un grupo representativo digamos en los Altos de Casuca, que están ahí. Eso es estrato uno, en el sur, sur, sur, sur, en Ciudad Bolívar.'³⁹ (Vargas 2008)

However, they could not specify the makeup of this Arab group in terms of origin, nationality, generation and religion. They had not been able to locate it and confessed that they had no leads to follow. The only aspect they could derive was their socio-economic status due to their geographical position, and they did not know whether they were descendants of Lebanese, Palestinians or Syrians, etc. Similarly, they had anecdotal stories of two families in different parts of Colombia who were supposed to be poor descendants of Arabs. They claimed to have looked for them whilst conducting research for their book but had failed to make any contact with them.

The absence of non-elite individuals in the study of Lebanese/Arab communities in Latin America is noticed by Alfaro-Velcamp (2007). She explains their absence in her study is because poorer Middle-Eastern migrants were 'absorbed' into Mexican society, and argues that the 1948 statistics of the *Colonia* in Mexico she uses only reflected middle and upper-middle class Middle-Easterners. This suggests that from early on in Mexico, those that participated in the community were those with the means to do so. The process was similar in Colombia (see Chapter Four). Those not participating in the community are more likely to have grown up unaware of their Lebanese/Arab heritage, and are less likely to

³⁹ '... it seems like there's someone that has them located. It's not a very big group, but let's say its representative. They're in Altos de Casuca, that's strata one, way in the south, south, in Ciudad Bolívar'.

create links with it. This situation is not confined to Lebanese *Colonias*, as Dinneen (2011) noted in his study, poor Portuguese individuals and their descendants remain invisible in Venezuelan society. Moreover, even if poorer descendants of Lebanese migrants had knowledge of their heritage, it would be almost impossible for them to access the organisations in which the *Colonia* revolves around, as they are not part of Bogota's elite society (see Chapter Four).

A possible lead for a poor Colombian-Lebanese family appeared in an article from *El Tiempo* newspaper, entitled 'Los parientes pobres de Salma Hayek serían colombianos'.⁴⁰ In it, the author Franco (2009) claims that a poor 75 year-old Colombian woman named Alicia Hayek is the great-aunt of Salma Hayek, the Mexican-Lebanese actress. The article reports that Alicia lives in the town of *El Guamo*, about 2 hours from Bogota, and that her and her half-brother Sami, whom she never met, are the children of Cecilio Hayek, a Lebanese immigrant to Colombia. Alicia argues Sami, Salma Hayek's father, travelled to Mexico and settled there, and she says she does not have any contact with them.⁴¹

I attempted to follow this lead and visited the town of El Guamo in July and August 2009 trying to find Alicia; however, I was not able to locate her. Family contacts in the region helped me locate the town's Catholic priest, who claimed not to know her; neither did different sellers in the central market, the pharmacists, or the teachers at the local school. They all claimed to be unaware of the *El Tiempo* article. Mexican newspaper *Cronica* reprinted the news item in 2012, mostly repeating the arguments from the previous article. A new addition was a comment from Alicia which could explain the difficulty in finding her. The article quotes Alicia as saying:

'A mí me dicen que no hable ni nada. Es que ellos son de una familia que se crió en la alcurnia, con plata, y uno pobre'⁴² – (*Crónica* Newspaper 2012)

Alicia may have asked the people in the town to respect her anonymity. At the same time, the Mexican magazine *El Heraldo de Veracruz* interviewed Sami Hayek in 2013, as an

⁴⁰ 'The deprived/poor relatives of Salma Hayek would be Colombians' – *El Tiempo* newspaper

⁴¹ The article dwells into Alicia's impoverished life compared to the wealth of her alleged family in Mexico. Alicia claims that the reason she is poor is because she fell in love and married a poor porter. The only reference to Lebanon is when they mention her father who they state migrated in 1920. The article also mentions other famous relatives which the great-aunt claims to be related to, include a famous Lebanese singer and an American professor. All share the last name Hayek (Franco 2009).

⁴² 'I am told not to talk to anyone, because they're a family that grew with lineage, with money, and I'm poor' – *Crónica* Newspaper

example of a successful businessman in the city. In it he stated he was born in *Agua Dulce*, Mexico, in 1937, and that his father was called Monir Hayek, not Cecilio, contradicting Alicia's claims. Other newspaper articles support his statements, mentioning a Mexican birth, as well as paternal nephews and maternal cousins living in Mexico. It is difficult to know whether Alicia made this claims to gain notoriety, because of misinformation from her relatives, or even trying to make money out of the situation. In any way, if her last name is indeed Hayek, it does suggest a Lebanese/Arab ancestor, regardless of their connection to the famous Mexican actress. Nevertheless, I was still unable to locate her and any other poor Colombian-Lebanese individuals, and so I am unable to include them in this thesis. As Dinneen (2011: 174) argues:

'Today, a significant minority, never having found stable or well-paid employment, continue to live in poverty in the city's poorer districts or shanty towns. Largely invisible, their stories remain untold.'

2.5. Positioning within my research

As I have stated, I am the descendant of a Lebanese migrant to Colombia and so could be considered both Colombian-Lebanese and part of the *Colonia*. Because of this, I am an insider, i.e. an individual that shares characteristics and experiences with a particular group, including our shared position in the upper-classes of Bogota, to the point that the group considers the individual to be 'one of them'. However, the fact that I did not grow up in an environment heavily influenced by Lebanese culture could also make me an outsider, i.e. someone 'not like them'. More importantly, my positioning within Colombian society also influences my positioning within the research. As I have argued, and as I further discuss in Chapter Four, the active Colombian-Lebanese are descendants of Christians and part of the socio-economic elite in Colombia. Their activities, the neighbourhoods where they live and their friends, all are contained within the upper-classes in Bogota. As I was also born into this section of society, the religion I grew up with and socio-economic positioning is that of an insider for the active Colombian-Lebanese, but of an outsider for those invisible and less wealthy, or for the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese. Therefore, my position as an insider or outsider is problematic, as Gans (1997: 886) argues:

'the distinction between insiders and outsiders is not as hard and fast as the two terms make it appear; accordingly, the terms are also not easily defined'.

Indeed, the margins that define insider and outsiders status are complex and where the researcher is positioned is largely decided by their positioning with regards to 'the other' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). That 'other' can be defined by the group in question, in this case the Colombian-Lebanese, by the dominant society or by particular individuals. In fact, there are a myriad of factors that affect positionality where researchers could be considered insiders or outsiders, such as 'gender, social class, age, political affiliation, religion, and region', which according to Banks (1998: 5), influence 'how individuals interpret their cultural experiences'. Many more factors could be added to this list, including nationality, education, profession, heritage etc. all of which could influence the status of the researcher. As Johnson-Bailey (1999: 659) argues, some common factors bring researchers closer to participants, whilst other difference factors can create barriers with which researchers must struggle.

An attempt to address the complexities of the positionality is offered by Banks (1998) who gives a typology of insider/outsider status for researchers with four alternatives: the indigenous-insider, who has strong connections with the particular community, both by originating from the community and maintaining the contact with them; the indigenous-outsider, who although originates from the community, has experienced influence from an outside community; the external-insider, who does not originate within the community, but has acquired enough recognition by the group to become an "adopted" insider"; and the external-outsider, who neither originates, nor is recognized as belonging to it by the group (Banks 1998: 7-8). In my own case, I would fall into separate categories in terms of the research into Colombian identity, and that identity particular to the Colombian-Lebanese.

As a Colombian I am an indigenous-outsider. Even though my family is Colombian and I was born and grew up there, I have not lived in the country for more than ten years, I have only been back for short periods of time and I have been heavily influenced by my experiences in the UK. This means that there are certain aspects of Colombian society which I no longer share, either because I was too young when I left Colombia to have experienced them (such as the experiences of university life in Colombia), or because they are somewhat new (such as the experiences surrounding the new polarization of politics experienced during the Uribe presidency). However, this status was hardly visible when I went back: the experiences I did live through whilst growing up, as well as my Colombian heritage, the connections I have kept whilst living in the UK, my socio-economic

background, and even my personal characteristics (including physical appearance and accent), seemed to have been enough so I was not treated as a Colombian expatriate. It was a given that I am Colombian, to the point that it never came up in conversation. Nevertheless, this status has influenced the way I approach my analysis. At the same time, the fact that I am Colombian does not mean I am an insider in all situations. In fact, the same social dividers that affect Colombian society, including class, race, gender, religion, regionalism, and political allegiance, played a part in defining the extent of my insider/outsider status, which was fluid and changed depending on the situation.

At the same time, within the middle/upper social class sector of society in Bogota, I am also an indigenous-insider. I share this background, and many experiences, with my elite participants. In fact, my time abroad may have even reinforced my elite positioning, as many of them/their relatives have also lived, worked and studied abroad (see Chapter Four). I come from a family who can be classified as 'clase alta'⁴³ in Bogota, as do a lot of the Colombian-Lebanese that participated in my study. My family shares the same socio-economic background, education and professions. I live in the north of Bogota, a relatively wealthy area, close to where many of the Colombian-Lebanese live and very close to the Club (about ten blocks away). I went to the same traditional school as some of them, one that most of them would have heard of; my parents have professions similar to theirs or their parents' professions. Moreover, my family moves in the same social circles as some of them and therefore share friends and acquaintances. All of this has meant I am 'one of them' in terms of social class and background.

As I mentioned above, I grew up outside of the community and my family did not have a close connection with the *Colonia*, however, I became an 'adopted' member through my participation during the research. As explained, this adoption was helped by my Lebanese background and socio-economic position. In fact, when I was introduced to members of the community, either the person introducing me would state that I was a descendant of Lebanese, a *paisano*, or the person I was meeting would ask if I was. In a sense, I also had an external-insider status, where explanations had to be made, but where afterwards the active Colombian-Lebanese community welcomed me as one of their own.

⁴³ Upper-class

However, as hinted above, for other Colombian-Lebanese not active in the community I was still an external-outsider. As seen with my Muslim Colombian-Lebanese participants, neither my ethnic nor my socio-economic background were very helpful to access them, and in some cases the latter might have been a hindrance. The religious differences may not have created barriers, but they also did not facilitate an approach. At the same time, my status as a researcher at times set me apart.⁴⁴ Even though my general positioning within the elite group made it easier to pass unnoticed, the presence of my Dictaphone, a camera, and the taking of notes are likely to have reminded my participants of my status as a researcher.

Therefore, I fall into all four of the categories Banks describes, though not in a neat manner as my status continues to change. This multifaceted positioning is not necessarily something negative, as Clifford (1986: 9) suggests, the accounts of different types of researchers ‘...are empowered and restricted in unique ways’ – not necessarily better or worse, but different. This fits Banks’ argument that each individual researcher can switch from one type to another, ‘depending on the context and situation’ (1998: 15). Indeed, my position changes depending on the subject being discussed in the interviews or observed in the events, whether it is specific to the Colombian-Lebanese community or to the more general Colombian society. As Merriam et al (2001: 415-16) argue, positionality can change: ‘in the course of a study, not only will the researcher experience moments of being both insider and outsider, but that these positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants’.

I argue that the positionality of the individual is connected to his or her identities, and therefore it is also varied, fluid and flexible, where these positionalities not only change but also occur simultaneously. This is what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) call ‘marginal positionality’, which they believe is very important because being able to switch between the roles of participant and observer produces different types of data and also helps identify the subjectivities the data may carry. I am therefore, not only an indigenous and an external researcher, but also an outsider and an insider. At the same time, this simultaneous positionality influences my analysis, which benefits from it too. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 89) stress, maintaining ‘marginal positionality’ is no easy task, as ‘it

⁴⁴ For example, I was asked in a somewhat joking manner, whether I was going to write what had just been said or done; and I was also once explicitly asked not to report something.

involves living simultaneously in two worlds, that of participation and that of research'. As I show below, I have had very real difficulties managing this marginality.

2.6. Ethical and methodological considerations

Because of the familiarity my insider position(s) bring, I have had to be aware of several issues. I have had to make sure I do not disregard aspects that may seem basic or obvious to me because of my familiarity with them, as these can actually be very important for the study; I have had to be aware that my close contact with one group may affect relations with another, as may have happened in my case with the difficulty I had accessing the Lebanese Muslim community; and I also had to avoid the danger of over-rapport by identifying too much with my participants, taking their views uncritically (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In fact, at the beginning of my research, I committed a clear example of over-rapport by undermining my insider status. As I explained above, not only do I share a common Lebanese ancestry with my participants, but I am also part of the same social group in Bogota. This latter familiarity was not obvious to me, as I share it with most of the people with whom I interact in Colombia. However, I came to realize that it would have been different if I had not been from the same country and/or social class as my participants. As Banks' (1998: 7) argues, my status as an insider researcher makes it more likely that I will accept uncritically the institutionalized beliefs of the researched community. Indeed, originally I did not address aspects of the context in a critical manner, but rather I took them for granted. For example, during the initial stages of my research, I accepted the premise that social status was a taboo subject in Colombian society. I grew up with this idea and at first decided not to address it. However, as this thesis shows, as time went by I realised the significance of social status in my research and I reversed this decision. Likewise, I failed to maintain some social and intellectual distance between myself and my participants, which led to problems with my analysis. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 90) argue: 'without such analytic space the ethnography can be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversion'. Indeed, this was one of the criticisms I received in the early stages of my research and one I had to continuously keep in mind. I also had to make sure that I did not give too much importance to other aspects which in fact may not be that important. As Merriam et al (2001) note, researchers need to balance the representation of the truth of their findings with the actual voices of their participants. An example of this is the food they consume, as even though it often comes up in conversation, only in certain occasions is

actually being an agent of ethnic identity (such as at cookery classes) instead of being merely a social or family issue, as it was most of the time.

Moreover, my position as an insider also had an influence on my relationship with my interviewees. It is likely that their answers were influenced by this position, and that they placed me favourably within the community, compared to the placing of others who may not have shared the insider status. This was positive as it is likely my participants were more open with their answers to my questions. However, it may have also been negative, as the familiarity could have led them to say certain things which may have not been said otherwise: maybe because it is what they want me to write about; because it is what they believe I want to hear; or because they indeed feel free to divulge more information but expect me to only use a certain part of it. My insider status does not necessarily impose a weakness. Merriam et al argue that even though the understandings of insider and outsider researchers can be different, they are just as valid, so that 'the insider's strengths become the outsider's weaknesses and vice-versa' (Merriam et al 2001: 411). In my case, I was expected to act as one of the group, to keep certain things quiet or simply not to consider them. This is similar to the situation some of my participants experienced with regards to the expectations of the *Colonia*, which I discuss further in Chapter Five. Only once did one of them stop what they were saying, and ask me not to repeat it: 'que esto no salga de acá'.⁴⁵ This assertion reflected the boundaries of the community, where it was safe to give particular opinions which may not be given outside of it. However, as I show in Chapter Three, the ethnicity of the Colombian-Lebanese is not the only characteristic which delineates the boundaries of the *Colonia*. I believe this request had more to do with my status in Colombian society than about my research, but the fact it only happened once I think shows that my outsider status as a non-community member was normally not noticed.

As I stated above, my connections with the Colombian-Lebanese community in terms of my heritage meant that I was treated as a *paisano* right from the beginning, and this together with my insider position as a Colombian helped me to be welcomed as one of them, to the point that one of the members of the Club often paid for what I consumed there (food and beverages). I was almost always given lifts back home from the events, even if it was not directly on anyone's way, and I was invited to several private celebrations. This provided me with an insight into their non-Lebanese lives, which I am able to compare with

⁴⁵ 'This cannot be repeated outside'

the times their Lebaneseness was performed. However, I also struggled with certain areas of my analysis, as I developed a certain loyalty towards them, something Hammersley and Atkinson recognise happens to researchers, arguing that

‘in so far as [the researcher] resists over-identification or surrender to hosts, then it is likely that there will be a corresponding sense of betrayal, or at least of divided loyalties’. (2007: 90)

This feeling of betrayal has made it difficult for me to address some issues and led me towards over-identification with my participants. This has been the case with social status: as I explain below, talk of social status can be seen as inappropriate in certain Colombian situations and relationships, and at times I accepted it as such. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000: 164) recognise this issue when they talk about the difficulty insiders encounter of maintaining a good research ethic with being a good member of the community, especially where relationships have been made. In order to overcome these worries I had to balance my personal and academic positions, whilst maintaining criticality in my analysis. In the end, I had to tackle issues surrounding social status as it was a constant in my data and became an important theme for my research.

As a descendant of a Lebanese migrant and due to the experiences within my family, I am used to certain activities that are common in the *Colonia*. The most obvious is the presence of abundant Lebanese/Arabic food in my own family celebrations and reunions. I never paid much attention to these whilst growing up, and only later on did I realise that the food was part of a Colombian-Lebanese heritage rather than ‘typical’ Colombian dishes. Nevertheless, my family did not keep many other Colombian-Lebanese traditions which seemed alien to me when I encountered them. For example, I was surprised by the widespread use of *narghiles* to smoke flavoured tobacco as a social activity, especially amongst those that did not smoke cigarettes or other tobacco products. Sometimes I also felt a bit out of place and as if I was intruding, to the point of feeling awkward in certain situations. For example, at times the discussion in a particular meeting would turn to a social conversation, with participants commenting on particular events or ideas they had, or even retelling stories that happened to them. In some cases I wanted to enquire about something that had been said but restrained myself.⁴⁶ I considered that socially, it would have been too

⁴⁶ For example, the Youth ULCM wanted to have polo shirts done with a Cedar Tree as a small logo on the top left of the garment and were discussing the design. I began asking questions about it but it became clear they

pushy of me to ask or comment on some of these particular conversations. Similar to my own experiences, Brayboy and Deyhle (2000: 165) expressed sentiments of feeling 'out of place' and realising that he was 'wearing out his welcome', recognising that 'in the midst of a conversation, [he] would want to ask questions but was worried about switching from being a friend to a researcher'. Indeed, I had these difficulties as well, attempting to maintain a balance between the familiarity and research objectivity, which I think were exacerbated by my own expectations of being treated as an insider: I was either an insider or I was not, and I did not consider that there can be 'shades' of 'insiderness' or a typology of positionality.

My status as a Colombian also helped me in my interaction with my participants. Part of this is the common cultural understanding I had with them, as Johnson-Bailey (1999: 669) notes, an insider positioning helps understanding different layers of conversation:

'there were silent understandings, culture-bound phrases that did not need interpretations, and nonverbalized answers conveyed with culture-specific hand gestures and facial expressions laced throughout the dialogue'.

This came naturally both to my participants and to myself, as these layers of conversation experienced during the interviews were the same as those in informal conversations. However, as Merriam et al (2001: 409) highlight, I had to approach these aspects with reference to contextual factors where they were expressed in order to fully understand their meanings, and I had to address the difficulty in translating the idioms and cultural lingo, where at times further explanations were necessary. I experienced this difficulty in translating, when colloquial words are communicated in a particular manner, making it difficult to fully express their meaning in English.

Another positive aspect of my positionality is what, Merriam et al (2001) argue researchers with an insider/outsider positioning can do: negotiate access whilst remaining a novelty. As I have explained, my positionality changed depending on the group and context. In the Colombian-Lebanese community I was an external-insider, adopted as one of their own, which enabled me to negotiate access to different parts of the community. At the same time, my presence was also something of a novelty, which allowed new participants to become interested in my research and more willing to help.

were more keen on discussing the design that the ethnic significance of making the polo shirts, so I stopped asking. In the end, the polo shirts were not made.

Unsurprisingly, I felt most comfortable with those most similar to me, mainly in terms of age, class, educational attainment, profession, and life experiences. However, it also meant that I shared the same constraints as they do in social interaction. For example, as mentioned above, talk of social class can be seen as inappropriate in that section of society in Bogota and it is not often talked about explicitly: a question about someone being working, middle, or upper class, would hardly ever be asked. In certain situations, implicit chat about social class would occur, something similar to what Johnson-Bailey describes as 'our community's code' where an individual asks a set of questions to identify who someone else is, and how similar they are to them. She explains that the 'code' she experienced was 'for ascertaining where color stood in our lives' (Johnson-Bailey 1999: 666). In my case, the 'code' exists to determine in what part of society someone falls, both economic and socially. Questions included the name of the educational establishments attended, the profession, and the full-name of the parents, as well as questions that lead to finding friends and acquaintances in common. The number of questions was usually longer with those I had most in common with. Once again, as I grew up used to these types of questions they seemed 'normal' to me when I chatted informally with my participants, indeed they are part of 'our community's code'. However, I came to recognise how different this informal chat would have been if I had not shared the same class background as them.

I have also experienced this uneasiness with addressing social class even within academia, both when expressing to other Colombians that the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota are from middle and upper classes and when trying to explain/or avoid explaining the situation to non-Colombians. Writer Kathryn Stockett offers a helpful line on her self-reflection after having written the novel *The Help* which looked into the relationship between black and white women in 1960s US South. She writes:

'Regarding the lines between black and white women, I am afraid I have told too much. I was taught not to talk about such uncomfortable things, that it was tacky, impolite, they might hear us' (Stockett 2009: 451)

I shared her feeling of inappropriateness, of approaching themes which could unsettle the status-quo and I could be reproached for. In my view social norms dictated that issues of social status should not be discussed with individuals of different social classes to mine, and hushed comments should be instead made about it. I believe these anxieties had led me

originally to downplay and refuse to address issues of social class within my research, which I struggled with but believe managed to address.

Another difficulty was accessing the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese community, which to a large extent would fall into a different social category than the non-Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, not only because of religion, but also because of profession and more importantly socio-economic background. After several failed attempts to get an interview, I was able to get one with the sponsorship of one of my participants, who contacted a Muslim Colombian-Lebanese man and asked him to meet me. Nevertheless, he still refused to be recorded. In order to overcome all of these issues, I had to go back to my data and reconsider my approaches to it. As Brayboy and Deyhle (2000: 168) argue:

‘(just as participants) have multiple identities in multiple contexts... the analysis of data is multilayered and full of contradictions and competing answers’.

I had to take into account these different layers of my analysis, including not only considering those arguments that supported my research questions but also the implications and hidden meanings their answers could have, as well as the possibility of their answers being what they thought I would like to hear. In order to do so I had to strike a balance between academic objectivity and my own subjectivities because of the loyalty I developed towards my participants and because of the ways in which I am expected to act, and where necessary acknowledging that I hold such subjectivities. As Banks (1998: 6) states:

‘Acknowledging the subjective component of knowledge does not mean that we abandon the quest for objectivity. Making the value premises of research explicit can help social scientists become more objective’.

Indeed, in the following chapters I continue stressing my positioning within the research as I write; in order to make sure my positioning is clear and the reader can take it into account as part of their analysis of my research.

CHAPTER THREE

LEBANESE MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN COLOMBIA

3.1 Introduction

Chapters Three and Four set out the context of the Colombian-Lebanese community. In Chapter Three I explain the history of their migration, including the reasons why the Lebanese emigrated from Lebanon, what led them to immigrate to the Americas and specifically to Colombia, and more importantly, what led them to settle there. I also look at their settlement patterns, the process of their socio-economic and political integration into society. In Chapter Four I explain the current situation of the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* in Bogota, including its make-up, the characteristics of the different generations in the *Colonia*, and the importance of transnationalism. I also discuss different factors that influenced the construction of Colombian identity and its impact on the Colombian-Lebanese. Finally, the areas of race, social class and religion in Colombia are explained in connection to the *Colonia* and in comparison to other countries in the Americas.

Some of the traits of the Lebanese in Colombia suggest this group forms a diaspora, both around the time of their arrival and in their current position. According to Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) a number of factors define diasporic communities: the dispersal from the homeland, with reasons ranging from persecution to work prospects; a sense of solidarity with other members of the diaspora, including a construction of a community based on the connection to the home; a collective idealisation of the homeland and a pursuit for its development and wellbeing; the desire to return to the homeland and maintaining a connection to it; and the belief they are not fully accepted in the host societies. I discuss here the first two factors, through a discussion of the emigration and the importance of networks. The remaining factors are discussed in Chapter Four.

The dispersal of the Lebanese migrants from Lebanon occurred due to a variety of economic, political, demographic and security issues. They migrated to a variety of countries in Europe, the Americas, West Africa and Oceania. Their reasons for this dispersal as well as factors which influenced their migration to Colombia are discussed here. The sense of solidarity is present from the initial migration, where migrant networks played an important

part in the development of the ethnic community. As was seen in Chapter Two, the Colombian-Lebanese are centred on a variety of organisations which have been constructed around social, religious and political factors with a connection to Lebanon. The initial solidarity, represented in their ethnic networks and patterns of settlement is discussed here. This sense of solidarity evolved and is now tied to other factors including socio-economic class, religion and ideology, and no longer just ethnicity. This further discussion takes place in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four also touches on other areas, such as the idealised image of Lebanon held by the Colombian-Lebanese and their efforts to ensure its wellbeing. It also discusses the last two diasporic factors mentioned above, the desire to return and the belief of non-integration, in order to problematise these ideas in the context of this particular community, given that many families can trace their presence in the country to when the first migrants arrived. It is this migration that I address first in this chapter.

3.2 Emigration from Lebanon

The latter half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th saw a large number of Lebanese emigrating from Lebanon, and authors estimate this to have been between one quarter and one third of the population migrated (Hitti 1967; Traboulsi 2007). The route of the immigrants took them from the Lebanese coast to Marseilles, and then to destinations in the Americas, Africa or Oceania.

A combination of different reasons contributes to the dispersal of migrants from their homelands, including push and pull factors, interfering obstacles and personal characteristics (Lee 1966). For the Lebanese and their migration to the Americas I will analyse the following factors: push factors, including perceived violence and repression reported by the first migrants, economic crises and demographic pressures; the main pull factor of the Americas as the land of opportunity; personal characteristics including age and gender, as well as family migrant networks - linked to the pull factors; and some obstacles, including immigration restrictions and financial costs (see Salibi 1965; Hitti 1967; Klich 1992; Issawi 1992; Humphrey 1998; Traboulsi 2007).

3.2.1. Violence and repression

One of the most cited reasons by my participants regarding the migration of their ancestors to Colombia is related to the violent conflict back in Lebanon:

‘... vinieron a vivir a Colombia pues por la guerra en el Líbano... sé de donde son pero no tengo toda la información de por qué llegaron acá. Sé que llegaron por la guerra, terminaron llegando acá...’¹ (Juanita 2008)

‘Mi abuelo nació aquí en Colombia pero fue porque mi bisabuela tuvo que venirse a principios del siglo, yo calculo que por ahí en 1920 se tuvo que venir, yo creo que por alguna guerra que los hizo venirse.’² (Maria-Camila 2008)

Similarly, my participants Ana and Cristina also mention wars and invasions as reasons to migrate, as well as uncertainty of the specifics of the alleged conflicts or their dates. The Lebanese region did suffer from conflicts in the 19th Century, most notably violence between Maronites and Druze religious communities in Mount Lebanon (Salibi 1965).³ Salibi argues that the inter-religious conflicts and killings, between the early 1840s and mid-1860s, led many to migrate. However, the dates of these conflicts precede the dates of mass migration by some decades, leaving a gap of almost 30 years until the mass migration started in the 1890s.

The accuracy of the impact of these conflicts has also been questioned as exaggerated. Akarli (1992) quotes the Ottoman consul in Barcelona from 1889 arguing that the Lebanese were migrant beggars who created stories of hardship to get money:

‘A crowd of men, women and children dressed in rags, wandering about in the streets... begging for mercy and alms. When questioned why they had to leave their homes in such large numbers, they invent ridiculous stories about the massacre of their wives and children... all to increase the compassion and thus the alms they can elicit...’ (Akarli 1992: 111)

¹ ‘...they came to live to Colombia because of the wars in Lebanon... I know where they came from but I don’t know the whole reason why they came here. I know they came because of the war, they ended up here...’ – Juanita

² ‘My grandfather was born here in Colombia because my great-grandmother had to come here, I guess around 1920, I think because of some war that made them come.’ – Maria Camila

³ According to Salibi (1965:106) four thousand Christians were killed in Mount Lebanon in these conflicts.

This suggests that at the time of migration there were conflicting views about the events and its results, with the veracity of the migrants' accounts being doubted by some. However, it is not surprising that such negative accounts are denied by Ottoman officials, such as the Barcelona Consul, due to their loyalty to the government.⁴ In terms of the migrants themselves, it is possible some of them held resentment towards their neighbours because of past aggression, and even felt insecure in their own hometowns, and this feeling of insecurity may have been passed down the generations. However, it is unlikely that these distant conflicts were the sole reason for migration.

Other participants point towards the alleged repression of the authorities as reasons for migrating, either general repression or religious persecution. For example, Myriam says that her uncle, her earliest relative to move to Colombia, did so 'because of the Turkish repression'.⁵ Carlos and Andrea share similar stories:

'A Colombia llegaron dos hermanos, si no estoy mal, a finales 1890 y pico, no sé el año exacto. Vinieron como llegaba la mayoría de la migración: cristianos maronitas, iban a Colombia básicamente huyendo del imperio turco'.⁶ (Carlos 2008)

'Mi bisabuelo era libanés, y debido a la persecución de los católicos en el Líbano, ellos se vinieron para Colombia cuando mi abuelo tenía 5 años'.⁷ (Andrea 2009)

Similarly, Dejar (1993) who wrote an autobiography of his Colombian-Lebanese family, the Chadid, argues that his ancestors escaped religious and political persecution; and Romano-Marun (1985), a Colombian-Lebanese author and devout Christian who wrote a short book on the history of Lebanon, places the migration as a consequence of the conflict, and blames the Ottoman Empire for it:

'Desde la matanza de cristianos ejecutada en 1860 por los drusos, pero bastardamente estimulada desde afuera por los otomanos... miles de libaneses, en

⁴ Arkali (1992: 111) also quotes the consul as stating that the Lebanese presence meant 'a great harm is being done to our national image'.

⁵ 'debido a la opresión turca' - Myriam

⁶ 'First, two brothers arrived in Colombia, if I'm not wrong, around the end of the 1890's; I don't know the exact year. They came like the majority of the immigrants: Christian Maronites that went to Colombia basically fleeing the Turkish Empire' - Carlos

⁷ 'My great-grandfather was Lebanese and because of the persecution of Catholics in Lebanon they came to Colombia when my grandfather was 5 years old' - Andrea

su mayoría cristianos emigran, buscando un horizonte más amable para sus vidas.⁸
(Romano-Marun 1985: 109)

However, it is difficult to find peer-reviewed sources that make similar claims. Issawi (1992: 22) mentions the Hamidian tyranny (1876-1908) and the young Turks (1908-1914) which respectively 'bore heavily on free thought... and attempted to Turkify the Arab provinces'. However, he stresses doubt that the actions of these regimes led to mass migrations. In addition, Humphrey (1998: 169) casts further doubts over these claims, arguing that '...the common perception that [the migrants] were overwhelmingly Christians fleeing Ottoman persecution is misleading', and that a significant number of Muslims also emigrated. Moreover, according to Issawi (1992), Lebanon saw a period of economic and political stability, from the 1860s until the First World War. Therefore, conflict as a reason for migrating, either as war or repression, appears in different family stories but fails to be fully backed up by authors before 1914.

3.2.2. Other factors

One push factor that does seem to achieve consensus is that of the introduction of military service for Maronites. According to Klich (1992) during most of the 19th Century Christians were exempt from doing military service, having to pay a tax instead. However, he suggests that the rise of the Young Turks⁹ changed this as Christians began to be recruited more systematically and the idea of military service greatly contributed to the migration of young men.¹⁰ Issawi (1992) agrees, arguing that even though a large part of the beliefs about conscription were based on fear, the mere possibility of having to serve was enough reason for individuals to emigrate. According to Viloría de la Hoz (2003), those from wealthy families escaped military service by bribing officials; however, for those who could not afford the bribe, migrating was the only option. This argument suggests that those that migrated due to the introduction of conscription were those who came from less well-off families who lacked the financial security to avoid it. If this was the case it would have implications for the

⁸ 'Since the massacres of Christians in 1860 by the Druze, but bastardly stimulated but the Ottomans... thousands of Lebanese migrated, mainly Christians, searching for kinder horizons in their lives'

⁹ The Young Turks was reformist group who opposed the monarchical system of government and eventually toppled the regime in the early 20th Century, before WWI.

¹⁰ During this time conscripts were faced with conflicts in Tripolitania (1911), the Balkans (1912), and War World I from 1914 onwards.

analysis of the migration, as it would give the emigrants a particular socio-economic characteristic.

The stories of repression told by my participants may have derived from these conscription practices. Their ancestors may have felt that a requirement to join the military service equated to repression by the authorities, and the idea of imperial wars might have frightened many. However, conflict alone cannot fully explain the emigration of the Lebanese. As Humphrey (1998: 169) stresses, the push for migration ‘...cannot be reduced to the push of ‘Oriental despotism’. Indeed, according to several authors economic crises and overpopulation played an important role in the migration: Issawi (1992: 22) states that ‘insecurity was an important factor working for emigration’, he also points at economic and social factors to explain the migration; Traboulsi (2007: 47) argues that a ‘baby-boom’ of mainly Maronite peasants followed the 1860s conflict in Lebanon, which combined with a scarcity of arable land ‘was instrumental as a ‘push’ factor for emigration’; and Klich (1992: 246) suggests that an economic crisis hit the Lebanese sericulture industry which the country was heavily reliant on, inducing individuals to migrate. The crisis may have also meant that less people were able to pay the bribe to avoid conscription, when it came to it.

3.3 Migrating to Colombia

The Lebanese migrated in large numbers to various countries in the Americas, notably USA, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina (Hashimoto 1992: 105-6). However, it is not entirely clear why the Lebanese migrated to Colombia. In general, chance seems to have played an important role in the choice of country to migrate to, as often migrants left without a firm decision on where to go. The usual route of Lebanese migrants took them first from the East Mediterranean coast to Marseille, and their destination was often only decided when reaching the port in France (Akarli 1992). Leichtman (2005) argues Lebanese migrants also changed plans in Marseilles, as some ran out of money at the port and could no longer afford the more expensive boat tickets to the Americas, so they paid the cheaper tickets to West Africa. This suggests that those that did manage to reach the Americas either had more money with them as they travelled, or were more careful on how they spent it. Again, if accurate, this argument would influence the type of migrant who reached Colombia. The former reason implies that it was the relatively wealthier migrants who managed to travel to the Americas, whilst the latter one suggests that they were more financially organised

migrants.¹¹ Either way, the port of Marseille was an important space for the future of individuals; where decisions were taken and the pathways of their new lives began forming.

At the same time, deception and error were also factors which influenced the migration, as some migrants were deceived by the agents or captains and not taken to their country of choice (Naff 1992). Hitti (1967: 475) offers an example of a Lebanese migrant who was in Australia for two years ‘...before he realised that he was not in “al-Na-Yurk”, the shipping agent in Marseille having put him in the wrong boat’. Similarly, ship captains looked to increase profits by misleading migrant passengers (Leichtman 2005) and those refused entry to the US often ended up in Latin America. As Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1998) suggest, increased restrictions on general immigration in the US are likely to have increased migration to Colombia. This trickledown is reflected by the experiences of my participant Gabriel’s ancestors:

‘Él [abuelo] creo que a los 16 años migró por primera vez, pasó por Francia y salió a Nueva York. Lo devolvieron... [entonces] decidió ir a Colombia... Toda su familia migró. Dos hermanas de él migraron a EEUU y fueron sobrevivientes del Titanic... y allá tienen una descendencia enorme¹² (Gabriel 2008)

Gabriel points to a dilemma faced by migrants, where only some family members are accepted into their first country of choice and the others have to settle elsewhere. In these cases, Colombia may have been a second or last choice for those refused entry elsewhere.

More significantly, the New World in general was perceived as offering opportunities as well as a new beginning for many individuals. According to Naff (1992: 145)

‘The Syrian-Lebanese were not driven to America on mass scale from either economic desperation, religious persecution, or political oppression... By their own testimony, the immigrants came to improve their economic condition... Later, others would join the ‘gold seekers’ for a variety of reasons such as evading personal problems or joining relatives.’

¹¹ However, as seen above, Vioria de la Hoz (2003) suggests that it was those with not enough money to bribe the officials looking for army conscripts that migrated.

¹² ‘I think he [grandfather] first left Lebanon when he was 16, travelled to France and then to New York. He was turned around... [so] he decided to go to Colombia... All his family migrated. Two of his sisters migrated to the US and were survivors of the Titanic... and they have a lot of descendants there’ – Gabriel

According to Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992), Colombia was included in this idea of the New World being the land of opportunities, and a number of my participants echo this sentiment:

‘Mucha gente del Líbano estaba cogiendo para América porque había oportunidades y querían ganar más plata. Entonces mi bisabuela cogió con su esposo y cuatro de sus hijos que ya habían nacido en el Líbano, cogieron para acá para Colombia...’¹³
(Maria-Camila 2008)

‘Mi abuelo llegó como la mayoría de los inmigrantes en esa época a Colombia a principios del siglo, cuando está la guerra con el Imperio Turco Otomano todavía muy vigente, y todos los jóvenes buscaban oportunidades fuera del país... ¿Por qué llegó a Colombia? Porque América era la tierra prometida para todos ellos... era un muchacho de 18 años que había terminado el colegio escasamente y se vino a probar suerte...’¹⁴ (Ana 2009)

‘Yo llegué a Colombia el 19 de noviembre de 1950, tenía 18 años, recién salido del colegio en el Líbano... y me vine aquí con la idea de tener negocios, tenemos negocios aquí desde hace más o menos 100 años, 1905. Fundados por mi papá en Facatativá primero y después en Bogotá, en la calle San Rafael... Yo me vine a Colombia porque en aquel entonces la situación digamos de negocios y trabajo en el Líbano no era demasiado buena...’¹⁵ (Jose 2008)

My participants support Naff’s arguments of individuals looking for opportunities, often accompanied by or following relatives. As my participant Jose describes: when the situation got difficult in Lebanon a clear path to take was that one already taken by other family members, even many years after the original migrants arrived. Maria Camila and others¹⁶

¹³ ‘Lots of people from Lebanon were travelling to the Americas because of opportunities and they wanted to make more money. So my great-grandmother grabbed her husband and her four children that had already been born in Lebanon and they came here to Colombia...’ – Maria Camila

¹⁴ ‘My grandfather arrived like most of the immigrants to Colombia in that time at the beginning of the century, when the war with the Ottoman Empire was still vivid and all the young people searched for opportunities outside of the country... Why did he go to Colombia? Because the Americas were the promised land for all of them... he was an 18 year old boy that had just finished school and came to try his luck...’ – Ana

¹⁵ ‘I arrived in Colombia on November 19th 1950, I was 18 years old and had just finished high school in Lebanon... I came here with the idea of having businesses. My family has had businesses here for around 100 years, since 1905. They were set up by my dad, first in Facatativa and then in Bogota, in San Rafael street... I came to Colombia because at that time the business and work situation in Lebanon wasn’t very good...’ – Jose

¹⁶ A number of my participants claim that their ancestors also travelled to Colombia with family, including Andrea, Angelica, Carlos, Daniel, and Jimena.

mention the families migrating together; and Ana, as seen below, says other family members followed her grandfather. On top of the opportunities Colombia offered, their accounts highlight the significance of family in making the decision of where to migrate.

3.3.1 Family and networks

The Lebanese followed a typical migrant pattern, with networks playing a vital part as pull factors in increasing the chances of migration to Colombia. According to Arango (2004) migration networks are sets of interpersonal relations linking migrants with their home societies: if a family member or a friend had already settled in a country, then it was more likely that others would follow. Naff (1992) recounts how individuals migrated to the Americas after hearing the successes of others, and they travelled with fellow men from their villages in large numbers. For example, my participant Daniel tells how his maternal great-grandfather brought family members to Colombia:

‘Cuando el negocio de bisabuelo comenzó a crecer, como en 1906 más o menos, él llamó a los primos. Montó con uno de esos primos compañía’¹⁷ (Daniel 2009)

Similarly, Dajer (1993) shows an example of chain migration with his family. He argues that the first two brothers arrived in 1895, with further relatives arriving in 1898 and 1904, continuing until 1920 when their mother arrived. This correlates with the migrant network theory, where a network of migrants increases the chances of migration and where the networks are cumulative in nature, as the more they grow in size, the more migration they encourage, growing in size once again, creating a chain of migration (Arango 2004). The networks related to the Arab/Lebanese migration have been noted by a number of authors, including Alfaro-Velcamp (2007 p.138) who notes that in Mexico ‘family-based connections created and consolidated the ethnic [Arab] network’; Agar-Corbinos (2009) who claims that Arab migration to Chile reproduced itself through chain migration; and even nowadays, Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous (2007) report that over 60% of their participants mentioned family as the most important social capital to help them migrate. These arguments are consistent with general characteristics of migration trends to the Americas. Gurak and Caces (1992) argue that one factor that impacts migration is the selective function of networks, which influences the type of individual that migrates. In the case of the Lebanese, family and town connections had a great influence on the choice of destination.

¹⁷ ‘Around 1906 when his business began to grow, he called his cousins and set up a business with one of them.’
– Daniel

As individuals migrate, structures of chain migration could be formed through family, kinship, friends, co-nationals, and/or co-regionals, helping certain individuals to migrate to specific places.¹⁸

My participants recount the importance of networks and the creation of family/friends chains of migration. For example Salomon's grandfather had cousins in Colombia by the time he migrated, and both Enrique's and Anna's grandparents travelled encouraged by friends from their respective hometown who had already migrated. The presence of family and friends also meant the immigrants were better positioned in society:

'Mi abuelito [materno] llegó muy joven, en los años veinte. Vino porque su tío del lado materno estaba aquí. Contrario a lo que venían los demás que venían a buscar trabajo mi abuelo llegó con un buen capital para trabajar y pues vivió una época muy bien aquí'.¹⁹ (Angelica 2009)

It is likely that Angelica's grandfather was able to use his money in addition to the help he received from his uncle, allowing him to live a better life than he otherwise would have. According to Pilar Vargas (2008) it was common for individuals to help others. She argues a single gentleman helped dozens of Lebanese, not only migrating, but also acquiring jobs and bringing the migrants' families as well. 'He was very good in the business of settling people'²⁰ she says. My participant Myriam recounts how her father and uncle ran one of these networks:

'Mi tío fue uno de los primeros inmigrantes que vino a Colombia en el siglo 20, después trajo a mi papá... y fueron de los primeros libaneses acá en Colombia... mi tío ayudaba mucho, recuerdo que en mi casa nunca faltaron libaneses... ellos los recogían en el aeropuerto, los ayudaban con sus papeles, los nacionalizaban en Colombia... Incluso corrieron con gastos de tiquetes, de gente necesitada. La verdad para mí es un orgullo decir esto y me siento, me emociono mucho cuando hablo de ellos porque fueron personas que se dedicaron de verdad a hacer el bien y a ayudar a sus compatriotas...'²¹ (Myriam 2009)

¹⁸ As can be expected, organised networks also benefited other migrant communities in Colombia, such as German migrants in mid to late 19th century (Rodriguez and Restrepo 1982).

¹⁹ 'My [maternal] granddad arrived very young, when he was 20. He came because his uncle was here. In contrast to others who came to look for work, my grandfather arrived with capital and lived well' – Angelica

²⁰ 'Era un duro en el negocio de instalar a la gente' – Pilar Vargas

²¹ 'My uncle was one of the first immigrants that came to Colombia in the 20th Century, he then brought my dad over... and they were some of the first Lebanese here in Colombia... my uncle helped a lot, I remember that in my house there were always Lebanese people... they picked them up at the airport, helped them with their

In Myriam's account there is no mention of money being exchanged between parties. Indeed, Hitti (1967) argues that when there is a lack of governmental assistance immigrants have to help each other in order to succeed. According to my participant Ana's story, there seems to have been a lot of cooperation:

'Mi abuelo entonces cuando se vino ya empezó a prosperar en los negocios y todo, hizo lo que hacían muchos de ellos, le escribió a su primo y le dijo que como era la situación acá. Que se viniera. Entonces el primo lo dudaba entonces mi abuelo le dijo que la mitad de todas las cosas se las dividiría. Y así se trajo a ese primo'²²
(Ana 2009)

Indeed, these networks not only showed a sense of diasporic solidarity amongst the migrants, but also that the first migrants often proved to be anchors for further individuals to migrate. My participants show that this chain migration worked well into the 20th Century, until the 1950s, when Jose and Sofia migrated to Colombia. These family and friends networks helped many individuals not only migrate but also settle and succeed, and they provided the basis for the organisation and growth of the community.

3.4. Size of the Migration

As noted above, the Lebanese migrated to various countries in the Americas, and compared to these, Colombia received a relatively low number of Lebanese migrants (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998; Vargas and Suaza 2007). Fawcett (1992) argues that factors such as Colombia's difficult geography, its poor transport links, especially to the interior, and its lack of pro-immigration policies were likely causes for the lower rates of immigration. However, these factors can also be applied to other Latin American countries, including Mexico and Ecuador. In any case, according to Fawcett, the number of Lebanese arrivals in Colombia was still in the tens of thousands and was second only to arrivals from Spain (Fawcett 1992: 366; and Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998: 68)

papers, got them Colombian citizenship... they even paid for the travel expenses for those that needed it. The truth is that I am proud of saying this and I get emotional when I talk about them. Because they really tried to do good and to help their compatriots...' – Myriam

²² 'My grandfather came back [to Colombia] started to prosper in business and did what many of them did, he wrote to a cousin to tell him about the circumstances here and to come over. His cousin was doubtful so my grandfather told him that half of everything of him would be his, they would divide everything. And that's how he came'. – Ana

Indeed, according to various authors it is difficult to know the exact number of Lebanese that entered particular Latin American countries (Klich 1992; Bejarano 1997; Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998; Karam 2007; Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). For Colombia, Vilorio de la Hoz (2003) argues there are no reliable migration records, that many of the recorded Lebanese arrivals were noted as *sirio-libaneses*, *turcos*, or *otomanos*,²³ and that no real differences were made between them and other ethnic groups, such as Armenians, making the differentiation of the Lebanese very difficult.²⁴ Moreover, he stresses that many arrivals were not recorded, and where records exist, e.g. of departures, deaths and birth, they are incomplete or inaccurate. Similarly, Fawcett (1992: 365) argues that:

‘It is impossible to be precise when speaking of the numbers of Syro-Lebanese emigrants who entered Colombia. The records of Colombian port and immigration authorities are scarce before the 1930s, and the data available from the Syrian, Lebanese or Palestinian authorities tell us little about the emigrants’ final destination’.

Some estimates can be found in the literature, however, they lack reliability. For example, Hashimoto (1992: 89,105) quotes the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs giving an estimate between 3,000 and 5,000 from around 1921-25. However, he stresses that these figures have to be treated with caution as they are not completely reliable: they only count those registered at the consulates, and are added to the numbers estimated by ‘local Lebanese notables, usually the head of the local Lebanese community’ and religious leaders (Hashimoto 1992: 75). Nabti (1992), in the same book, gives an unreferenced number of 125,000 Lebanese who are supposed to have migrated to Colombia by 1986. She acknowledges the figure comes from the Lebanese World Cultural Union but does not provide a clear reference or explain how they arrived at that figure. Care should be taken when considering these estimates as they cannot be taken as accurate due to their unreliable or incomplete records. This is an issue not only for Colombia, but also other Latin American nations who also have conflicting and/or incomplete account of the Lebanese/Arab migration. A more official figure is given by Rhenals and Florez (2013) who

²³ ‘Syrian-Lebanese’, ‘Turks’, and ‘Ottomans’.

²⁴ Similarly, Batrouney (1992) argues that all immigrants under Ottoman rule were recorded as Turks in Australia, and after the fall of the Ottoman Empire as Syrian-Lebanese. He argues it was not until 1954 that Australia began differentiating between Lebanese and Syrian migrants.

quote a figure from the 1928 Colombian census of 2,967 people who were listed as having a Syrian origin.²⁵

I compiled Table T.1 with the different estimates given for the Number of Lebanese, Arab and Middle Eastern migrants to different countries in the Americas

Table T.1 – Estimates of Arab/Lebanese migrants to various countries²⁶

Country	Estimation Hashimoto ²⁷ (1992: 89-105)	Lower Estimation	Higher Estimation
Argentina (Lebanese)	150-160,000 by 1935	More than 104,000 by 1914 (Klich 1992)	108,000 by 1950 (Jozami 1996)
Brazil (Arabs)	180,000 by 1932 (Lebanese)	107-141,000 by 1970s (Lesser 1999)	140-200,000 by 1960 (Montenegro 2009a)
Chile	32,000 by 1934 (only 2,000 Lebanese)	8-10,000 Arabs by 1940 (Agar-Corbinos 2009)	40,000 Lebanese by 1977 (Nabti 1992)
Colombia	3,000-5,000 by 1926	2,967 in 1928 (Rhenals & Florez 2013) 20-30,000 by 1960s (Fawcett 1992)	125,000 by 1986 (Nabti 1992)
Mexico (Arabs)	16,489 by 1926 (Lebanese)	7,665 by 1960 (Zeraoui 2006)	Between 2,277 and 37,500 Middle Easterners by 1960 (Alvaro-Velcamp 2011)
USA	90-200,000 in 1920s and 1930s (Lebanese)	130,000 between 1930s and 1970s (Suleiman 1999)	More than 1,330,000 Lebanese by 1977 (Nabti 1992)
The Americas	Hashimoto gives three figures: 175,716 early on; and between 556,212 and 1,084,764 by 1940	Around 1,200,000 between 1860 and 1914, with around half being Syrian and Lebanese (Karpas 1985)	

The table shows the discrepancies in the estimations. Whilst the estimations for Brazil overlap, the estimations for Colombia and other countries widely vary.

²⁵ This figure is still inconclusive for a number of reasons. First it relies on self-identification, i.e. individuals had to express their origin; second, the authors only include seven nationalities: 14,748 Venezuelans, 2,967 Syrians, 2,465 Spaniards, 1,916 Italians, 1,682 Germans, 1,607 Americans, 1,436 English – for a total of 35,251 (over 8,000 foreigners are listed but unaccounted for); and third, it is unclear what nationalities are included in certain categories such as Syrian or English.

²⁶ Compiled by the author from a number of sources – all given in the table. The lower and higher estimations do not include Hashimoto's figures.

²⁷ Other figures of Lebanese migrants given by Hashimoto (1992: 105) by 1926 include: 16,000 in Cuba; 4,000 in Uruguay; 3,288 in Venezuela; 2,200 in Paraguay; 1,582 in the Dominican Republic; 1070 in Guatemala; and 1066 in Ecuador.

Estimating the size of the Arab Muslim migration is also problematic. First, the records are as unreliable and incomplete as those estimating the general Arab migration; second, many Muslims also passed as Christians at the borders and/or converted to Christianity to facilitate entry and assist assimilation into Christian societies; and third, the migration estimates that do exist often include all Muslims, not just those of Arab origin (Alfaro-Velcamp 2011).²⁸

Similarly, it is difficult to estimate the current number of Lebanese descendants in Colombia. When discussing Brazil, Montenegro (2009a: 243) argues that it is problematic to consider the figures given for the total number of Lebanese descendants in Brazil nowadays, as most are difficult to verify and often are a result of the communities themselves wanting to appear larger, or exaggerations by the media. She gives the example of the current estimates for Brazil which vary between six and ten million. Fawcett (1992) attempts to draw a figure from different sources, including and claims that by the 1960's the number of 'Syrian-Lebanese', including original migrants and their descendants, was between 20,000 and 30,000. She concludes by arguing:

'given the relatively high birth rate and young average age of the immigrant population, a realistic figure for the present day [1992] might be in the order of 50,000.' (Fawcett's 1992: 366)

Other more recent estimates give much larger numbers. For example a newspaper article by *El Espectador* gives the unreferenced figure for Arab descendants in Colombia as one million, but it does not explain the source of this claim nor the methods used for finding it (Carrillo and Cuevas 2011). A more conservative number is given by the Lebanese Consulate officials in Bogota. The consul stated in 2008 that she believed the Lebanese descendants to be over 500,000. She stated she derived the number by extrapolating from the registrations the consulate received over time. However, she also used the figure to highlight the significance of the community, as warned by Montenegro. Indeed, this is something Karam (2007) also notices with the Syrian-Lebanese in Brazil. He argues that many reports rely on their interviewees to find out the number of descendants, but that these claims are often exaggerated:

²⁸ I was able to find two estimates of the initial Muslim migration: for Mexico Alfaro-Velcamp (2011: 288) reports that 4.2% of Arabs who migrated until 1951 identified as Muslim; and for the Americas in general, Karpat (1985 p.185) estimates that only around 12% of Arab immigrants by 1914 were Muslim.

'Maintaining a privileged presence in business and political circles, Middle Eastern descendants have overestimated themselves as a way to strengthen their place in the Brazilian nation.' (Karam 2007 p.11)

As Karam suggests, these exaggerations go together with the socio-economic status of the Lebanese in their societies. Similarly, Salloum (2000) gives an unreferenced estimated figure of one quarter of a million descendants of Arabs in Colombia, a figure quoted uncritically by Shohat and Alsultany in the introduction to their 2013 book.

Current estimates for Lebanese Muslims are also difficult to find, and general estimates for all Muslims vary: Bruckmayr (2010) gives a relatively large estimate of more than two million Muslims in Colombia; Garcia (2007) argues the figure is closer to 30,000 Muslims; whilst a newspaper article claims there are approximately 15,000 Muslims in Colombia (Galindo 2012).²⁹ The variation is not only large but also includes all Muslims, including Colombian converts, making the estimation of Lebanese/Arab Muslims even more problematic. Nevertheless, a comparison of the total number of Muslims in each country of the Americas is given by the Pew Forum. According to their statistics, the only Spanish speaking country in Latin America where more than 1% of the population is Muslim is Argentina with 1.9%; Colombia and Mexico are reported to have less than 1%,³⁰ whilst countries such as Brazil and Cuba have 0.1%; and others like Chile and Ecuador less than 0.1%. Comparatively, Canada is reported as having 2% and the US 0.8% (Pew Forum 2009: 32-33).³¹ The figure for Colombia given by the Pew Report matches Garcia's estimate, however, both count the total number of Muslims in the country, including converts, not just Arab/Lebanese Muslims. Just as with the general migration, the percentage estimations of Lebanese/Arab Muslims in Latin America are imprecise. For example, Montenegro (2009c) suggests the Arab Muslim population in Argentina can be anything between 0.12% and 1.7% of the Arab population.

What a number of authors do agree on is that the number of Muslims in Colombia has reduced in the last decade due to insecurity (Garcia 2007; Mojica 2007; Bruckmayr 2010). Mojica (2007) suggests this has been specially felt in Maicao, where the Arab

²⁹ For an estimate of Muslims in Bogota see Chapter Four

³⁰ This 1% would amount to almost 5 million Muslims in Colombia

³¹ The same report states that the Shia population is even lower: less than 10% of Argentinean Muslims, and less than 1% of Muslims in Colombia

population decreased from 4,000 down to 1,200 in the 1990s; and Garcia (2007) argues that around 80% of the community in Maicao have left, either to bigger cities such as Bogota or abroad. She estimates that out of a population of 10,000 Muslims in Maicao by 1994, there were only 2,000 left in 2007. Seeing that Maicao is still considered by Bruckmayr (2010) as one of the two localities with highest concentration of Arab Muslims, it can be suggested that the number of Arab Muslims in Colombia is in the low thousands.

As can be seen, the majority of estimated figures for the current population are neither reliable nor complete, whether Arab Christians, Arab Muslims or Arabs in general. Even if the reliability question is put aside, these numbers do not necessarily reflect a comparatively large migration but rather prolific reproduction. As Fawcett's (1992) argues, the Lebanese had relatively high birth rates. My participant Jose agrees that the first generations had big families and gives his own family as an example: he came to Colombia where his ten siblings had already migrated; another seven uncles had travelled there as well, and one also had ten children; and even though he only has two sons and six grandchildren, he claimed the members of his extended family are in the hundreds, or around 20 per original migrant. My own family, descendant of my Lebanese great-grandfather is also large, composed of over 80 individuals, including four individuals from the second generation, 20 third generation, and over 60 fourth and later generations. There are even greater claims, like Dajer (1993) who claims that his ancestors, eight siblings, left over 1473 descendants in Colombia, more than 180 each. Taking these different numbers,³² and following the newer estimates of Fawcett and the Lebanese Consul, then the number of original first generation Lebanese immigrants could have been anything between 1,250 and 12,500, figures that fit with the 3,767 estimate given by Hashimoto for the 1920s.³³

3.4.1 Settlement

The Lebanese that arrived in Colombia originated from different regions including both coastal areas and the interior. Fawcett (1992: 367-68) reports that the main centres of origin included Akkar and Tripoli in the north, Beirut and Chiah in the coast, and Mount Lebanon,

³² An average of 40-120 descendants per original migrant

³³ Comparatively, Klich (1992: 277) argues that the estimates of Arab descendants in Argentina ranged between 50,000 and 2.5 million; Montenegro (2009b) estimates that there are around 50,000 Arab descendants in Paraguay; and a *BBC Mundo* article from 2005 quotes Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* figure of 17 million Arabs and descendants of Arabs in Latin America. At the same time, Kahhat and Moreno (2009: 334) give a figure of Lebanese and their descendants in Mexico as 380,000 in 2000, acquired from the Mexican Lebanese Centre; and Alfaro-Velcamp (2011: 285) notes the Arab population in the US is between 1.25 and 3.5 million.

where a large number of my participants' ancestors came from. This is not surprising as Mount Lebanon has been mainly inhabited by Maronites, and many, including my great-grandfather, came from its capital Baabda. Apart from towns in Mount Lebanon, other places mentioned by my participants include Beirut, and the coastal towns of Byblos and Sidon.³⁴ The majority of Lebanese immigrants to Colombia settled in towns and cities near or on the Caribbean Coast, including Barranquilla, Cartagena and Santa Marta, or in fluvial towns such as Lorica, Cerete, and Girardot, further inland. This pattern followed that of earlier European immigrants who had travelled and settled in Colombia from the 1820s onwards (Rodriguez and Restrepo 1982). In time, the Lebanese migrants spread across the country to other cities and regions, including Bogota.³⁵ Even though a number of authors agree on the importance of Barranquilla as a centre for Lebanese migrants, and immigrants in general, (Fawcett 1992; Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998; Vargas and Suaza 2007), according to Hashimoto (1992: 92) there were more Lebanese registered at the French Consulate in 1921 who set their residence as Bogota, than all the other towns and cities combined, with Girardot in second place.³⁶

Still, the importance of Barranquilla as a port of entry was highlighted by many of my participants, who narrate a boat trip south along the Magdalena River to the town of Girardot, either to settle there or move further inland.³⁷ Their stories usually began narrating where their ancestors set off from, their route and where they settled:

'Por el lado de mi papá, mi abuelo fue el que llegó aquí a Colombia. Él llegó del Líbano en el año de 1919. Somos originarios de Baabda, un pueblo en las montañas del Líbano... Mi abuelo llegó aquí por Barranquilla, obviamente, y se bajó desde Barranquilla por el Magdalena, hasta acá a Bogotá, entró por Girardot. Llegó aquí a trabajar con unos amigos...'³⁸ (Enrique 2008)

³⁴ The region of Mount Lebanon and the city of Byblos are still Maronite strongholds, Beirut is divided among different religions, and Sidon is now mainly Muslim, especially since 1948 with the influx of Palestinians.

³⁵ Even towns were named after the country: there is a municipality in the province of Tolima, South-West of Bogota, called '*El Líbano*', and its inhabitants are referred to as '*Libaneses*' (Lebanese in Spanish). Girardot is also in Tolima; there is also a municipality in the province of Cordoba in the North Coast called '*Montelibano*'. Cerete and Lorica are also in Cordoba.

³⁶ This discrepancy is likely due to the presence of a French Consulate in Bogota; however, it does show the significance of the city in terms of settlement.

³⁷ This fluvial transport system was controlled by German and British firms.

³⁸ 'My paternal grandfather arrived from Lebanon in 1919. We are originally from Baabda, a town in the mountains of Lebanon... My grandfather arrived obviously through Barranquilla, through the Magdalena [river] to Bogota, through Girardot. He arrived to work with some friends...' – Enrique

‘Por parte de mi papá dos abuelos son libaneses, ellos llegaron a Colombia en barco, mi abuelo paterno era de un pueblito cercano a Baabda y mi abuelita era de Baabda. Ella con sus cuatro hermanos, cada hermano casado llegaron a Colombia y se instalaron aquí con sus familias. Mi abuelita tuvo su primer hijo en el Líbano y vino embarazada de la segunda tía. Después tuvo otros 6 hijos más... Llegaron aquí a la costa y cogieron por el Magdalena y se instalaron en Girardot, después Facatativá, y después Bogotá...’³⁹ (Angelica 2009)

Other towns and cities reached through this route include Ubaté, Ibagué and Neiva. A different route took migrants eastwards to Ocaña in Santander province, and then further south to Chiquinquirá in Boyacá province and then to Bogotá. All of my participants were born and/or grew-up in Bogotá:

‘[Mi papá] era el séptimo hermano de una familia de diez, de un pueblo en la región de Biblos... En Ocaña estuvieron hasta el año 45, de ahí se fueron para Barranquilla... y después a Bogotá’.⁴⁰ (Jacqueline 2008)

More significantly, the choice of settlement was also influenced by the original networks who guided the migrants to Colombia. As seen above with my participant Enrique, some Lebanese immigrants travelled to particular cities due to family members or friends already settled there:

‘Mi Papá vino a Colombia en el año 1937, después de que uno de sus hermanos mayores llegó en el 32 a Ocaña, porque una hermana de ellos aún mayor, se había casado con un libanés inmigrante que había llegado a Ocaña a principios del siglo pasado. Mi tío llegó al Ecuador primero en el año 27, en el año 32 pasó a Colombia y llegó a Ocaña. Mi papá vino directamente del Líbano a Ocaña’⁴¹ (Jacqueline 2008)

³⁹ ‘From my dad’s side two grandparents are Lebanese. They got to Colombia by boat. My granddad was from a town near Baabda and my grandma from Baabda... they arrived in the coast, took the Magdalena [river] and settled in first in Girardot, then Facatativa and then Bogotá...’ – Angelica

⁴⁰ ‘[My dad] was the seventh brother in a family of ten, in a town near Byblos... [he] lived in Ocaña until 45 and then moved to Barranquilla... and later to Bogotá’. – Jacqueline

⁴¹ ‘My Dad came to Colombia in 1937, after one of his older brothers arrived in 32 to Ocaña, because an even older sister of them had married a Lebanese migrant who had arrived to Ocaña at the beginning of last century. My uncle first went to Ecuador in 1927, in 1932 crossed to Colombia and arrived in Ocaña. My dad arrived straight to Ocaña from Lebanon’ – Jacqueline

'Aquí él tenía unos primos que lo recibieron en Girardot. Entonces ahí fue cuando mi abuelo decidió quedarse... Toda su familia migró...' ⁴² (Gabriel 2008)

'Mis abuelos llegaron en 1913-14, mi abuelo tenía 18 y mi abuela 14. Llegaron a Bucaramanga, donde había amigos del mismo pueblo pero no de la misma familia. Quería llegar a Girardot y después Neiva donde si vivían familiares...' ⁴³ (Cristina 2009)

'Mi papá llegó a Colombia en el año 55/56. Se radicó en la ciudad de Chiquinquirá porque allá tenía un tío y un hermano que ya había venido antes que él...' ⁴⁴ (Fernando 2009)

As it can be seen the influence of family and friends' networks was of great importance when choosing where to settle: not only coming to Colombia, but also the particular towns and cities, and it continued influencing those that arrived later on. In the 1980's the influence of networks played a similar role towards the migration of Arab Muslims to the town of Maicao (Garcia 2008 – see Chapter Four). Generally, family networks are also of great importance in the integration process of the migrants. For the Lebanese this can also be seen in the DANE (2005) census for current first generation Lebanese, as 25% settled in La Guajira, all but one of them in Maicao; 18% in Bogota; and 15% in Atlántico, most of them in Barranquilla. ⁴⁵

3.5. Social Mobility and Integration

The economic climate that the Lebanese encountered when they migrated to Colombia was favourable for their chances of success, as at the turn of the 19th/20th Centuries the country was experiencing a governmental push for economic development and industrialisation, with

⁴² '...He had some cousins that welcomed him in Girardot. So that's where my grandfather decided to stay... All his family migrated' – Gabriel

⁴³ 'My grandparents arrived in 1913-14. My grandfather was 18 and my grandmother 14. They arrived to Bucaramanga [Santander] where some friends from their town lived, but not relatives. They wanted to go to Girardot and Neiva where they did have relatives...' – Cristina

⁴⁴ 'My dad arrived in Colombia in 55/56. He settled in Chiquinquirá because he had an uncle and a brother there who had migrated before him...' – Fernando

⁴⁵ Other regions include 12% in Valle del Cauca, most of them in Cali; 8% San Andres y Providencia, the island province in the Caribbean; and smaller numbers in Santander (4%), Magdalena (3.2%), Bolivar (2.7%), Antioquia (1.8%), Norte de Santander (1.3%), Cordoba and Cundinamarca (1.2% each). Dane does not report when these immigrants entered the country, it only has figures for 2000-2005 when 66 Lebanese (7% of the total) are reported to have entered the country.

the textile and manufacturing industries being the most prominent (Ocampo 1996). Moreover, the Colombian economy was also benefiting from a growth in its exports, mainly coffee, oil and bananas, offering great economic opportunities (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992). Not only did immigrants benefit from these economic opportunities, but the country also profited from the commerce and businesses immigrants created. For example, Rodriguez and Restrepo (1982: 94) argue that the presence of immigrants in Barranquilla was a key factor in its development, stating that although immigrants only represented a small percentage of the population in the late 19th Century, they (Lebanese, Syrians, Jewish among others) controlled much of the city's economy. Bruckmayr (2010) contends this influence helped Barranquilla develop into the most important port in Colombia in the early 20th Century. Indeed, a number of authors suggest that these coastal and fluvial cities were part of the reason why many immigrants successfully improved their lives. For example, Bejarano (1997) argues that the economies of these places had been based on agriculture and this allowed migrant groups to create a new economy based on commerce. Similarly, Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1998) argue that Barranquilla had good communications with both Colombia's heartland and the outside world, it offered encouraging economic opportunities, and it allowed for quick upward social mobility, as well as integration (Rodriguez and Restrepo 1982).

3.5.1. From Peddlers...

A number of authors mention the prevalence of the Lebanese peddler stereotype, where the first immigrants travelled around cities and towns selling merchandise door-to-door (Hourani 1992 for various countries; Klich 1992 for Argentina; Karam 2007 for Brazil; Vargas and Suaza 2007 for Colombia; Agar-Corbinos 2009 for Chile; Bartet 2009 for Peru). However, peddling was not present in any of the stories told by my participants. Many of them mentioned their Lebanese ancestors setting up shops in different towns and cities in the country and working with family: Carlos' great-grandfather set up a textile shop in Chiquinquirá; Jimena's grandfather had one in Bogotá; Gabriel's grandfather opened one in the town of La Mesa, between Girardot and Bogotá; and Andrea's great-grandfather set up a factory in Cartagena that her extended family still owns.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The significance of these towns and cities must be highlighted, as according to Luz Marina Suaza (2008) not every place was open to the Lebanese migrants. She argues that in Medellín the Lebanese were not able to replicate the same success they had in other cities as they were in direct competition with the locals: 'Why didn't they succeed? Because they were competition in commerce and so they didn't rent them spaces to set up their

Not even those that told stories of hardship included peddling:

'Lamentablemente mi abuelo falleció muy joven... dejando a mi abuela con 5 hijos... Lo que hizo fue coger sus joyas y en el año 42/43 las vendió en 14 mil dólares a un judío. Con el producto de la venta de esas tres piezas montó un almacén igualmente de textiles. Pero no lo hizo en Bogotá sino que lo hizo en Girardot. Población que en ese momento era muy importante, entre otras cosas porque había navegación fluvial, era un puerto importante, y tenía una colonia bien importante en esa época...'⁴⁷ (Jimena 2009)

There can be a number of reasons for this. One explanation may be that the ancestors of my participants either went to Colombia with substantial capital to set up a shop, or had already successful families who helped them set one up. A number of authors suggest this was the case for a number of Arab immigrants, who arrived with enough capital and even business plans (Almeida 1996; Bruckmayr 2010). Similarly, Hourani stresses that some Lebanese immigrants with:

'...the necessary education or capital resources entered the world-wide network of textile traders, importing European woollen and cotton goods and distributing them' (Hourani 1992: 7-8).

However, it is doubtful that all of their ancestors came with enough money to be able to set up a shop. In fact, even though Batrouney (1992: 419) acknowledges the presence of wealthier Lebanese in Australia, he argues that 'most Lebanese immigrants were illiterate peasants'. Therefore, another explanation may be that this part of the story was omitted, either by my participants or their ancestors: it is possible that their ancestors did not pass on this information to their children, perhaps because of shame or even by not placing enough importance on it to be retold; it is also possible it was a part of the history that the second generation and/or my own participants decided to omit as they climbed the social ladder, as the idea of their father or grandfather going door to door selling goods does not fit with their current elite position in society. In a conversation with authors Pilar Vargas and Luz Marina

shops' - ¿Por qué no entraron? Porque les hacían competencia en el comercio y entonces no les arrendaban locales para que pusieran almacenes, por ejemplo (Luz Marina Suaza 2008)

⁴⁷ 'Regrettably, my grandfather died very young... leaving my grandmother with 5 children... What she did was grab her jewellery, around 1942-43 and sold it for 14 thousand dollars to a Jewish man. With that money she set up another textile shop, this time in Girardot, which at that time was a very important city as there was river navigation, it had a port, and a large Colonia at that time...' - Jimena

Suaza in 2008, they recounted how some Colombian-Lebanese were upset at their choice of book cover for their book on the Arabs in Colombia, which shows a picture of a peddler with a stack of merchandise next to him. The authors said some individuals were angry, telling them that their ancestors had not resembled the man in the image, however, they stressed that most immigrants were peddlers when they arrived. The authors defended their choice as most of the literature mentions peddling. Ironically, however, they were not able to find a picture of an Arab peddler in Colombia, and so the cover depicts a Brazilian-Lebanese man instead.⁴⁸

The only clue to peddling that I was able to find with my participants come from Ana, who tells the success story of his grandfather:

[Mi abuelo] se montó en un barco y llegó a Barranquilla. En Barranquilla fue buscando el centro... y en esa travesía se encontró con Laguna de Ayapel y se enamoró de ese sitio, y fue medio colonizador de Ayapel. Entonces se radicó ahí, comenzó a comerciar en un principio y se casó con una persona de Medellín...'⁴⁹
(Ana 2009)

Ana continues her story telling of the success her grandfather had there and of her father, and eventually the rest of her family, moving to Bogota. This story could be one of a successful peddler who travelled inland trading and selling goods until he found a place to settle. He was successful, raised a family and moved with them to Bogota. This story coincides with Valverde's (1992) argument of social mobility, where Lebanese migrants in Argentina progress from peddlers in isolated locations to traders in the capital:

'Upper mobility was very much linked with geographical mobility. The Lebanese moved from being pedlars in the remotest areas of the country... to become small shopkeepers in rural towns. From there they would move to a secondary city and become *minoristas* [retailers]. The most successful would then become *mayoristas* [wholesalers] and if they were wealthy enough they would move to Buenos Aires as a mark of success and upper mobility achievement.' (Valverde 1992: 318)

⁴⁸ Klich (1992: 273) offers statistics of the occupations of early Arab migrants in Argentina: in 1910 out of 42,600 working Arabs, 35percent were peddlers; and in 1917, out of 84,200 Arabs, only 18 percent are peddlers. This suggests that the majority either never peddled, or only did so for a short period of time and hence were not counted as such. Other categories offered by Klich include: established merchants, agriculture, industry, workers and employees.

⁴⁹ '[my grandfather] got on a boat and arrived in Barranquilla. In Barranquilla he began searching for the centre... and in those travels he found the Ayapel Lake, he fell in love with it and was kind of a colonist/founder of Ayapel. He settled there, began trading and married someone from Medellín...' - Ana

This is likely to have been the case for Colombia as well, and could explain the nature of my participants, wealthy descendants of Lebanese who had been successful in their business ventures and who, either they or their children, moved to Bogota.

3.5.2. ...to Industrialists

The main economic activity of the Lebanese migrants was commerce and mainly in the textile industry, something that my participants often stressed in the interviews:

‘...La firma nuestra ha sido una firma que manejó los textiles desde 1905... era digamos una época en la que prácticamente teníamos [los libaneses] dominado el comercio textil de Bogotá, hasta 1930 que hubo un crack mundial...’⁵⁰ (Jose 2008)

A large number of Colombian-Lebanese also set up their shops in Bogota from early on and they found a niche in the historic centre of the city, an area within 7th and 11th streets (east-west), and 11th and 18th streets (north-south), next to the presidential palace and the main Cathedral in the *Plaza de Bolívar*.⁵¹ These include many of my participants’ ancestors:

‘...Siempre tuvo en Bogotá almacén de paños finos, francés y todo eso, y tuvo un almacén en la Plaza de Bolívar... después cuando construyeron el Palacio, paso el almacén a la carrera séptima con 18, donde estaban la mayoría.’⁵² (Angelica 2009)

‘...El esposo de ella montó con el hermano una serie de almacenes de telas o de sombreros en el centro, ahí a una cuadra de la Plaza de Bolívar, de hecho pues nosotros todavía tenemos esa esquina en la Plaza de Bolívar es de nosotros. Ellos montaron almacén, hicieron mucha plata y toda la cosa...’⁵³ (Maria-Camila 2008)

⁵⁰ ‘...My family’s business has been trading textiles since 1905... At that time we [the Lebanese] practically dominated the textile commerce in Bogota, until 1930 with the world crisis...’ – Jose

⁵¹ This area still has a number of independent shops selling textiles, clothes and hats. There are also some remnants of its Arab past with shops named ‘Almacén Said’, ‘Almacén Nablos’ or ‘Distribuidora de Cobijas Barah’. Even though some Colombian-Lebanese still own some shops, these are leased and rented out. The shops named above are owned by Palestinians or Colombians with no ethnic or social connection to the *Colonia*.

⁵² ‘He [maternal grandfather] always had shops in Bogota, of fine textiles, from France and all of that, and had one in the Plaza de Bolivar... and then in 7th with 18, where the majority [of Lebanese shops] were’ – Angelica

⁵³ ‘Her husband and her brother-in law set up a series of textiles or hat shops in the centre [of Bogota], near the *Plaza de Bolívar*. In fact, that corner of the Plaza still belongs to us. They set up the business and made a lot of money...’ – Maria Camila

‘Entonces me vine aquí porque ya estaban los negocios andando y me quedé trabajando desde ese entonces. El primer almacén que tuve fue en la carrera 7ma con calle 11., en la esquina. Y seguí así hasta el año 56 y fundé un almacén en la calle 12, entre la 8 y 9, un gran almacén de textil... Ahí monté ese negocio y monté varios almacenes más con dos compañías, llegamos a tener como 12 almacenes, siempre en la rama textil, más que todo’.⁵⁴ (Jose 2008)

Authors give different reasons for the economic attainment of successful Lebanese. For example, Viloría de la Hoz (2003) argues that the Lebanese often traded imported goods, and their prices were lower than those of the general population, making their shops popular. Alfaro-Velcamp (2007) and Fawcett and Posada Carbo (2008) suggest that their method of business was innovative, by allowing individuals to pay in quotes, or *abonos*, their goods were accessible to different sectors of society. Almeida (1996) and Leichtman (2005) note that many Lebanese immigrants acted as a middleman minority, which included the use of family and ethnic networks for success. Probably due to a combination of all of these factors the businesses of many Lebanese migrants improved, and they set up branches, brought family members to Colombia and gave them jobs within their organisations:

‘... [Mi abuelo] trabajó con amigos al principio como todos los libaneses en un almacén de telas y después abrió su almacén en la carrera 8 con calle 12 [en Bogotá]. Dos o tres años después llegó su hermano, le dijo a su hermano que se viniera, y también con él montaron otro almacén. El primer almacén que abrieron ellos se llamaba ‘El Gallo de Oro’, en español, porque al principio lo pusieron en francés pero la gente no podía pronunciarlo... Después abrieron ya un par de almacenes más importantes. Allí ellos se hicieron camino...’⁵⁵ (Enrique 2008)

Alfaro-Velcamp (2007) argues that in Mexico, the profits made in Lebanese-owned shops allowed them to take advantage of the difficulties the 1930s economic crisis brought by buying factories that went bankrupt. This is likely to have been similar in Colombia as, in

⁵⁴ ‘So I came here because the businesses were already running and I stayed working since. The first shop that I had was in 7th street with 11th in the corner. I stayed until 56 and then I set up a shop in 12th between 8th and 9th streets, a big textile shop... later I opened more shops under two companies. We had at one point like 12 shops, all of them with textiles.’ – Jose

⁵⁵ ‘... [My grandfather] worked with friends at the beginning, as all Lebanese do, in a textiles shop, and afterwards he opened his own shop in 8th street with 12 [in Bogota]. Two or three years later his brother arrived. He told him to come and they set up another shop. The first shop was called the ‘Golden Rooster’ in Spanish because at the beginning they wanted it to be in French but the people couldn’t pronounce it... afterwards they opened a couple of large shops. That’s where they started...’ – Enrique

time, successful Lebanese there also had the opportunity to expand and invest into other areas, such as agriculture and cattle ranching:

'en Chiquinquirá mi abuelo materno tenía almacenes de telas. Y le iba muy bien, inclusive tuvo finca en el llano, o sea era un hombre bastante próspero, un tipo muy organizado por lo que me cuenta mi mamá, muy del sentido de la familia. En Ubaté los abuelos también tenían almacén de telas y tuvieron un molino'⁵⁶ (Maria 2009)

Almeida (1996) notes how the Lebanese immigrants in Ecuador expanded to other areas, including agriculture, financial institutions, service industry, and media companies. In Colombia, some of the successful ventures became large organisations and even multinational corporations:

'...me instalé otra vez en la calle 12 y seguimos trabajando aquí.... Y sigue todavía trabajando con mis sobrinos. Ya me retiré de esto en el año 1995 más o menos... La firma siempre ha sido una empresa seria y hemos tenido mucha gente con nosotros, llegó momentos que se tenían, en el año 60-65 había varios almacenes y teníamos unos 400 empleados.'⁵⁷ (Jose 2008)

'Mi papá en Ocaña tenía un almacén de telas, y agujas, zapatos, medias, eso se llamaba misceláneas en esa época. En Barranquilla puso almacén de repuestos automotrices. Mi tío, en la misma época, emigró para Bogotá y también abrió almacenes de repuestos. El almacén de Ocaña permaneció abierto hasta el año 97. Hoy en día lo que iniciaron con un almacén de telas y dos almacenes de repuestos es una organización que está compuesta por veintidós empresas en Colombia, Venezuela y Ecuador. Producimos partes automotrices para los mercados de reposición, no solamente de la comunidad andina sino que se exporta a 33 países del mundo'.⁵⁸ (Jacqueline 2009)

⁵⁶ 'In Chiquinquirá my maternal grandfather had a textile shop and he did very well for himself. He even had a farm; I mean he was very prosperous. Very organised, according to my mum, very family oriented. In Ubaté the [paternal] grandparents also had a textile shop and they had a windmill' – Maria

⁵⁷ '... I set up again on 12th street and we're still working here... it's still running with my nephews. I retired around 1995... The business has always been serious and we've had lots of people with us. Around 1960-65 we had several shops and around 400 employees' – Jose

⁵⁸ '...In Ocaña my dad sold textiles, needles, shoes, socks in his shop, back then they were called 'miscelaneas'. In Barranquilla he set up an automobile spare-part shop. Around the same time my uncle moved to Bogotá and also set up a spare-part shop. The shop in Ocaña stayed open until 1997. Nowadays, what started as one textile and two spare-parts shops is now an organisation that comprises of 22 businesses in Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. We produce automobile spare-parts for the replacement market, not only in the Andean community but we export to 33 countries in the world' – Jacqueline

As can be seen, the family was a very significant part of the whole network, for immigration, settlement and business. In fact, Almeida (1997: 209) suggests this was one of the particular characteristics which allowed the Lebanese to flourish in Ecuador:

‘...la empresa familiar fue uno de los pilares del sistema de comercio sirio-libanés... Al frente de las sucursales están las esposas, los hijos o los primos, o amigos del mismo pueblo, algunos de los cuales llegaron al Ecuador expresamente para eso. La estructura familiar también permitió aumentar su capacidad de ahorro y por ende de reinversión y ampliación de sus negocios.’⁵⁹

It is understandable why, after enjoying economic success in Colombia, many decided to stay as the country was proving itself to be full of opportunities. The success of their trade not only brought them economic solvency, but also allowed them to start their upward mobility. Liu (2005) gives an example of the Chinese migrants to the US, where success in the herbal business allowed them not only to expand into other areas, but also to gain financial capital, give their children a good education, and improve their social status. Indeed, these networks provided what Gurak and Caces (1992) argue is another important influence: adaptation. The adaptive functions of the network allowed the Lebanese to find cheap and reliable labour in their family members, to expand their family businesses, to diversify to other areas and eventually to improve their social positioning. In other words, migrant networks provide social capital (Rumbaut 2001), which in turn help build financial capital, and are stepping stones towards progressing in general society (Alba and Nee 1997). One of these first steps was education.

3.5.3. Education

A number of authors mention the importance successful Lebanese migrants placed on education. Knowlton (1992) argues these Lebanese preferred to send their children to good, mainly private, schools, and then to higher education establishments. Similarly, Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992) suggest the profits made in business allowed Colombian-Lebanese parents to send their children to university, meaning a large number of wealthier second-

⁵⁹ ‘...the family enterprise was one of the pillars of the Syrian-Lebanese businesses... fronting the branch shops were the wives, children, cousins, or friends from the same town. Some of them went to Ecuador precisely for that reason. The family structure also allowed for increasing their ability to save money, invest it and grow their business.’ – (Almeida 1997: 209)

generation Colombian-Lebanese became lawyers, doctors and engineers, or went into politics.

My participants claim this was a desire of their ancestors:

'...la ilusión de mi abuelo ya que él no había podido terminar por motivos de la situación del conflicto de su país, era que sus hijos fueran profesionales. Para él eso era lo único que le interesaba. El hizo dinero allá, compró tierras, sembró arroz, fue comerciante y propietario. Ayudó a poblar ese sitio, bastante prolíficamente. Tuvo 12 hijos y los doce hijos son profesionales'⁶⁰ (Ana 2009)

'... [mi bisabuelo] era comerciante como todos los que llegaban... Mi abuelo era arquitecto... Interesante ¿no? Yo no había caído en cuenta, uno llega inmigrante vaciado y el hijo ya profesional...' ⁶¹ (Carlos 2008)

'Mi abuelo nació acá en Colombia con sus hermanas, cinco hijos en total. Mi abuelo estudio medicina acá... Llegó a Ocaña en Norte de Santander, un pueblo donde se juntaron bastantes libaneses... Mi abuelo tuvo almacén de muchas cosas, tenía una finca grandísima, era el médico del pueblo, era muy amigo de otros libaneses'⁶² (Daniel 2009)

Angelica told me how her grandparents' textile shops were successful, both maternal and paternal grandparents', and how this allowed them to send their children to university. Both her parents went to university in Bogota and her father became a doctor. Similarly, Jimena said that all of her grandparents' five children became professionals; and Daniel mentions that his great-grandfather was successful, allowing him to send his son to medical school. Different studies of Arab migrants in Latin America point towards a similar scenario, of education and urbanisation being tools used by the immigrants to climb the social ladder (Knowlton 1992; Agar-Corbinos 2009; Montenegro 2009a). Indeed, Knowlton (1992) claims

⁶⁰ ...my grandfather wish, seeing that he had not been able to finish his studies due to the conflict in the country, was that his children became professionals. It was the only thing that mattered. He made money there, bought lands, cultivated rice, traded and was a landowner. He helped populate the place very prolifically, he had 12 children and all 12 became professionals.' – Ana

⁶¹ [My great-grandfather] was a trader like all of the arrivals... My grandfather was an architect... It's interesting, right? I hadn't thought about it: he was a poor immigrant and his son already becomes a professional...' – Carlos

⁶² My [paternal] grandfather was born here with his sisters, 5 children in total. My grandfather studied medicine... He moved to Ocaña, North Santander, a town where a lot of Lebanese migrated to. He met and married my grandmother there, who has German ancestry... My grandfather had a shop that sold many things, he had a huge farm, was the town's doctor and was good friends with other Lebanese' – Daniel

that the Lebanese in Brazil saw rapid social mobility, from peddlers at the turn of the century, to shop owners in the 1910s and 20s, and to industrialists in the 1930s. From then on, he argues, many Lebanese continued their upward social mobility, no doubt helped by the education the second generation got:

'because of their Brazilian education they had formed bonds of friendship with Brazilians of diverse ethnic groups and were able to move into the society in a way their fathers, no matter how wealthy, could not' (Knowlton 1992: 303).

As I show below, this social mobility and general integration also influenced the marriage patterns of the Lebanese.

3.6. Marriage

A number of authors state that a large number of Arab migrants to Latin America were single young men (Knowlton 1992; Fawcett 1992; Zeraoui 2006). Fawcett (1992) argues the pattern began to change with success: the family networks meant relatives started migrating and these single Lebanese men were able to marry the new arrivals; others went back to Lebanon to marry and bring their wives back. Several authors suggest there was an early tendency towards endogamy in various Latin American countries within the Arab communities: Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1998) state that only around 16% were married to Colombian women; Zeraoui (2006) reports that only 12% of early migrants of the Lebanese in Mexico married a Mexican, compared to the 46% that married Lebanese or descendants of Lebanese; Agar-Corbinos (2009) and Almeida (1997) claim that the rate of endogamy was around 90% for early Arab migrants in Chile and Lebanese immigrants in Ecuador, respectively. As is to be expected the exogamy rate increased with time: Alfaro-Velcamp (2007) reports the exogamy rate increased in Mexico to 27% by 1948; and Agar-Corbinos (2009) shows a steady increase in Chile with over 35% in the 1940s and argues that by the 1960s less than half of the Arab marriages took place within the community.

With my participants' ancestors, there is also a larger proportion who practised endogamy in the first generation: nine Lebanese men married Colombian women, eleven Lebanese men married Lebanese women,⁶³ and five Lebanese men married descendants of

⁶³ The eleven marriages include six couples who already travelled married to Colombia, three Lebanese men who travelled to Lebanon to find a wife, and two who married in Colombia. These figures only include the marriages of reported by my participants.

Lebanese. This means 64% of the first generation practised endogamy. An example of this trend is given by my participant Angelica, who says her father's parents were both Lebanese and her mother was Colombian-Lebanese; her three aunts married Lebanese descendants, as did one of her two uncles.

These numbers also suggest that in the first generation intermarriage mainly occurred with Lebanese men, as Lebanese women tended to marry Lebanese men. This can be due to Lebanese patriarchy which was still very much present in the first generation. However, it may also be that the Lebanese sense of belonging was more likely to be passed from the paternal line than the maternal line, i.e. when a Lebanese woman married a Colombian man her Lebanese cultural heritage was lost through the generations. My participants tell stories of their Colombian mothers 'adopting' Lebanese culture, which also suggest a role of Lebanese patriarchal relationships:

'Mi abuelo se casó con mi abuela que no es libanesa, entonces se vinieron acá a Bogotá. Mi abuelo no comía comida colombiana, a mi abuela le toco aprender a cocinar comida libanesa, le hacía la comida aparte, o sea, ella aprendió todo y le tocaba traer todo del Líbano...' ⁶⁴ (Andrea 2009)

'Mi mamá aunque era de origen colombiano ella adoptó la cultura libanesa totalmente... mi mamá se integró totalmente a la comunidad libanesa. En mi casa se comía comida árabe, bailábamos música árabe, se oía música árabe, viajábamos al Líbano. Quiero decirle que mucha gente no supo que mi mamá era colombiana sino el día que se murió cuando vieron los obituarios en el periódico... nadie sabía que era colombiana...' ⁶⁵ (Jacqueline 2008)

In the second generation, the tendency to marry Colombian individuals increased: ten men and five women married Colombians, ⁶⁶ whilst six individuals married descendants of Lebanese, ⁶⁷ and two women and one man married Lebanese individuals. This means 62%

⁶⁴ 'My grandfather married my grandmother who is not Lebanese, so they came to Bogota. But my grandfather didn't eat Colombian food. My grandmother had to learn to cook Lebanese food; she made different food for him and had to bring everything from Lebanon' – Andrea

⁶⁵ 'Even though my mum was Colombian she completely adopted Lebanese culture... my mum completely integrated into the Lebanese community. In my house we ate Arab food, we danced and listened to Arabic music, we travelled to Lebanon. Let me tell you that many people did not know that my mum was Colombian until she died and they saw her obituary in the newspaper... nobody knew she was Colombian...' – Jacqueline

⁶⁶ Five men and four women had both Lebanese parents

⁶⁷ Four of them had both Lebanese parents

married Colombians, an almost complete reversal of the first generation. There is also a connection between the marriages of first and second generations, of the nine individuals whose parents practised exogamy, only three of those married practised endogamy. For example, Carlos grandfather married a Colombian, as did all of his seven children.

My participants' stories also suggest that in the later generations it has been mainly the women who have kept the Lebanese heritage in their families. For example Jimenas' grandfather travelled back to Lebanon to find a wife, her daughter, however, married a Colombian, as did Jimena (who is, alongside her sister and their respective daughters, active in the Club's activities). The same is the case with Lucia, whose Lebanese father married a Colombian and so did she; however, she is more connected to the community than her brother who married a descendant of a Lebanese. My participants' stories suggest that Lebanese cultural heritage is more likely to be passed through the female line from the second generation onwards. In fact, in the third generation the tendency to marry Colombians within my participants switches to Colombian-Lebanese women and most of them have kept a connection with Lebanese culture. In the third generation three men and six women married Colombians, and three men and one woman married descendants of Lebanese.⁶⁸

As might be expected, increased interaction of second and later generations with non-Lebanese Colombians also increased the likelihood of exogamy. As I have explained, many first generation migrants used the profits of their businesses to send their children to university, and this inevitably increased the social interaction with Colombians for the second and third generations. As Ana tells of her father:

'Cuando mi papá se vino a estudiar en la universidad a Bogotá mi abuelo pues vino y les arrendó un apartamento para que todos los hijos vinieran al apartamento. Entonces en esa época existían las pensiones y el contrato con una pensión que quedaba cerca al apartamento que les estaba arrendando a sus hijos para que en esa pensión les dieran la alimentación y les lavaran la ropa a sus hijos. Y ahí era

⁶⁸ Two women who married Colombians, and the woman who married a Colombian-Lebanese, had Lebanese ancestry from both parents. Of the four individuals in the fourth generation only one has married and she married a Colombian. For reference, three of my participants were born in Lebanon; four were of Lebanese parents born in Colombia; three are 75% Lebanese, i.e. with three Lebanese grandparents; seven are 50% Lebanese; five are 25-40% Lebanese; and two are less than 25% Lebanese.

una familia santandereana con la que hicieron gran amistad y mi papá se casó con una de las hijas'⁶⁹ (Ana 2009)

3.6.1. Arranged marriages

Conversely, of those that did practise endogamy there was a propensity to do so within the extended family. For example, Dajer (1993) reports that in his family of the nine original siblings that migrated to Colombia only one married a Colombian; seven couples of cousins married in the second generation, and three in the third generation. My participant Daniel also says that there has been a lot of internal mixing within his family, where three male siblings married their three female cousins, who were also siblings. Similarly, Ana tells her grandfather convinced his cousin to migrate to Colombia, and after the cousin settled he began bringing other family members:

'Y luego entonces cuando ya tenía al primo establecido acá se trajo a su hermana y la casó con el primo. Y luego se trajo a sus otros hermanos. Y los trajo a todos. Luego trajo a otro primo y lo casó con su hija mayor'⁷⁰ (Ana 2009)

My participants' stories suggest that the Lebanese migrant network not only helped others migrate to Colombia and find jobs, it also helped arranging marriages. These Colombian-Lebanese families may have been making financial and social investments by marrying their offspring within the family, as they ensured their successful businesses and properties stayed within the family, whilst strengthening the family unit (Knowlton 1992). Alfaro-Velcamp (2007) agrees with this and argues that wealthier Lebanese in Mexico tended to marry within the community, and significantly within the extended family:

'the consolidation of wealth by Middle Eastern families can also be described as part of the ethnic identity of the community... tended to be patriarchal and to form a symbiotic unit in which each family member performs a function to help maximize savings and capital; and within this economic unit, family members also aimed to maintain their ethnicity and their immigrant positioning in Mexican society' (Alfaro-Velcamp 2007 p.142).

⁶⁹ 'When my dad came to university in Bogota he rented a flat for him and his brothers. They had a contract with a guesthouse so they would feed them and wash their clothes. It was a family from Santander, they became good friends and my dad married one of the daughters' – Ana

⁷⁰ 'Later he brought his sister and married her to his cousin; and after brought his other brothers. He brought all of them. After he brought another cousin and married him to his eldest daughter' – Ana

At the same time, endogamy was not solely restricted to the Lebanese, or to migrant communities. As Almeida (1997) argues, endogamy was also practised among the Ecuadorian elites with similar aims, to ensure that the capital stayed within the boundaries of the elite society. This is likely to have been the case in Colombia as well. Even though marriages may not be arranged in the same way, numerous activities, such as frequenting social clubs and attending particular educational establishments, encourage elite individuals to marry within their social class (see Chapter Four and Five for a discussion of social clubs).

However, as it can be expected, later generations were less likely to follow outdated paternalistic traditions. Valverde (1992) suggests that many second generation Lebanese women opted to stay single instead of going against paternal authority. Stories of arranged marriages also came up in the interviews with my participants, either for first or second generation:

‘El abuelo materno llegó del Líbano y mi abuela materna descendiente de libanes por todas partes, la mamá era libanesa, el papá era libanés, pero ella ya nació acá. Y al abuelo materno, llegó del Líbano y tú sabes que yo creo que ellos más que todo armaban los matrimonios. Entonces mi abuela tenía 14 años y él le llevaba como sus 20 años más o menos, y tuvieron siete hijos... A mi papá lo querían casar con la hermana mayor de mi mamá, porque los padrinos de bautizo de mi papá eran mis abuelos maternos y los padrinos de bautizo de mi mamá eran mis abuelos paternos. Entonces a él lo querían casar con la hermana mayor de ella pero él se rebeló y le gusto más mi mamá, entonces ahí formaron el hogar’⁷¹ (Maria 2009)

Similarly, Carlos states his grandfather put pressure on his father to marry a descendant of Lebanese but he ended up marrying a Colombian, and Andrea says that:

‘A mi papá lo iban a casar con una libanesa. Tenía matrimonio arreglado. Pero él dijo que no, pues no...’⁷² (Andrea 2009)

⁷¹ ‘My maternal grandfather arrived from Lebanon and my maternal grandmother was descendant of Lebanese from her mum and dad, but she was born here [in Colombia]. The maternal grandfather arrived here and I think that they arranged the marriages. So my grandmother was 14 and he was around 20 years older, and they had seven children... They wanted to marry my dad with my mum’s older sister. Because the godparents of my dad were my maternal grandparents and the godparents of my mum were my paternal grandparents. So they wanted to marry him with her older sister but he rebelled and liked my mum more, so they built a home’ – Maria

⁷² ‘My grandfather [second generation] was going to have an arranged marriage with a Lebanese woman. They had set everything up. But he said he didn’t want to...’ – Andrea

In some cases, like that of second generation Monica, the experience of arranged marriages was felt first hand. Monica reports her father would only allow her to marry a Lebanese or descendant of Lebanese and that she almost had an arranged marriage:

‘Todo estaba organizado a que yo me casara con un libanés, que era el querer de las dos familias. Y tenía mi novio libanés con palabra de matrimonio, las dos familias muy contentas. Mis padres murieron pensando que yo me iba a casar con él, y yo conocí a otra persona, que es el padre de mis hijos, mi esposo, me enamoré y olvidé la sangre, la colonia y el querer de mis padres’⁷³ (Monica 2008)

These stories reinforce the strength of paternal authority that Valverde refers to: Maria’s father still married a Colombian-Lebanese, even though she was not the one he was supposed to marry; and Monica only married a Colombian after her parents had passed away. The refusals also seem an act of rebellion against that authority. Conversely, the only time the idea of arranged marriages was mentioned in relation to the third generation was by my participant Enrique, as he was telling me the story of how he married a Colombian-Lebanese:

‘Yo ya la conocía de chiquitica y jugaba con ella en el jardín de mi casa... y nos enamoramos y nos casamos, por coincidencias de la vida. No como mucha gente piensa, ahí como se dice “de puertas pa’ fuera”, que fue arreglado. No, eso no.’⁷⁴ (Enrique 2008)

He is keen to emphasise that his marriage was not arranged, suggesting not only that ‘outsiders’ considered it to be so, but also wanting to make a statement that it was not the case. Nevertheless, when the Colombian-Lebanese practise exogamy they were still expected to marry within the area of society that had been reached. For my participants that would be to marry within the elite.

⁷³ ‘Everything was arranged so that I would marry a Lebanese, as both families wanted it. I had a Lebanese boyfriend and we had a verbal promise that we would marry, and both families were very happy. My parents passed away believing that I was going to marry him, and I met someone else, my husband and the father of my children, and I fell in love and forgot about my blood-ties, about the Colonia, and about my parents’ will’ – Monica
⁷⁴ ‘I met her when we were little and she used to play in my garden... and we fell in love and got married, just by coincidence. It’s not like a lot of people think, like the saying “from the outside”, that it was arranged. No, it wasn’t.’ - Enrique

3.6.2. *The impact of exogamy*

Valverde (1992: 319) notes that it was mainly second generation women who had to struggle with arranged marriages, as men had more freedom:

‘Second generation men were more independent and many of them married Argentine women. Once the Syro-Lebanese men married outside the community, their children would in general lose contact with anything Syro-Lebanese and would adopt the mother culture and religion’.

She suggests that for men exogamy meant a decline in a sense of belonging to their Lebanese heritage by their descendants. Her argument supports the trend within my participants, as those who had a female ancestor in the second generation tend to be more connected. Similarly, Garcia (2007) suggests that many Arab Muslims married Colombian women and assimilated to the local society, losing not only their attachment to Arab culture but also their Muslim religious identity. At the same time, some authors argue that the economic prosperity enjoyed by many Arab migrants, coupled with the educational status of the second generation, not only increased the likelihood of mixed marriages, but also of marrying into the local elite (Akmir 2009; Barter 2009). Not only was the integration process of Arab immigrants helped by marrying locals (Agar-Corbinos 2009), but the fact many second and third generation married into the local elites demonstrates the high degree of social acceptance they enjoyed (Bartet 2009).

My participant Maria Camila suggests that a way the Lebanese families used to improve their status was through marriage. She tells of the hardship her great-grandmother had to endure after her husband died:

‘...pero se le murió el esposo... fueron tiempos muy difíciles porque no tenía plata, entonces le tocó empezar a hacer bordados que les enseñan a hacer allá y fue unas épocas muy difíciles. Ella vivió en Santander entonces y a la hijas les tocó casarse muy rápido y jóvenes con los primeros hacendados que vieran porque o sea es duro...’⁷⁵ (Maria Camila 2008)

⁷⁵ ‘it was a difficult time because she didn’t have money. So she had to do embroidery which she had learnt there [in Lebanon] and they were difficult times. She moved to Santander and her daughters had to marry quickly and young with the first landowner they met, it was hard. I know many people had it different; I know may Arabs set up businesses and maybe did much better, but my great-grandmother had it more difficult because she was a woman, and to raise seven children is difficult...’ – Maria Camila

My participant Jose goes one step further and name drops different Colombian elite political families and their marriage connections with Colombian-Lebanese families:

‘Muchas colombianas se casaron con libaneses y viceversa. Usted sabe por ejemplo, el hermano de tu abuelo, Don Isaac Devis, se casó con la hermana del presidente Echandía, y hay mucha gente: un sobrino mío se casó con la hija de Belisario Betancourt, y muchos se han casado con los Santos y con Ospinas y por ese estilo.’⁷⁶ (Jose 2008)

Jose not only mentions families from elite society, but all the names he mentions are of former presidents of Colombia. As with migrants elsewhere, their stories suggest that marriages were used as a tool for social mobility, both when facing unexpected difficulties, as in the case of Maria-Camila, or to cement their status in the elite, as in the case of Jose, even to the highest political level possible. It also shows the level of integration into Colombian society.

3.7. The Colombian-Lebanese in politics

One way of measuring the success of Colombian-Lebanese integration in Colombia is through their participation in the country’s political affairs: not only have the Colombia-Lebanese been over-represented in terms of numbers involved, but they have also had more representation than other immigrant communities in Colombia. Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992) argue that in 1992, 11% of Colombian senators were of Arab background, with the majority being Colombian-Lebanese;⁷⁷ and Dajer (1993) claims that according to statistics from the Lebanese government, Colombia and Brazil are the two countries with the highest number of members of congress of Lebanese origin. Their success is also significant when compared to other Lebanese migrant communities in the Americas, as the Colombian-Lebanese were already reaching positions of influence at the national level in the

⁷⁶ ‘Many Colombian women have married Lebanese and vice versa. You know, for example, your grandfather’s brother, Don Isaac Devis, married the sister of President Echandia. And there’re many people: a nephew of mine married the daughter of Belisario Betancourt, and many have married into the Santos and the Ospinas, and the like’ – Jose. Eduardo Santos was president of Colombia in 1938-42; Dario Echandia was president in 1943-44; Mariano Ospina-Rodriguez was president 1958-61, his son Pedro-Nel Ospina was president 1922-26, and his grandson Mariano Ospina-Pérez was president in 1946-1950; Belisario Betancourt was president in 1982-86; the current Colombian president is Juan Manuel Santos, nephew of Eduardo Santos.

⁷⁷ If we take Fawcett’s (1992) estimate of 50,000 Colombian-Lebanese, and the Colombian population in 1992 at 35.5m then around 0.15% of Colombians would be Colombian-Lebanese, clearly overrepresented in the Senate with 11% of seats. Colombian population data from Dane (2005)

1930s. Bruckmayr (2010: 160) argues their importance in politics shows 'the most visible proof for their successful integration' into Colombian society.

Their influence was most strongly felt in the Atlantic Coast region of Colombia, where by 1916 the Colombian-Lebanese were already forming part of the Chamber of Commerce in Barranquilla (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992). The first Colombian-Lebanese to have important political influence at the national level was Gabriel Turbay Abunader, who was elected to the Colombian senate in 1932 and during the next two decades occupied a number of influential posts, such as Colombian ambassador to various countries, including the USA; government minister; delegate to the League of Nations; and official presidential candidate for the Liberal Party in 1946.⁷⁸ Another very influential Colombian-Lebanese politician was Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala,⁷⁹ president of Colombia 1978-1982. Turbay-Ayala was also a Liberal politician who served as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Senator for several years. During his presidency there were at least three other Colombian-Lebanese among his cabinet (Vargas and Suaza 2007).⁸⁰ These examples are illustrations of the level of integration of the Colombian-Lebanese in elite Colombian society. Fawcett (1992) argues this successful integration can be attributed to the similarities the migrants had with Colombians in terms of religion, family values and social norms.⁸¹ These are issues that are still relevant in Colombian society.

The influence of Lebanese descendants was also present in Chile and Ecuador, who also had large representations in their political institutions, however, they only began to be felt in the 1950s (see Bray 1962; Bejarano 1997). Additionally, a number of individuals of

⁷⁸ His candidature is significant as he ran against an independent Liberal candidate, splitting the Liberal vote and against the Conservative party candidate, who won the election. The combined votes of the two Liberal Party candidates would have defeated their Conservative opponent. This independent Liberal candidate was Jorge-Eliecer Gaitán, a popular, and populist, politician. His popularity proved costly and he was assassinated in 1948. His assassination led to a popular uprising called the *Bogotazo*, which in turn gave way to a violent period known as *La Violencia* where Conservative, Liberal and Communist groups waged a guerrilla war against each other. Many lives were lost in this conflict and eventually an armistice in 1958 between the Liberal and Conservative parties, called the *Frente Nacional*, hailed the official end of *La Violencia*. Although the armistice addressed political tensions, it did not tackle economic inequalities or social divisions, and excluded other political parties. This climate led to the creation of several leftist guerrilla groups including the M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril), the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) the latter two being still very active in Colombia. It can be seen how a Colombian-Lebanese was a prominent political figure during a decisive period of Colombia's political history, and it is interesting to think how the history of the country could have been different if the Liberal Party candidates had joined forces in 1946.

⁷⁹ Even though both politicians shared the surname Turbay, they were not known to be related.

⁸⁰ Coincidentally, during his presidency, one of the leaders of left-wing guerrilla group M-19 was Colombian-Lebanese Alvaro Fayad. As Vargas and Suaza mention, at the time both the President of Colombia and one of the leaders of the powerful guerrilla movement were Colombian-Lebanese.

⁸¹ Nevertheless, these similarities must have also been present in other countries, particularly in Latin America.

Arab descent have been elected presidents of different countries in Latin America. However, they reached the presidency much later than Turbay-Ayala: Carlos Menem of Argentina (1989-1999); Abdala Bucaram of Ecuador (1996-1997); Carlos Flores of Honduras (1998-2002); Jamil Mahuad also of Ecuador (1998-2000); Antonio Saca of El Salvador (2004-2009). Currently there are more than 20 Colombian-Lebanese in congress. There are also individuals in congress and government who have Italian, French and Eastern European surnames,⁸² however, they are not as numerous. Almeida (1996) also notices more active participation of Lebanese descendants in politics in Ecuador, than descendants of other nationalities.

Even though Colombian-Lebanese politicians have been members of different political parties and held conflicting ideologies, a large number have been of the Liberal party (Vargas and Suaza 2007), one of the two traditional political parties in Colombia. Even though many of the current Colombian-Lebanese politicians in congress still follow the Liberal party and come from the Atlantic Coast region, others originate from different regions of Colombia and/or are members of different political parties. There are also prominent politicians and civil servants of Lebanese descent in the executive and judiciary branches of government.

This political success has also meant that Colombian-Lebanese politicians have been involved in different political scandals. The latest one involving Colombian-Lebanese politicians was the parapolitics scandal where a number of them were accused of having strong links to right-wing paramilitary groups. Of those involved at least one has been convicted (*El Tiempo* 2008d).⁸³ Significantly, none of the major newspapers have made a

⁸² Interestingly, most politicians of Arab backgrounds have two Arab surnames, whilst most others have one Spanish-sounding surname. This suggests a higher level of endogamy within Colombian-Arab ethnic communities in the political elite:

Arab: Amin Salame, Besaile Fayad, Char Abdala, Gechem Turbay, Mendez Bechara, Merheg Marun, Mota y Morad, Name Cardozo, Raad Hernandez, Rapag Matar.

Italian: Gnecco Zuleta, Guerra de la Espriella, Zuccardi de Garcia.

French: Betancourt Perez, Barguil Assis, Cuenca Chaux.

Polish/Jewish: Sudarsky Rosenbaum.

⁸³ According to *El Tiempo*, Senator Dieb Maloof was found guilty of his links to paramilitaries and was given a seven year prison sentence, of which he spent almost five before being released (*El Tiempo* 2008d). There are at least another five congressmen and women of Lebanese descent that have been or are being investigated for alleged links with the paramilitaries. It must be noted, however, that not all of the politicians of Lebanese descent have been involved in such proceedings. A possible explanation for the large number of individuals involved is that the regions represented by these particular politicians were under heavier influence of the paramilitary groups. As seen above, the Lebanese quickly reached positions of power within the Atlantic coast of Colombia, and many Colombian-Lebanese kept their influence in this region, which, many years later, was under heavy influence from paramilitary groups. Indeed, Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992) argue that in 1990, 32% of those

connection between the parapolitics scandal and the Colombian-Lebanese⁸⁴ and none of my participants commented on them. Unsurprisingly, my participants were keen to praise the successes of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia and even claim some ownership to that success, but also ignored any failures or possibly embarrassing connections.

It can be seen, therefore, how the Colombian-Lebanese have risen to the economic and political elite in Colombia, and some Colombian-Lebanese became influential figures in the country, something my participants stressed repeatedly in the interviews.

3.8. Decline of the migration

From the 1930s onwards the rate of immigration of Lebanese/Arabs to the Americas began to decrease. A combination of retain and repel factors contributed to this decline. First, governmental changes in the Middle East, starting with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the improving conditions under the French mandate and the independence processes which improved the lives of Christians, lessened the need to migrate (Agar-Corbinos 2009). Second, the 1929 economic crash led to conditions becoming less favourable for migrating to Latin America (Klich 1992). Conversely, Landazabal (2010) argues that the economic conditions in Lebanon began to improve in the 1930s and that the authorities started promoting the repatriation of Lebanese abroad. This positive situation in Lebanon would have also reduced the number of new emigrants. Third, the different conflicts in a number of countries in Latin America which meant the region became less attractive and discouraged individuals to continue migrating (Valverde 1992; Vargas and Suaza 2007; Bartet 2009). This is definitely the case for Colombia, which saw worsening periods of violence from the 1930s onwards. This includes a war with Peru in 1932-33; increased internal strife in the 1940s and 50s in a period known as *La Violencia* where Conservative, Liberal and Communist groups waged a guerrilla war against each other; and violence from the

elected to Senate from the Atlantic Coast were of Arab background. This can partly explain why a number of them have been involved in this scandal.

⁸⁴ The only time there is a connection between the scandal and the Colombian-Lebanese is done by a Colombian-Lebanese senator accused of having connections with paramilitary leaders. In an interview, the senator states the accusations arose because he is: 'costeño, islámico, hijo de un inmigrante libanés' and states 'Aquí no saben lo que es un árabe enardecido cuando se violan sus principios. ¿No los han visto meterse 100 kilos de dinamita y volarse?' (Soto and Peña 2007) - 'costeño [from the Atlantic coast], Muslim and son of a Lebanese immigrant' – 'here they don't know how fired-up an Arab gets when their rights are violated, haven't you seen them blow themselves up with 100 kilos of dynamite?'

increasingly powerful guerrilla groups such as the FARC, ELN and M-19 from the 1960s onwards. As Bruckmayr (2010: 162-63) argues:

‘In Colombia syro-Lebanese immigration faltered in the aftermath of the Great Depression during the 1930s. However, the foundation of the Israeli state and the ensuing Arab-Israeli wars promoted the arrival of new migrants, now mostly Palestinians... in general, Colombia presented itself in a particularly unfavourable condition to prospective immigrants from the late 1940s way into the 1960s... naturally, civil war fostered neither business nor immigration in the country’.

Conversely, Bruckmayr stresses Venezuela’s oil rich economy encouraged individuals to continue migrating.

At the same time, there was a slight increase in the migration in the 1970s, which has led a number of authors to suggest that there have been two migratory waves of Lebanese/Arabs to Colombia, and Latin America in general: first from 1890-1930 and then from mid-1970s to date (Vargas and Suaza 2007; Bruckmayr 2010).⁸⁵ The second migratory wave had a number of characteristics which differentiated it from the first, including a much smaller migration size and a shift from Christian to Muslim Migrants (Bruckmayr 2010). These changes also took place in a number of Latin American countries, including Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Chile, however, most authors do not give reasons for this (Montenegro 2009b; Mizobuchi and Takaoka 2013). A number of reasons have been given for the restart in migration in the 1970s. Alfaro-Velcamp (2011) notes a pull factor from the US: a 1924 law which restricted the entrance of non-European migrants was repealed in the 1960s and led to an increase in Arab migration, with more participation from Muslims. It can be suggested that there was also a trickledown effect to Latin American countries, as during the first migration wave. In terms of push factors, emigration was influenced by exacerbating conflicts in the Middle East, including the Israel/Palestine conflict and the Lebanese Civil War.⁸⁶ Bertet (2009) argues that the Israel/Palestine conflict led to a large migration of mostly Muslim Palestinians which contributed towards the shift. Agar-Corbinos (2009) also notes more participation from Palestinians, rather than Lebanese or Syrians, during the second migration wave. However, the Lebanese Civil War from the 1970s onwards affected

⁸⁵ Migration to other regions, however, is divided into three waves. For example, Batrouney (1992) divides the waves as 1880-1947, 1947-1975, and 1975-to date.

⁸⁶ Other conflicts such as the Yemeni Civil War (1960s) and the Iran-Iraq war (1980s) also took place in these ; however, there are no reports of significant migration to Latin America from these countries.

both Christians and Muslims alike in Lebanon, with over 40% of the Lebanese population emigrating (Abdelhady 2011). This suggests that Christians indeed continued immigrating to other countries, but Latin America was no longer a top destination for them.

DANE figures for the Colombian national census in 2005 correlates with the shift in Lebanese migration. DANE compiled data including country of birth, age, gender, and region/city of settlement. Unfortunately, as the only variable recorded is country on birth, and not nationality or ethnicity, only first generation immigrants can be accounted for. The DANE reports that for the 2005 Census there were 940 first generation Lebanese individuals in Colombia. The figures compiled in Table T.2 show that 72% of the current first generation Colombian-Lebanese are within the ages of 15 and 64, and that 64% are men.

Table T.2 First Generation Lebanese in Colombia (Dane Census 2005)

Age in years	Men	Women	Total
0 to 14	9	17	26
15 to 64	442	231	673
65 or more	156	85	241
Total	607	333	940

This suggests that these first generation migrants are following the trends of the previous migration, where it was mostly single young men that migrated – as seen above (Fawcett 1992; Zeraoui 2006). However, it is difficult to tell in what decade they migrated, as this could have been as early as the 1940s for the over 60, and as late as 2005 for everyone. Unfortunately, the census did not collect year of entry by nationality.

Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the composition of the first generation of Lebanese migrants alive in 2005 can shed some light. Tables T.3, T.4 and T.5 show the age distribution of first generation Lebanese in the three regions with the largest number of individuals born in Lebanon: T.3 shows 232 first generation Lebanese living in La Guajira province, 231 of them in the town of Maicao; T.4 shows 166 live in Bogota; and T.5 shows 141 in Atlantico province, 131 in Barranquilla. This indicates that more than half of first generation Lebanese live in the three cities (Maicao, Bogota and Barranquilla), showing that the previously constructed networks were still influencing the choice of settlement.

Table T.3 – First Generation Lebanese in La Guajira (Dane Census 2005)

La Guajira	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0-15	3	10	13	5.6%
15-24	13	18	31	13.4%
25-34	19	24	43	18.5%
35-44	49	14	63	27.1%
45-54	37	11	44	19%
55-64	18	5	23	9.9%
65 +	9	2	11	4.7%
Total	148	84	232	

Table T.4 – First Generation Lebanese in Bogota (Dane Census 2005)

Bogota	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0-15	1	5	6	3.6%
15-24	1	4	5	3%
25-34	19	12	31	18.7%
35-44	18	10	28	15%
45-54	16	3	19	11.4%
55-64	16	14	30	18.1%
65 +	31	16	47	28.3%
Total	102	64	166	

Table T.5 – First Generation Lebanese in Atlantico (Dane Census 2005)

Atlantico	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0-15	1	1	2	1.4%
15-24	1	6	7	5%
25-34	10	2	12	8.5%
35-44	8	5	13	9.2%
45-54	17	8	25	17.7%
55-64	18	5	23	16.3%
65 +	30	29	59	41.8%
Total	85	56	141	

The data also shows the age distribution of the first generation Lebanese in each of these regions and the differences suggest patterns within the migration. As seen above, both Barranquilla and Bogota received large numbers of Lebanese migrants; Barranquilla

being the port of entry for most and Bogota a popular destination. The age distribution for Atlantico seen in Table T.5 shows that 41.8% of first generation Lebanese are over the age of 65, whilst less than one quarter are under 44. This suggests that migration to Atlantico has slowed down as few young first generation Lebanese live there. The age distribution for Bogota seen in Table T.4 is also skewed towards the older age brackets, with almost 58% being over 44. However, 33% are between 25 and 44, meaning they migrated from the 1960s onwards. Conversely, the age distribution for La Guajira province in Table T.3 shows that the first generation of Lebanese is composed younger people, with over 64% being under 44 and only 4.7% over 65. This suggests that it is a much younger migration with almost 40% having been born in Lebanon from the 1970s onwards. Even though the DANE national census does not collect data related to religion, the fact the city of Maicao has the largest population of Arab Muslims in Colombia (Garcia 2007; Bruckmayr 2010), as well as the largest number of first generation Lebanese, supports the shift of migration to a mainly Muslim phenomenon.⁸⁷

This shift not only took place in Latin America. Batrouney (1992) also sees an increase in Lebanese migration to Australia and explains it as a result of the Lebanese Civil War and the economic hardship it brought with it. He also suggests that comparatively more Muslims than Christians migrated and that this impacted the composition of the community. He argues that whilst by 1954 over 70% of first generation Lebanese were Catholics (Maronites and Melkites) and only 4% were Muslims, by 1981 around 38% were Catholic and 33% were Muslim (Batrouney 1992: 417-19, 431). However, he suggests both Christians and Muslims continued migrating. Similarly, other countries such as the US, Canada and France also continued receiving Arab immigrants, both Christians and Muslims (Abdelhady 2011).

However, it is difficult to account the reasons for the shift from Christian to Muslim migration in the second wave. As I showed above, Maronite Christians did make up most of the migration during the first wave, and reasons for the migration of Christians include the religious conflicts and conscription discussed above, as well as the Catholicism of Latin

⁸⁷ Interestingly, the gender distribution for all ages between the three cities is similar. In all three males make most of the overall migration with 64% in La Guajira/Maicao, almost 62% in Bogota, and 60% in Atlantico/Barranquilla. However, the gender percentage difference is even larger between the ages of 25 and 64, with males making 72% of Lebanese migrants in Barranquilla, 70% in Maicao and 63% in Bogota. At the same time, for the younger bracket between the ages of 0 and 24 females greatly outnumber males, with Females making 87% of Lebanese born immigrants in Atlantico, 82% in Bogota, and 64% in La Guajira.

American countries. In addition, according to Alfaro-Velcamp (2011) during the Ottoman regime Muslims were prohibited from emigrating. She suggests this not only discouraged Muslim migration, but also created registration inaccuracies, as many Muslim migrants reported being Christians for fear of deportations which could have led to punishment by the Ottomans.⁸⁸ A possible push factor influencing the rise of Muslim migration for the second wave is given by Bruckmayr (2010) who suggests that a ban on the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria during the early 1980s led Syrian Muslims to emigrate; and a pull factor is offered by Garcia (2007), who suggests that the migrant networks created by a handful of Muslim migrants from 1940s onwards led to Lebanese Muslims migrating to Colombia during the Civil War. However, such networks should also have been present for the Christian Lebanese. The only clear account I was able to find explaining the shift for Lebanese migration comes from Abdelhady (2011) who argues that during the Civil War there were two periods of migration. She notes that Christian migration dominated the years from 1975 to 1982, however, she argues that from 1982 onwards, after the Israeli invasion of Beirut, Muslims became the majority of migrants (Abdelhady 2011). This argument suggests a shift after 1982; however, Latin American countries should still have seen an increase of Christian Lebanese immigrants during the first years of the conflict. Unfortunately, none of the sources I have been able to find give clear and satisfactory reasons for the relative absence of Lebanese Christians migrating to Latin America during the second wave.

As mentioned above, the second migration wave was not as substantial as the first in terms of size, and not long after it began it started decreasing once again (Karam 2007). Indeed, Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous (2007) note that the rate of Arab migration to Latin America has been in constant decline since the 1970s and 80s, and that by 2007 it was negligible. Similarly, Agar-Corbinos (2009: 134) reports that the percentage of Arab immigrants within the Arab population in Chile has significantly reduced, from 85% of Arabs in Chile being immigrants in 1941, down to 14% in 1970, and to only 5% in 2001. In addition Garcia (2007: 72) argues that a large number of Lebanese Muslims left Colombia and went back to Lebanon in the 2000s due to insecurity and suggests that in the Bekaa valley ‘...es común oír hablar español, escuchar música de la costa colombiana, encontrar comida colombiana, etcétera.’⁸⁹ The Colombian Foreign Ministry (2013) correspondingly claims

⁸⁸ As already discussed, the records were also distorted as Muslims claimed to be Christians as they believed it would ease their integration into Christian societies in the Americas.

⁸⁹ ‘...it is common to hear Spanish being spoken, to listen to music from the North of Colombia, to find Colombian food etc’.

there are approximately 5000 Lebanese-Colombians in Lebanon, including Colombian-born descendants of Muslim returnees, and their own descendants, many who allegedly do not speak Spanish. In terms of those immigrants still living in Colombia, the DANE figure of 940 first generation Lebanese represents only 0.8% of foreign born individuals in the country.⁹⁰

3.9. Summary

This chapter has explored the history of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia as a diaspora, their reasons for migrating, including typical pull and push factors, and the influence of migrant networks in the migration process. It provides a discussion of their numbers in comparison to other migrations in the Americas, as well as settlement patterns, which spread across different parts of Colombia. The economic success of many Lebanese migrants is visible in the number of ventures they undertook in a variety of fields, which in turn impacted their social integration through education and marriage. An example of their integration has been given, showing how some of them reached positions of political power relatively soon after their arrival. Finally, the decline of the migration has been explained, together with a discussion on the shift that took place from the 1970s onwards. Chapter Four further explores the process of integration of the Colombian-Lebanese, focusing on the current elite status of the community in Bogota.

⁹⁰ The DANE reports that there are 109,971 foreign born individuals in Colombia, equally divided between men and women

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLOMBIAN-LEBANESE *COLONIA* IN BOGOTA

4.1. Introduction

My thesis focuses on the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* in Bogota, Colombia. *Colonia* is the name given to the ethnic community by the Colombian-Lebanese themselves and it is the one I use throughout this thesis. The *Colonia* is composed of Colombian-Lebanese individuals, the Lebanese migrants and their descendants who have settled in Colombia, regardless of their level of participation in the community. Currently, there are first generation Colombian-Lebanese, who were born in Lebanon, as well as second, third and later generations of descendants who were born in Colombia, and still form part of the *Colonia*. Within it a number of Colombian-Lebanese organisations operate, including the Club *Colombo-Libanés* (the Club), the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association, the Lebanese World Cultural Union (ULCM) and Maronite Parish.

This chapter seeks to build on the background and context presented in Chapter Three, focusing on the experience of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota and, when relevant, the Colombian context. It discusses the process of nation building in Colombia, from both a historical and contemporary perspective. It explores the meaning of elites in Colombian society, of which my Colombian-Lebanese participants form a part. As my participants are Colombian-Lebanese, I also look briefly into relevant events from Lebanon which might influence the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese, including its Civil War, the 'July War', and its national elections. The chapter also deals with a further three notions of diaspora, the idealised image of the 'home' country, the efforts to ensure its wellbeing, and the 'troubled relationship' with the 'host country'; and it discusses the accuracy of the term when referring to the Colombian-Lebanese.

It then looks at the assimilation and acculturation of the Lebanese and their descendants into Colombian society, and the reasons for its current make-up, i.e. the fact that the active community is part of the socio-economic elite. In addition, it looks at current Colombian factors influencing the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese, focusing on religion, race, and social status. Finally, the current generational composition of the *Colonia* is

explained, offering a comparison with both waves of migration and signalling the influence current transnational processes are having on the *Colonia*.

Colombia's conflictive history has influenced the sense of belonging within the country, and affected its economic situation; religion has been a strong identity generator; race and socio-economic status are connected, and the latter is important for an understanding of the Club. Overall, with this chapter I seek to present the reader with the necessary knowledge to understand the complexities of the sense of belonging amongst the Colombian-Lebanese, including those that impact on the identity of the *Colonia*.

4.2. The Colombian-Lebanese Colonia in Bogota

As has been explained, my study is centred on Bogota, Colombia's capital and its largest city. According to *Metrocuadrado*¹ (2003), Bogota is also the richest city in Colombia and has the second highest income per capita; however, it is also a city of great inequalities, with 7% of the population generating 40% of the income. This inequality is reflected in what Uribe-Mallarino (2008) calls geographical segregation, as the city is divided between a safer and wealthier North and a poorer and more dangerous South. Official statistics also support this argument, as they recognise the localities in the North of Bogota as wealthier than those in the South, the wealthiest of all being the locality of *Chapinero* (*Metrocuadrado* 2003). Wade argues that from the 1920's class differences in Bogota expressed themselves through 'residential segregation, with the elites moving to the north of the city, and the emergence of "elite (social) clubs"' (Wade 2000: 108). This is a trend that the wealthy Colombian-Lebanese also followed, noticeable with the move of the Club further north to the locality of *Chapinero*, which is home to both the Club and the Parish, and to most of the activities of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations, including cooking classes and political demonstrations.² Most of my interviews also took place in places within this wealthy northern locality of Bogota, where almost all of my participants live.³ The location of these Colombian-Lebanese spaces in the wealthiest locality in Bogota reflects the social status of my Colombian-Lebanese participants. As seen in Chapter Two, most of my Colombian-

¹ *Metrocuadrado* (meters-squared in Spanish) is a state-agent type website run by *El Tiempo* newspaper

² The only exception is the Santa Clara Hospital which is the charitable cause supported by the Ladies Association and located in a poorer locality.

³ I also grew-up and went to school in this locality, and my parents still live in it (see Chapter Two for more on my own positioning within this research)

Lebanese participants are part of the socio-economic elite of Bogota and Colombia. Even though the social status of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota does vary, this variation was hardly visible in the Colombian-Lebanese organisations on which I based my study, the only exceptions being with the participants of the Maronite Parish and the Muslims mosques (see Chapter Seven). In fact, those active in the *Colonia* are not only part of elite society themselves, but they follow the same practices as most individuals from the upper classes in Bogota.

Conversely, there are no visible patterns that can be drawn from Muslim Colombian-Lebanese. As I discuss below, there are no Muslim Colombian-Lebanese organisations, and no Muslims are actively involved with the organisations in the *Colonia*. Therefore, I had to look at the spaces where interaction amongst Arab Muslims took place. This occurs at the mosques, where they congregate due to their religious identity, but not due to their ethnicity. In terms of location, neither the mosques nor the Islamic centres are located in wealthy areas, but in different lower-middle class neighbourhoods. There is no particular concentration in one area, though they are also not located near any shanty towns. The interviews took place in a variety of places, including my participants' bakery, located in a wealthy neighbourhood in the north of the city; in the café of a shopping mall, also located in the north but of no apparent particular significance to my participants; as well as in one mosque.

4.3. Nation Building in Colombia

I can now turn to investigate the nature of nation building in Colombia in order to understand the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese. I follow Garcia's (2007) arguments that there is no single meaning of what it means to 'be Colombian', as it is constantly changing, and that the answer to such a question is strongly tied to particular historical periods. Garcia (2007: 75) explains that:

'la identidad es fundamentalmente un discurso que se construye históricamente a través del diálogo entre lenguajes de dominación y resistencia, y que cambia de acuerdo con las condiciones políticas que le dan origen'⁴

⁴ 'Identity is fundamentally a discourse that is historically constructed through the dialogue between the languages of dominance and resistance, and changes according to the political circumstances that gave origin to it' (Garcia 2007: 75)

Following this line, when looking at the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia, one must take into account both its historical influences and its current status. As Garcia (2007: 76), argues: instead of asking 'what are we?' the question should be 'what are we being?'⁵ That 'we' would be Colombians, and as Garcia argues, the question arises from a duality between dominant and resistance groups in society, where the dominant would be the elites. An explanation of the elites is therefore necessary at this point.

Amato (1970: 104) uses the word elite as a synonym for upper class in Bogota and defines it as '...that group of persons who hold positions of eminence in a society, particularly in a political, economic, or social sense'. The elites in Colombia have tended to be 'white', descendants of Spanish and other European migrants. This 'white' identification, however, has had to do more with wealth than actual ethnicity, as Chua (2003: 69) argues that in Latin America 'whites' are those wealthier and those who come from 'good families', and Alcantara (2005: 1667) points that in Latin America 'the poor are often identified as non-white'. This points towards the racialisation of social status in Colombia, where the dominant group are those considered to be 'white' elite, and the resistance group are those considered to be 'non-white' poor.

This situation has generated inequalities between races, as the 'white' minority elites hold the largest part of the wealth in the country and the region, control most resources, are better educated and hold most important positions of political, economic, and social power. Chua (2003) believes this divide to be a part of the region's history, with the caste system designed by the Spanish colonisers acting as a significant part of politics, economics and culture. Indeed, during Spanish colonial times a caste system was introduced favouring white Spaniards and *criollos*⁶ over other castes. Although the caste system was officially abolished after independence, it has continued to influence society in the sense that even now the higher social classes continue to be dominated by descendants of white Europeans, whilst the lower social classes include a higher proportion of ethnic minorities (indigenous and African-Colombians) and their descendants. Therefore, the periods of identification in Colombia have been driven by a duality between the 'white' elites, and the 'non-white' poor (see the section Socio-Economic Status below for a more extensive explanation of social classes and its connection to the Colombian-Lebanese).

⁵ '...más que preguntarnos ¿qué somos?, la pregunta legítima sería ¿qué estamos siendo?...'.

⁶ The children of Spaniards born in the Americas

With this duality in mind, Garcia's argument can be explored. According to her, in Colombia, nation building has moved through different historical periods whose significant bases have been religion, territory and law. It can be added that these periods are not separate from one another and that they have overlapped and influenced each other. The first period, which started during colonial times, was inherited from Spain and was based around Catholicism. Both religious and governmental authorities, being mainly Spaniards and *criollos*, ensured that Catholicism spread through the region as it was used to promote the state as much as to control the population. Indeed, Samper believes religion to be one of the roots of common identity, not only in Colombia but in Latin America in general, as Christianity has been the 'force behind the determination of the hemispheric culture and the organisation of society, supporting economic development and shaping the way politics and government are exercised' (Samper 2004: 259-60). He still considers it to be a main influencing factors, even though its influence has been weakening.

The second period started after the independence from Spain and was influenced by the United States and France, based around republican ideas where the nation was constructed around territory (Garcia 2007). Colombia had a need to differentiate itself not only from its former colonial power, but also from the neighbouring states with almost identical populations, which sometimes had political tensions with Colombia. Therefore, the nation was confined to its frontiers, where to be Colombian was to have been born or to live within the territory delineated by its frontiers. This period took away power from the Spaniards, transferring it mainly to the *criollos* and to some extent to the *mestizos* both of whom had been born in Colombia. This is also the period when most of the non-Spanish migration to Colombia took place, including the migration of the Lebanese and, as seen below, it can partly explain the reception they experienced when they arrived.

The current period bases the nation on the law, centred on the 'judicial-administrative' aspect of Colombian identity, allowing greater recognition of minority communities, including a multiplicity of identities (Garcia 2007: 12). The change was made possible thanks to several historical developments, such as the separation between church and state and the growing importance of human rights, among others. Samper (2004) also believes justice and law to be bases for identity in Latin America, and argues that even though there is a lack of popular belief in the judicial system, the people endeavour to use

all possible channels to ensure their judicial security. As shown below, in this system power relies more on the judicial and law-making institutions than on individuals. Nevertheless, it does not greatly diminish the power of the elites, and although law is currently the most important identity constructor in Colombia, religion and territory still play a part.

During the three periods of nation building identified by Garcia in Colombia, the 'other' has altered as the periods evolved. The influence of religion has meant that non-Catholics have at times been classified as the 'other': mainly Jewish but also protestant Christians and some Muslims. The influence of territory meant the 'other' were also those who had been born and lived outside Colombian territory after independence. Finally, the current influence of the law means that the 'other' are those who do not follow the law. I discuss below how this current period is influencing the Colombian-Lebanese.

4.3.1. Identity in the law

Following Garcia's argument that the current nation building process is one based on the law, it can be seen that Colombia has been going through a process of promotion of Colombian identity since the 1990s, and of patriotism in the 2000's. A crucial point was the introduction of a new constitution in 1991, which according to Bejarano (2001) was the result of negotiation by several political factions and took place as a response to dissatisfaction with the political system and the reforms led to significant political changes. One of these was the recognition of Colombia as a multicultural nation allowing for greater recognition of ethnic groups (Sarrazin 2009). Indeed, the Colombian Constitution of 1991 states in Article 13 that:

'Todas las personas nacen libres e iguales ante la ley, recibirán la misma protección y trato de las autoridades y gozarán de los mismos derechos, libertades y oportunidades sin ninguna discriminación por razones de sexo, raza, origen nacional o familiar, lengua, religión, opinión política o filosófica'.⁷

The greatest beneficiaries of these policies have been the indigenous and African-Colombian minorities who now enjoy officially recognised representation (Wade 1995).

⁷ 'every person is born free and equal under the law, they will receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities without any discrimination for reasons of gender, race, national or familial origin, language, religion, political or philosophical opinion' – *Constitución Política de Colombia 1991, Título II, Capítulo I, Art. 13* (2000)

Other beneficiaries include religious minorities, such as Muslims, as the Catholic Church has lost its formerly strong influence on the state, and also communities of descendants of migrants such as the Colombian-Lebanese, with the introduction of policies such as the possibility of having dual nationality, regardless of what that second nationality is.

According to Sarrazin (2009), since the change in legislation there have been more people identifying themselves as belonging to a particular ethnicity in the censuses. He argues that a 're-ethnicisation' of certain groups in Colombian society is visible. This is important as it can lead certain groups to recognise themselves, or be recognised, more with their own racial/religious/migrant community than with the national. Ikonómová (2005) argues this for indigenous communities, as she explains, how indigenous identity can come before the national identity of the country they live in, and how even if aspects of the latter influence the former, indigenous identity remains stronger. At the same time, it allows for more transnational identities, as seen by Alcantara (2005) with indigenous groups that span many countries, e.g. Quechuas, Aymaras and Guajiros. The same can be influencing my Colombian-Lebanese participants as they may be recognising themselves more with their Colombian-Lebanese community, instead of with the Colombian nation. Moreover, they can also be recognising themselves with particular aspects of the Colombian-Lebanese community, instead of the whole of it, or with other 'Lebanese *Colonias*' in Latin America and elsewhere. I will be exploring how this process of promotion of national identity in Colombia is impacting my Colombian-Lebanese participants, how far they embrace this identity, or whether this has led them to recognise themselves more as part of a Colombian-Lebanese community, separate from the Colombian nation.

The Colombian government also introduced the possibility of having dual nationality in 1991. Before, immigrants had to renounce to their nationalities if they wanted to acquire Colombian citizenship. A large number of individuals benefited from this policy, including Colombians living abroad, and immigrants and their descendants already settled in Colombia. Many Colombian-Lebanese acquired either Colombian or Lebanese citizenship. As the period of nation building is now based on law, and territory and religion have less influence on it, it is the law and not being born in Colombia that eventually grants nationality.⁸

⁸ However, this change in Colombian law was not enough for some Colombian-Lebanese to have access to Lebanese citizenship. This is because, currently, Lebanese law stipulates that citizenship can only be carried

At the same time as the political reforms were taking place, the Colombian government implemented a range of neo-liberal economic reforms (Harding 1996), which started slowly in the 1980s and sped up in the 1990s (Livingstone 2003). Colombia was also able to withstand the crisis of the 1980s, according to Williams and Guerrieri (1999) due to the money brought in by the drug cartels, which controlled the very lucrative cocaine trade. Nevertheless, the country was not able to resist the economic crises at the end of the 1990s. By this time, the government had defeated the main drug cartels and the transactions had dried up. Reina (2001) connects all of these factors together as causes for the economic crisis of late 1990s, including: the neo-liberal reforms that took place in the country during that decade; the general violence which affected foreign direct investment; and the drug economy, which over time weakened the Colombian economy. This crisis hit the Colombian-Lebanese organisations hard as the adverse situation affected many activities that could be seen as dispensable for individuals, such as involvement in charity organisations, social clubs, and leisure activities. In fact, according to its general manager, the Club suffered from a large decline in its members in the late 1990s when it almost went bankrupt, and only began to recover around 2002-03, after the Colombian economy started to improve. The Club was hit in a similar way to other social clubs; however, because of its comparatively small size the loss of members was more deeply felt. This difficult time even led the directors to consider selling the Club. However, they decided against it because, they argued, it has a great importance as the centre for the *Colonia*.

4.3.2. Identity through patriotism

Colombia has been going through a process of increased popular patriotic sentiment. Two important factors have affected this: first, the negative image Colombia receives abroad, and second, the security policies pursued by President Uribe and his successor, Juan Manuel Santos. The country had been suffering from an undeclared civil war for a number of decades, between guerrilla groups, such as the FARC⁹ and the ELN,¹⁰ paramilitary groups

through the male line i.e. only fathers, not mothers can give their children the Lebanese citizenship. This has had an impact on some Colombian-Lebanese whose Lebanese ancestry comes from their maternal side. For example, Juanita (2008) said: 'me gustaría tenerla si pudiera, así me sienta completamente colombiana (risas)... (pero) yo sé que en mi caso nunca va a pasar porque es el hombre el que lleva la ciudadanía' - 'I would like to have the Lebanese citizenship, even though I feel completely Colombian (laughs)... (but) I know I'm never going to get it as it's the man the one who carries the citizenship' - Juanita

⁹ Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces

¹⁰ National Liberation Army

and its remnants, drug cartels, and the government. The guerrilla and paramilitary groups have been labelled as terrorists by the Colombian government and the international community. The actions of the guerrillas include kidnappings, car bombs, extortions, attacks on urban centres, and involvement in the drug trade (Villamizar 2003). All of these have tarnished the image of Colombia and this has been felt both by Colombians abroad, and increasingly to Colombians at home with greater access to global media. Indeed, Guarnizo and Diaz (1999: 404) argue that their Colombian migrant interviewees in the US agreed that Colombians have to bear the burden and the stereotype of drugs, which is continuously disseminated by local and global mass media. Out of this, a public-private enterprise to improve the image of Colombia was launched under the name of *Colombia is Passion*. Its supporters include the Colombian government, as well as a number of Colombian private companies with links to international markets. According to Liliana Medina (*Colombia is Passion* representative, personal communication 2009) their strategies have aimed to increase foreign direct investment in Colombia, generate more tourism, and promote Colombian exports abroad. Furthermore, she argues the organisation has aimed to reach Colombians both at home and abroad to act as spreaders of the campaign, and to create a feeling of identity with the brand *Colombia is Passion*.

The second factor has been the security policies of President Uribe, many of which have been continued by current President Santos, which have not only had many military successes against the illegal armed groups in Colombia, but have also included a campaign for their de-legitimisation, creating an image of a violent 'other', versus a peaceful 'Colombian'. The security policies have been carried out with help from the US in terms of armament and financial support, and have led to the capture or killing of many members of the illegal armed groups, as well as to the demobilisation of many more. At the same time, it has led to campaigns against groups such as the FARC, with several public demonstrations against them, asking for the release of all hostages, as well as for their demobilisation. Slogans seen on these demonstrations, such as '*Colombia soy yo*',¹¹ are examples of the 'other' as a constructor of identity: I am peaceful and follow the law, therefore I am Colombia; the FARC (and others) are violent, outside the law and are not Colombia.¹² The Colombian-Lebanese community has participated in these, waving Colombian and Lebanese flags simultaneously, and calling for peace in Colombia (see Chapter Eight).

¹¹ 'I am Colombia'

¹² Arisen in conversation with political scientist Diego Garcia (personal communication 2008)

These factors, among others, have created a stronger sense of patriotism in Colombia. This is different from what Guarnizo and Diaz (1999) reported in 1999 about Colombians living in the US, where they interviewed individuals of different regions, backgrounds and ethnicities. They argued that their interviewees were not part of a single Colombian community, as they felt a stronger connection with people from their region than with other Colombians, and that the same social, racial and regional divisions that were felt in Colombia were also felt abroad. Thus, according to this study in the late 1990s there was not a strong sense of Colombian patriotism among Colombians living in the US. This lack of patriotism was also felt in Colombia. Nowadays, the sense of patriotism is stronger, and even though there is a disagreement about its significance and/or the depth of its roots, the feelings are very visible in Colombia ranging from the support enjoyed by President Uribe and his successors, to the many flags seen flown on masts throughout the country.

According to Bhabha (cited in Rutherford 1990) multiculturalism is about the creation of cultural diversity and the containment of cultural difference, as it promotes diversity but only within its own terms, therefore, containing it. As shown above, in Colombia governmental policies and laws developed from assimilation to multiculturalism with the 1991 constitution. This later drive was contained within a normative space and so the diversity has developed within its boundaries. However, the normative space is not static, and of significance here is the patriotic drive experienced by Colombians following the election of Uribe as President, where cultural diversity was contained within this patriotic drive. To be Colombian was to be against the violent, more specifically, the FARC. Thus on the one hand, Colombia has been experiencing a promotion of national identity, with smaller communities having greater representation and more rights. On the other, it has also been undergoing a process of patriotism, with an aversion towards the illegal armed groups. Both of these forces have influenced the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia and are discussed in Chapters Six and Eight.

4.3.3. *The influence of Lebanese events in Colombian-Lebanese identity*

By being Colombian-Lebanese, the *Colonia* is not only influenced by Colombian factors but also by Lebanese factors. These latter are generally less significant than the former as most Colombian-Lebanese were born and live in Colombia. Nevertheless, I will explore some of

the factors connected to Lebanon influencing the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia. One such influence comes from the idealised image of Lebanon held largely collectively by the *Colonia*. As seen in Chapter Five, a diasporic collective memory based on idealised imaginings of Lebanon can have a strong influence on the sense of belonging of individuals as Colombian-Lebanese (Halbwachs 1992; Fortier 2006). According to the Colombian Foreign Ministry (2013), the diplomatic relationship between Colombia and Lebanon started in 1948; the Colombian embassy in Beirut was opened in 1960; and apart from the Lebanese embassy in Bogota, there are Lebanese honorary consulates in Barranquilla and Cali.

A significant moment for the Colombian-Lebanese and for the Lebanese in general was the Civil War that took place in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. It saw fighting between different religions and ideologies,¹³ foreign intervention by Syria and Israel, switching of allegiances and in-fighting.¹⁴ The Civil War divided the Lebanese in Lebanon, and these divisions spread to the Lebanese communities outside of Lebanon, including in Colombia leading to divisions within the *Colonia* and among the descendants of Arab immigrants. Even now, in Colombia there is a degree of enmity between those that followed different sides and ideologies during the Civil War (see Chapter Eight). However, at certain times during the war, groups of Colombian-Lebanese got together through their organisations to send aid to Lebanon. These reunions led to the foundation of the Lebanese Ladies Association in the 1980s.

Another violent conflict which influenced the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese was the July War of 2006, or Israel-Hezbollah War, which took place when Israel bombed Lebanon in the summer of 2006 after Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. The war lasted just over a month and according to Ruys (2007: 266) resulted in the death of more than 1,100 Lebanese, mostly civilians.¹⁵ The war felt close to many Colombian-Lebanese, not only because of the closeness they may have had to Lebanon, but because at the time a number of Colombian-Lebanese and non-Lebanese Colombians, were visiting Lebanon and were caught up in the conflict. A group of Colombian-Lebanese used their network of

¹³ See Chapter Seven for an explanation of the influence religion has on Lebanon and the consequences of these for the Colombian-Lebanese.

¹⁴ The causes, events and circumstances of the Lebanese Civil War are still a matter of contention. A good start for further information and analysis on the Civil War see Traboulsi's *A History of Modern Lebanon* (2007)

¹⁵ The Israeli bombardment took place after Hezbollah attacked an Israeli military convoy and abducted two Israeli soldiers. It lasted for just over a month (see Ruys 2007; and Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2009).

contacts and a military plane was sent to rescue the Colombians stranded in Lebanon. After the success of the operation, the group decided to stay together and reorganised the ULCM (see Chapter Eight). Therefore, whilst the Civil War caused divisions within the Colonia, the conflict also united some Colombian-Lebanese.

At the same time, some Colombian-Lebanese have been connected to politics in Lebanon. A number of Colombian-Lebanese with dual Colombian and Lebanese citizenship, both Maronites and Muslims, flew to Lebanon to vote in the 2009 elections. All Lebanese citizens are entitled to vote in those elections, regardless of where they were born or where they live. However, they need to be physically present in Lebanon in order to do so. Because of this, several Lebanese political parties pursued a policy of encouraging those eligible to vote living abroad to do so, facilitating their travel to Lebanon. They were flown to Lebanon by different parties, and support seemed to vary depending on political leanings (connected to religion), family connections and personal experiences. Many also used the trip as a leisure opportunity to meet with family or do tourism in the country (see Chapter Eight). These events resemble the diaspora argument presented by Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) of striving towards the wellbeing of the homeland. In addition to individuals participating in the elections, the ULCM and the Ladies Association have undertaken a number of activities aimed at raising money to support different causes in Lebanon. These activities, maintained through the active Colombian-Lebanese, also impact on the sense of solidarity within the community, also listed by the two authors.

Colombian-Lebanese identity has been influenced by political and economic events both in Colombia and Lebanon. However, as my participants live in Colombia, it is necessary to further explore the influences on identity, not only political/economic but also societal, as it is within Bogota's society that we find the usual space where my Colombian-Lebanese participants interact with other Colombian-Lebanese, and other Colombians in general.

4.4. Contemporary Colombian society and the Colombian-Lebanese

In this section I start with an explanation of their assimilation and their climb to the elite circles of Colombian society. I then explore those characteristics of contemporary Colombian society that have a direct influence on Colombian-Lebanese identity and the

construction of Colombian-Lebanese community, including race, socio-economic status, and religion.

4.4.1. *The assimilation of the Lebanese into Colombian society*

As has been seen in Chapter Three, the Colombian-Lebanese have reached varying levels of economic, social and political spheres in Bogota and Colombia. Those active in the *Colonia* are part of elite society in Colombia, however, not all Lebanese immigrants and their descendants became part of this elite. Here I discuss the process of assimilation of the Colombian-Lebanese into different sectors of Colombian society.

It can be argued that this process follows a typical assimilation pattern as discussed in the theory. According to segmented assimilation theory, the characteristics of a community and the processes migrants encounter in the host society influence the assimilation process, and this assimilation may be upward or downward, depending on the resources available to the migrants (Zhou 1997). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) link this assimilation with the process of family acculturation into the local society, and promote an acculturation that is selective, that is when migrants learn the language and customs of the host society but stay connected to their home culture, with the help of a local migrant community, be it through political organizations, churches, social clubs or informal gatherings.

At the same time, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that acculturation and upward/downward mobility go hand in hand with parental socio-economic conditions, family composition and modes of incorporation. Bejarano's (1997) explanation of the assimilation process for Arab migrants to Ecuador reinforces this argument by arguing that there were two types of early Arab immigrants with different assimilation trajectories: first the stereotypical image of the peddlers, young single males, who worked their way to open shops, married locals and fully assimilated into the into lower/middle levels of local society; and second, immigrants who were members of the Arab bourgeoisie, had a better education, had successful ventures, and had already set a name for themselves in their country of origin. She believes the first group's complete assimilation made their visibility 'almost impossible':

'La mayoría de sus descendientes solo conserva el apellido árabe, pero nada recuerda de sus abuelos, si no es que éstos venían de un país árabe; algunos ni siquiera recuerdan de qué localidad procedían. Esta inmigración, formada por personas anónimas en sus países de origen, pertenecientes a una clase media modesta, fue la que se integró con mayor rapidez en las clases mestizas medias y media-bajas. Estos inmigrantes se desarraigaron y se despojaron de su pasado, se olvidaron de sus costumbres, de su idioma e incluso de su religión, si eran musulmanes'¹⁶ (Bejarano 1997 p.65)

Conversely, she argues that the second type of immigrant never broke ties with the region but continued being involved with the politics of their home country. She argues they also arrived with capital and, once they consolidated their position in their new country, became the leaders of the migrant community, founding organisations and helping the newly arrived. According to Bejarano all of these characteristics allowed the second generations to integrate into the upper and upper-middle classes:

'En la segunda generación los matrimonios mixtos aumentaron, no solo con ecuatorianos sino con extranjeros de las otras colonias... Esta segunda generación fue la que logró penetrar de lleno a las clases medias burguesas, y en varias ocasiones, estos primeros descendientes de árabes pasaron a formar parte de las elites dirigentes ecuatorianas'¹⁷ (Bejarano 1997 p.68)

Bejarano stresses that there is more readily available information for this wealthier, more educated, migrants. All of this suggests that the reason why the Ecuadorian-Lebanese community is part of the elite in Ecuador (or Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia) is not so much because of the economic success of the immigrants, but rather because of their personal socio-economic characteristics at the time of arrival.

¹⁶ 'The majority of their descendants only kept the Arab surname; they only remember that their grandparents came from an Arab country, but some do not even know where they were from. This migration consisted of individuals who were anonymous in their countries of origin who were members of the modest middle classes. They integrated more rapidly into the mestizo middle and lower-middle classes. These immigrants distanced themselves from their past, they forgot about their customs, their language, and in the case of the Muslims, even their religion' - (Bejarano 1997 p.65)

¹⁷ 'Mixed marriages increased in the second generation, not only with Ecuadorians but also with foreigners from other *colonias*... The second generation was the one who was able to fully enter the bourgeoisie middle classes, and often they went to become part of the ruling Ecuadorian elite.' (Bejarano 1997 p.68)

As I showed in Chapter Three, some of my participants do state that their ancestors arrived with more social and economic capital than others. Leichtman (2005) argues that boat tickets to the Americas were more expensive than to Africa; hence the immigrants going to Colombia are likely to have been relatively wealthier than those that headed to Senegal or Ivory Coast. However, Bejarano's argument only involves the personal socio-economic condition of individuals and does not take into consideration the characteristics of the community as a whole, nor the context which the migrants encountered on arrival.

In terms of the context, how the first wave of migrants was seen in local society is important for assimilation (Zhou 1997). As Alfaro-Velcamp (2011) argues, in Latin America, the acculturation of immigrants depended on their nationality: 'desired' immigrants, such as European and North American, did not acculturate, as in many developing countries a foreign status gives legitimacy to individuals and leads to incorporation into elite society. Instead, they retained their culture as well as their "foreignness". However, undesired immigrants/races found it harder to succeed and were forced to assimilate in order to diminish their undesirability. The Lebanese were neither considered desired 'white European' immigrants, nor 'black or Indian' undesired immigrants/races; instead they had a status of 'honorary westerners' (Almeida 1996: 110) or 'foreign citizens' (Alfaro-Velcamp 2013: 100). The ambiguous categorisation led the Lebanese, and Arab immigrants in general, to segmented assimilation. Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) argues that in order to succeed, first generation migrants had to show acculturation into Mexican society, however, what happened then to second and third generations depended on the success of the first. She suggests that the children and grandchildren of economically successful immigrants were able to 'create a new Lebanese Mexican identity', whilst the descendants of less successful ones 'tended to more fully acculturate into Mexican society because they often did not have the time or resources to participate in Arab (and later Lebanese) community activities' (2013: 101). She stresses that it was those that acculturated into the lower and middle classes who were the ones that maintained the least connections to their ancestors' identities to ensure 'survival' in Mexican society, whilst many successful ones became wealthier and became part of the Mexican elite (Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). A similar phenomenon took place elsewhere in Latin American, where the regional context and the personal characteristics of the immigrants and their families defined which segments of society individuals assimilated to.

As seen above, in Latin America 'white' identity has been closely linked with wealth, and poorer individuals are seen as non-white (Chua 2003; Alcantara 2005), hence it can be deduced that the wealthier the Lebanese immigrants and their descendants were, the 'whiter' they became. This allowed them to follow selective acculturation practices which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) favour: wealthy second and third generation descendants of Lebanese acculturated into local elite society, whilst keeping a strong connection to their ethnicity. Alfaro-Velcamp (2013: 100) argues that the Mexican Lebanese define themselves as 'foreign citizens', officially Mexican, born in Mexico, but also identify on their heritage culture. At the same time, she argues that these elite Mexican-Lebanese use this privileged status to differentiate themselves from poorer Mexicans and to explain and validate their elite position.

These same arguments can be applied to the Colombian-Lebanese and the current status of the community. Those that arrived with better social and economic capital are likely to have been able to achieve success more easily to those that did not. However, regardless of their initial resources the Lebanese immigrants must have taken steps to acculturate into Colombian society. The success of these first generation immigrants influenced their surrounding family, not only their descendants but also those who belonged to their family network, and either helped or hindered their status in Colombian society. The class make-up of the network, i.e. if made up of working class families, independent entrepreneurs, or professionals, impacted on the help it could provide (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), as well as the characteristics of the activities it organised (Nagel and Staeheli 2004). Moreover, this situation also influenced the Colombian-Lebanese community as a whole. I have argued that those who are active in the community are wealthy individuals who are part of the Colombian socio-economic elite. Alfaro-Velcamp's argument helps explain why some of them climbed the social ladder and some did not, and it also helps explain the current positioning of the Colombian-Lebanese community. Firstly, the ones who have kept the strongest connections with their Lebanese cultural heritage are those that became part of the elite, hence making it more likely that they will pass that feeling on to third and fourth generations. Secondly, by the time the main organisations were set up the Colombian-Lebanese were already on their road to success. Those that were active in the foundations of these organisations were already climbing the social ladder and eventually reached the elite. Dinneen (2011) suggests that the activities and organisations set up by the migrant communities play a dual role in strengthening their shared cultural identity and by creating

spaces which provide contacts and information, which often turn into assistance and help, facilitating social mobility and economic success. This meant the Colombian-Lebanese organisations not only reinforced the common identity of the participants, but also became part of the drive towards the elite sectors of society. As stated above, those active in the *Colonia* form part of the elite circles in Colombian society. This is unsurprising, as the Colombian-Lebanese organisations have been practically inaccessible to any Colombian-Lebanese who were/are not wealthy.

This acculturation of successful Colombian-Lebanese into the Colombian elite and the assimilation of less successful Colombian-Lebanese into general Colombian society challenge the idea of the Colombian-Lebanese being a diaspora. As I have discussed, Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) offer a number of characteristics of diasporas that apply to the Colombian-Lebanese, including ethnic solidarity and striving for the wellbeing of the homeland which still apply to my participants. However, the desire to return to the homeland and a troubled relationship between the immigrant group and the host society may no longer be relevant. Cohen (1997) explains that members of a diaspora emigrate with the idea of going back to the homeland, often with an idealised image of what they left behind. This may have been the case with the original first generation migrants, however, as they settled, married locals and either acculturated or assimilated, with the passing of generations that desire has generally faded away. As Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) argues, those who were less successful fully assimilated into the local society, and lost all contact with their heritage, making the idea of the 'homeland' irrelevant. Conversely, those that climbed to the elite are likely to hold higher social positions in Colombia than their families did in Lebanon. Rather than a desire to return to the homeland, my participants report a desire to keep connected to it, with the new generations recreating cultural traditions, doing touristic trips or becoming involved in the political processes (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). They chose to maintain their position in elite Colombian society and are able to decide when to portray their Lebaneseness.

Similarly, both Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997) see a 'troubled relationship' between the diaspora and the host society, with the existence of physical, geographical, and/or cultural divisions between them. As has been argued, the physical divisions between the Colombian and the Lebanese were ambiguous and those that did exist were overcome by those becoming wealthy. There has been no record of geographical divisions, and the

cultural divisions were either reversed by those that fully assimilated into Colombian society or used to create a new mixed identity in the elite. Any troubled relationship that may have existed with the first generation was erased by the later ones, and hence current Colombian-Lebanese do not fit certain characteristics of diaspora as proposed by these two authors.

4.4.2. Racial Discrimination

Colombia, as much of Latin America, suffers from deep-rooted, largely unspoken, racism. In broad terms, there is a division between the wealthy white elites, and the black and Indigenous poor. Guarnizo and Diaz (1999) argue that race, class and regional differences play an important part in the everyday relations of Colombians. Moreover, Sarrazin (2009) argues that even though there has been a high level of racial mixing, and behind Colombian nation building there has been an attempt to cultivate a Colombian hybrid race, or mestizo, the elites preferred a whitened population, black and indigenous traits being considered inferior. How has this impacted on the Colombian-Lebanese? As has been argued the Colombian-Lebanese were neither considered desirable European nor undesirable black or Indian. This is partly because of their physical appearance, as according to Ajrouch and Jamal (2007) the Lebanese resemble in appearance other migrants from the Mediterranean, and this fact, together with the fact they are Christians, allowed them to expect the ascribed white identity. Furthermore, it is argued that this Mediterranean-Latin physical appearance allowed them to remain largely invisible (see Zeraoui 2006) and their 'olive-skin' colour was preferred over black (Rhenals and Florez 2013). This suggests that their whiter phenotype favoured them in contrast with other more racially visible groups.

Nevertheless, early Lebanese migrants in the Americas, including in Colombia, do seem to have been the victims of racism and derogatory comments were commonplace (Klich 1992). The label 'Turco' was applied throughout Latin America not just to Lebanese, but to most Middle Easterners. The term was of course inaccurate, as although most of the region was once part of the Ottoman Empire, the Lebanese were neither of a Turkish ethnicity, nor did they speak the language. Accents were also a motive for ridicule and discrimination, as Vargas and Suaza (2007) illustrate, how stereotyping of the Lebanese accent made fun of their seemed inability to properly pronounce the letters P and V replacing them for a strong letter B. Moreover, there were different stereotypical and even

contradicting representations of the 'Turcos', on the one hand being negatively represented as stingy, wanting to cheat the customer into paying more money, whilst on the other being positively portrayed as overly generous and friendly (Vargas and Suaza 2007). This signals that even though the 'white' physical appearance of the Colombian-Lebanese may have made them relatively more invisible than other migrant groups, it was not enough to counter all forms of discrimination.

Racism was most noticeable in political rhetoric and the press in the 1920s and 1930s. Newspapers such as *El Diario* and *La Nación* in Argentina (Klich 1992), and *El Espectador* and *El Periscopio* in Colombia, sometimes carried xenophobic remarks against the Lebanese with insults such as 'asquerosos turcos'¹⁸ (Vargas and Souza 2007), although it rarely escalated beyond words. A number of authors argue that a significant reason for this racism was the commercial competition the Lebanese represented to the already established businesses (Rodriguez and Restrepo 1982; Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992; Vargas and Suaza 2007). This contradicts the previously held view of a successful and, to a large extent, smooth integration process, one which Klich (1992: 267) labels as 'not only hollow but also entirely misleading'. At the same time, these attacks did not go unnoticed and some newspapers and politicians complained about them, refuted them, and defended the Colombian-Lebanese community. Such is the case of Senator Gonzales of Argentina, of Lebanese-Argentinean newspaper *Assalam* (Klich 1992), and also of Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* (Vargas and Suaza 2007), where articles and editorials defending the Colombian-Lebanese community can be found.

Rhenals and Florez (2013) argue that the negative attitudes towards the Lebanese began to change in the 1920s and 30s. They contend that unlike countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, Colombia was not able to attract the desired European migration which corresponded to the preference towards 'white' immigrants. As a result, the Colombian authorities had to reluctantly accept previously unwanted immigrants, such as the Syrian-Lebanese. They argue that the Syrian-Lebanese were able to shake that negative perception and became to be seen as an acceptable replacement to the lack of European immigration. The rhetoric evolved to an acceptance of the mestizo, where white was supposed to positively influence other ethnicities.

¹⁸ Disgusting and/or repulsive Turks

At the same time Vargas and Suaza (2007) argue that the introduction of policies which imposed quotas on certain nationalities represented a direct effect of racist discrimination aimed at curbing the migration of individuals from undesired nationalities. As previously mentioned, the Colombian government introduced in the 1930's a number of policies that included quotas that limited the total number of individuals per year, of certain nationalities including Lebanese, who could enter the country, and the fulfilment of certain conditions including good health and the ability to pay entry fees (Vargas and Suaza 2007; Vargas 2009). It must be remembered that when these earlier migrants arrived, Colombia was linking membership of the Colombian nation with being born and raised on Colombian territory. Those who did not meet these criteria would be considered the 'other'. These discriminatory attitudes and governmental measures would be examples of constructing the 'other'. The measures would represent an official discriminatory policy against those considered undesirable for the country; the policy not only favoured some nationalities more than others, but also wealthier and healthier individuals.

However, Rhenals and Florez (2013: 249-50, 266) argue that the 1930s actually showed a positive change towards the Syrians and the Lebanese as these were less restrictive to those previously implemented. They point to previous laws which were more exclusionary: one aimed to promote only European migration (1871); another prohibited Chinese immigration (1887); one more authorised the governors of the provinces to prevent 'Syrian' migration (1912); and finally a law which explicitly prohibited black immigration (1922). Even though the authors explain that these immigrations laws were largely ineffective, they still show a negative attitude towards certain nationalities¹⁹. In contrast Rhenals and Florez argue that the 1930s laws instead of restricting the entrance of individuals ensured a number of them could enter legally into the country. Later, the quotas were replaced and they relaxed the restrictions by focusing on health and legal requirements. What the policies demonstrate is a shift in general attitudes towards certain nationalities from a more positive outlook. Currently, the Colombian government has imposed visas for nationals of most countries, including Lebanon. The Lebanese government also requires Colombians to obtain a visa before entering the country. These governments have followed the trend of most other countries regarding their choices of visa requirements.

¹⁹ Rhenals and Florez (2013) argue that the European immigrants preferred other countries in the Americas, who offered better incentives, and that the Colombian government had little control over its ports to enforce the different laws and prohibitions.

In addition, the extent to which these racist attacks and policies influenced the Colombian-Lebanese must be put into context. It must be stressed that the attacks they encountered resembled those received by other migrant groups, and mostly came from those suffering the most from this competition i.e. textile merchants and small shop owners. For example, in the 1830s there was an anti-British sentiment from traders who argued could not compete with their imports (Rodriguez and Restrepo 1982), and some communities, like the German, faced more violence (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1992) also related to economic competition. In fact, the discrimination towards immigrants received was not confined to their ethnicity or nationality, as Chinese, Eastern Europeans and Jews, among others, were also held in contempt, and Lebanese migrants in Colombia seemed to have had a very similar experience to those in other countries across the region, such as Brazil, Argentina, or Cuba (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998). Rhenals and Florez (2013) argue that the attacks against the Lebanese were not widespread, and according to Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992) many '*antiturco*' newspapers had low circulation. This is reflected in Vargas and Suaza's study, where only *El Espectador* newspaper had large circulation. Moreover, some authors argue that the *Turco* has not often been used with a negative connotation, and that it has nowadays been largely replaced by the term Arab (Valverde 1992; Vilorio de la Hoz 2003). Even though one cannot paint a rosy picture of the experiences of the Lebanese migrants, as they did have to overcome a number of obstacles including being barred from social clubs and some immigration entry restrictions, these should be seen more as a hurdle in the adaptation process than as any institutional or societal form of entrenched racism (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998). Those Colombian-Lebanese that reached the social, economic and political spheres of the Colombian elite would confirm this.

As has been seen above, in Latin America, social status and racial identification are linked together, and the economic successes of prosperous Colombian-Lebanese were tied to a decrease in discriminatory practices against them. Rhenals and Florez (2013: 262-63) argue that it was their economic success that allowed them to '*romper con las percepciones negativas existentes e irrumpir en los restantes ámbitos de la sociedad...*'.²⁰ Alfaro-Velcamp (2013: 98) notes a shift in the categorisation of Arabic speakers in Mexico and connects it with their road to success. She argues that the shift from *turcos*, to *árabes*, then to *Sirio-*

²⁰ 'break away from the existing negative perceptions and break through the remnant areas of society...'

Libanese, and now to *Libanese* demonstrates their upward social mobility. Indeed, Luz Marina Suaza argued that the racism the Lebanese received changed as they progressed in life, she says:

'Habría que mirar las características mismas del racismo en relación con los árabes. Al comienzo llegaron pobres y todo eso, y alguna gente los criticaba, pero cuando ya tenían plata, cuando empezaron a aparecer en las páginas sociales de los periódicos, ya se construye una idea distinta, porque es que ya tienen plata. Y por la plata baila el perro, y somos muy clasistas...'²¹

I suggested that maybe it was not racism against Arabs, but rather classism causing the discrimination, and she replied:

'exactamente, puede ser muy buena interpretación. Porque ahora igual por ejemplo aquí usted ya nadie le dice 'usted árabe hijuetantas'. Le pueden decir hijuetantas, pero no árabe...'²²

Even more significantly, Alfaro-Velcamp argues that nowadays: 'Lebaneseness has become imbued with a sense of cultural superiority, largely derived from claims to a Phoenician past and to Christian roots' (2013: 98-99). As seen above, the Lebanese claim to foreignness validates and justifies their elite position in society. Indeed, nowadays, the racism against the Colombian-Lebanese has almost been eradicated. On top of their economic success and upward social mobility, most Colombian-Lebanese can become invisible: they have been born and raised in Colombia and their accents are native Colombian; intermarriage has increased their physical resemblance to other Colombians; and their Maronite condition has helped for their invisibility in a Catholic country. In fact, Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) argues that the negative reception they may encounter has to do with their wealth, meaning it would be similar to that received by wealthy non-Lebanese.

The same cannot be said about discriminations towards other ethnic groups, indeed some authors have claimed that discrimination against ethnic minorities in Colombia, that is Indigenous, African-Colombian, and Roma communities, still takes place (see Wade 1995).

²¹ 'We have to look at the characteristics of the racism received by Arabs. At the beginning they arrived poor and some people criticised them. But when they became wealthier, when they starting appearing on the social pages of the newspapers, the ideas changed because they had money, and money talks, we are very classist...' – Luz Marina Suaza

²² 'Exactly, that can be a good interpretation, because nowadays no-one says 'you're an effing Arab', maybe they'll get called effing [something], but not Arab...'

Moreover, Rhenals and Florez (2013) stress that the attitudes towards Afro-Antillean migrants have not improved and in some cases the discrimination has worsened, and the community is still being seen as a hindrance for development and progress. Given the relationship between social status and race, whiteness has more to do with wealth than ethnicity. Hence, the more social and economic success the Colombian-Lebanese experience, the less likely it is they are going to be racially discriminated against. Nowadays, the active Colombian-Lebanese are more likely to be identified as 'white', more due to their socio-economic status than to their physical appearance. This is not the case in other countries as Lebanese migrants elsewhere have suffered from worse discrimination and racism than the Colombian-Lebanese ever did. For example the Cronulla Riots in Australia in 2005 targeted Lebanese communities who were used as scape goats for local problems (Hyndman-Rizik 2008).²³

4.4.3. Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status can be an important factor when considering how successful a particular community is. On the one hand I will look at social discrimination and how this has impacted on the Lebanese and their descendants in Colombia, and on the other, how far the Colombian-Lebanese have been socially mobile and have influenced Colombian society. Social discrimination in Colombia is often more widespread than racial discrimination, but there is still a connection between them. Chua (2003) argues that there is an embedded racism in this social discrimination, which has perpetuated inequalities, and has worsened in the current era of globalisation by reinforcing the economic power of the global 'white' elites. The gap between the rich and the poor is very large indeed, and if racial divisions are often created by class, then the divide between whites and non-whites will also be large.

Socio-economic status in Colombia is discussed informally in terms of the division between upper, middle and lower classes, and more formally through governmental stratification of private properties from one (the lowest) to six. The first informal descriptors are imposed by society and/or individuals on others or on themselves, depending on their particular idea of each social class. Several factors can influence this imposition, including

²³ Hyndman-Rizik (2008: 47) argues that 'the riots clearly represented a merging of anti-Lebanese racism with a broader 'panic' about 'ethnic Australia' and the fear of 'Anglo-decline.' She suggests that the Lebanese in Australia were used as scape goats to signify a larger dislike for the processes that have been taking place there.

family background, education, profession, place of residence, and even the way someone dresses or speaks, and they are used to recognise individuals from different classes. The second differentiator is decided by government officials taking into account the location of the property and the average income of its inhabitants (Uribe-Mallarino 2008). When government reports and newspaper articles address issues of inequality, or compare aspects including access to health and education, crime rates etc. they often refer to the strata division. Moreover, the lower the strata the higher the public service subsidies it receives, whilst the higher strata contribute more towards them (Medina and Morales 2007; Uribe-Mallarino 2008). According to Uribe-Mallarino (2008) this stratification has generated further divisions in Colombian society between classes. It is also visible in the geographical segregation between the North and the South in Bogota.

It is difficult to say which social class the first Lebanese migrants would have fallen into when they arrived in Colombia. The caste system was no longer in place when the Lebanese migrants arrived, however as we have seen Colombian society was still under its influence. A visible example is the immigration quotas introduced by the government, with European migrants, especially northern European, being regarded as more desirable than others. The Lebanese, among other migrants, were not seen as desirable by the government, and therefore would have fallen into a lower class level. Most of the social discrimination they received indeed occurred in the first decades after their arrival. Their inability to join certain social clubs suggests that it is probable they were not considered to be part of the elite social class. As Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1998: 27) argue, in the beginning the Lebanese found the doors to certain exclusive social clubs closed, which led them to create their own social establishments.

The Colombian-Lebanese also made efforts to integrate, not only by marrying locals and thereby interacting with wider Colombian society but also by changing their names to make them sound more Colombian. In some cases, the change may not have been voluntary but a misspelling by the immigration authorities (Zeraoui 2006). For example, some changed into surnames with a similar spelling: Arabic *Doura* became Spanish *Durán*,²⁴ whilst some translated the meaning: Arabic *Harb* was turned into Spanish *Guerra*, both of which mean 'war' (Viloria de la Hoz 2003: 29-30). First names were also changed, francophone Charles became Carlos, and Arabic Youssef became José. This phenomenon

²⁴ My own surname was formerly *Dehabis*: it first evolved into *Debis* to then become *Devis*.

occurred in several countries, for example, Portes and Rumbaut (2001 p.189) who note how in Ellis Island many of the immigrants' names were changed, either by the migrants themselves or by the migration officials:

'Whether those sudden name changes stand as examples of symbolic violence against powerless immigrants or as the strategic choice of ambitious newcomers, the fact is that they often initiated immigrants in a path towards integration into American society. Symbolic acceptance of a new identity could lead the way for entry into a new culture and for learning the ropes of its social hierarchy'.

The name changes are likely to have been significant for the Lebanese immigrants to Colombia as well.

The current status of the Colombian-Lebanese as members of the elite means that they are unlikely to receive social discrimination from the dominant groups in society. There still is discrimination between social classes in Colombia and the class divisions not only reflect economic status, but also form part of an individual's identity. As Alfaró-Velcamp (2013: 100) argues, the Lebanese in Mexico

'use their "foreignness" to distinguish themselves as superior to their Mexican counterparts while often facing contradictory receptions, including xenophobia, because of their wealth...

The active Colombian-Lebanese are likely to suffer from these same discrimination because of their wealth by those in the lower social classes, however, their dominant position means they can disregard this type of discrimination. The issues they are likely encounter have more to do with what is expected from them as part of the elite. As Uribe-Mallarino (2008) argues social class carries social stigma, influencing the desirability of marriage suitors and for friends to be from a similar strata. I have explained that some Colombian-Lebanese have married into influential families. This is mainly because the active Colombian-Lebanese families belong to the same social circles as the Colombian elite: they attend the same schools and universities and are part of the same interest groups (social, religious or political). In this sense, the discrimination the wealthy Colombian-Lebanese currently experience, if they experience any at all, will be because of their socio-economic status and is unlikely to come from within the elite.

As seen in Chapter Two, the idea of creating a Colombian-Lebanese country club in the 1950s, with large open spaces and sports facilities did not materialise. This signals a contradiction with the social discrimination already mentioned, as some individuals were in fact members of other clubs. It is likely that by the 1950s many Colombian-Lebanese were already socially mobile and had access to such clubs. The founding of the *Club Colombo-Libanés* as a city club provided a space for the community to get together, rather than being a response to discrimination. Nowadays, descendants of successful Lebanese migrants are members of the Club in Bogota, whilst others are members of one or more of the many social clubs in Bogota, sometimes combining it with the *Club Colombo-Libanés*, and others do not wish to pursue this type of social activity.

Social Clubs in Bogota and Social Mobility

Social clubs in general are fee charging, private institutions that play an important role in Colombian elite society, by providing places for gathering, networking and a more general pursuit of leisure. For example, Wade (2000: 68) argues that in Colombia 'class identity was expressed powerfully through the creation of elite social clubs'. Therefore, they are also regarded as luxurious places that provide comfort and even security for their members, e.g. Williams and Guerrieri (1999) connect the existence of social clubs with the prevalence of crime and violence in Colombia, suggesting social clubs provide a safe space for its members to participate in social activities.

Social clubs in Bogota can be roughly divided into two categories: city clubs and country clubs. City clubs are inside the city and are important places for social gatherings. The *Club Colombo-Libanés* is a city club and as with other city clubs, its daily activities circle around its members, who often meet to discuss business deals or practise their hobbies, which depending on the club, can vary from playing cards or billiards, to drinking tea or whiskey. These clubs are also often used for celebrations such as wedding receptions (and sometimes ceremonies), graduations, birthday parties etc. They usually have large restaurants, bars and facilities for business meetings. Some also have saunas, gyms or squash courts. A minority operate as male-membership only clubs, where women can only enter if invited by a male member. Country clubs are those often found on the outskirts of the city because of their large size, and part of their appeal lies in the number of activities that can be performed there. They usually have all the amenities city clubs have to offer and in addition numerous sporting activities. Sport is frequently an important part of country

clubs, which usually have golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools and even polo fields or skiing lakes. In addition, some clubs, city or country, cater to specific groups of people, e.g. by profession (lawyers, doctors), hobby (bridge, hunting and fishing), or ethnicity/culture (Lebanese, Hebrew, Italian, German).²⁵

The prestige of the clubs varies depending on their history, tradition and the nature of their members i.e. historically the type of people that have been members of the club,²⁶ and how exclusive has it been throughout the years. Wade (2000: 108) mentions a number of social clubs in Bogota which he considers to be examples of elitism, such as the *Gun Club*, the *Jockey Club*, and the *Country Club*, and he points to its English names, which suggests a desire by the elites in Bogota to appear British or North American, and possibly to stress their whiteness. Sometimes this prestige is tied to the fee its members have to pay, the higher the fees the more exclusive the club, though their tradition also continues to be important. In order to gain access to the club, an individual has to go under scrutiny by a board of directors who may research their family history, profession, business contacts etc. Most of them also operate a system of recommendation, where current members have to propose individuals before they can be considered to join the club and recommendation does not necessarily guarantee entry. Some clubs even operate a vetting system, where a single member can veto an individual – preventing them from becoming a member. Members can also be expelled if they undertake activities that go against the statutes of the club, either within the club or outside of it.²⁷ As Williams and Guerrieri (1999: 38-39) argue:

‘The most elite and traditional private clubs are quite difficult to enter without the proper class credentials and the payment of remarkably high fees. Only the most wealthy individuals whose families have been in the oligarchy for decades find easy access to private clubs...’

Therefore, all of these measures ensure that the clubs remain elitist institutions, where connections, patronage and status are very important. As *Dinero* magazine (2012: online) explains: ‘para ser socio de un club además de tener plata, debe tener buenos amigos’.²⁸ At

²⁵ Karam (2007) argues that in Sao Paulo the Arab-Brazilian country clubs are more elitist than the Arab-Brazilian city-clubs, as the latter are more modest and cater to middle-class families. This is not the case for the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota, first because there is no Colombian-Lebanese or Arab country club, and second because some of the most elitist social clubs are actually male-members-only city clubs.

²⁶ This can be based on class, profession, gender, ethnicity, and/or sports practiced, among others

²⁷ For a more detailed explanation of the history and membership rules of social clubs in Bogota see *Semana Magazine* (1996)

²⁸ ‘in order to be member of a club, you not only need money but also good friends’ – *Dinero* magazine

the same time, individuals can be members of several clubs, if they can afford it and have the right connections.

It can be seen why some Colombian-Lebanese were unable to join certain social clubs in the early days after their arrival, as they would not have been considered part of the elite. This social rejection was also suffered by other non-European migrants, as even though most social clubs in the north of Colombia, including the *Club del Comercio* and the *Club Barranquilla*, had large numbers of immigrants as members, these were mainly European migrants who had arrived some time before the Colombian-Lebanese (Rodríguez and Restrepo 1982). Fawcett and Posada-Carbo (1992) argue that in response to this, the Colombian-Lebanese set up their own social clubs. These include the *Club Unión* in Cartagena, the *Club Campestre del Caribe* in Barranquilla, and the *Club Colombo-Libanés* in Bogotá. However, Villalón (2008) argues that in the 1930s there were more than ten ethnic social clubs in Barranquilla, including American, German, Italian and Spanish clubs suggesting that these social clubs were not only founded due to discrimination but also for community building. Nevertheless, Villalón stresses that these clubs had disappeared by the end of the 20th century.

This discrimination became eventually less evident and as successful Colombian-Lebanese prospered in business, they became more socially mobile, and many of their descendants are now part of the Colombian elite. Indeed most migrant groups with similar characteristics to the Colombian-Lebanese are now considered part of the elite. Moreover, the Colombian-Lebanese mostly settled in less developed areas of Colombia, at a time when industrialisation was taking place. As their business prospered, they became part of the industrialisation wave in that area, ensuring their progress. These profits allowed Colombian-Lebanese parents to give their children a better education, some of them becoming professionals, and once again gaining a foot higher on the social ladder. Many of them eventually moved to bigger cities having made their money in the smaller cities and towns, and their improved economic status allowed them to continue their social mobility and to become part of the Colombian elite. The opportunity of migrating into the big cities, especially to Bogotá, acquiring a good level of education, and a well-remunerated job are significant contributors to upward mobility (Uribe-Mallarino 2008). Indeed, this is what many Colombian-Lebanese families did: a large number had settled in towns near Bogotá, such as Girardot, Honda, Ubaté and Fusagasuga; others in cities such as Ibagué; or towns

further away such as Ocaña; and most eventually moved to Bogota or another of the big cities such as Barranquilla, contributing to making them amongst the largest in Colombia. Eventually, their entry into and success in local and national politics consolidated their elite status.

4.4.4. Religion

The majority of Colombians are Catholics and religion still plays a significant part in Colombian society. Religion has been important because of the bonds it has created among its followers strengthening solidarity and fraternity (Ikonómova 2005). Furthermore, religion has deep roots in Latin American culture and Christianity has been the 'force behind the determination of the hemispheric culture and the organisation of society, supporting economic development and shaping the way politics and government are exercised' (Samper 2004: 259-60). These statements link with Garcia's argument that religion has been a factor in the consolidation of Colombian national identity, and the nation building process. Religion, therefore, has not only been influential and an important force for development in Colombia, but also influential for the experiences of Lebanese migrants, impacting on Colombian-Lebanese identity.

Maronites

Lebanese Christians had a religious bond with Catholic Latin America, as the majority of them are Maronites, and the Maronite Church has had an alliance with Rome since 1180. Maronite priests studied in Rome but were allowed to carry on performing their services with Eastern rituals. Henley argues that the Maronite Patriarchs are:

'...in full communion with Rome, the Maronite Church being a self-governing body under the umbrella of the Catholic mother church, with the patriarch subject only to the universal jurisdiction of the papacy' (Henley 2008 p.355)

The violence and conflict in Lebanon led many Maronites to look for Christian countries to migrate to. Indeed, Fawcett (1992) argues that the largest proportion of Lebanese migrants in Colombia were of Maronite tradition. Dejar (1993) uses his family the Chadid as an example, claiming they escaped religious and political persecution in Lebanon and chose countries that had Catholic majorities, which allowed them to practise their faith. Moreover, as Father Naji, the Maronite priest in Colombia stated during my interview, the Eastern and

the Latin churches ‘tenemos la misma dogma’²⁹. Martinez-Assad (2009 p.107) argues the similarity between them allowed them to integrate into society:

‘Los libaneses nunca fueron percibidos como una amenaza para el cambio de costumbres de los mexicanos. Por el contrario, descubrieron virtudes en los recién llegados como la del trabajo y el compartir los valores religiosos, si no idénticos, muy cercanos. La evidencia está en los matrimonios mixtos que en seguida fueron autorizados...’³⁰

Therefore, it would not have been difficult for Maronites to convert to Catholicism, or practise under Catholic rituals in Colombia, if they had wanted to do so, easing the integration of Colombian-Lebanese Maronites into the general Colombian society. Interestingly, one of the four current Maronite hermits in Lebanon is Colombian.³¹

The Maronite Church has been present in a number of Latin American countries for many decades now. For example, Argentina has had a Maronite Mission since 1901, including a school founded in 1902 named *Colegio San Marón*,³² after their religious saint (*Misión Libanesa Maronita en la Argentina* 2001). The first Maronite parish, of many, was set up within the school in 1925 (Klich 1992). The first recorded Maronite mass in Mexico took place in Mexico City in 1906 (Martinez-Assad 2009) and a Maronite priest led a congregation in Havana, Cuba from 1899 (Menendez-Paredes 2009). Elsewhere, the Maronite community in Australia built the first church in Sydney in 1897, then in Melbourne in 1955, and a second church in Sydney in 1972 (Batrouney 1992). Even though the Maronite Colombian-Lebanese have been living in the country for generations, it was only in 2004 that a chapel dedicated to San Marón was established and in July 2008 that the parish was formed. The masses are well attended, and not all the congregation are Colombian-Lebanese but also non-Lebanese Colombians. However, it is difficult to tell how many in the congregation consider themselves to be Maronites, as most were raised as Catholics. Father Naji argues that the Church also works as a greater Eastern church, not only for

²⁹ ‘we have the same dogma’ – Father Naji

³⁰ ‘The Lebanese were never perceived as a threat to Mexican customs. On the contrary, they [the Mexicans] discovered similar, if not identical, virtues to those that had just arrived, like work [ethic] and sharing religious values. The evidence is in the mixed marriages that were soon authorised...’ (Martinez-Assad 2009 p.107)

³¹ Hourani and Habachi (2004) note that Colombian priest Dario Escobar is one of the four current Maronite hermits in Lebanon. However, priest Escobar is not of Lebanese decent and he was trained as a Roman Catholic priest. They suggest his conversion to Maronitism had more to do with his interest in eremitism as it is practised in Lebanon, than on religious differences with mainstream Catholicism. Escobar became a hermit in 2000.

³² However, some six decades after the foundation the *Colegio San Maron*, it was described as *católico apostólico romano*, instead of Maronite (Klich 1992).

Maronites but also for Orthodox, Melkites, Syriacs and Coptic Christians, and even for Muslims. He also stressed that the Maronite Church seeks to keep developing its good relations with the established Catholic Church, and that there are at least four Catholic bishops in Colombia who are of Lebanese descent. Therefore, Father Naji argues, they are not attempting to act as a replacement but rather to enrich the Church with the Maronite rituals (see Chapter Seven). Given the importance of religion to a sense of Colombianness (Garcia 2007), it can be argued that in order to integrate and become successful in the country the religion of the Colombian-Lebanese needed to be similar to Colombian's Catholicism.

Muslims

The other religion present in the Colombian-Lebanese community is Islam. As seen in Chapter Three, the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese migration can be divided into those that arrived during the large waves of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and those that arrived during and after the Lebanese Civil War (see Chapter Three). Even though the Maronite religion eased the interactions with the general population in Colombia, non-Christian religions would have been an obstacle to this successful interaction. Garcia (2007: 54-55) argues that most Lebanese Muslims who arrived at the time of the first migrations did not suffer from religious persecution as such in Colombia, but that most of them lost their religious identity due to difficulties in teaching and practising it. She argues this was not due so much to religious harassment but rather to being ignored by the authorities. Colombian-Lebanese Muslims had to enrol their children in Catholic schools, as the large majority of Colombian educational centres were religious at the time. The Catholic influence on the country meant that it was not until the 1930's that non-Catholic places of worship were allowed. As Garcia (2007: 58-59) argues:

‘...los inmigrantes musulmanes no encontraron los espacios jurídicos ni políticos que les permitiera mantener una identidad religiosa propia’³³

Indeed, Zeraoui (2006) and Bruckmayr (2010) suggest early Muslim migrants had a difficult time integrating in Latin American Christian societies, due to the non-existence of places of worship and the small number of Muslim women. Zeraoui (2006) argues this led to Muslims

³³ ‘...the Muslim immigrants did not find the juridical or political spaces that would allow them to maintain their own religious identity’ (Garcia (2007: 58-59)

having the largest return rate. Moreover, Garcia (2007) states that as the Muslims were also a minority within the Colombian-Lebanese their dispersion further contributed to the loss, as did the lack of support of Muslim teachers and the absence of Spanish language versions of the Koran for later generations who lost the Arabic language.

A number of authors argue that all of this led many original Muslim migrants to convert to Christianity in different Latin American countries order to ease the integration process (Klich 1992; Valverde 1992; Garcia 2007; Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). The process of assimilation into local culture included achieving social and economic stability, marrying locals, and becoming less religious (Montenegro 2009c). The strength of Catholicism in the country indirectly led to many of those early Muslim migrants losing their connection with Islam, and nowadays many of their Colombian-Lebanese descendants may not even be aware of their Muslim roots.

Even though the presence of Arab Muslims in Latin America goes back to the first wave of migration, it was not until the last decades of the 20th century that a variety of organisations were set up, including the first mosques in Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil in the 1980s and in Colombia and Venezuela in the 1990s.³⁴ These organisations were likely to have been influenced by the wave of migration in the 70s and 80s. It brought larger numbers of Muslim migrants, not only Lebanese, but also Palestinians and Syrians, who have been able to maintain their religion and traditions. As seen in Chapter Three, a number of factors, most significantly the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War influenced the second wave of Lebanese migration. Bruckmayr (2010) argues the Lebanese that arrived in this wave concentrated in the 'free-trade zones' of San Andres and Maicao. According to Garcia (2007: 16) Maicao is also one of the two most representative Muslim communities in Colombia, together with Bogota, as they have the largest numbers and the highest levels of organisation. Garcia says the biggest mosque of Latin America is in Maicao, and that the community also has their own educational establishments: the *Colombo-Árabe* School, and

³⁴ These include the mosque in Buenos Aires (1985), and another financed by the Saudis (2001), a mosque in Torreon, Mexico (1989), Centro Cultural Islamico in Mexico City (1995), Centro Cultural Islamico in Sao Paulo (1989), Mosque in Caracas (1993), Islamic Charity Association in Bogota (1979) Mosque in San Andres (1993), in Maicao (2007), and in Bogota Istanbul Mosque (2008) and Mosque Abou Bakr Alsiddiq in Bogota (2013) (Klich 1992; Bertet 2009; Montenegro 2009c; Bruckmayr 2010; Alfaro-Velcamp 2011; and my participants Khalid and Eugenio)

a centre for Islamic religious formation. Still, the mosque in Maicao was only built in 1997 (Bruckmayr 2010).³⁵

Islamic Centres were founded before these dates and often located in offices or houses, like an Islamic centre in Buenos Aires in the 1970s (Klich 1992), as well as the *Asociación Benéfica Islámica*³⁶ in Bogota in 1979, according to my participant Khalid (2003). They were often located in former office spaces and not recognisable buildings. In Bogota there are two Sunni mosques, a Shiite Islamic Cultural Centre,³⁷ and an office serving as a Shiite mosque.³⁸ The Islamic Cultural Centre was founded in 1993 by Colombian converts (Garcia 2007), however, by 2013 it had relocated to a town near Bogota. The Sunni Istanbul mosque was founded in 2005 and is located within a dated house in an older traditional neighbourhood of Bogota. A new Sunni mosque, named Abu Bakr, is being constructed in the west of Bogota and supported by the *Asociación Benéfica Islámica*. Garcia (2007) argues that concentration in Bogota and Maicao, as well as the comparatively larger number of Muslims migrating, has allowed them to keep their religious identity, as well as their language, costumes, and food.

Just as with national figures, it is difficult to estimate the number of Muslims in Bogota. Newspaper articles give different numbers, ranging from 1,000 (*El Tiempo* 2013), to 1,500 (Galindo 2012), to 3,000 (Valenzuela 2012).³⁹ At the same time, Khalid argues that in Bogota there are around 500 to 1000 Muslims. He claims that the discrepancy is because they have never done a census.

Additionally, there are no official figures for the numbers of Sunnis and Shiites in Bogota. According to my participants, there are more Sunnis than Shiites in Bogota:

³⁵ According to Bruckmayr (2010) the first mosque in Colombia was built in San Andres in 1993 by Muslims migrating from other Caribbean islands.

³⁶ Islamic Beneficial Association

³⁷ Centro Cultural Islámico

³⁸ Even though my participants referred to the Shiite site as a mosque, it would be better described as a prayer rooms, due to their size and location.

³⁹ As seen in Chapter Three, the estimates for the total number of Muslims in Colombia vary from 15,000 to almost 5 million.

'Hay más sunitas, muchas más. Por lo menos diez veces más. Que es el mismo porcentaje entre los sunitas en el mundo y los chiitas, el mismo porcentaje acá'⁴⁰ (Khalid 2013)

'Chiitas y sufís son una cosa muy minoritaria [en Bogotá]. A ver, yo creo que por cada cien [sunitas] habrá unos ocho máximo, eso es muy poquito lo que hay.'⁴¹ (Eugenio 2013)

The fact that both are Sunni imams suggests that they would be likely to underestimate the proportion of Shiite Muslims. However, the presence of two large Sunni mosques in Bogota compared to a small location for the Shiite prayer room, as well as an older Sunni Islamic organisation and the relocation of the Shiite cultural centre, seems to support their arguments.

Similarly, the number of Muslim Lebanese is even more difficult to estimate. There are no exclusively Lebanese or Arab Muslim organisations. Khalid estimates that only around 100 Muslims in Bogota are Lebanese:

'...Los libaneses musulmanes son muy pocos, como alrededor de 100 personas. Pero claro si nos referimos a los Libaneses acá en Colombia, 80% de ellos no son musulmanes, son católicos-maronitas, u ortodoxos, si la mayoría.'⁴² (Khalid 2013)

Nevertheless, no Muslims were active participants in any of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations that I investigated. Alfaro-Velcamp (2011) also noticed the lack of Muslim Lebanese in the elite Mexican organisations and suggests that this is partly due to Lebanese Mexican identity being constructed under Christian/Maronite ideals. In addition to this, there are also socio-economic differences between the Muslim and Christian Colombian-Lebanese. As I explained many Colombian-Lebanese Muslims have been in Colombia less than forty years, meaning they have had less time to fully integrate into society and climb the social ladder. Likewise, due to their religion, marriages with individuals from the local elite are likely to be more difficult (than for Maronite Colombian-Lebanese).

⁴⁰ '[In Bogota] there're a lot more Sunni's, a lot more, at least ten times more. It's the same percentage of Sunnis and Shiites in the world.' - Khalid

⁴¹ 'Shiites and Sufis are a minority [in Bogota]. Let's see, I think that for every one hundred [Sunnis] there must be eight maximum, that's very small numbers.' - Eugenio

⁴² 'There's very few Muslim Lebanese, around 100 people. If we talk about the Lebanese here in Colombia, 80% of them are not Muslim. They are Maronite-Catholics or Orthodox, the majority' – Khalid

The socio-economic differences are noticeable in the locations of the Islamic organisations, as these are in middle/lower-middle class neighbourhoods in Bogota, compared to the upper-class neighbourhoods that the Club and Maronite Parish are based in.⁴³ In terms of occupations, Garcia's (2007) participants suggest a large number of Muslims are entrepreneurs who have their own businesses, in most cases a single store or office. These businesses, however, are smaller than those owned by the Maronite Colombian-Lebanese who usually own large companies, factory lines and/or specialise in the mass supply of goods to other businesses.⁴⁴

As can be seen, religion has had a significant influence on the migrants: it eased the settlement period, but it also caused many of them, both Maronites and Muslims, to lose their religious roots. A switch to Catholicism (and back) was easier for Maronites than Muslims due to the former's similarities with Catholicism. Religion has also influenced the ease of integration, allowing Maronites to climb the social ladder, whilst making it more difficult for Muslims to do the same.

4.5. Generations and migration waves

All of this has led to the current positioning of the Colombian-Lebanese community. In order to understand its current situation two further aspects need to be taken into account: first the generational make-up of the community, and second, the transnational processes they create or are experience. As seen in Chapter Three, there have been two waves of Lebanese migration, and each wave will be different in terms of these two aspects.

The generational make-up of any community is important for the understanding of their internal workings. A generation can help explain the influence of the migrant identity, but it does not clarify the age distribution within that generational bracket. For example, 'current' second generation individuals could be anything from elderly individuals whose parents may have passed away decades ago, to teenagers and young adults whose parents are still active in the community. With my participants, as it can be expected, there is overlap between generations: first and second, second and third, and third and fourth. There are also differences between the waves. As the first wave took place between 1890s-1930s, this

⁴³ The Beneficial Association is based on north-west of Bogota (Calle 80 with Carrera 30) and the Cultural Centre is north of the centre of Bogota (Calle 45 with Carrera 14), both in houses smaller than the Club.

⁴⁴ For an example of this see the differences in the bakeries owned by Colombian-Lebanese in Chapter Six

group is now mostly composed of their second and third generation descendants, though there are also fourth and even fifth generation Colombian-Lebanese. As seen in Chapter Three, the second wave has mainly first generation immigrants, and a higher number of males of working age. Hence, the first generation has an older group in their late 60s and 70s, remnants of the first wave networks, and a younger group in their 20s-40s who migrated more recently.

As I have argued, the assimilation and acculturation processes of the two waves have been different. Whilst the second wave was mostly Muslim and has not reached the elite, the first was mostly Christian and many were able to maintain their Lebanese cultural heritage as they climbed the social ladder, whilst some were not as successful and completely assimilated into Colombian society. This is replicated in other Latin American countries, e.g. Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) argues that even though most still active in the Lebanese *Colonia* in Mexico belong to the second and third generations of the first wave, they still have a cultural identification with Lebanon. This identification has been handed down from older generations and recreated by the later generations, and it further shows the acculturation process they experienced as they climbed the social ladder, as they drew from both their Lebanese heritage and their local Mexican (or Colombian) environment. Importantly, the identification has not come from the second wave of migration, as the differences between the two migration waves and their current position in society have led to a division between them. Batrouney (1992) argues that the descendants of the early migration wave, now second, third and fourth generation Australian-Lebanese, have little or no contact with those who have migrated after 1975. He suggests that the earlier Christian migrants have animosity towards the newer, mainly Muslim immigrants: earlier migration has been upwardly mobile, has successful businesses and has acculturated into Australia, whilst maintaining a united community; instead the new immigrants are not only mostly Muslim, generating a difference from mainstream Australian society, but they also brought with them the divisions generated by the Lebanese Civil War, which led to divisions within the community, and have not (yet) been as successful as the previous migrants, suffering from high unemployment rates (up to 34%). Batrouney (1992) suggests this has led the descendants of the earlier migrants to feel like the newer Muslim migrants challenge their position in Australian society. As I have argued, the presence of Muslims in the Colombian-Lebanese organisations in Bogota is non-existent, and the connections between individuals

are minimal as well, suggesting this same phenomenon is taking place in Colombia.⁴⁵ This indicates that the second generation and third generations of the first migration wave have kept their cultural heritage without having to interact with those arriving in the second wave. This further suggests that the Colombian-Lebanese identity of my participants is heavily influenced by their socio-economic status, sometimes more than any common ethnicity.

4.5.1. Generations and Lebanese identity

Apart from the first generation, my Colombian-Lebanese participants do not differentiate themselves by generation but rather by age and family participation. As explained above, most active Colombian-Lebanese are part of the second and third generations, and, due to the time of the migration of their ancestors, they are mostly middle-aged and older. Mason (2007) argues that conflicting and overlapping feelings of home are felt more for later generations, where memory replaces experience when referring to the homeland. Home may be more than one place at a time, but it could also not be anywhere in its entirety. She argues that these later generations show a high measure of hybridity, consciously shifting different aspects of their identity between the home where they live and the home where their ancestors came from. These differences cause what Hyndman-Rizik (2008) describes as the 'migration lag', where many years after migrating, individuals and communities try to maintain the past cultural practices of the homeland, even if these are not present there anymore. She points towards a renewed religiosity among the certain Lebanese Maronite sectors in Sydney.

This 'migration lag' has also occurred with my participants, whose experiences of living in Lebanon come mostly out their ancestors' memories. As seen in Chapter Eight, a number of events have reignited the Lebanese identification of many of my Colombian-Lebanese participants. Often the influence of these events is first felt by my middle-age and older participants, who have either continued participating in the organisations of the community or have suspended their participation, only to reconnect with the community after the influence takes place. This occurs regardless of their generation, as there are first, second and third generation Colombian-Lebanese who recounted going through this process. This took place with the events leading to the foundation of the Ladies Association

⁴⁵ See Chapter Six for a discussion of the social interaction between the migrants (and their descendants) of the first and the second waves.

(see Chapter Six), the inauguration of the Maronite parish (see Chapter Seven), and the reorganisation of the ULCM (see Chapter Eight). These organisations have worked at maintaining that reignited identification alive by creating a series of events, performances and activities, aimed at attracting other Colombian-Lebanese, including those who had little contact with the community and, especially, young Colombian-Lebanese adults (see Chapters Six and Eight). The younger Colombian-Lebanese belong to the third, fourth and fifth generations and most of them only got involved in the new organisations and events after encouragement from the older generations, many times older family members. At the same time, these younger Colombian-Lebanese have taken the flag in regards to recruiting, and currently organise a number of activities aimed at increasing participation amongst young Colombian-Lebanese (see Chapter Six). They also administer the Facebook page.

4.5.2. *The current impact of transnationalism*

Just as the generations of Colombian-Lebanese have not been static, the processes surrounding them have also evolved, including their transnational practices. Vertovec (1999) defines transnationalism as a multiplicity of connections between different actors, from individuals to institutions, crossing the borders of two or more states, and argues that transnationalism evokes a diasporic consciousness, arguing that 'the awareness of multi-locality stimulates the desire to connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there' who share the same 'routes' and 'roots' (p.450). In the first generation, Colombian-Lebanese transnationalism included a physical connection, with individuals traveling back to the homeland to visit relatives, look for marriage partners and improve business contacts (see Chapter Three). As individuals assimilated into Colombian society, they either lost their connection or their transnational processes changed. Over the years, fewer and fewer travelled back to look for spouses and the transnational connections became less physical, with political involvement becoming the preferred transnational connection with Lebanon (Vertovec 1999; see Chapters Five and Eight). The outbreak of the Civil War practically ended the travels to Lebanon, but increased charity donations done through the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. At the same time, it deepened the divisions in Lebanon and led to the second wave of migration, both of which caused friction within the community. According to Hourani (2007), with the end of the Civil War the numbers of Lebanese descendants visiting the country has increased, as they visit the towns where they families travelled from and get to know the 'homeland' (see Chapter Eight). In fact, Mizobuchi and Takaoka (2013)

argue that these 'home' visits are limited to family networks, i.e. diaspora families that still have connections with family members in Lebanon. However, Dinneen (2011) suggests that the fact transnational activity is present in a community it does not mean all members of the community take part in such transnational processes. In terms of the return visits, Mizobuchi and Takaoka (2013) argue that it is usually the wealthier Lebanese the ones who keep in touch with their family abroad, as they are more likely to travel and visit them. It is likely that this is replicated too with the other transnational activities, at least for the descendants of the first wave.

Still, virtual transnational processes became more prominent. Technological advances mean that younger generations do not have the same experiences as previous ones (Portes 1997), as new information technologies have had a lasting influence on migrant communities. Mannur (2003) argues that virtual connections have allowed the more affluent members to stay in touch with their countries' activities, bypassing territoriality, and connecting not only different countries, but going beyond them. Similarly, Mason (2007 p.279) recognises that those raised in the technological era have a more virtual relationship with the country of their ancestor, with the use of the internet and satellite. These opportunities have also meant the experiences of the second wave of migrants are different to the first. Bruckmayr (2010: 153) argues that second wave migrants have had more opportunities to stay in touch with people, Lebanese culture and Lebanon: 'networking possibilities of the era of globalisation are indeed conducive to a preservation of the Arabic language and original sectarian identity (either Christian or Muslim) among later immigrants'. Conversely, as seen in Chapter Three, first wave migrants did not enjoy the heightened opportunities to protect certain cultural characteristics. As I discussed above, the myth of return is not present on the descendants of the first wave migrants as they have either lost their connection to Lebanon or successfully acculturated and used their Lebaneseness for their advantage. At the same time, Abdelhady (2010: 177) suggests that transnational practices may have also have replaced the desire to return of second wave migrants:

'In a global world, the myth of return is no longer meaningful, even as a rhetorical device, since moving back and forth is relatively easy. As a result, maintaining transnational attachments is a preferred mode of keeping the homeland alive in the daily experiences of members of the Lebanese diaspora'.

These same technological advances have influenced the descendants of the first wave of migrants, but in a slightly different way. As has been argued, some of these descendants reached the elite spheres of Colombian society and as such, they can take advantage of current transnational processes from that advantageous position. Similar stories can be drawn from elite Lebanese communities in a number of Latin American countries, including Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador and Chile (Almeida 1997; Karam 2007; Bartet 2009; Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). As Agar-Corbinos (2009: 153) argues:

‘en el lapso de un siglo se advierte una escalada impresionante: su llegada, en términos precarios con dedicación al comercio; luego, la creación de pequeñas, medianas o grandes industrias; enseguida, su participación financiera interna y su posterior expansión al resto de América Latina. Por tal motivo, existe en estos grupos igual comportamiento acorde con el comportamiento de las esferas altas de la economía internacional.’⁴⁶

As explained in Chapter Three, the rise to the elite took place with economic success. The business ventures of the Lebanese and their descendants prospered and enlarged. What started in many cases as shops, in time, became large companies and some even multinational corporations represented in different countries. Their business models are now transnational, covering several countries in a number of regions, and production is no longer confined to Lebanon or the Middle East, but to expanding markets such as China, India and South East Asia.

In addition, the active Colombian-Lebanese are also enjoying the development of these transnational processes; not due to their ethnicity but due to their socio-economic position. Dinneen (2011) argues that his participants (members of a diaspora) go further than before when developing their transnational connections; they look to other places outside the traditional home and host countries for work and study opportunities, facilitated by the new technologies which allow them to stay in touch and access cheaper travel. As Bartet (2009) argues, many young descendants of Arab immigrants in Peru share their goals of living abroad, to work or study, with the rest of young Peruvians. Indeed, many younger Colombian-Lebanese have visited Lebanon, taken courses at universities there and

⁴⁶ ‘With the passing of a century the impressive climb is evident: the poor condition they were in at their arrival and their predisposition to commerce; then, the establishment of small, medium or large-sized industries; followed by their participation in finance, internally at first and then their expansion to the rest of Latin America. Because of this, these groups demonstrate the same behaviour as that of the high spheres in international economy’ (Agar-Corbinos 2009)

learnt the language. In fact, three of my younger participants took language and/or university courses in Lebanon. However, many more have chosen other countries to study, including two of those that spent time in Lebanon, plus another three of my participants also studied in other countries. In addition, most of the children of my second and third generation middle-aged participants have also studied abroad, in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Canada, the US, France, Spain, China and Australia. Similarly, even though some have travelled to Lebanon in various occasions, they are even more likely to travel to Europe and within the Americas. Moreover, even though Bruckmayr (2010) reports current technological advances make it easier for individuals to transfer the Arabic language, for the descendants of the first wave, the global nature of English makes it a preferred second language, over the language of their ancestors (Dinneen 2011). Once again, the behaviour of my Colombian-Lebanese participants is more closely defined by their socio-economic status than their ethnicity.

4.5.3. Elite ‘foreign-citizens’ as a focus for research

As has been argued, the main focus of my thesis is on an elite group of Colombian-Lebanese individuals, active in a number of ethnic organisations in Bogota. The thesis also offers a discussion on non-elite Colombian-Lebanese, especially Muslim Lebanese and their descendants and of the interaction between these two groups. As argued above, the Colombian-Lebanese have used their ethnicity and status as ‘foreign-citizens’ (Alfaro-Velcamp 2013) to strengthen and validate their elite socio-economic position in Colombian society. This makes part of my thesis focus on a socio-economically privileged ethnic community. Vallejo (2009), in her work on the Latino community in the US, claims most research in this area has focused on the disadvantaged, discriminated against and undocumented. However, she argues that this type of research is incomplete as it:

‘...do[es] not allow for the possibility that second and later generations can become upwardly mobile and middle-class without cutting their ties with the ethnic community and becoming white’ (2009 p.133)

Likewise, Pott (2001 p.169), in his study of second generation Turks in Germany, questions:

‘The widespread assumption that the social utility value of ethnicity automatically declines during the upward mobility process...’

Some Colombian-Lebanese have indeed lost contact with the *Colonia*; as seen above, those who were less successful were more likely to fully assimilate into lower levels of Colombian society, and hence have been more likely to lose their connection with their ethnic heritage. However, there is still a significant number of elite Colombian-Lebanese who are active members of the organisations and participate in their events.

Both Vallejo and Pott see ethnicity as a possibly helpful factor for an individuals' social upward mobility. Indeed, Pott (2001 p.173) argues that ethnicity can be considered:

'...a social resource that can also be used by Turkish climbers of the social ladder in Germany... Due to its flexibility, ethnicity can be used in various ways and situations in the process of social mobility'

And Vallejo (2009: p.151) proposes that other migrant communities can be investigated:

'Future studies should examine how upwardly mobile middle-class immigrants and succeeding generations engage a minority culture of mobility by organizing "middle-class ethnic capital" as a resource to create social spaces that are springboards for socioeconomic advancement'

Indeed, this is the route I take in the following chapters, where I analyse the different ways the Colombian-Lebanese have used their ethnicity and social status to strengthen, improve or facilitate different areas of their lives, whilst at the same time being able to decide how and when to use them.

4.6. Summary

This chapter has explored the current location of the *Colonia* in Colombian society, starting with a geographical explanation of their location in Bogota. The process of nation building in Colombia is also explored, as are certain political events in Lebanon which influenced the Colombian-Lebanese community, including the Lebanese Civil War and the 2006 July War, which created divisions as well as reignited a Colombian-Lebanese identification for some of my participants. The focus stayed on Colombia as it is the place where my Colombian-Lebanese participants live. An explanation of the elite in Colombia was given, including the connection between socio-economic status and perceived whiteness. In addition, the three historical periods of nation-building in Colombia, proposed by Garcia, were explored:

religion, territory, and law. The section focused on the current period based on law, and then on the influence of governmental policies aimed at increased patriotism in Colombia. These have been influencing the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese.

It discussed the process of assimilation of the Colombian-Lebanese into Colombian society, reasoning for their elite positioning and how they engaged with factors influencing this process, including race, socio-economic status, and religion. More specifically, it explained how the Colombian-Lebanese were at the receiving end of racist remarks soon after their arrival. Nevertheless, due to their social mobility and closeness with the Catholic religion they were able to integrate into society. However, Muslim Colombian-Lebanese have had a different experience to Maronite Colombian-Lebanese, not only because of the religion difference but also because of the socio-economic differences. Finally, it addressed the current generational composition of the Colombian-Lebanese community, offering a comparison between the two migration waves, and looking at the impact different transnational processes have had on them. This chapter has aimed to contextualise the research sites and the data I have collected, which I will examine in the later chapters, and furthermore has highlighted the importance of the socio-economic standing of my Colombian-Lebanese participants, both for them as individuals and for the community as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND PERFORMING ETHNICITY: THE COLOMBIAN-LEBANESE EXPERIENCE

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the concepts of space, performance and community, which help me better understand and explain the processes related to ethnicity I explore in the subsequent chapters. It sets a conceptual frame for the data analysis that takes places in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The main recurring theme of this thesis is the role of ethnicity in constructing identity, in particular the identity of a specific group of elite Colombian-Lebanese individuals in Bogota.

The chapter first introduces some approaches to discussing identity, which are helpful to understand the significance of the concept for this type of study. Throughout the thesis, I focus on three different areas which influence Colombian-Lebanese identity: ethnicity, social status and religion. These are constantly interrelated and fluid, but not exclusive. Other categories, such as generation, gender and/or political allegiance can also be significant. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study my focus is mainly on the three areas already mentioned. What is more, I also examine the importance of the 'visibility' of ethnicity for my participants, as this is influenced by both religion and social status, as well as the concepts discussed in this chapter. The concept of space helps explain how these identities interact with each other and the significance where these interactions take place in Bogota. The concept of performance is useful to understand the portrayals of Colombian-Lebanese identity, as well as the construction of traditions and of memories. The concept of community is important to appreciate the nature of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations and the boundaries of the *Colonia*.

5.2. Identity

'Identity', of course, is a widely discussed and debated term. As Chan (2004: 190-91) argues:

'Identity is a slippery thing. It is elusive, hard for the theorist to pin down; it is complex and multifaceted because it is sometimes displaced or positioned depending on the nature of the audience, or... the presence of the other'.

This difficulty is equally apparent when authors define the term:

'[identity is] the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past'. (Hall 1990: 225)

'identity is the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning'. (Castells 2004: 6)

These authors suggest that positionality, both self-defined and imposed by others; and commonality, which varies with the surroundings, are the bases for identity. However, questions arise regarding different temporal spaces that can influence positionality; and how the 'other sources of meaning' (Castells 2004: 6) can also result in the construction of identity through common 'otherness'. These are examples of both the ambiguity of the term and of the different points of view it raises. This has led Chan (2004) to argue that identity is not a determinant, as it is changeable and transformative, where the views of the individual self and the other are important, as well as the level of tolerance that exist between them. Hall also recognises this, and implies that the discussion should move towards identification, which he defines as 'the process by which groups... try to construct us within symbolic boundaries in order to locate us' (Hall 1996: 130). This understanding of identification helps explain the sense of belonging of the Colombian-Lebanese, as not only their own idea of where they belong is important, but also where others believe they belong.

As explained, this research examines the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese through the categories of ethnicity, social-status, and religion. These were the areas of most significance observed during the data collection process and its subsequent analysis. As shown below, the Colombian-Lebanese see themselves as a particular community within Colombia; they feel solidarity to both Lebanon and Colombia; and sometimes develop a resistance identity, e.g. in support of the Lebanese in Lebanon, as seen in their protests against the July War. In addition, the Colombian-Lebanese usually describe themselves as both Colombian and Lebanese, explaining the difference by making reference to their own bodies:

'yo me siento colombiano, pero con glóbulos rojos libaneses'.¹

(Enrique 2008)

'yo me siento colombiana y libanesa... de corazón me siento de ambos países'.²

(Angelica 2009)

'me siento colombiano en gran parte, pero parte del corazón y del alma están en el Líbano'.³

(Edgar 2008)

These quotations show how my participants link their ethnicities to form a combined Colombian-Lebanese label. This style of self-identification mirrors Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 16) study where their participants 'describe themselves using a hyphenated identity that links the US and their homeland', demonstrating that they belong simultaneously to both countries. For example, my participant Eduardo (2008) described himself as 'un libanés orgullosamente colombiano'.⁴ The hyphenated identities can be ethnic (Colombian-Lebanese), as well as religious (Catholic-Maronite). Moreover, these are not only described by my participants but also performed by them. For example, by portraying Colombian and Lebanese national symbols (see Chapter Eight) or by incorporating both Catholic and Maronite rites in religious services (see Chapter Seven).

5.2.1 Multiple identities

Issues surrounding the ethnic identity of migrants, their descendants and their communities are also significant for this research. Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 158) argue that:

'ethnic identification begins with the application of a label to oneself in a cognitive process of self-categorization, involving not only a claim to membership in a group or category, but also a contrast of one's group or category with other groups or categories'.

It is not only necessary for the Colombian-Lebanese to create an internal view of themselves, but this view must be compared to the views others have of them. Moreover, location is an important consideration when examining ethnic identity: to what or to whom the Colombian-Lebanese feel identified, whether to a nation-state, a locality, an

¹ 'I feel Colombian, but with Lebanese red blood cells' – Enrique

² 'I feel Colombian and Lebanese... my heart belongs to both countries' - Angelica

³ 'I feel Colombian to a great extent, but part of my heart and my soul are in Lebanon' – Edgar

⁴ 'A Lebanese that is proud to be Colombian' – Eduardo

organisational entity or a metaphysical space, as these locations enhance those identities. Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 161) see ethnic identity partly as an answer to 'where do I come from?' where the answers are embedded within an association with others:

'...they are often expressed in a metaphorical language of kinship... with reference to a "birth connection" to a nation and family- to an imagined common origin or ancestry...'

This belonging can be expressed through mechanisms such as the narratives of a long history, e.g. migration and settlement; or a connection with an ancestral home, e.g. Lebanon; or mechanisms that construct a commonality among those who share them and lead to a feeling of community, e.g. the *Colonia*. Other factors which help form an ethnic migrant identity include shared ancestry, and/or myths surrounding it; shared culture, religion and/or language; and shared loyalty and solidarity, based on common values and ideals for the future (Yuval-Davis 2006: 209).

Hall (1990) outlines two ways of addressing what he calls 'cultural identity': one that is shared, based on common experiences and resulting in a homogenous group; and another that recognises similarities but also differences which may have arisen and widened as time goes by. However, he argues that single homogenous communities do not exist, though such collectives are necessary '...to make a unity out of that which is not yet a unity' (Hall 1996: 131). Therefore, he argues that cultural identity is:

'...a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past... (they) come from somewhere, have histories. But, as with everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation'. (Hall 1990: 225)

Moreover, Chan believes that ethnic identity is not transplanted from place to place, but constructed and reconstructed in different societies. She argues identification is often:

'...reproduced and produced, deconstructed and re-constructed, in exploitation of structural advantages as well as in adaptation to structural constraints'. (Chan 2004: 183)

This (re)production, (re)construction etcetera is useful when thinking about the Colombian-Lebanese and their identities, as it explains the different adaptations that take place within the community and within individuals. Both historical adaptations of identity, such as those

developed after the settling in Colombia of the first migrants, and the everyday adaptations of individuals as they move from one location to the next. Furthermore, Chan (2004) realises that individuals carry traditions with them and that the interaction of these traditions with other cultures leads to their current interpretation of ethnicity. This is noticeable with Lebanese cuisine which has been transported to Colombia and adapted accordingly, both impacting on and being impacted by Colombian cuisine. Identities, therefore, are not static as they are constantly being constructed in the present, through the use of histories, myths and traits from the past. They are constantly being created and in a never-ending changing process. As Garcia (2007) argues, the question should not be about what we are, but about what we are being, and as Hall (1996) argues, what we are becoming. In this sense, the identity being expressed by the Colombian-Lebanese is an on-going, multiple transformative process, and can change depending on the contextual circumstances.

Garcia argues that there should be no talk of identity but of identities, ‘...pues hay pertenencias múltiples, lealtades diversas y fidelidades plurales’⁵ (2007: 12), and as Hall (1996: 129) claims:

‘In contemporary societies identities are more flexible, more open, more labile, more fluid, less predictable, more dramaturgical, more dependent on performance, less dependent on – as it were – inherited tradition’.

Thus, there is no single but rather a multiplicity of identities for the Colombian-Lebanese within the *Colonia*, and a wide amalgam of belongings. In addition, Yuval-Davis also proposes the multiplicity of belongings, noting the variety of ways in which people can belong, as well as the variety of what people can belong to, arguing that ‘...belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity...’ (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199). Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 7-8) argue for the importance of examining the multiplicity of identities, as

‘...different political identities, political claims and modes of participation and belonging might exist simultaneously between and within societies’.

Belonging, therefore, can be self-imposed by the Colombian-Lebanese or be imposed by others; and it can be accepted or contested. Moreover, ethnicity is a category used by my participants to separate those within the *Colonia* and those outside of it. I also drew on it to select my participants, the organisations I studied and the events I attended. However,

⁵ ‘...as there are multiple belongings, diverse loyalties and pluralistic fidelities’ (Garcia 2007: 12)

ethnicity is just one of the identities of the Colombian-Lebanese, and its importance varies depending on the individual. For many it is not the most important identifier. For example, identity based on social status is also significant for my participants and not necessarily influenced by their ethnicity, and the Maronite identity is connected to both the Lebanese ethnicity and to the religious identity. Additionally, there is also variety within these identities: they can feel they belong to categories of ethnicity (Colombian, Lebanese, Colombian-Lebanese), religion (Maronite, Muslim, Catholic), and class (upper, middle, lower), with the possibility of belonging to several categories from between and within. In the following chapters, identity is explored using different categories that can be seen as markers of ethnicity, religion and class, such as music, dance, food, and politics, among others.

Castells (2004) offers further different types of identity: *legitimising*, which is introduced, and may be imposed, by the dominant society; *resistant*, which arises in opposition to the dominant; and *projected*, which is the building of new identities that redefine the individual's or the community's position in society. He argues that these do not have to be static and that individuals can shift from one type of identification to another. The identities of the Colombian-Lebanese, therefore, are multiple and fluid, being able to shift, to produce and reproduce themselves continuously.

The nature of the belonging also depends on the context in which it takes place, i.e. the social standing and personal experiences of individuals (Yuval-Davis 2006), as well as the context in which the author writes, the place, time, specific history and culture (Hall 1990). The former argument helps explain one of my central assertions: that the Colombian-Lebanese have significant control over their ethnicity in terms of Colombianness and Lebaneseness that they exhibit. In fact, as seen in Chapter Four, they have more control than other minorities in Colombia, such as the Afro-Colombians or the indigenous communities. This is because the Colombian-Lebanese occupy a privileged position within society in Bogota.

It is important to understand the current Colombian context already set out in Chapter Three, as factors such as the place of settlement and time of migration help to explain the feelings of belonging of those who live there. Moreover, the history of the Colombian-Lebanese, i.e. their 'being', and their ideas for their future, i.e. their 'becoming', are also important influences on their sense of belonging. Their multiple identities interact

with each other, with varying aspects emerging as prominent according to the context. For example, when the Lebanese Civil War brought divisions within the *Colonia* due to political allegiances, the Colombian-Lebanese turned to their common social status, rather than their ethnicity, which became the glue for the community, ensuring its continuity (see Chapter Eight).

5.2.2. *The construction of identity*

Following the ideas of Yuval-Davis, Chan and Hall presented above, it can be seen that identity is constructed around commonality (us) and difference (them), with the idea of 'the other' changing depending on the identity or identities being constructed, experienced and/or performed. As seen in Chapter Four, Garcia (2007) and Samper (2004) argue that religion, territory and law have helped construct identity in Colombia at different times. These periods created different 'others' to which those in Colombian society had to adapt to. In terms of the Lebanese, it led to a change from integration during the period when the focus was on the importance of territory, to the multiplicity of belonging in the current period where the focus is on legal rights.

The influence of commonality and difference is twofold for the Colombian-Lebanese: on the one hand, some organisations have endeavoured to be seen as part of the 'us' in Colombia, such as the Maronite Parish's efforts to present itself closely to the Catholic Church (see Chapter Seven); on the other hand, the 'us' is sometimes expressed as 'Lebanese' and 'the other' as the non-Lebanese, with the 'us' presented positively as something unique, different from the mainstream, maybe extended to all descendants of Lebanese migrants, not just those in Colombia, and/or to the Lebanese in Lebanon. The stereotypes they assign to themselves include being more generous, hard-working and welcoming than non-Lebanese individuals. These are claimed as part of their shared Lebanese descent, generating a feeling of belonging to the community. At the same time, Muslim organisations have been labelled as 'the other' by anonymous harassers, who have acted discriminately against them (see Chapter Seven)

Ethnic identity can also be constructed out of interaction with external agents, either by having an imposed 'other' identity or by imposing it on others. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), a reactive construction of identity results from the negative experiences of

groups or individuals against mainstream identities, usually because of the differences in their physical or cultural characteristics. They argue that high levels of discrimination could lead to equally higher levels of identification to alternatives, other than to mainstream identities. Portes and Rumbaut label this negative identification 'reactive ethnicity', and argue that it is 'the product of confrontation with an adverse native mainstream and the rise of defensive identities and solidarities to counter-it' (2001: 284). The Colombian-Lebanese are reported to have suffered discrimination in Colombian society until around the 1950s (see Chapter Four), encouraging a sense of ethnic identity opposed to mainstream Colombianness. As Jaksic (1995: 29) explains, talking about his own experience as an immigrant in the US:

'Building a new identity, or at least an identity in addition to my sense of national origin, was one of the unexpected challenges of my experience of immigration.

During my first years in the United States, I found strength in my nationality. In fact, I think I became conscious of it only when removed from my own cultural context'.

A result of the discrimination received by Colombian-Lebanese during the initial years after their arrival, may have led to stronger feelings of belonging towards Lebanon than towards Colombia. This may have also led them to create ethnic-based organisations as safe spaces. However, largely because of their upward mobility in society, the ethnicity of the Colombian-Lebanese no longer seems to create discriminatory reactions from mainstream society. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) state that those not suffering from discrimination may find it easier to identify with mainstream identities, leading them to argue that for some, ethnicity is a matter of choice, as these migrants can choose when to identify with their ancestry. For others, ethnicity is a source of strength in upward social mobility, whilst for some it is a means of subordination.

Castells (2004) offers the idea of resistance identity, which is built on opposition to, or on a different basis from dominant institutions, and can lead to a collective resistance. For the Colombian-Lebanese, these dominant institutions do not necessarily have to be within Colombia, and the resistance can be to external events. Hence, this common resistance identity can be constructed by events in Lebanon, such as the July War (see Chapter Eight) or the rising influence of Islam in Lebanon.

Another way that identities are constructed is through the narratives of the past within and about communities (Hall 1996). These narratives can influence the individual and communal feelings of belonging to the *Colonia*. Indeed, Hall argues that the production of identity can be thought of in the stories people produce, whether by choice or not. This includes a history of its people, the roots and routes, the past and the future:

'Where you're coming from are the resources that you put together in order to make that story some semblance of sense'. (Hall 1996: 131)

In this sense the history of the Colombian-Lebanese can be of equal significance as their future. Yuval-Davis (2006: 202) agrees that

'Identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)'.

She believes, however, that this should not be the sole assessment placed on them, as she argues that

'...constructions of belonging... cannot and should not be seen as merely cognitive stories. They reflect emotional investments and desire for attachments...'. (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202)

Therefore, these authors not only involve place, history and memory, but also the values and judgements placed upon these identities. They are not only a story of the history of the migration, but also an explanation of the sentiments felt since. This narrative was encountered in many of the interviews of Colombian-Lebanese I carried out, when my participants told me about their personal and family histories. These narratives, together with the realisation of the multiplicity and fluidity of identity help explain how the feelings of belonging work for the Colombian-Lebanese: where they come from; how and why they have changed; as well as account for the differences within the *Colonia* in Bogota.

Finally, the context where an individual or a group interact is also important for the construction of identity, as it is influenced by the situation and the spaces in which they inhabit. Locations can also be (re)constructed as ethnic spaces (Fortier 2006), and identity can be constructed with the (re)creation of traditions and through performances (Giddens 2002). Moreover, this construction of identity, through space and performance, can lead to mutual feelings of belonging and the construction of communities. In this way, the

organisations used as the sites for my research are important for the production/construction and reproduction of Colombian-Lebanese identity. They help create and open these spaces, manage the performances and are the bases for the community.

5.2.3. *The visibility/invisibility of Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity*

As has been seen, the relationship with mainstream society is significant for the ethnic identity of migrant communities, and this relationship also impacts on its visibility, as discussed below, the more similar the ethnic community is to the mainstream society, the more invisible it can be.

A number of studies about Arabs in the US argue that visibility is connected to whiteness. For example, Naber argues that whiteness leads to invisibility, but not merely as a racial characteristic. Rather, because Arabs have a wide variety of physical characteristics whiteness:

‘... [can] be assessed in terms of the community’s social and political positioning rather than their biological make-up’. (Naber 2000: 52)

In this sense, whiteness has to do less with physical appearance and more with following the societal practices of the mainstream society, including religion, political beliefs and social class. As, Arjouch and Jamal (2007: 860-61) argue, ‘whiteness’ brings status to the ethnic community or individual:

‘Whiteness represents a sociological category that demarcates unspoken privilege and power. Its existence derives from the construction of “otherness”... to be white means not having to refer to one’s race; it is a privileged status that does not require contemplation or reflection’.

By not requiring ‘contemplation or reflection’, the privileged status of the individual is taken for granted as ‘one of us’ and granted invisibility. Therefore, this whiteness is both created and reflected by social practices. In terms of religion, Naber (2000: 42) argues that in the US, Christians are seen as more acceptable than Muslims; hence, whilst the former can easily identify as ‘white’, and hence be more invisible, the latter finds it more difficult. The same happens in Colombia, as has been indicated with the difference between the Maronite and Muslim Lebanese communities in Chapters Three and Four. As the mainstream religion

in Colombia is Catholicism, those closer to it will find it easier to remain invisible and gain a privileged position.

At the same time, individuals can take steps to become less visible, such as the changing of surnames to make them sound more local. For example, Portes and Rumbaut argue that at Ellis Island many immigrants' names were changed, either by the migrants themselves or by government officials:

'Whether those sudden name changes stand as examples of symbolic violence against powerless immigrants or as the strategic choice of ambitious newcomers, the fact is that they often initiated immigrants in a path towards integration into American society. Symbolic acceptance of a new identity could lead the way for entry into a new culture and for learning the ropes of its social hierarchy'. (2001: 189)

This symbolic acceptance of a new identity by changing the surnames not only impacted on the original migrants but also significantly on their descendants, who may never have found out about the change. Invisibility can be seen as a way of countering discrimination, as well as a way of encouraging and facilitating integration. With regards to Arabs in the US, Naber argues that earlier migrants successfully integrated into society by anglicising their names, self-identifying as 'whites', and restricting 'their ethnic identity to the private sphere' (Naber 2000: 40). This was mirrored in Colombia, as shown in Chapter Three the Lebanese migrants latinised their surnames, and together with their phenotypic characteristics, their Christian religion and their social mobility they were able gain/maintain their invisibility.

At the same time a kind of selective visibility occurs. As seen above, due to the similarities the Colombian-Lebanese have with mainstream society, as well as due to their status in Bogota society, they find themselves in a position to have an option of when to portray their ethnicity in the private sphere and when in the public sphere (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). This means that they do not always have to be invisible, but rather choose when to express their visibility, as a response to their surroundings, demonstrating both the multiple and fluid character of their identities. In addition, Karam argues that Arab ethnicity is seen nowadays as fashionable in Latin America, as Arab food, dance, music and tourism, 'have become popular among elites and masses', which leads him to state that:

'...when the group whose culture is appropriated enjoys significant social power, it can retake the appropriation in a way that further benefits itself'. (Karam 2007: 143)

For my Maronite participants ethnicity acts as an appealing label that can be chosen to be 'worn'. In some cases it is even beneficial for them to be seen as Colombian-Lebanese, for example in terms of business with the Colombian-Arab Chamber of Commerce (see Chapter Eight).

Invisibility, however, can also have negative connotations, as individuals may not be able to maintain it. For example, Naber (2000: 41) argues that political events in the Middle East, such as the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, fuelled a rise in awareness of Arab distinctiveness in the US. Moreover, Spickard (2007) believes that although Arabs in the US were considered 'white' at the beginning of the 20th Century, different international events since, such as rising oil prices and the first Gulf War, have made them 'darker'. He argues that the events of 9/11 have contributed to this, but stresses that the shift had been ongoing for a long time before. As seen in Chapters Four and Eight, a number of events in the Middle East have also impacted on the Colombian-Lebanese. However, due to the geopolitical differences the region has in relation to Colombia, compared to the US, and possibly the social status and religion of the Maronite Colombian-Lebanese, their ethnic visibility has not been affected in the same way. Nevertheless, as seen in Chapter Seven, the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese have not had the same experience.

5.3. Space

5.3.1. *Space and identity*

Understanding the role of space is useful to explore the way the Colombian-Lebanese interact with their identities, specially their ethnicity and social status. First, it is necessary to make a differentiation between place and space, where place is a static location and space is fluid and not territorially bound. Faist (1998: 217) states that:

'Space not only refers to physical features, but also to larger opportunity structures, the social life and the subjective images, values and meanings that the specific and limited place represents to migrants. Space thus differs from *place* in that it encompasses or spans various territorial locations.'

De Certau (1984: 117) argues that place is stable and reduced to a particular singular location; whilst space is fluid and influenced by processes and the context in which it takes

place and which surrounds it. He argues space is a 'practiced place' (1984: 118), where performances occur and places can transform into spaces and vice versa. The Colombian-Lebanese use both places and spaces to construct and perform their ethnic and social identities. These spaces are shared with non-Lebanese Colombians, but the extent of that sharing varies. Faist's explains that fluid de-territorialised spaces are not bound to a particular place, such as some of the spaces created by the World Lebanese Cultural Union (ULCM); and De Certeau's states that space is a 'practiced place' which can again turn into just a place, such as the Club's function rooms, which change depending on their use.

Spaces can be constructed with the intention of reproducing an identity, or as a result of an interaction. An example of the former in my study is the Club which has been constructed as a Lebanese space which serves as a 'second home' for the Colombian-Lebanese. Kondo argues home is where individuals feel safe, where their attitudes and experiences are taken as presupposed and 'where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders' (1996: 97). The construction works both for their ethnic and their social identities (see Chapter Six), as it has been constructed as both Lebanese and Colombian: as an exclusive ethnic space for the Colombian-Lebanese, and as an open social centre for the upper and middle classes in Bogota. It also mirrors the actual home-places of the Colombian-Lebanese, noticeable for example in the decoration or in the drinks and food on offer, which are both Colombian and Lebanese. The Maronite Parish has also been constructed to reflect both ethnicity and religion within its space, reflecting both Lebanon and Colombia. Vasquez (2010: 128) argues that a migrant church combines the homeland, the host-land, and spirituality in its construction, something also seen in the Parish (see Chapter Seven).

At the same time, space can be constructed to produce a new identity, from what Bhabha argues is the result of an encounter of two different sides, be it based on culture, gender, class, race etcetera:

'These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself'. (1994: 1-2)

An example of this can be the demonstrations attended by the Colombian-Lebanese which combined both Colombian and Lebanese identities (see Chapter Eight). At the same time, these spaces are also de-territorialised and not bound to a particular location (Faist 1998). The spaces constructed by these demonstrations are also influenced by what Vertovec (1999: 455) calls the 'politics of homeland' which 'engage members of diasporas or transnational communities in a variety of ways'. Here, communities such as the *Colonia* are both influenced and able to influence the politics of the 'homeland', i.e. Lebanon, as technological advances have allowed for the expansion of activities and the intensification of links between Colombia and Lebanon, as well as with other migrant communities (Vertovec 1999). This can be useful to explain the demonstrations against the 2006 July conflict, as they constructed a temporary and portable Colombian-Lebanese space out of a reaction to a conflict in Lebanon. In this sense, the Colombian-Lebanese are making use of the multi-locality their status offers them by engaging in transnational processes, making connections across states and politics.

5.3.2. Space and commonality

Spaces, therefore, can be constructed to reflect or portray a particular identity. As seen, the Club has been constructed as a 'home' for the Colombian-Lebanese where they can feel safe. This feeling of safety also leads to a strengthening of the feeling of belonging, as Yuval-Davis (2006: 197) argues:

'Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and... feeling safe'

This follows Fortier's argument that familiarity with one's surroundings aids in (re)creating a belonging by providing comfort. She calls this a 'habitual space' where individuals 'need not try to make sense of what is going on', where everything is 'familiar' and 'intelligible' (Fortier 2000: 133). She argues that:

'In order for a place to be recognised as a 'habitual space' ... [it is required] that the material organisation of space is such that it will interpellate its users and call upon them to 'feel at home' in this setting'. (2000: 112)

By constructing the places as 'habitual spaces' such as the Club and the Parish, the *Colonia* leaders are ensuring the Colombian-Lebanese have spaces where they can feel at home with their ethnicity. Moreover, Fortier argues that in a 'habitual space'

'...people are enjoined not so much to remember, but rather to 'unforget' the drama of emigration. That is to say that emigration is not merely recovered in a master narrative that aligns a series of anecdotal moments in the story of collective growth... emigration, here, is retrieved as a mode of being and a mode of knowing in itself'. (2000: 114).

Therefore, Colombian-Lebanese spaces such as the Club can act as 'second homes' for the Colombian-Lebanese, where both ethnicity and social status are necessary to replicate 'home'. At the same time, the 'habitual space' becomes part of the individuals' life where the ethnicity forms part of the personality, and within this space a common identity is developed. Furthermore, the notions of Lebaneseness are not only used to construct a commonality, but are also constructed by the commonality itself, as Yuval-Davis (2006: 197) argues:

'The politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways'.

The 'home' feeling of the Club is partly created by its reminders of Lebanon, such as artefacts, decorations and names which are purposely used to construct a Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity and are then continuously used to reinforce it.

In fact, it is not only ethnicity, but also the social and religious identities of the Colombian-Lebanese that interact in these different spaces. The extent of how much these are felt is related to the particular space in which they occur: within the Club, ethnicity is strongly tied to social status (see Chapter Six); whilst at the Parish, social status is less significant than religious identity (see Chapter Seven). It is significant that the Colombian-Lebanese are able to choose where to establish these spaces, not only the demonstrations which lead from a particular point to another, but also spaces such as the locations of Club and the church. In this sense the Colombian-Lebanese are not only choosing when to portray their ethnicity, but also where to portray it and to whom.

These activities are set up by Colombian-Lebanese organisations which play an important role in influencing the identity of my participants. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue, ethnic organisations are important as they provide spaces that the individuals can

belong to, and this can be permanent physical places as well as temporary metaphorical cultural spaces. By providing spaces to belong to, organisations are also allowing for a common belonging to be developed within the spaces, together with the boundaries of that belonging, which negotiate inclusion and exclusion. These can act as 'spaces of belonging' which create commonality through identity performances:

'As a space of belonging, the Centro is used as a cultural object, a collective property, a scene for performing and referring to collective belonging of Italians in (South) London'. (Fortier 2006: 67)

The spaces used by the Colombian-Lebanese can be seen as spaces of belonging where they share something in common, not only in terms of property of the buildings but also in terms of ethnicity and social status. However, by allowing for a common belonging they are also creating differences, where only those that fit particular characteristics are allowed to interact in them, be it in ethnic, social, political or religious terms. Hence, these can also be spaces of contention, with different forces battling for social, religious or political power within the community.

5.3.3. Space and visibility/invisibility

Another area of interest is the relation between spaces and the visibility and invisibility of the Colombian-Lebanese. As shown above, they have a significant level of flexibility when choosing the spaces to use. For example, some Colombian-Lebanese choose not to link certain events of their life with the *Colonia*, opting to perform other identities instead, such as professional or social ones. This can be seen, for example, with the choice of different churches for particular religious services, as the Maronite service is just one of a wide array of options the Colombian-Lebanese have and opt for (see Chapter Seven). These choices also influence the visibility of the Colombian-Lebanese.

Moreover, the spaces themselves can also be explored in terms of their visibility, as this can help explain the context within which the different organisations work and how these adapt to their surroundings. For example, ethnic spaces can be invisible to the outside as they blend into the rest of the surrounding neighbourhood, as Fortier (2006: 68) argues of the Italian church and social centre in Brixton, London:

'If it were not for its modest facade, one would be hard-pressed to notice the church, which can still easily go unnoticed to the unacquainted eye. As for the Centro, nothing indicates its presence: it is invisible in/to the neighbourhood. In the days following my return, I reflected on this invisibility and remembered the sense of enclosure I felt during my initial visits to the Centro. I pondered the contradiction between this invisible presence and the politics of visibility that is at the origin of the project of creating an Italian community'.

This is also the case for two of the Colombian-Lebanese places: the Club and the Parish, which blend into their Bogota neighbourhoods by not having any overt external references to the nature of the space within them or its connection to ethnicity (see Chapters Six and Seven). As Fortier (2006) suggests, however, the aim of strengthening ethnicity within the community whilst remaining invisible to outsiders signals a contradiction.

This invisibility can be examined through Lefebvre's (1991: 86) argument that 'social spaces interpenetrate one another' and they do not have 'mutually limiting boundaries':

'Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity'. (1991: 87)

Indeed, the Club and its surroundings give support to the idea of the spaces interpenetrating each other and providing continuity in this wealthy neighbourhood. The Club aims to maintain invisibility in terms of ethnicity, but proclaim its visibility in terms of social status, particularly in regards to being seen as a social centre open for business (see Chapter Six).

5.4. Performance

5.4.1. *The significance of performance*

The fluidity of space can be seen through the performances of identity of the Colombian-Lebanese. As explained above, the privileged social status of my participants allows them to choose when to portray their ethnicity, being able to change with ease between portraying a Colombian identity and a Colombian-Lebanese identity. This flexibility gives them other freedoms, such as a choice of spaces and performances, which other less privileged groups in society may not have. Indeed, the Colombian-Lebanese are able to choose which

particular identities they portray through their performances and when: in some cases they perform to the general public in Bogota/Colombia, in others they perform to themselves in the *Colonia*, whilst in others they only perform for their close family and friends.

Additionally, the space can be both expanded and contracted by the performances: the Colombian-Lebanese space is expanded by performing their Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity to the general public in Bogota, for example through their participation in demonstrations; and is contracted when it is restricted to a particular space, such as certain events at the Club, which remain inside of it. The difference between these performances is important as it also impacts on their visibility. The internal performances are only seen by those within the space and thus invisible to the outside, as Fortier (2006: 68) argues, these performances are:

‘...for the benefit of the insider’s gaze: it is turned inwards, ‘we show ourselves to ourselves’

For example, a film directed and produced by a young Colombian-Lebanese about the migration history of his family was only showed in the Club to ‘friends and family’ as the director wanted to keep it ‘private’ (see Chapter Six). This worked as a constructed space for belonging by performing and (re)producing identities, whilst (re)constructing memories which stay with them (e.g. by re-enacting their ancestors’ migration to Colombia). These memories help maintaining the community as well as strengthening their identities, however, the private character of such performances also suggests a selectivity of who has access to these memories and thus to the strengthening of the identity.

In addition to expanding and contracting, spaces can also be adapted or borrowed to reflect a particular connection with the Colombian-Lebanese, whether in ethnic or social terms. E.g. the establishment of the Maronite Parish led to a previously solely Catholic Church being adapted to include Lebanese and Maronite symbols within its spaces: its Colombian-Lebanese identity becomes more prominent when Maronite services are performed, and less prominent with Roman Catholic services (see Chapter Seven). In addition, temporary spaces can also be borrowed by the Colombian-Lebanese where they perform a particular side of their identity, ranging from dabkeh dance presentations, political demonstrations and marches, to newspaper ads.

The performances help to reproduce identities, raising awareness of the existence of these and even their importance in society, and, as Fortier argues, performances can also produce them:

'I consider the formation of an Italian migrant identity as an effect of events, rituals and practices that occurred in these locations [performative sites], rather than as merely reflected by them'. (Fortier 2006: 65)

The Colombian-Lebanese organisations are similar to the Italian cultural centre and the Italian newspaper in London described by Fortier (2006: 71):

'...[they] are performative sites that produce the community rather than merely 'reflect' it. But more than simply being a set of performative acts, the investment in reproducing the community through organizing various events like the Easter lunch, and then in printing a record of it in the newspaper, is also a testimony to the investment in the promise of community.'

With this (re)production of ethnic identity the spaces are 'constructed as scenes for ethnicity' by the performances that take place within them. Here the community becomes a 'common ground for belonging' that is reproduced by the events, which in turn produce an identity to such commonality (Fortier 2006: 74). The performances act as 'scenes of ethnicity' for the community:

'On the one hand, the Centro is constructed as a scene for ethnicity through a combination of the calendar of events, their repeated re-enactment and their repeated recording. The creation of a community is reliant on images and imaginings as well as on deliberate will and work that are motivated by the desire for community, rather than grounded in an already constituted community. On the other hand, the Centro is also a place where individuals seek out intimations of ethnicity and for an ethnic intimacy that cannot be conflated within normative ideologies that circulate in the public domain—ethnicism, nationalism and patriotism. With the idea of community as 'common ground' rather than as 'having' or 'being' in common, we might think of communities as effects of how we meet on the ground'. (Fortier 2006 p.74-5)

The performances that take place by and for the Colombian-Lebanese can reflect a particular Colombian-Lebanese identity; they can also reinforce or even introduce a

belonging to the *Colonia*; and they help maintain both individual identity and communal feelings of belonging.

5.4.2. The construction of community through performance

By performing their identities the Colombian-Lebanese organisations are also creating a commonality amongst the participants, by for example opening its meeting spaces to Colombian-Lebanese individuals and by providing spaces of belonging through events, where they can collectively experience their ethnicity. These performances can be defined as the strategies used by the organisations for community-building (Nagel and Staeheli 2004: 13):

'As a general category, functions associated with community-building seemed to be most prominent. One strategy for community building was to promote cultural awareness for Arab and non-Arab audiences. This took several forms, including teaching about language, cultural history and society. Many of the sites attempted to convey a sense of pride and to build a consciousness of Arabness... A second strategy might be seen as more political in orientation, as there is a cluster of sites that address issues that are important in a variety of locations and scales. These sites, for example, promote issues related to civil rights, policies affecting Arabs in the US and issues in the Middle East'

In the *Colonia*, the promotion of cultural awareness can take place both directly, with events such as the teaching of Lebanese cuisine; and indirectly, with for example the dabkeh dancing presentations, which increase the knowledge of Lebanese culture without an active participation from the audience being necessary. It also takes place with the demonstrations and talks about the political situation in the Middle East, which aim to address or promote particular political issues. Moreover, the performances of shared culture based around food, music and dance can be seen as representations of collective belonging, as community-building performances which also help strengthening it.

Fortier (2000: 133) also notices the importance of performances for community-building as she argues that 'rituals cultivate a sense of belonging' where its repetitive nature leads to the events being not just social constructs but also (re)producers of ethnic identity:

'The combination of the calendar of events, their repeated re-enactment, and their repeated recording, suggest that the creation of a community is reliant not only on deliberate, calculating rational will and hard work, but also on its imaging and re-presentation. The visual referent of community offers a particular vision of who 'we' are as Italians, as migrants, in Britain. In a mimetic relationship between representation and identity, the assumption is that if the visual referent changes, 'we' change'. (Fortier 2006: 71)

Fortier notes not only how performance and identity influence each other, but also how these are conscious performances of particular views of those identities. In fact, she argues that the leaders of the organisations actively set up these performances to help sustain the community:

'These leaders are fully aware that 'community' is something that is not merely sustained, but that it must be continually re-created'. (Fortier 2006: 66)

This is replicated within the *Colonia*, and the Colombian-Lebanese leaders seem to have realised that the most successful performances in terms of generating a sense of belonging are those that combine their ethnic and social identities, for example as my participant Lucia explained of the activities which acted as performances:

'...[los eventos son hechos de] una manera divertida además de que esto se crea como una bola de nieve, pues para todos es lógico que si estamos contentos en un ambiente con nuestros amigos y nuestros amigos igual quieren pertenecer o los traemos para que pertenezcan a ese ambiente agradable...'⁶ (Lucia 2008)

By creating an enjoyable social environment with an ethnic basis the Colombian-Lebanese aim to strengthen the *Colonia*. Additionally, these performances act as cycles, with ethnic and social status identities continuously influencing and strengthening one another.

It is also important to note the notion of the 'particular vision' of the community (Fortier 2006), as there can be more than one such vision of what the ethnic community is or might be. Indeed, within the *Colonia* different organisations have different views, such as the ULCM which supports Lebanese sovereignty and Lebanese ethnic differentiation, or the

⁶ '...[the events are done in] a fun way so they work as a snow-ball, because for everyone it's obvious that if we're happy in a friendly environment, and our friends already belong to it or we bring them over so they do...' - Lucia

Pan-Arabist believing in a common Arab ancestry and referring to the Middle East as one entity rather than to individual countries (see Chapter Eight)

5.4.3. Tradition and memory

Some of these events are performances of traditions, which are necessary because they give a sense of continuity, for example by the participation of different generations:

‘generations, in migration, are the living embodiment of continuity and change, mediating memories of the past with present living conditions, bringing the past into the present and charged with the responsibility of keeping some form of ethnic identity alive in the future... their circulation in an array of cultural activities repeatedly enacts both generational differences and cultural continuity’. (Fortier 2000: 150)⁷

By preserving practices and rituals specific to the *Colonia* the Colombian-Lebanese have been able to maintain their sense of continuity and unity. However, Giddens (2002), amongst others, argues that although traditions do evoke continuity with the past, they are in actual fact inventions that have been created, modified, rejected and re-created. Nevertheless, he argues, with time these traditions become more entrenched in the community, until they become unquestionable. He draws from Hobsbawm (1983: 1) who talks of ‘invented traditions’, which he describes as:

‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and or a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past’.

The notion that traditions have been invented does not diminish the influence they have on belonging, but rather points to the consciousness behind the performance of particular traditions. It is important to consider the traditions performed by the Colombian-Lebanese, the way these impact on their identity, as well as the process of construction of these traditions. One such performance is the ‘tradition’ of dabkeh dancing in the *Colonia*, which was first started as an effort to reconnect the community with its Lebanese roots, but is now

⁷ Fortier’s example is first communion rites

presented as continuity from previous generations and a Lebanese cultural act (see Chapter Six).

Related to the issue of tradition is that of memory, as in order for the *Colonia* to have a sense of belonging to the past, they must endeavour to remember it. These memories can be seen as 'symbolic anchors' for the community, which providing a shared connection among participants (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 11):

'Remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. This has long been true of immigrants, who... use memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world. "Homeland" in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples...'

Gupta and Ferguson refer to memories of 'the homeland' as symbolic anchors that help maintain the community. The notion, nevertheless, can be expanded to performances which also generate memories and can act as anchors. The Colombian-Lebanese seek collective memories about certain events that help in preserving the past. Halbwachs argues that collective memories are social constructions, usually created, identified and kept within society, and used by individuals to remember and reproduce their own memories:

'One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories'. (Halbwachs 1992: 40)

In this way, depending on the context and experiences of the Colombian-Lebanese, different collective memories of a particular event are created in relation to other groups. Halbwachs argues that collective memories can be remembered with commemorations and festivities. Therefore, the memories that the Colombian-Lebanese have of the past are being created by events in the present. This corroborates Fortier's argument that performances deliberately (re)produce belonging by recreating held memories and creating new ones:

'The creation of a community is reliant on images and imaginings as well as on deliberate will and work that are motivated by the desire for community, rather than grounded in an already constituted community'. (2006: 74)

Hence, collective memories are likely to have an impact on the expression and remembrance of belonging, and help in the construction and/or preservation of that belonging. Moreover, the feeling of belonging does not remain static after it is produced through a performance, but it travels with the individuals afterwards (Fortier 2006). Through the performances the Colombian-Lebanese are ensuring the *Colonia* continues alive by creating memories of commonality among the participants.

5.5. Community

5.5.1. Community and belonging

As has been seen, commonality is important for the construction of a community and in turn a feeling of belonging to that community. As Fortier argues of the Italian cultural centre in London, spaces can create a common bond among those that participate in them, who can find themselves again and encounter people 'like them' generating a sense of belonging to the space and the community it represents:

'The Centro is a place where Italians meet and remember, partially and fleetingly, what it is like to be 'together', to 'be Italian among Italians'. It is a place that individuals seek out in the hope of a particular kind of connection. In this sense, 'community' can be the object of intense attachments, and the site of meaningful interchanges for some of those who attend events to meet others 'like them', to 'find themselves again'. (Fortier 2006: 72)

Networks and associations are organised around these 'intense attachments' (Fortier 2006), forming the bases of the community. Rex (1987) mentions four types of associations which are significant for migrants: associations of kinship, through family and friends; religion, which often reproduces religious organisations at 'home'; politics, both governmental and from opposition; and independent ones, which can aim to recreate 'home' culture, or through common characteristics: social, financial, educational, etcetera.

The Colombian-Lebanese have created organisations which fit into all of the categories Rex describes: the Club and the Ladies Association are associations of kinship, and to a lesser extent the ULCM. In them, family and friends are of great importance for encouraging people to get involved and participate in the activities. Kinship networks are,

according to Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, essential for the Lebanese as they offer financial and emotional support⁸:

‘The family is the basic institution of Lebanese society and the main refuge of its members. Lebanese turn first to their families for assistance in almost every aspect of their lives, including migration’. (2007: 45)

The Club, ULCM and Ladies Association are all independent associations which claim to recreate ‘home’ culture in different degrees. The ULCM is a political association but independent from the Lebanese government. It sometimes supports its policies but sometimes opposes them; its connections to Colombian politics are more circumstantial. The Parish is of course a religious association, which claims to bring a part of Lebanese culture to Colombia.

As seen above, the performances that these organisations portray help the cohesion of the community, sometimes even helping construct it. Fortier argues that access to certain ethnic activities is restricted to individuals with connections to a ‘closed community network’ (2000: 106). This network, as Rex suggests, can be based on kinship. Nonetheless, for the Colombian-Lebanese the closed community network relies on ethnicity and social status, as well as on kinship. Indeed, both ethnicity and social status play a part in deciding who can participate in Colombian-Lebanese organisations: in general terms, a common Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity and a common social status are the most important categories of inclusion and exclusion. The organisations are important for the community and each of them base their membership on additional common characteristics. For example, political leaning is an important category for the ULCM, and gender for the Ladies Association. However, ethnicity and social status permeate all of them: as the organisations are a reflection of the individuals that comprise them, these are upper class ethnic Colombian-Lebanese organisations.

As seen in Chapter One, the Colombian-Lebanese use certain terms to define themselves, some of these also set boundaries of inclusion, between those that belong and those that do not. *La Colonia* is used to define the Colombian-Lebanese as a united group of people; and *Paisano* to refer to other Colombian-Lebanese using a word that suggests

⁸ Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous (2007) argue that at times of extreme events, such as during the July War, this support intensifies.

inherent familiarity and commonality. La *Colonia* is made up of *paisanos* as an imagined community, as according to Anderson (2006), imagined communities are capable of evoking deep solidarity among their members, and inspiring many to sacrifice themselves for the community⁹. As, explained above, the *Colonia* is potentially made up of all the descendants of the Lebanese in Colombia, but not all of them have an active participation in the organisations and the events. Those that are active participants do get to know many of the other Colombian-Lebanese. Nevertheless, the imagined communities' argument can still help explain the way the *Colonia* works, with its different overlapping organisations, yet without all of the Colombian-Lebanese knowing one another. It can also explain the extent of the solidarity and connection some of the Colombian-Lebanese feel for each other, even when not physically present, such as the solidarity expressed during the July War to the Colombian-Lebanese stranded in Lebanon.

Communities can also work as anchors for the creation of belonging, as Portes and Rumbaut's (2001: 166) findings suggest: the more connected individuals are to the ethnic community, the more likely they are to harbour a sense of belonging to that community. This is visible in the Club, which as I have discussed has been an important focal point for the Colombian-Lebanese for many decades. It has also been the main anchor for the *Colonia* in Bogota, with other organisations such as the Maronite Parish and the ULCM also lately being influential

However, according to Fortier, the recurring efforts to recreate the community and maintain it alive demonstrate its weakness:

'The repeated recording of events, and their visual rendition in La Voce [newspaper], fortnight after fortnight, suggests something about the very fragility of community'.
(2006: 70)

She implies that if the community was strong it would not need to continuously remind itself of its existence. Part of the fragility can be explained by the nature of the community, as Alba and Nee explain, as immigrants (and their descendants) assimilate and no new ones arrive:

⁹ Anderson (2006) stresses that the fact communities are imagined does not mean that they are artificial, but rather that they should be addressed as ways of thinking

‘...organizations dwindle in membership or find that their members belong to early generations or those with a more parochial outlook’. (1997: 835)

Both of these arguments can be seen within the *Colonia*: several of the activities set up by the organisations aim at recreating the *Colonia* and the older organisations, such as the Club and the Ladies Association, have suffered in terms of numbers and ageing of their members. The ULCM seems aware of both this fragility and the older members as they constantly stress the importance of getting the younger Colombian-Lebanese involved in the *Colonia*, for example with the dabkeh dancing, which can work as an anchor for belonging (Portes and Rumbaut’s 2001). The more active my participants were in the dabkeh classes the more they expressed a sense of belonging to the *Colonia*, which in turn led to them participating in more activities and strengthening that belonging.

As Nagel and Staeheli (2004) argue, however. about Arab organisations in the US, the activities of ethnic organisations are not homogenous as different ones have characteristics of assimilatory, transnational, and/or multicultural processes. This can also be seen with the Colombian-Lebanese organisations which use different methods of community building. For example the Maronite services which aim to include aspects of Catholic services; or the ULCM which supports a view of Lebanese sovereignty instead of a common Arab ethnicity. The different approaches aim towards the same goal of strengthening the *Colonia*, but through significantly different methods.

5.5.2. Community boundaries

As mentioned before, different factors influence who can and who cannot be a part of a community, social class and ethnicity being the most important factors of inclusion and exclusion that set up the boundaries of this community. As Yuval-Davis (2006: 204) argues

‘...any construction of boundaries, of a delineated collectivity, that includes some people – concrete or not – and excludes others, involves an act of active and situated imagination... The different situated imaginations that construct these national imagined communities with different boundaries depend on people’s social locations, people’s experiences and definitions of self, but probably even more importantly on their values... is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/ or other communities of belonging, whether they are ‘us’ or ‘them’ ’.

In this sense, the boundaries of the *Colonia* help delineate who is Colombian-Lebanese and who is not. The boundaries can express themselves as physical boundaries where the community's space has walls which divide those that belong and those that do not. This is the case for some organisations that have 'placed' their space, by acquiring a piece of land settling their organisation on it, such as the Club. The activities in this type of space are only available to those with connections to the community, making it both exclusive and reclusive. The activities in these spaces:

'...take (place) exclusively inside, invisible to the neighbouring residents, available only to a handful of people connected to each other through a close 'community' network'. (Fortier 2000: 106)

The activities at the Club take place within its high walls, behind its locked doors, guarded by security doormen and, therefore, are not visible or accessible to those outside of it (see Chapter Six). As shown in Chapter Two, all of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations use the Club for their activities; hence its secluded nature also acts as a boundary for their membership.

Nevertheless, some organisations also work within deterritorialised spaces which are not confined to a physical location (see Faist 1998 above). Their boundaries are not based on territoriality but on more metaphorical ideas based on identity or ideology. In these cases, the boundaries are set by expectations that need to be fulfilled to ensure continued access to them, i.e. expectations also create boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. As Zhou's (1997: 997) explains:

'If norms, values and social relationships within an ethnic group do influence the adaptation of group members, the influence should logically depend on the extent to which individuals hold the norms and values and participate in the social relationships. Hence, participation in social relationships and acceptance of group norms and values are interrelated; the more individuals associate with a particular group, the greater the normative conformity to behavioural standard and expectations prescribed by the group'.

Those who meet the expectations are inside the boundaries and enjoy the care and social capital the community provides, however, those that do not meet the expectations can be

excluded. For example, Olwig (2004) argues that through the fulfilment of the expectations some individuals can become role models, whilst others who do not fulfil them are conveniently 'forgotten' about¹⁰. These same expectations occur within the *Colonia* and individuals may feel pressured to conform to them, e.g. the idea of '*pobres vergonzantes*' where individuals who are facing financial difficulties are expected to maintain their social status, and thus need to keep these difficulties hidden (see Chapter Six). Others may fail to develop a sense of belonging to the *Colonia* because they are unwilling to follow the expectations.

At the same time, boundaries are sometimes created within communities, as these are not homogenous and fractions and divisions occur within them. In their study about Colombian migrants in the US Guarnizo and Diaz (1999: 412) discover that:

'the transnational cultural ties connecting migrants and their places of origin are as varied in form, content and reach as the class and ethno-racial composition of the migrant population itself'.

They found that the divisions that are found in Colombian society are replicated abroad, as the Colombian community in the US was divided along social class, race and regional lines leading them to argue that:

'this multi-layered heterogeneity has resulted in heterogeneous, fragmented, and differentiated transnational activities' (Guarnizo and Diaz 1999: 416).

For the Colombian-Lebanese these divisions include religion, mainly Christian versus Muslim or Shiite versus Sunni; and politics, between defenders of Lebanese sovereignty versus Pan-Arabists. These divisions replicate community boundaries in Lebanon and are expressed in situations such as election voting and the support for the extension of voting rights. Other divisions in the community mirror the boundaries in Colombian society, such as those based on social status. The *Colonia*, being both Colombian and Lebanese is influenced by both sets of dividing boundaries.

¹⁰ Olwig uses the family as a site of belonging, which gives care and provides social capital, but which access is cut if the expectations (including educational, moral, job related) are not met.

5.6. Summary

As has been seen, the concepts of identity, space, performance, and community are all interrelated, influencing one another. For example, the construction of identity takes place within particular spaces, with the help of the performance of that particular identity and with the possibility of this resulting in a common belonging leading to a sense of community. I have sought to address the themes of visibility, commonality and the constructivist nature of the concepts themselves. These concepts and the explanations set a conceptual frame for the three following chapters, underpinning the analysis of the data I present.

CHAPTER SIX

BELONGING TO THE COLONIA THROUGH SOCIAL AND ETHNIC SPACES

6.1. Introduction

The Club *Colombo-Libanés* in Bogota is a central location for Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity, as its name suggests. It is frequently referred to as a place where the Colombian-Lebanese organisations meet. At the same time, it is a location of social status, where private parties take place, and also used by wealthy non-Lebanese Colombians.

This chapter starts by asking the extent to which the Club *Colombo-Libanés* is an ethnic space. In a similar way, in her study of Italians in London, Fortier focuses on an ethnic centre where ethnicity is just one of the factors that play a role in its activities:¹

‘... [the centre] allows cross-cultural relations of ‘likeness’ that are not about ethnicity, origins and nation, but about much more mundane things that together constitute feelings of home and belonging... the community feeling emerging in the Centro... is an effect of how people meet on the ground, as well as of the very imagining of the community...’ (2006 p.74)

In order to assess the extent of the significance of ethnicity for the Club, I explore its physical visibility in its neighbourhood, i.e. the degree to which the building is an ethnic Colombian-Lebanese place, as well as the particular characteristics that may make it appealing for potential members compared to other social clubs. I also discuss its comparisons with other Colombian-Lebanese social clubs in Colombia. Following de Certau’s (1984 p.117, 118) argument that such locations can be both space and place – the former being when the identities are being performed, i.e. space is a ‘practised place’ – I see the Club as a fluid *place* that can transform into a *space* for performances of identity, and explore the role of ethnicity in this fluidity of the Club as a space.

Additionally, the Club serves as the base to explore the role of social status in the *Colonia*. I do this by investigating the significance of social connections for the Colombian-

¹ The Centro Scalabrini, a social club set up by Italian immigrants in Brixton, London.

Lebanese. As mentioned in Chapter Two, a number of organisations in the *Colonia* use the Club for their meetings and activities, including the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association² and the ULCM.³ All three of these organisations, the Club, the Ladies Association and the ULCM are what Rex (1987) calls 'independent associations' which claim to recreate 'home' culture to different degrees, mainly through different performances. I look here into membership and participation of the Club and the Ladies Association, as well as in the *Colonia* in general. I take into account the expectations that arise from the membership and the significance of family connections. The ULCM is explored in Chapter Eight.

Next, I explore the notion of belonging to the *Colonia*, from the idea of having the Club as a second home, through the strategies for the promotion of identity and the boundaries of such belonging. I suggest the Club acts as a 'space of belonging' (Fortier 2006), a space of inclusion and exclusion, where performances help construct a common Colombian-Lebanese identity. I explore these performances in the final section, including the invention of traditions and the creation of memories that construct a sense of belonging to the *Colonia*. It is important to reinforce that the Colombian-Lebanese who use the Club's premises, the members of the organisations, and those who take part in their activities, are all wealthy upper-class descendants of predominantly Christian Lebanese immigrants. Hence, when I refer to the Colombian-Lebanese in this context, I am referring to this group within the elite. Otherwise, I will specify when I refer to other groups that do not fall within the elite Colombian-Lebanese, such as Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, or to those less well-off.

6.2. The Club *Colombo-Libanés* in Bogota

As seen in Chapter Two, the Club *Colombo-Libanés* was founded in the 1960s as a city club in Bogota, after the failure of the *Colonia* to set up a large country club in the outskirts of the city. The foundation of the Club followed an evolution of the *Colonia* and its members, where, as seen in Chapters Three and Four, the Colombian-Lebanese eventually reached the social, economic and political elite of Bogota and Colombia.

² Asociación de Damas Colombo-Libanesas

³ *Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial* - World Lebanese Cultural Union

According to my participant Jose, one of the oldest active members in the *Colonia* and considered one of the patriarchs,⁴ the idea of setting up Lebanese organisations in Colombia arose soon after the first arrival of Lebanese migrants:⁵

‘eso sí es simpático porque desde tiempos inmemorables, desde la primera presencia de los libaneses aquí, trataron de fundar unas asociaciones. Llamaron la primera: ‘Asociación de Amistad Colombo-Libanesa’, porque muchas libanesas se casaron con colombianos y muchas colombianas se casaron con libaneses’.⁶ (Jose 2008)

According to him, Lebanese migrants wanted to form associations due to the degree of assimilation and interconnection they had with Colombian society and to portray assimilation. Romero (2007) also mentions this organisation in an article for *El Tiempo*: ‘Esta asociación correspondía a la necesidad imperiosas de encontrarse...’⁷ and as a space to promote the culture within the *Colonia*. The organisation is, therefore, presented both as a connection to Colombia and as an ethnic space for the Colombian-Lebanese.

As seen in Chapter Two, a physical place was also sought and its locality was an important consideration for the leaders of the *Colonia*. Even though the Colombian-Lebanese city social club was first set up in the centre of Bogota, it then moved to a prestigious location in a wealthy neighbourhood in the north of the city. The Club is one of the few remaining original houses in the area, as most others have been demolished and replaced by elegant apartment buildings. The house does not look like a social club but rather like an expensive home or diplomatic residence, like most other remaining houses in the area. In this sense, the building as an ethnic space is invisible from the outside as it blends into the rest of the neighbourhood, which as Fortier (2006) argues, signals a contradiction between external invisibility and the promotion of ethnic identity within it. In fact, the only visible signs that would indicate its ethnicity are the small plaques next to the doors which state that the building houses the Club *Colombo-Libanés* and a Lebanese flag hoisted high at the entrance. However, these are barely noticeable from the outside, the

⁴ See Chapter Two

⁵ Jose also argues that Colombian-Lebanese Clubs were set up in other cities, such as the *Club Unión* in Cartagena, and the *Club Alhambra* in Barranquilla, now known as the *Club Campestre*. The Club Alhambra was founded in 1945 – see *El Tiempo* Newspaper (1945)

⁶ ‘That is amusing/nice because since time immemorial, since the first arrival of Lebanese here, they tried founding associations. The first was called ‘Colombian-Lebanese Association of Friendship’ because many Lebanese (women) married Colombian (men) and many Colombian (women) married Lebanese (men)’ – Jose.

⁷ ‘This association answered the imperious need to meet again...’ (Romero 2007)

plaques are small and the flag is hidden behind tree branches. Moreover, the building itself is also hardly visible, as is surrounded by a wall and trees that prevent a clear view from the outside.

Nevertheless, the invisibility of the place not only has to do with seclusion but also with conformity with its surroundings, where large houses are hidden by high walls and leafy trees. As Lefebvre (1991 pp.86, 87) notices, social spaces 'interpenetrate one another', adding that:

'Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity'.

Here, social status instead of ethnicity is confirmed: by fitting in as part of a wealthy area, the building is demonstrably a space of social status. According to Maria, one of the directors of the Club, its current location is one of the Club's assets, calling it a *sitiazgo* and stating that it is 'la mejor esquina de Bogota'⁸ (Maria 2009). Similarly, other Lebanese social clubs in Colombia and the Americas have followed the same pattern. For example, The *Club Unión* in Cartagena was first located in the traditional *Getsemaní* neighbourhood, but in 1953 it was moved to its current location in a wealthy neighbourhood of Cartagena (Viloria de la Hoz 2003). The club occupies a large house facing the Caribbean Sea in the *Bocagrande* neighbourhood, where most of the modern hotels of the city are located, and it is surrounded by high fences. The *Club Campestre* in Barranquilla was first housed in the traditional neighbourhood of *El Prado* in the 1940s and moved to its current location in 1964, in the outskirts of the city, next to the Universidad del Norte. Its extensive grounds are surrounded by walls, fences and trees which block view from the street. This is not only the case in Colombia: the *Centro Libanés* in Mexico City has two large sites, a tall building which serves as the headquarters, based in the *Benito Juárez* business district in the centre of the city founded in 1962, and a large sports centre in the *Olivar de los Padres* neighbourhood. The tall building resembles the headquarters of a large multinational organisation, and whilst the sports centre's building has arches and domes emulating Arabic architecture, it is hidden behind a thick concrete wall which surrounds its grounds; in Buenos Aires, the *Club Sirio-Libanés*, founded in 1932, is located in a large colonial building in the

⁸ 'It's a *sitiazgo* (a great location), the best corner in Bogota'. It is unclear how Maria assesses the quality of a street, but as seen in Chapter Four, the area where the Club is situated is one of the most expensive ones in the city.

traditional and wealthy neighbourhood of *La Recoleta*. The club does display flags of Lebanon, Syria and Argentina from its balcony, resembling the outside appearance of some hotels, which somewhat hides its ethnic status. As in Mexico, in 1983 the club obtained a second location where they set up their larger sports site, also surrounded by trees and bushes concealing it from public view. Similarly, according to Almeida (1996: 104) 'the *Sociedad Unión Libanesa* has a posh and modern headquarters on the wealthy outskirts of Guayaquil'.⁹

It must be noted that the social clubs are only visible and available to those individuals that fit within specific desired ethnic and socio-economic categories. Indeed, Alfaro-Velcamp (2013: 102) argues that regular Mexicans and even non-wealthy Arabs do not fit within the desired categories: 'Arabs who did not become wealthy, Arabs that never advanced beyond peddling, and Arabs that married into the Mexican middle and lower classes' do not have access to the clubs and associations. Therefore, when setting up an ethnic place and space for their communities, the leaders of the different *Colonias* took into account the significance of social status. By situating the Lebanese clubs in prestigious locations they are signalling their social status, whilst maintaining it invisible by not portraying it as an ethnic space. Indeed, these social clubs and their surroundings can be seen as social spaces which interpenetrate each other, whilst maintaining a distance.

Even though the current Club *Colombo-Libanés* was not the initial place (location) or space (situation) some Colombian-Lebanese had in mind, the status of the Club as a whole still is important. Wade (2000) argues social clubs are significant expressions of class identity, and I believe the Lebanese in Colombia and elsewhere wanted their clubs to reflect their status in society by setting up them up in prestigious neighbourhoods in the respective cities.

⁹ There are also Lebanese/Arab social clubs in other Latin American countries. In Argentina there are a large number of Arab organisations in numerous cities, including Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Santa Fe, Salta and Tucuman. In Buenos Aires the organisations include the smaller *Club Libanés*, the *Club los Cedros*, the *San Marón* School, the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital, and ULCM chapter with its youth wing. In Haiti there is a Syrian Commercial Club, founded in 1920; and in the Dominican Republic the *Club Libanés-Sirio-Palestino* was founded in 1925, and relocated to a more prestigious location in the 1980s (Nicholls 1992: 351, 354). There is the *Club Líbano Venezolano* in Caracas, and several clubs and organisations in Brazil, including several clubs in Sao Paulo, such as the *Club Sirio*; the *Club Sirio-Libanes* in nearby Santos; and the *Club Monte Líbano* in Rio de Janeiro.

6.2.1. The Colombian-Lebanese social clubs: ethnicity, size and elitism

The Club *Colombo-Libanés* is in many ways comparable to other small private social clubs in Bogota. It charges membership and maintenance fees; provides different facilities for its members, such as a restaurant and bar; organises events, both for members and non-members; and offers networking opportunities. The admission process for new members is also similar to those of other social clubs, where individuals must be introduced by current members and approved by the committee/board of directors during separate meetings.¹⁰ At the *Colombo-Libanés*, individuals must then pay a membership fee of eight million Colombian pesos or CP (approx. £2,700), and then a maintenance fee of \$373,000 CP per month (approx. £127). The admission process to the other two significant Colombian-Lebanese social clubs in Colombia is the same, requiring substantial references and scrutiny before acceptances can be made. However, the prices vary: the membership fee for the *Club Campestre* is \$6.8 million CP (approx. £2,295) and a maintenance fee of \$436,000 CP per month (approx. £147); and the membership fee for the *Club Unión* is \$12 million CP (approx. £4,050) with a monthly maintenance fee of \$416,000 CP (approx. £140) (*Dinero* magazine 2012).¹¹ In this sense social clubs, including the Colombian-Lebanese clubs, ensure access remains limited to those that are already connected to them through current members, and have similar economic capital and social background. This selectivity follows Uribe-Mallarino's (2008) argument that most individuals in Bogota want to have friends of similar social status to them. However, if all the city social clubs are so similar, why would individuals decide to join the Club *Colombo-Libanés*?

According to Maria (2009), one of the directors of the Club, there are three characteristics that differentiate it from other social clubs: its size, its less 'elitist' approach, and its ethnic component. Indeed, the Club *Colombo-Libanés* can be seen as relatively small, with only around 80 fee-paying members. Maria claims that the other small social clubs in Bogota are not based around ethnicity but professions, and that the other comparable social club based on ethnicity, the 'Jewish club', is much larger.¹² In addition, she states that the remaining small social clubs are also different because they are

¹⁰ For a detailed explanation of the membership procedures of different social clubs in Bogota see 'Para Todos los Gustos' (*Revista Semana* 1996)

¹¹ Prices given by Maria in September 2009; exchange rates are variable, ranging from 2,900 to 3,100 Colombian pesos to one British pound (from XE – Universal Currency Converter 2011)

¹² Social clubs based around professions include the Lawyers Club, Medics Club, Engineers Club etc. Most social clubs have between 300 and 900 members, some such as *Club Los Lagartos*, a large country club, has 1200 members, and even then the Bankers Club has 570 members – (*Revista Semana* 1996)

'supremamente elitist[s] de pinchado[s]'.¹³ The small social clubs she might be referring to are the same as mentioned by Wade (2000 p.108): the *Gun Club* or the *Jockey Club* – all-male member social clubs in Bogota, frequented by the political, social and economic elite of the city.¹⁴ If we take elitism to be connected with club membership fees, then the fees of the Colombian-Lebanese social clubs may seem less restrictive and relatively less elitist than other Club's fees. According to *Semana* magazine (2004) in 1999 most social club memberships ranged between 15 and 50 million CP (£5,070 and £17,000 approx.), some even reaching 120 million CP (approx. £40,600). The prices also seem to have inflated, as *Dinero* magazine (2012) reported that the highest membership fee in 2012 was 180 million CP (approx. £60,700). However, eight million Colombian pesos is still a lot of money for many Colombians, so the fee makes sure the clubs remain accessible only to a wealthy section of society.¹⁵ This is elsewhere seen as Karam (2007 p.126) argues about São-Paulo, the Middle Eastern social clubs, financially and socially: '...have now become as exclusive as the clubs of traditional Luso-Brazilian elites'.

The third characteristic which differentiates the Club *Colombo-Libanés* from other social clubs is its connection with Lebanese ethnicity. Its name *Colombo-Libanés* directly connects it to this, unlike its previous name, *Centro Unión* or the names of the Colombia-Lebanese clubs in Cartagena and Barranquilla.¹⁶ The change in name suggests a conscious decision to incorporate both the Colombian and the Lebanese labels, just as in the early associations, stressing the connection between Colombia and Lebanon. Conversely, the other two clubs seems to have done the opposite. The club in Barranquilla used to be called *Club Alhambra* until 1960, when it changed location (Yidi 2012), ceased to be a city club and became a country club- hence *Club Campestre del Caribe*.¹⁷ The first Colombian-Lebanese

¹³ 'extremely elitist and posh'

¹⁴ Including many Colombian-Lebanese individuals, some of which are also members of the Club *Colombo-Libanés*. The *Semana* article says neither social club has membership places available (ibid.)

¹⁵ A comparison can be made with the Arab-Brazilian social clubs in São Paulo. Karam (2007 p.126) mentions how membership fees at the different clubs span from 10,000 to 60,000 Brazilian reals (£3,470 to £20,800), and monthly maintenance fees from 100 to 400 Brazilian reals (£35 to £140). Again, the membership fee of the Club *Colombo-Libanés* is lower than what reported by Karam. However, the maintenance fee is almost as high as the most expensive Arab-Brazilian social club. Conversion rate of 2.88 Brazilian reals to the pound, (XE – Universal Currency Converter 2011)

¹⁶ The 'Jewish' social club – the Carmel Club - only has an indirect connection to a geographical place in Israel, Mount Carmel, which may not be obvious to outsiders.

¹⁷ The word *campestre* can be translated to rural, rustic or country – as in country club.

social club in Cartagena was called *Club El Levante Unido*¹⁸, it evolved and changed names until it became the *Club Unión* (Viloria de la Hoz 2003: 53).¹⁹

Figure P.1. – Cedar Tree²⁰



Within the *Colombo-Libanés*, there are signs that demonstrate the Lebaneseness of the place: there is the Lebanese flag already mentioned; the windows of the house are adorned with small cedar trees; all of its conference rooms are named after Lebanese cities or symbols, including *Beirut*, *Byblos*, *Baalbek* and *Cedar*, and interestingly, the function room for children is called ‘Pequeños Emires’,²¹ indicating both orientalism and elitism; and there is Middle Eastern decoration with artefacts, including *narghiles*, tables and sofas furnishing the rooms. There is also a small cedar tree planted in the garden, although it is very small and can easily go unnoticed. Maria, one of the directors of the Club, pointed it out to me and explained that it was taking a long time to grow; in fact the tree just seemed like

¹⁸ United Club of the Levant

¹⁹ Interim names included *Club Alcazar* and *Club Aldunia* (Viloria de la Hoz 2003). The former referred to Spanish castles built by the moors, or under their influence; the latter refers to the Arabic word *dunya*, which can mean ‘earthly’ or ‘of the world’, and it is also an Arabic surname.

²⁰ Picture taken by Esteban Devis at the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, August 2009

²¹ Little Emirs – Arab princes

any other small tree in the garden, even a shrub, apart from the fact that it is surrounded by a small brick wall (Figure P.1). This tree mirrors the Club in the neighbourhood, being almost indistinguishable from its surroundings. The brick wall, nonetheless, made it stand out.

Comparatively, the *Club Campestre* is much larger than the *Colombo-Libanés* in Bogota. Not only is it a country club with facilities for practising a number of sports, including a swimming pool, tennis courts and a football pitch, but it also has a large club house. It has several function rooms that can accommodate more than 2,000 people, many more than the *Colombo-Libanés*, which can accommodate a maximum of 800 people. The names of the function rooms of the *Club Campestre* are either grand names, such as *Salón Palladium* and *Salón Imperial*, or have a more hidden connection to Lebanon or the Arab world, such as the *Salón Manara*, named after a district in Beirut and the *Bar Alhambra*, a reference to the former name of the club and the citadel in Granada, Spain. The only direct and noticeable connection to Lebanon is one of its smallest function rooms, called *Salón Árabe*. It has an Arab style façade and it is decorated in an Orientalist fashion. The differences between the *Colombo-Libanés* and the *Club Campestre* are a result of its development. Whilst the former bases its membership on Colombian-Lebanese families, the latter evolved into one of the top two social country clubs in Barranquilla frequented by the elite.²² The *Club Unión* is slightly larger than the *Colombo-Libanés* in terms of infrastructure, and it is home to the descendants of both Syrians and Lebanese. For example, it held a reception for the Syrian Ambassador to Venezuela in 2011 (*El Universal* 2011). The names of its event rooms are more functional, such as *Salón Principal* and *Salón de Actos*, though their restaurant is called *Khalifa*.²³

Conversely, the *Centro Libanés* in Mexico City is a combination of both city and country club. Its headquarters resemble the *Colombo-Libanés* but at a much larger scale. Its event rooms have Lebanese names such as *Baalbek* and *Sidon* and according to Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) the club promulgates renowned Mexican-Lebanese individuals, such as Carlos Slim, one of the wealthiest men in the world. At the same time, its sports centre in the

²² The roots of the *Campestre* can still be seen in its board of directors, as nine out of twelve members have Arab surnames (including Jalil, Hazbun, Cure, Jabba, Nader, and Alí), and their social pages show photographs of many more individuals who also have Arab surnames. However, the *Club Campestre* has a membership of thousands and many of them are not descendants of Arab immigrants but part of the socio-economic elite of the city (*Club Campestre del Caribe* website 2013a). Indeed, the club serves as another social club for the elites of the city.

²³ Caliph

outskirts of the city has two swimming pools, including an Olympic sized one; a covered basketball court; three tennis courts; a gym; an 'Olympic stadium' with a football field and an athletic track; and even a luxurious old age 'residence'. Even though its façade resembles Arabic architecture, as mentioned above, inside it looks like a recreational sport centre for the wealthy.

In terms of the *Colombo-Libanés*, all of its features point towards a conscious construction of a Colombian-Lebanese space which, as seen below, can lead to the development of a common sense of belonging. Also of significance is the food on offer which includes Lebanese dishes such as *kibbe* cooked in different forms;²⁴ vine leaves,²⁵ rice with almonds; hummus; *tahine*;²⁶ and *tabbouleh*.²⁷ The importance of food often came up during my interviews as my participants recounted what connects them to their Lebanese heritage. They grew up eating Lebanese food in their homes, which is the same as that offered at the Club. In fact the Club is known for the quality of its Lebanese food in Bogota and it has been praised in different media outlets, e.g. *Cambio* magazine (2008) mentions it as one of the best places to get this food in the country;²⁸ and a number of recipes by one of its chefs have been published online by *Semana* magazine (Moreno-Hernández n.d.)²⁹. This suggests that the Club is renowned as an authentic ethnic space. Karam (2007 p.136) also notes how the main Lebanese social club in Sao Paulo, called *Monte Líbano*, 'has gained status among Arabs and Brazilians alike as one of the most authentic establishments offering Middle Eastern cuisine'. Comparatively, even though the *Club Campestre* in Barranquilla also claims to specialize in Arab cuisine, the food is not as prominent in the *Colombo-Libanés*. Whilst over 60% of the dishes in the latter's menu are Arab/Lebanese, the figure is only 25% for the *Club Campestre* (from the club's websites – accessed in 2013).³⁰ The difference demonstrates the location of these two clubs within the society of

²⁴ Made of rice, chopped meat and different spices; It is eaten fried, baked or even raw.

²⁵ Vine/Cabbage leaves are called '*indios*' in Colombia, such as *indios de repollo*. However, I have not been able to find out a reason or origin for this use of the word *indios*, but Buenavida (2011), in a an article for *El Espectador* newspaper article, mentions '*los indios*' and comments that 'they have already taken a *criollo* name'

²⁶ Tahine is a paste made with sesame seeds and an ingredient to make hummus.

²⁷ Salad made with different ingredients, including bulgur, tomatoes, parsley and mint.

²⁸ The Club is one of two places mentioned in Bogota, out of ten places throughout Colombia: 'Gastronomía libanesa ya no es exclusiva de la Costa' (*Cambio Magazine* 2008). The article also interviews the general manager of the Club who explains the food tradition.

²⁹ The recipes report the name of the chef as Warner Moreno-Hernández – all the chefs are non-Lebanese Colombians. Online edition of *Semana- Cocina* magazine, see 'Receta Libanesa: Shawarma Mixto' (Moreno-Hernández n.d. a) and 'Receta Libanesa: Kafta de Res' (Moreno-Hernández n.d. b)

³⁰ Interestingly, the other social club frequented by the elite in Barranquilla, the *Country Club*, also offers a number of Arab dishes in their extensive menu, showing the influence Arab cuisine has had on the elites in the city.

their respective cities. Whilst the *Colombo-Libanés* acts as mainly as an ethnic social club for the community, the *Club Campestre* has evolved into one of the two social clubs frequented by the elite in Barranquilla. However, the *Colombo-Libanés* does not advertise itself as a public restaurant nor as an ethnic space. It only reaches out to businesses and organisations as a conference and events centre. Therefore, its reputation as an authentic ethnic status venue seems to rely more on word of mouth and personal connections of its members, suggesting the directors are not attempting to regress the invisibility the Club as an ethnic space.

Other aspects of the Club demonstrate its Colombian influences. Of the twenty-two employees, only the manager is Colombian-Lebanese. Even though the Club is famous for its food, not even the chefs are Colombian-Lebanese.³¹ Spanish is spoken at the Club, not Arabic, as only a small number of Colombian-Lebanese speak Arabic – none of the employees do. In terms of food, although its everyday menu does not have Colombian dishes, these are sometimes offered for particular occasions³² and they do have a wide selection of Colombian drinks, including *Colombiana* (a popular fizzy drink), *Aguardiente* (an aniseed alcoholic drink) and Colombian hot chocolate. Moreover, the Club *Colombo-Libanés* also offers what it describes on its menu as ‘international’ food, including Colombian style Spanish, Italian and South East Asian cuisine, i.e. the type of dishes one would find at international restaurants in Colombia. In this way, within the Club, Lebanese heritage and Colombian context mix to construct a Colombian-Lebanese space.

Of the three characteristics given by Maria as the principal features of the Club – ethnicity, less elitism, and size – the latter does not seem to be much of an incentive for individuals to join; in fact it signifies a higher maintenance fees due to the small number of members. The lower membership fee may be a reason for people to join, but its maintenance fee is relatively expensive and, as stated above, many members of the Club *Colombo-Libanés* are also members of other, more expensive, social clubs. As opposed to the *Club Campestre*, it cannot offer the extensive sport and recreational activities. Even the *Club Unión*, though a city club, still has a swimming pool. This suggests that the exclusivity of the Club *Colombo-Libanés* as a social club is not unique, as many other social clubs offer similar facilities and in many cases, better ones. However, the Club’s ethnic links are likely

³¹ Karam (2007) notes how the chef of renowned social club *Monte Libano* in Sao Paulo is also not of Lebanese descent, but a Brazilian who is nicknamed with the Arabic name ‘Salim’.

³² Such as occasional the Sunday brunches, which include typical Colombian *calentado* and Colombian *arepas*

to be an influence for people to join. Indeed, individuals may choose to become members of the Club due to the duality that takes place within it, between Lebaneseness and Colombianness.

Is ethnicity a defining factor for membership? Maria stresses that the Club is not restricted to the descendants of Lebanese, and that non-Lebanese Colombians could become members: 'por eso es Colombo-Libanés'³³ she says, stressing the word *Colombo*. Moreover, many of the events that take place there have no direct connection to the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* or to its members, as the function rooms are often rented out to external organisations for meetings and events. Maria seems proud of this fact as she highlights that one of the positive characteristic of the service they provide is the 'contacto *face to face*',³⁴ which she argues is very appealing for companies who want to hire their facilities. A good way of finding out what public events are happening at the Club is by looking at the social pages of *El Tiempo* newspaper³⁵ where the Club often appears as the host of celebrations, cultural events, academic conferences, as well as financial and political meetings. It is also the location of most events set up by organisations connected to the Middle East, and other social clubs even use it for their social activities. The fact meetings of different political factions have taken place there, also suggests that the Club is not seen as having a particular ideological position for Colombian politics but it is reclusive enough so the meetings can take place.³⁶ The high number of entries in the social pages of *El Tiempo* newspaper suggests the Club *Colombo-Libanés* is widely used for exclusive events and, therefore, is also seen by many outside the *Colonia* as a reputable social space and not just as the social club of the Colombian-Lebanese. Something similar can be seen in the exchange programmes: just as many other social clubs, the Club *Colombo-Libanés* has a number of exchange programmes with other social clubs in Bogota and elsewhere in Colombia. However, according to Maria, the Club has no exchanges with Colombian-Lebanese social clubs elsewhere in Colombia.³⁷ She says they used to have one with the

³³ 'that's why it's *Colombo-Libanés*'

³⁴ 'face to face contact' –said in 'Spanglish'

³⁵ Including announcements of events organised by the Club (*El Tiempo* 1998), by organisations connected to the Middle East (*El Tiempo* 2007) and even by other social clubs (*El Tiempo* 1999)

³⁶ Many other social clubs also rent their spaces for meetings and events; however, it could be counter-productive for certain politicians to be seen as connected to one of the more elitist clubs in Bogota, especially if their party has a rhetoric of wealth redistribution or diminishing class inequalities.

³⁷ According to Maria the only exchange program they have with Lebanese clubs abroad is with the Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian Club of the Dominican Republic, but more due to the contacts of one of its members than because of what it represents.

Club Unión in Cartagena but they had stopped it, because: 'no nos atendieron muy bien'.³⁸ This suggests that the expectations of the Club's directors and of its members in terms of treatment and service weigh more heavily than the ethnicity link. They prefer to have exchange programmes with non-Lebanese social clubs who fulfil their expectations. These examples suggest that, even though ethnicity is an incentive for individuals to join, it is neither a requirement nor an absolute priority for the Club or its members.

Moreover, individuals can rent its spaces for private weddings, birthday celebrations, graduations and anniversaries. The Club is keen to promote its services to the *Colonia* and a number of my participants have used the Club for their celebrations, such as Juanita who had her university graduation reception there which included a dinner with Lebanese food, and Maria Camila (2008) who had her 15th birthday party: 'mis quince fueron con vestido árabe y joyas árabes, como princesa árabe'.³⁹ Maria even used our interview to reinforce this purpose, making sure to tell me that if/when I get married I should do so there,⁴⁰ stating that '...son eventos que son súper lindos. Los matrimonios acá, entonces si te vas a casar me cuentas y entonces aquí [lo hacemos] que es muy bonito'⁴¹ (Maria 2009). These social occasions celebrated at the Club by the Colombian-Lebanese often include an ethnic element, sometimes only the food, sometimes as the central theme of the event.

Conversely, the *Club Unión* is frequented by the elite in Cartagena, both Colombian-Arabs and non-Arab Colombians. The club also hires out its function rooms for private hire, as the *Colombo-Libanés*. However, the *Club Unión* is regarded one of the main social centres of the city. This can be seen in the recurring social events it delivers, such as a famous gala with the candidates of the Miss Colombia pageant, which takes place every year in Cartagena; as well as the ceremony for sports personality of the year for the Bolívar state/department, among others (El Universal 2012). In this case, even though the *Club Unión* was founded by Arab descendants, and many are still members, its position within Cartagena's society means it has become more of a symbol of elitism than ethnicity. Its activities suggest that even though it maintains some connection to its Arab heritage, it has become a centre to Cartagena's elite in general.

³⁸ 'they didn't treat us very well' – Maria

³⁹ 'my fifteenth was with an Arab dress and Arab jewellery, like an Arabian princess' - Maria Camila

⁴⁰ Noticeable here is my own position in the research. For more on this see the Chapter Two.

⁴¹ '...the weddings here are super pretty, so if you're going to get married you tell me and (do it) here as it's very nice'.

As has been seen, for the *Colombo-Libanés* in some situations ethnicity is not a restriction, such as when trying to generate revenues as a business. It is still the choice for many in the Colombian-Lebanese community as the place to have their events and celebrations. On the one hand, the *Colombo-Libanés* likes promoting itself within the *Colonia*, thereby sustaining its claim as the most important Colombian-Lebanese centre, and many members do use the Club's facilities for their parties and events which often include an ethnic element to them. On the other hand, it also tailors itself as a reputable social space that can be rented to outsiders. However, it is not the first choice of the elite in Bogota, as there are many such places to choose from. Ultimately, the *Colombo-Libanés* can act both as a social and an ethnic space, both to attract members and to generate income. Both the ethnicity and social status are based around the social networks the *Colombo-Libanés* creates and tries to sustain.

6.3. Social Networks

An important reason for individuals to join social clubs in general is the social networks they offer, and as can be expected, these networks work within the boundaries of exclusivity. Their exclusive nature varies, and a clue to it is given by the admission processes of many elite social clubs, including the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, where potential applicants need references from current members and must go through committee discussions before being accepted. This is not unique to Colombia of course, as Karam (2007 p.126) says of Brazilian-Lebanese social clubs:

'Because these clubs serve upper-middle-class families, membership titles are granted only if they are accompanied by letters of reference from at least two members'.

Individuals are only likely to be accepted into these elite social clubs if they already have connections with current members, meaning accessibility is restricted to maintain the exclusivity of the space. This follows Uribe-Mallarino's (2008) argument that individuals prefer having friendships of the same social status; the social clubs, including the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, are spaces which maintain this arrangement through their practices, and their admission procedures ensure there is homogeneity in their membership. This is supported by Maria's claim that there have been no applicant rejections in the recent past:

'no, mientras yo he estado, no, y además no, porque la mayoría pues han sido socios y ya se han ido y han vuelto, y los otros son gente muy allegada digámoslo pues que conoce a fulano, a mengano, son gente chévere. Muy poquitos realmente...'.⁴² (Maria 2009)

Those who apply for membership are those encouraged to do so, as they fulfil the necessary requirements for it. Moreover, she stresses that it is easier to become a member of the Club if the parents of the individual were or have been members:

'Diferente se maneja cuando ya eres hijo de socio, que quieres entrar, ya como pues te conocen y todo, pues entras en primer debate'.⁴³ (Maria 2009)

Ethnicity can help admission to the Club, as the children of the Colombian-Lebanese may be granted membership with fewer hurdles. However, as seen above, Maria argues heritage is not a restriction in terms of membership, i.e. it is the fact the individuals are sons or daughters of members which eases access, more than the fact that they are Colombian-Lebanese. As in other social clubs in Bogota, the closer the individual is to the social circle, the better the chances of accessing it. In this sense, the Club is accessible to all Colombian-Lebanese individuals and their non-Lebanese friends, as long as they already knew other Colombian-Lebanese who are members, and have the money to pay for the membership and maintenance fees. The Club works within a close knit community network: by easing the membership of the children of members, the social networks created within it reinforce themselves.

The social networks supported by the Club are not only seen in the admission processes, but also in the other Colombian-Lebanese organisations which rely on the Club for their activities. Indeed, the ULCM, the Ladies Association, and the CACC,⁴⁴ use the Club's facilities for their board meetings, AGM's, shows and events. These organisations use the Club's spaces first, because the Club has traditionally been the space used for Colombian-Lebanese related activities, and second, because of its convenience in terms of location, facilities and accessibility. Being Colombian-Lebanese, the organisations either do

⁴² 'Not whilst I've been here' she says laughing, 'no, because the majority have already been members who have gone and come back, and the others are people who are very close, that they know so and so, they're cool people; not many members really...' – Maria

⁴³ 'It's different when you are the son/daughter of a member, if they want to come in, as they are already known and everything, they're in after the first discussion'.

⁴⁴ *Camara de Comercio Colombo-Árabe(Libanesa)* - Colombo-Arab(Lebanese) Chamber of Commerce

not have to pay to book the spaces or receive a reduced rate (the latter is also the case for private events of Club members and their families).

In turn, the organisations have helped the development of the Club: by using the Club for their events they are increasing the number of attendees, the Club's revenues (in terms of personal consumption and booking fees) and even its membership. In fact, many ULCM participants have become members of the Club as a result of participation in its events.⁴⁵ For example, one of my interviewees says she took a long time before acquiring a Club membership:

Jimena: '...nunca quise, por ejemplo, me parecía hartísimo [aburridísimo] ser socia del Club, mi marido me decía "¿por qué no compramos una acción?", y yo decía: pues qué pereza, ¿eso como pa' qué? ¿Para ir a almorzar? Eso, qué pereza...'

Esteban: ¿Entonces todavía no lo eres?

Jimena: No, sí, sí somos, ahora sí,... sí, tal vez [desde] 2006... socios mi marido y yo... al final del camino, ya después cuando esto [ULCM] se hizo digamos multitudinario, las reuniones y todo, entonces ya meritaba...'.⁴⁶ (Jimena 2009)

Even though Jimena found the idea of just having lunch as "not worth it", after the re-organisation of the ULCM she re-connected with the *Colonia* and bought a Club membership. In addition, the activities organised by these associations also act as networking events. Lucia, a ULCM member, told me that these activities are designed to be both cultural and entertaining, as their aim is to attract more people:

'...[los eventos son hechos de] una manera divertida, además de que esto se crea como una bola de nieve, pues para todos es lógico que si estamos contentos en un ambiente con nuestros amigos, y nuestros amigos igual quieren pertenecer, o los traemos para que pertenezcan a ese ambiente agradable...'.⁴⁷ (Lucia 2008)

⁴⁵ Some of them already were members or relatives of members, but many who were not members of the Club have now acquired memberships.

⁴⁶ Jimena: '...I never wanted to, for example, I thought it was very boring to be a member of the Club, my husband would say to me: "why don't we buy a membership?" and I would say I can't be bothered, what for? (Just) to go have lunch there? I can't be bothered...'

Esteban: 'So, you still aren't?'

Jimena: 'No yeah, now we are... maybe (since) 2006... my husband and I are members... in the end, after all of this [the ULCM] turned into, let's say multitudes, the meetings and all, then it was worth it...'

⁴⁷ '...[the events are done in] a fun way so they work as a snow-ball, because for everyone it's obvious that if we're happy in a friendly environment, and our friends already belong to it or we bring them over so they do...' - Lucia

Lucia, therefore, recognises the importance of the social aspect of these activities in order to attract more people. According to her, the activities must be entertaining and fun, and mirror their everyday social networks.

In this way, the Colombian-Lebanese organisations are helping to construct the Colombian-Lebanese community by bringing new people together through their activities. However, the activities must have a combination of social and ethnic features in order to be appealing for individuals. A balance between the two must be struck, as the social side on its own might 'not be worth it' but the ethnic side must still be entertaining. Moreover, as Fortier (2000 p.106) argues of the Italian cultural centre in London:

'life at the Centro takes place exclusively inside, invisible to the neighbouring Brixton residents, available only to a handful of people connected to each other through a close 'community' network'

Indeed, as seen above the Club is invisible in its neighbourhood, and the enjoyable activities Lucia talks about are supposed to attract only those who already have connections to the participants.

Some of my participants' even comment on the need to keep its exclusivity, as Daniel suggests with participation in the activities of the Youth ULCM (see Chapter Eight):

'mira, en Bogotá a través de nosotros y conocido del conocido no sé qué, porque aquí al fin de al cabo las familias libanesas todas se conocen entre todos en Bogotá... entonces queremos, por ahora, manejarlo así con los conocidos de los conocidos, igual si nuestro proyecto bandera digamos va a ser ir el próximo verano al Líbano no queremos que vaya gente equis, queremos que vaya gente que conocemos'.⁴⁸ (Daniel 2009)

For Daniel it is important that those involved are individuals similar to those already accepted as part of the *Colonia*, and a way of securing this was by only reaching to friends of friends. He stresses he does not want '*gente equis*' to join the activities, but to keep it within their social circle. He is setting a boundary for the *Colonia* of those who belong and

⁴⁸ 'here in Bogota it's through us and the acquaintance of the acquaintance, because at the end of the day all the Lebanese families in Bogota know one another... so we want to keep it like this for now, the acquaintances of the acquaintances. Anyway, our flagship project is to go to Lebanon next summer and we don't want random people to go, we want people that we know' – Daniel

those who do not. He explains his desire for exclusivity by stating that all Colombian-Lebanese families know one another, but rather than this being a personal contact it is through their network of contacts. Daniel's comments also imply a shared social status, where '*gente equis*' are those less wealthy and, therefore, not part of his network.

The reliance on social networks is also seen with participation at the Lebanese cooking classes organised by the Ladies Association:

Esteban: ¿Y quién iba a las clases?

Sofia: ¿A las clases mías?⁴⁹ Mire, yo nunca puse un aviso en el periódico ni nada. Primero, digamos, amigas, y la amiga iba diciéndole a su amiga, mamás de compañeros de mis hijos... yo soy del Opus Dei... entonces muchas de mis amigas en la obra [del Opus Dei], y conocidas, digamos. Se fue corriendo la voz, y les ha encanto mi comida, entonces, pues eso. Y muchas que son casadas con libaneses, esas que les encanta...'.⁵⁰ (Sofia 2008)

The fact they never advertised means all the participants belong to their extended social circle, as wealthy members of the Colombian-Lebanese community, religious organisations or through their children, and not necessarily restricted to those that express a Colombian-Lebanese identity. These became exclusive spaces where particular characteristics and connections are necessary to access them, in particular a similar socio-economic background, and in turn constructing a commonality around those participants. Many social connections between the Colombian-Lebanese will more likely be based on their social status through 'the acquaintance of the acquaintance', than on their ethnicity.

Social networks played an important part for the Club since its beginnings, e.g. the current house where the Club is based was bought from a Jewish Colombian-Lebanese man (Romero 2007). Moreover, Monica (2008) suggests that using the networks has allowed the Club to ensure continuity. She told me that the Club contacted the sons and

⁴⁹ The classes were organised within the Ladies Association framework by Sofia, a first generation Colombian-Lebanese and former president of the organisation. She taught the classes which took place at her house and which were attended only by women.

⁵⁰ Esteban: 'and who went to the classes?'

Sofia: 'to my classes? Look I never advertised in the newspaper or anything. First it was friends, and the friend would tell their friends; mums of my children's school friends...; I am from the Opus Dei... so friends from there too, and people I know. So the word spread and they loved my food. Many of them are married with Lebanese men, who love it...'. See Chapter Two for a brief explanation of membership of Colombian-Lebanese individuals to elite organisations, such as the Opus Dei.

daughters of the members and past members to encourage them to re-join and increase its numbers. Maria told me there is a small group of older members who go every week to play cards, with games lasting a long time and a lot of money being involved. She calls the card players 'nuestros socios consentidos... ellos son el muro de contención'⁵¹ (Maria 2009). Alba and Nee (1997 p.835) notice that as immigrants assimilate and no new ones arrive, '...organizations dwindle in membership or find that their members belong to early generations or those with a more parochial outlook'. Due to its small size and by relying only on friends and acquaintances, i.e. by maintaining its exclusive nature, the Club has been susceptible to the loss of members, which can be difficult to replace. This shows the fragility of the community, which helps explain why the Colombian-Lebanese organisations I study are keen to recreate the community.

6.3.1. Maintaining social-status

These social networks have helped both to construct and maintain the community by keeping it exclusive but raising solidarity within it. As seen in Chapter Four, most of the work of the Ladies Association is based around charity, including the help they give to Colombian-Lebanese families. In order to maintain their charity work, they have a number of activities and fundraisers and rely on the community and their connections for much of their work. The majority of these fundraisers take place at the Club and are based around social events. For example, they organised a fashion show at the Club, with many of the models being young Colombian-Lebanese women and attended by members of the diplomatic community (Portafolio 2011). Their main causes include supporting the children's wing of the Santa Clara hospital, an under-resourced establishment, which has a cot fund covering the cost of cots for babies whilst they are in intensive care; and supporting members of the community:

'Trabajamos para personas menos favorecidas, ayudamos a familias venidas a menos... y principalmente trabajamos para el pabellón infantil del Hospital Santa Clara, que trabaja para niños de estrato cero, uno y dos'⁵² (Lucia 2008 – member of the Ladies Association)

These 'less privileged' people come both from within and outside the community: the former are those Colombian-Lebanese who were once wealthy but for some reason lost

⁵¹ 'our spoiled members... they are the retaining wall' - Maria

⁵² 'We work for less privileged people; we help families that have lost their patrimonies...; and principally, we help the children's wing at the Santa Clara hospital that works for children of strata cero, one and two' - Lucia

their money, but perhaps not their social status, i.e. 'personas venidas a menos'; and the latter those children of families from lower strata who require specialist medical assistance in the hospital. As current and former members of the Ladies Association talk about helping members of the community who face difficult financial situations, the importance of social status becomes apparent:

'...para ayudar a las familias [colombo]-libanesas que tengan algún miembro como 'pobre avergonzante'. No sé si entiende esa figura, personas que han tenido medios económicos, entran a una mala situación, y por su rango no pueden ir a pedir, eso se llama el 'pobre vergonzante' ⁵³ (Monica 2008)

'... se sostienen varias familias de la Colonia que son 'vergonzantes', entonces usted les pasa mensualmente una suma de dinero para su sostenimiento'⁵⁴ (Sofia 2008)

'...ayudan a algunas familias con algún presupuesto, a familias de la comunidad que han quedado en mala situación. Entonces, las Damas estudian eso en conjunto y aprueban una mensualidad de algún tipo para ayudarle a la gente... sólo son de la comunidad, porque la obra social para Colombia es el hospital'.⁵⁵ (Angelica 2009)

These 'vergonzante' labels given to the individuals who lose their money can be interpreted as 'embarrassing', as one should be ashamed of losing one's money. As Monica suggests, to maintain their social status they have to hide their economic needs. Connected to this is the idea of respectability, which Fortier (2000 p.124) argues permeates these social settings:

'This ideal (respectability) dominates the overall way of 'being' in the Club, and establishes lines of distinction, and exclusion, that members need to negotiate. However performative it may be, what one does, and how one does it, may be the source of one's exclusion, which is often self-attributed'

⁵³ '... to help (Colombian)-Lebanese families that have a member that ehm it's a 'shamefaced poor'. I don't know if you understand what I mean, these are people who have been economically solvent, they go into bad circumstances and because of their rank they can't go begging. That's called the *pobre avergonzante*' – Monica.

⁵⁴ '... we sustain a number of families of the community that are 'vergonzantes', so we give them a sum of money each month for their housekeeping' - Sofia

⁵⁵ '...they help some families with some money, families of the community that have landed in a bad situation. So the Ladies study each case and approve a monthly instalment to help them... they're only from the community because the social/charitable work for Colombia is the hospital' - Angelica

This chimes with the solidarity that exists within the *Colonia*, with better off members supporting those less well-off; and also highlights the importance of 'being respectable' by maintaining social status in society. The financial help allows these families to do so. Help is given to these Colombian-Lebanese so that they need not be seen 'asking for money' in order to uphold their reputation. Olwig (2004) argues that inclusion in a site of belonging requires the fulfilment of particular expectations and that just as some individuals can become role models, others are conveniently 'forgotten' about. In order to maintain their social status the Colombian-Lebanese are expected to have financial respectability, otherwise they could be excluded from certain Colombian-Lebanese organisations.

The need to fulfil social expectations is also one explanation given for the work done in the hospital. As Sofia describes this work:⁵⁶

'...al principio se entró dotando cuatro camas, me parece, de cuidados intensivos, que no tenía el hospital... yo fui presidenta de la asociación en esa época, cuando yo no conocía el hospital, pues iban las que estaban encargadas... y cuando vi, entró a ese pabellón, me da tristeza, le digo francamente, y a lo último hay la sala de cuidados intensivos, con una placa 'Damas Colombo-Libanesas'. Cuando entra, ya era otra cosa, la sala, yo dije: "no puede estar el nombre de nosotros en un sitio como deplorable, la verdad". Entonces ahí sí me puse en contacto con una arquitecta, que es una hija de libaneses acá, de la Colonia, y le dije bueno, vamos a ver cómo nos metemos a reformar eso. Entonces se empezó con una parte del pabellón... y algunas de nosotras tenían conocidos en el ministerio, en el distrito, entonces se abogó y se presionó un poco para que completaran las ocho camas... nos dijeron: "casi el mejor del estrato de eso, el hospital..." y eso da mucha alegría, sobretodo el porcentaje de mortalidad ha mermado muchísimo...'.⁵⁷ (Sofia 2009)

⁵⁶ For more information on the work on the hospital by the Ladies see article by *El Tiempo* newspaper (2001) titled 'Un hada para los niños del Hospital Santa Clara'

⁵⁷ 'Well, first of all our labour is with the Santa Clara Hospital... At the beginning we provided four cribs for the intensive care unit in the children's wing, which the hospital didn't have... When I first was president of the Ladies Association I didn't know the hospital... and when I saw that wing (children's) it made me sad, I tell you frankly, and at the end there's the intensive care unit with a plaque of the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies. When you went inside it was something completely different (better) and I said "our name can't be in such a deplorable place". So I contacted a Colombian-Lebanese architect from the community to redevelop the place, and we started with a part of the wing... and some of us knew people in the Ministry, in the district, and we championed and pressured a bit so they completed the eight beds... we've been told it's almost the best for the strata... and that gives me a lot of happiness even more as the mortality rate has reduced a lot' - Sofia

The Ladies have managed to bring important improvements to the hospital with the help of their contacts and through the *Colonia*. Sofia sounds proud of their achievements but she also suggests that the reputation of the Ladies must remain high. She does not want to see a poor hospital in an ‘appalling’ state, when there is a sign connecting it to the Ladies Association. As seen in Chapter Two, Ladies Associations such as this one are based around the idea of respectability (Fortier 2000), and this example, together with the idea of ‘vergonzantes’, suggest that social expectations need to be met so that reputations and their respectability remain high. In order to do so, the social networks come into play, on the one hand helping those in need, on the other making use of it to achieve that help. As Zhou (1997) argues, the more involvement there is with a community, the more the expectations have to be maintained, and these contributions by the Ladies ensure that the social status of the Colombian-Lebanese, both as individuals and as a community, remain in place.

The portrayal of respectability is not only seen within the Ladies Association and the Club, but individuals also express similar views about the *Colonia* in general. For example, Jose highlights the marriage connections of some Colombian-Lebanese families:

‘...muchas libanesas se casaron con colombianos y muchas colombianas se casaron con libaneses. Usted sabe, por ejemplo tu pariente se casó con la hermana del presidente Echandia, y hay mucha gente. Un sobrino mío se casó con la hija de Belisario Betancourt, y muchos se han casado con los Santos y con muchas familias, Ospinas y por ese estilo...’⁵⁸ (Jose 2008)

Not only does Jose reaffirm the marriage pattern seen in Chapter Three of Colombians marrying the descendants of Lebanese, but he also stresses that these marriages were with Colombian families of high social status. Jose is keen to portray the *Colonia* as respectable and part of the social (and political) elite in Bogota.

⁵⁸ ‘Many Lebanese women married Colombian men, and many Colombian women married Lebanese men. You know your own relative got married to one of the sisters of President Echandia, and there’s lots of people. One of my nephews married the daughter of President Betancourt, many have married the Santos, and many other families like the Ospinas and the like...’ – Jose. All the names are of Colombian presidents: Dario Echandia was president 1943-44; Belisario Bentancourt 1982-86; Eduardo Santos 1938-42 and his grand-nephew Juan Manuel Santos, elected president 2010; and Pedro Nel Ospina 1922-26 and his nephew Mariano Ospina 1946-50.

6.3.2. Family connections

The family is one of the ways the networks are created and sustained. As seen in Chapters Three and Five, Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous (2007) argue that family networks are particularly important for the Lebanese for both financial and emotional support. This importance is in *Colonia*; families are vital for the identity of my Colombian-Lebanese participants. Jacqueline, for example, argues that she 'practically grew up in the Club', adding that she, her father and her brother have all been presidents of it. She says that the Club, apart from being a place for social events, is also a place of gathering:

'(para) la promoción de la cultura para nuevas generaciones y mantener vínculo con raíces... Para que los hijos se conozcan y mantengan el contacto'.⁵⁹ (Jacqueline 2008)

Others also connected their participation in the *Colonia* with their families:

'Nosotras desde chiquitas crecimos en el Centro Unión, hacíamos parte de todas las actividades y conocíamos a todas las personas... bailamos dabkeh⁶⁰ desde chiquitas y por temporadas. Obviamente todo el mundo está con sus actividades y el desarrollo de sus carreras y todo eso, pero pues siempre que ha habido la necesidad de apoyar las instituciones libanesas, lo hemos hecho... siempre fuimos muy activas, mis hermanas y yo...'.⁶¹ (Angelica 2009)

'Yo, es decir, sin ser arrogante, yo contestaría que yo me siento la comunidad, siempre he estado muy cerca de todos... [desde] cuando nosotros éramos pequeños... nos conocimos y nos acercamos muchísimo, porque entre todos éramos la familia que habían dejado allá... En esa época se crea el Club, precisamente para que fuera la casa de todos... era el sitio de encuentro, aquí crecimos todos, aquí se casaron, aquí se enoviaron, aquí se pelearon, aquí todo, y esos son los amigos que hoy en día, por ejemplo, somos los que en este momento

⁵⁹ '(for the) promotion of the culture for the younger generations and keeping the connection with the roots... so the children can meet one another and keep in contact' - Jacqueline

⁶⁰ Dabkeh is a Middle Eastern dance, performed in groups with choreographed jumps, stomps and shouts.

⁶¹ 'Since we were little we grew up in the Centro Union, we were part of all the activities and knew all the people... we danced dabkeh since we were little, and it was seasonal of course as everybody has their own activities and the development of their careers and all of that, but every time that there's been a need to support the Lebanese institutions we have done it...we've always been very active my sisters and I...' - Angelica

somos de una edad madura, que estamos retomando ojalá de la misma manera que los viejos, este tema de los libaneses y la comunidad'.⁶² (Lucia 2008)

All three of them have been involved in the *Colonia* since their childhood, as their families are also involved, with the Club at its centre. As they explain, friendships and relationships have been formed there, activities organised, and they have carried on with their involvement. This suggests first, that for them the *Colonia* is based around family and social circles, and second that the Club itself is important for the family as it offers spaces of recreation and it is a way for parents to keep their children connected to the *Colonia*. Indeed, both the Club and the Ladies Association can be seen as associations of kinship (Rex 1987), as involvement in the organisations and participation in the activities are heavily influenced by family and friends.

The significance of the family in maintaining a connection with the *Colonia* is also noted by younger Colombian-Lebanese participants, such as teenager Maria Camila (2008) who says her parents often took her to the Club as a child, which she sees as the centre of the community. Likewise, Enrique, who is in his mid-thirties, explains why he is married to another Colombian-Lebanese:

'Bueno primero la familia de mi suegra con mi familia... toda la vida por el Club libanés y por la amistad, se han conocido de toda la vida... Yo ya la conocía de chiquitica [a la esposa] y jugaba con ella en el jardín de mi casa... y nos enamoramos y nos casamos, por coincidencias de la vida. No como mucha gente piensa, ahí como se dice "de puertas pa' fuera", que fue arreglado ¡No, eso no!'.⁶³ (Enrique 2008)

By taking their families to these spaces, the Colombian-Lebanese increase the chances of their children having friends and marrying other Colombian-Lebanese, which in turn makes it more likely that they will stay connected to it as they grow up. These families have been

⁶² 'Without being arrogant I would say that I feel I am the community. I've always been close to everyone... (since) we were children... we met each other and we got very close, because we all were the family that had been left behind... around that time the Club was created, precisely so it would be a house for all... it was the meeting place, here we grew up together, people got married here, got boyfriends/girlfriends here, split-up here, everything here. And we are the friends, now of a mature age, that today are taking up again that theme of the Lebanese and the community, hopefully just as the older ones did.' - Lucia

⁶³ 'Well, first of all because of our families... we spent all our lives in the Club and [our families] have known each other all their lives... I met her [my wife] when we were little and we played in the garden... and we fell in love and got married, because of life's coincidences. (But) not like many people think, like it's said "outside these walls", that it was arranged. No, not that!' - Enrique

important promoters of both ethnicity and social connections. For many years the older generations took their second and third generation descendants to the Club, and these descendants are now the ones leading the different organisations of the *Colonia*. In fact, the events hosted by the different organisations also play a dual role: Lebanese raising cultural awareness and promoting endogamy. Alfaro-Velcamp (2013: 102) mentions Mexican-Lebanese JOMALI⁶⁴ which officially aims to promote Lebanese culture, however, she suggests that it 'also serves as a place for future spouses to meet and perpetuate what it means to be Lebanese Mexican'.

Enrique also refers to the boundaries of the community where he believes 'those on the outside' have misplaced assumptions about his marriage which he feels he needs to explain, but not to those within the *Colonia*. The *Colonia* is, therefore, what Fortier (2000 p.133) calls a 'habitual space' where familiarity with one's surroundings aids in (re)creating a belonging by providing comfort and where individuals 'need not try to make sense of what is going on' and do not need to explain themselves. The boundaries of the space coincide with the need for explanations, and it is only outside of the 'walls' of the Club that the suggestions of an arranged marriage are made.

This lack of need for explanations is reinforced by the fact these individuals have a shared experience of the *Colonia*, with a common space where they grew up (the Club), where many memories are based, and where they are comfortable to express their Colombian-Lebanese sense of belonging. These memories are important as they can act as 'symbolic anchors' for the community, providing commonality among participants (Gupta and Ferguson 1992 p.11). Their shared experiences when growing up have constructed common memories of the *Colonia*, strengthening their Colombian-Lebanese identity and easing the connection with other Colombian-Lebanese individuals. Nonetheless, as participant Monica says, even though she shared the same experiences as her siblings, not all feel the same connection to the community or to their heritage:

'... dentro de los mismos hermanos usted encuentra gente llena de nostalgia, como yo, y totalmente entendida en esa cultura, como yo y unos otros... o a personas como mi hermano, que no ha sentido esa curiosidad'.⁶⁵ (Monica 2008)

⁶⁴ Jóvenes Mexicanos de Ascendencia Libanesa

⁶⁵ '...if you were to interview all seven of us (siblings) you would find differences. For example one of my brothers has travelled all over the world... and has never been to Lebanon. So within the same siblings you find people

This situation is replicated in other families, where not all individuals have been influenced in the same way by participation in the *Colonia* when growing up, and with some family members having close bonds to it whilst others hardly feeling a connection.

Lack of participation in the community does tend to make it more difficult for individuals to connect later on. For example, Carlos always has had only a marginal connection with the *Colonia*, even though he has recently increased his interest about his ethnicity; he is not a member of the Club and has not participated in most of the activities of the community. About his connection growing up he says:

'[al Club] me llevaron tíos un par de veces... [pero] ni mi abuelo ni mi papá eran del Club... Mi abuela tampoco instigó eso, no le interesaban tanto esas raíces, sino la parte colombiana'.⁶⁶ (Carlos 2008)

This seems to be a pattern within the Colombian-Lebanese, of individuals who have had little contact with the *Colonia*. As first generation siblings Isaac and Sofia suggest:

Sofia: 'hay muchos acá, digamos que están lejos de la Colonia, porque no han tenido oportunidad de involucrarse'

Isaac: 'perdieron el contacto'

Sofia: 'no es que perdieron el contacto sino no lo han tenido... si no tienen aquí nexos que los unan, entonces no pueden, no pueden [estar cerca]'.⁶⁷ (Sofia and Isaac 2008)

This suggests that participation is heavily reliant on family connections to the *Colonia*, though it is not a defining feature. As we see below, different Colombian-Lebanese organisations have realised this and have taken steps which they argue will help connect to the *Colonia* those previously unconnected, sometimes using the family to draw them in. As I explain in Chapter Seven, one of the visiting Maronite priests carried with him a large

full nostalgia, like myself; with a complete understanding of that culture, like myself and some of my siblings; and you find people or individuals like my brother who hasn't felt that curiosity' - Monica

⁶⁶ 'My uncles took me [to the Club] a couple of times... [but] neither my dad nor my granddad were (members) of the Club... my grandma didn't instigate that either, she wasn't that interested in those roots but in the Colombian part' - Carlos

⁶⁷ Sofia: 'nowadays there are many people far from the *Colonia*, because they've never had the chance to get involved'

Salomon: 'they've lost contact'

Sofia: 'it's not that they lost contact but that they've never had it... they don't have connections here, so they can't, they can't [be near the *Colonia*]' - Sofia and Salomon

database of Maronites in Lebanon, including lists of family trees which Colombian-Lebanese individuals were encouraged to use. Some kept in contact with the priests to continue their search, and therefore kept connected with the Maronite Church and the *Colonia*. Other organisations have also tried to influence the feeling of belonging of the Colombian-Lebanese, many times through meetings or events at the Club.

6.4. Belonging to the *Colonia*

As seen above, the Club has been acting for many years as the main social and ethnic base of the Colombian-Lebanese. By opening its meeting spaces to Colombian-Lebanese individuals and by providing spaces of belonging through the events, where they can collectively experience their identity, the Club is generating a sense of belonging to the *Colonia*. Fortier (2006 p.72) notes the importance of spaces in creating a common bond among those that participate in them, as they are spaces to 'find themselves again', where individuals encounter people 'like them' generating a sense of belonging to the space and the community it represents. As has been shown, the Club's spaces have been significant for my participants. It has continuously been a centre for the *Colonia*, where future friends and spouses have met, and according to some of my participants, a space where they are at 'home':

'...hoy en día, ya para mí, sí, definitivamente es una casa más. Y de verdad que es como mi casa, y pues te lo dirán, te lo habrán dicho seguramente muchos de quienes has entrevistado y esto para muchos de nosotros es nuestra segunda casa, y es muy agradable tenerla'.⁶⁸ (Jimena 2009)

As I showed above, Jimena used to think it was not worth becoming a member but now her participation has increased to the point that she refers to the Club as a second home. Juanita expresses similar sentiments, as she also started attending the Club more often after the formation of the ULCM:

'[ahora] uno va al Club y se siente en la casa... muchos no son de familia, pero se siente en su casa, conoce a muchos, y tratan como primos. Siempre todos son

⁶⁸ '...nowadays it is definitely for me another home. And really it is like my home, and they will tell you, surely many others that you have interviewed would have told you, this for many of us is our second home, and it is very pleasant to have it' - Jimena

'primos'... ahora me parece rico ir a almorzar al Club, antes no lo hubiera pensado'.⁶⁹ (Juanita 2008)

In both these cases, the Club and the ULCM have played an important part in their feeling of belonging and on their re-identification as Colombian-Lebanese: the ULCM by providing a 'worthy' excuse to meet up, and the Club facilitating a space to connect with the *Colonia*. Shared ethnicity alone is not enough to feel the Club as a second home, but a social element is necessary to consider it 'worthy'. Moreover, part of this second-home feeling has to do with the atmosphere of the Club which creates a family feeling. As Juanita says 'everyone's a cousin', suggesting the members of the *Colonia* are all a big family. This family feeling is a way in which some of my participants express their belonging, by connecting socially with others who share their ethnicity. Fortier (2000 p.120) reports one of her Italian participants explained she enjoyed the meetings at the Italian centre in London because she felt 'like home, a place where she did not have to explain herself or who/what she is'. This feeling of familiarity can also be seen in the Club with my Colombian-Lebanese participants. The boundaries of the *Colonia* are once again important, as there is an implicit understanding among those that belong to it, which in turn deepens the commonality being felt.

Jimena offers an example of her feeling of belonging to the Club:

'...ya forma parte de la vida de todos y cada uno de nosotros. Muchas veces no hay nada nuevo de qué hablar pero siempre encontramos cualquier cosa, cualquier tema. Es bueno para reunirnos, para vernos, para darnos un beso y un abrazo, simplemente'.⁷⁰ (Jimena 2009)

For her, the Club is not only a place to meet up and have a chat, but a space to be with other Colombian-Lebanese who share her feelings. The Club has played a role as a socio-emotional centre, as Lucia (2008) expresses as she explains the re-organisation of the ULCM:⁷¹

⁶⁹ '[Now] one goes to the Club and feels at home... many are not from my family but it feels like home, we meet and treat each other as cousins. Always everyone's a 'cousin'... now it's nice to go have lunch, before I'd never thought of it' - Juanita

⁷⁰ '...it already forms a part of our lives, for each one of us. Many times there's nothing new to talk about, but we always find something. It's good to meet up, to see each other, and simply to give each other a kiss and a hug' - Jimena

⁷¹ See Chapter Eight

‘Entonces en el verano de 2006 arranca la guerra y eso hace que nos encontremos muchas personas que desde hace mucho tiempo no nos veíamos, porque realmente el momento fue demasiado dramático y dolido por todos nosotros, y como de costumbre este es el sitio de reunión acá [el Club *Colombo-Libanés*] empezó a llegar la gente, porque sabían que acá iban a encontrar alguien a quien preguntar qué hacer...ese fue el origen de este renacer...’.⁷² (Lucia 2008)

As people were looking for answers they went to their ‘usual meeting place’, i.e. the Club, in order to get reassurance in a space where they felt safe and at home. As Yuval-Davis’ (2006) argues, the feeling of ‘home’ is an emotional attachment and an expression of belonging, in this case to the *Colonia*. Moreover, Lucia argues they ‘knew they would find answers there’ and, once again, where no explanations are needed (Kondo 1996).

The directors of the Club also seem aware of this ‘second home’ feeling. This is noticeable from Maria as she explains how they have maintained the standards of the restaurant:

‘el restaurante, que gracias a Dios con el esfuerzo ya lo hemos ido poniendo a la altura, porque la competencia de competir con la abuela, la tía, la mamá, la esposa, era muy complicado, entonces pues ha sido un esfuerzo y un escuchar a la Asociación de Damas, y a la tía, a la mamá: “mijo esto no se hace así, esto sí”. Porque ellas se meten a la cocina, lo agradecemos porque eso nos ha ayudado a mejorar nuestra calidad’.⁷³ (Maria 2009)

According to her, this active involvement of the members is a positive characteristic of the Club, as it ensures the good quality of the food, suggesting that it is just like the food prepared at home. In addition, the labelling of these Colombian-Lebanese women as mothers and aunts plays on the idea of the *Colonia* being a big family. Indeed, Maria seems keen to portray this second-home image:

⁷² ‘Then in the summer of 2006 the war began, and that meant we got together with many people that we hadn’t seen for a long time. It was a really dramatic moment and it hurt us all, and as this [the Club] was usually our meeting place, people started to arrive as they knew they would find someone to ask what could be done... that was the origin of its rebirth...’ - Lucia

⁷³ ‘the restaurant, which thanks to God and with effort, we’ve been able to be up to the task, as competing against the grandma, the aunt, the mum, the wife, was very complicated. So, we’ve put effort into it, listened to the Ladies Association, to the mums and aunts: “darling, this is not the way, this is”. Because they get into the kitchen! And we thank them for it because it has helped to improve our quality’ – Maria
This involvement of the members is not unique to the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, as Karam (2007) notes that the members of the Arab-Brazilian social clubs are also known to make suggestions to improve the food.

'... la casa tiene un ambiente delicioso. Esta casa, tú llegas y te sientes muy rico acá... ¡Y yo les digo que el slogan!, mi jefe me regaña, yo les digo que el eslogan del Club Colombo-Libanés debiera ser: ¡llegue, quítese los zapatos y la corbata, es lo primero que tú llegas a hacer a tu casa!'⁷⁴ (2009)

This 'home' feeling is also being constructed through the way it is decorated and the activities that take place within it, with its reminders of Lebanon, such as artefacts, decorations and names which are purposely used to construct a Colombian-Lebanese identity and are then continuously used to reinforce it. According to my participant Maria Camila, the octagonal tables adorning the place, the playing of cards, smoking *narghile*, drinking Arab coffee and eating dates, are all aspects of the Club which remind her of home. Once again, this shows a collective experience of identification through a 'habitual space' (Fortier 2000 p.133). Therefore, part of the participation and belonging to the *Colonia* is being promoted through a 'home' environment and a connection to the family, whether people are actually related or not. Individuals are encouraged to participate socially, engaging with the sense of Lebanese ethnicity and being made to feel comfortable at the Club.

6.4.1. The promotion of ethnic identity⁷⁵

According to my ULCM participants, many of the younger people have a mixed heritage and have not felt such a strong connection to the *Colonia*. They argue it is their 'responsibility' to 'keep the roots alive' in order to save it. Their choice of words suggests a struggle for ethnic survival, an argument strongly connected to the politics of the ULCM ideology.⁷⁶ In order to reconnect young Colombian-Lebanese individuals to the community, the ULCM have organised a number of activities. The most significant seem to have been the dabkeh classes:

'La parte del folclor, pues ha sido algo que ha pegado muy duro y que ha sido un gran aglutinador, indudablemente. Y hemos hecho tres o cuatro actividades más, que definitivamente hacen que ese propósito se esté cumpliendo, lentamente... esto

⁷⁴ '...the house has a delightful atmosphere. When you get here you feel good... and I say! which my boss tells me off for it, I say that the slogan of the Club should be: arrive, take off your shoes, and take off your tie, because it's the first thing you do when you get home!' - Maria

⁷⁵ I show in Chapter Seven how the Parish has also been able to promote both religious and ethnic identities within the congregation, in some cases even where it did not exist.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Eight (ULCM)

es de paciencia y de ir ganándose adeptos lentamente, a base de que vayan observando [lo que hacemos]... y en la medida en que se han ido involucrando jóvenes y eso, vamos poco a poco... estas organizaciones, miradas cada una dentro de su objetivo, al final del camino, ayudan a lo que todos quisiéramos, que es mantener prendida la llama del Líbano en los corazones de todos'.⁷⁷ (Jimena 2009)

The ULCM directors seem to accept the link between participation and belonging, in this case through dance classes, thereby 'keeping the flame of Lebanon alive'. In addition they have arranged special talks for the younger generations:

'...en donde se hablan históricamente el trascender del Líbano, la iglesia de oriente en occidente ¿quiénes somos, de dónde vinimos? porque las segundas y terceras generaciones desafortunadamente están perdiendo sus vínculos sentimentales con el Líbano... este es nuestro objetivo, que no se pierda la cultura y que los que no saben, lo aprendan, y los que lo tienen conocido, no lo olviden y lo vivan permanentemente'.⁷⁸ (Lucia 2008)

As a result of these events, a number of younger Colombian-Lebanese have begun reconnecting with the *Colonia*. They have been frequenting the Club, either to participate in one of the activities set up by the organisations, such as the dabkeh classes, or simply to have a meal and socialise. As Juanita explains, it is the ULCM that has encouraged her to visit the Club more often:

'Ya hay sentido de ir al Club, a mí me daba pereza ir al Club, detestaba ir al Club, hasta que la Unión volvió. A partir de la Unión empecé a ir y a interesarme, desde ahí me empezó a gustar. Cuando era chiquita, mi abuela era la conexión a la comunidad libanesa, iba al Club con mi abuelita, a verla jugar cartas con las amigas. Fui pocas veces después de eso, me daba física 'mamera'... porque sentía que iba y

⁷⁷ 'The folkloric part has been something which has always had a big impact and undoubtedly has gathered people. We have done three or four activities which reach this goal... this has to be done with patience, winning supporters slowly as they observe [what we do]... and with time young people have started to participate, slowly... all these organisations, at the end of the day, help in what we all want, which is to keep the keep the Lebanese flame alive in everyone's hearts' - Jimena

⁷⁸ '...where they talk about the history of Lebanon, the meeting of religions, who are we and where we come from, as unfortunately the second and third generations are losing their sentimental links with Lebanon... this is our goal, that the culture is not lost, and that those that don't know about it can learn it, and those that do know it don't forget about it and constantly live it' - Lucia

no conocía a nadie... pero poco a poco fui conociendo a gente de mi edad y me gusta más'.⁷⁹ (Juanita 2008)

The directors also reported they were taking steps to attract the Colombian-Lebanese and get them to (re)connect with the *Colonia*. For example Salomon, one of the Club's directors, says that they have emphasised regaining its 'cultural value' to bring together all Colombian-Lebanese, not just the members. He explains that in terms of food they have focused more on Lebanese dishes,⁸⁰ and less on Western ones, to once again make the restaurant have an 'oriental' outlook. Maria Camila believes some of these changes have also opened up the Club:

'... [al Club] le tocó abrirse y se remodeló para que fuera más atractivo, para hacer fiestas, también comida libanesa y comida internacional'.⁸¹ (Maria Camila 2008)

Maria Camila thinks that in order to attract more people the Club has become more open and inclusive for younger generations as well as for non-Lebanese. Nevertheless, these ideas of openness and the inclusion of 'all Colombian-Lebanese' still fall on the socio-economic paradigm in which the *Colonia* is set, i.e. to increase the sense of belonging of all Colombian-Lebanese who share the social status of the current members, and to be more open to the children of the Colombian-Lebanese in the elite. Indeed, changes have been taking place; however, they are geared towards recapturing those Colombian-Lebanese who had been part of the community, and inviting those in the elite who had not.

Moreover, these changes are also directed towards generating revenue, either to support the Club and its facilities, or for the charitable activities and cultural events of the organisations. Despite all the rhetoric about the Club being a home for the Colombian-Lebanese, it still operates as a business. As I have shown, the Club has a good reputation because of its seemingly traditional Arab food. This seems to be the case for Arab social

⁷⁹ 'Now there's a reason to go to the Club, before I couldn't be bothered, I hated going to the Club, until the ULCM got together again. From that I began to go and began to like it. When I was little my connection to the community was my grandma, I'd go to the Club to watch her play cards with her friends, but after that I rarely went, I thought it was lame/boring... because I went and didn't know anybody... but slowly I've been meeting people my age and I like going more and more' - Juanita

⁸⁰ However, the Club did not get rid of its entire old menu and still offers non-Lebanese food. Moreover, the Club has been inviting its 'members and friends' to bank holiday brunches in the Club, where none of the food served is particularly Lebanese and many dishes are considered Colombian, such as *calentado*. In fact, in the invitation these dishes were labelled as *tipicos* or traditional, with the label referring to Colombian instead of Lebanese food.

⁸¹ '... [the Club] has had to open up. And it was redecorated so it looked more attractive to have parties, and also offer Lebanese and international food' - Maria Camila

clubs elsewhere too, as Karam (2007) explains how his Arab-Brazilian participants use their social clubs restaurants to entertain guests and close business deals. Therefore, food is used not only to attract more Colombian-Lebanese members but also outside organisations and individuals.

Moreover, Maria told me that they are planning to expand their current facilities even more, both for its members and to improve their commercial capabilities. According to her, they plan to build an internet café and a new billiards room, and possibly a sauna, with massage rooms, a beauty salon, and/or a larger room for events:

‘...para matrimonios, primeras comuniones, fiestas infantiles, reuniones de trabajo, tenemos Wifi, Internet abierto para todos, ayudas audiovisuales, refrigerios, almuerzos de trabajo, desayunos de trabajo. Y eso es lo que nos ha ayudado a mantener el Club, porque únicamente tenemos 80 socios, entonces así es muy difícil.’⁸² (Maria 2009)

Most of these improvements appeal more to the social side of the Club than the ethnic, and of course the potential to bring in more business. Indeed, this quote suggests that Maria believes opening the Club up to more business is a way to finance it with its few members, allowing for it to continue to run and in turn carry out activities which can influence the identification of the Colombian-Lebanese. The Club is being constructed both as a social and as an ethnic space, with the revenues of the former being used to subsidise the latter.

At the same time, the Ladies Association is also considering projects which aim at increasing cultural awareness within the community and (re)connecting younger people to it. A potentially significant project is the creation of a *Colegio Levantino*⁸³ in Bogota, a school for descendants of wealthy Colombian-Lebanese/Arabs, as well as children of wealthy Lebanese/Arab immigrants. It would be a bilingual mixed school, teaching in Spanish and Arabic. The name suggests an ethnic identification with the historical region of the Levant, whilst distancing itself from national identification. The term Levant would include Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians, but it would exclude other Arabs – at least in its name. The idea has partly come as a way of (re)connecting the community, and partly after seeing the

⁸² ‘...for weddings, first communions, children’s parties, work meetings. We have Wi-Fi open to everyone, audio-visual facilities, light refreshments, work lunches, work breakfasts. And that’s what’s help us maintain the Club, because we only have 80 members’ - Maria

⁸³ School of the Levant

success of the Colombian-Arab school in Maicao, called *Colegio Colombo-Árabe Dar al-Arkam*. The school which is mostly attended by the children of second-wave Muslim Arab immigrants and of Colombian converts, though Bruckmayr (2010) reports that some Christian Colombian-Arabs who live in the area also send their children there. The school teaches Arabic and Islamic studies, and it was the first place at which Imam Khalid preached. Bruckmayr (2010: 168) argues the school demonstrates a 'quest to preserve Arab language and cultural values, and their outreach into local society'.

The Ladies supporting the *Colegio Levantino* seem to also want to generate an interest in learning Arabic, whilst widening their appeal as elite Colombians of Arab descent. Maria Camila's grandmother is one of the proponents of the school in Bogota, and she describes it as one of their flagship projects:

'Mi abuela está mucho con la cosa del colegio Colombo-Árabe y es uno de los proyectos bandera... ella ha hablado con embajador de Palestina, mi abuela lo conoce y es muy amiga de ella. Porque mi abuela es toda que los legados, que las raíces, que hacer un colegio para nuestros hijos... y lo que pasa es que toca una cantidad de plata, entonces el problema no es tan fácil.'⁸⁴ (Maria Camila 2008)

Maria Camila stresses the will of her grandmother who, she argues, places a lot of importance on Arab cultural heritage. She is also keen to point out the networking efforts of the organisation and claims her grandmother is friends with the Palestinian Ambassador, suggesting there is some official endorsement. The school would also likely work as another social networking space, where individuals would get closer to the community and Colombian-Arab children would get to know one another, increasing the chances of endogamy for the next generation.⁸⁵

At the same time, Maria Camila mentions money problems, indicating their fundraising abilities have not been as successful as with other projects. In fact, the plans have met opposition within the organisation and it has not gathered the support other projects, such as the *Santa Clara Hospital*, have received. Author Pilar Vargas commented

⁸⁴ My grandmother is very involved with the Colombo-Arab School, and it's one of the flagship projects... she has spoken with the Palestinian Ambassador; she knows him and they're friends. Because my grandmother is all about legacy, roots, making a school for our children... the thing is that it's a lot of money, so it's not easy' – Maria Camila

⁸⁵ Interestingly, Maria Camila called it Colombo-Árabe, instead of Levantino – the name the rest of my participants gave it.

about the school on this issue. She says the Ladies have meetings every week to discuss the rules, philosophy, curriculum, etc. However, she also sees problems in it:

‘Lo que pasa es que también quieren que sea un colegio para árabes, pero lo que hablábamos con varias señoras, es que quién, si ellas que tienen hijos o ya unas que van para nietos, quien de ellas metería a un colegio nuevo por ser árabe a sus hijos a sus nietos, entonces ellas me decían “no nosotros no, nos quedamos ya con los colegios tradicionales, o nos los tradicionales pero los colegios que queremos.” Eso no llama la atención⁸⁶ - (Pilar Vargas 2008)

Indeed, the school in Bogota would be aimed at the wealthier sector of the *Colonia*, the ones who have kept a closer connection to it. Its standards would be expected to match those of private traditional schools, and hence it would have to compete with them. This would result in relatively high fees, meaning few second-wave migrants would be able to send their children there. The school would have to mostly rely on the wealthy descendants of first-generation Arab immigrants. However, as Pilar Vargas argues, many Lebanese Ladies are against the idea. Monica is one of the Ladies members who does not agree with the creation of the school. She argues that she has not gotten involved with the school project as she does not see its feasibility:

‘No me he metido en ese tema y no lo veo fácil. No, porque los hijos de libaneses que tendrían las posibilidades de meter a sus hijos en un colegio así se van a ir para el Liceo Francés, o para el Anglo, o para el Marymount. ¿O no? y no se van a ir a ensayar un colegio. Pensar que ese colegio subsistiría con los hijos de los libaneses, no, no lo veo posible.⁸⁷ (Monica 2008)

Both Monica and Pilar doubt the Colombian-Lebanese would opt for a Colombian-Arab school when they would be able to send their children to other established, traditional, bilingual elitist schools. Pilar talks of traditional schools and Monica mentions three international bilingual private school, frequented by the children of the elite. Even those that like the idea of their descendants learning Arabic have their reservations. For example, my

⁸⁶ “The thing is they want it to be a school for Arabs, but we chatted with a number of women and who would it be, if even though they have kids, or some have grandkids, and they would say ‘no, not for us. We’ll stick to the traditional schools, or not the traditional but the ones we want’. It’s not appealing’ – Pilar Vargas

⁸⁷ ‘I haven’t gotten involved with that and I don’t see it happening. No, because the Lebanese that would have the solvency to send their children to a school like that would rather send them to the French Lyceum, or the British School, or the Marymount, right? They’re not going to try out a [new] school. To think that the school would survive with only the children of the Lebanese, I do not see it happening’ - Monica

participant Jacqueline argues that even though she would like her children and grandchildren to learn Arabic, she would have to see the school first to assess it before she can support it.

In this case, the Colombian-Lebanese are showing the limits of their ethnicity. Although some like Monica and Jacqueline are keen to reignite the feeling of belonging to the *Colonia* amongst Colombian-Lebanese, they are not willing to compromise their children's education for it. Even though the school could provide an important cultural heritage centre for the community, it would not be able to compete with already established schools and many Colombian-Lebanese do not seem keen to support it. Monica suggests that in order to work, the school would have to broaden its catchment to attract non-Lebanese Colombians. However, this could take away both the ethnic emphasis which is the basis of the school, as well as its connection to the high socio-economic status enjoyed by the active Colombian-Lebanese. This example shows one of the boundaries of the Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity: they are willing to go far for their ethnic heritage, but not too far.

6.4.2. A social and an ethnic space

Conversely, the Colombian-Lebanese have used the social emphasis of the community for the benefit of their ethnicity. Ethnic identity not only benefits from the subsidies provided by the social spaces, but also ethnicity itself can be strengthened by them. Alejandro told me of the activities of the Colombian-Lebanese youth:

'básicamente como por una cosa social, sabes, social y cultural. O sea, el hecho de que se reúnan los jóvenes, que comparten ese mismo sentimiento, que no lo tienen vivo, que lo reviven, que lo sientan... y pasarla muy bueno, divertirse... Básicamente igual que uno hace cualquier cosa para tratar de divertirse un poco, pero también tratar de generar conocimiento... entonces es una cosa social, con unas cosas para mirar cómo es el país, la cultura, y al mismo tiempo agruparse y hacer la fiesta ¿me entiendes? Entenderlo así, y sentir que todos, aparte de que somos amigos tenemos una cosa en común, que es una cultura muy fuerte, muy pesada, como la libanesa'.⁸⁸ (Alejandro 2009)

⁸⁸ '...basically as a social thing you know, social and cultural. I mean, the fact that young people get together, whether they share that same feeling, [if] they don't have it awakened, they revive it and feel it... and have fun,

Alejandro suggests that social activities can be used to reinforce the ethnicity of the Colombian-Lebanese, by providing a door into its culture and generating a common bond, whilst also having a good time. Maria Camila expresses a similar view as she recounts how she was asked by her uncle to join in a protest against the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon.⁸⁹

‘...mi tío [me dijo]: “vamos a marchar”, y yo [dije]: “¡bueno vamos y vamos al Club después a almorzar!”⁹⁰ (Maria Camila 2008)

Whilst this political demonstration against the Israel bombardment of Lebanon helped produce a feeling of solidarity with the *Colonia*, it was also a chance for Maria Camila and others to ‘meet up’ and ‘have lunch’. Her words underline how the social aspect dominates over any other objectives the events may have. Something similar happened with the 20th of July march in 2008, when a number of Colombian-Lebanese set off from the Club to join the march, and many of them returned there again after it finished in order to have lunch (see Chapter Eight). Seemingly political events have also been used as an excuse to meet up socially, to the point that in Maria Camila’s case, the lunch seems to have been an expectation if she was to participate. Therefore, the Club is a place where ethnicity and social life can be experienced simultaneously, where ethnic and social events influence each other, and where they can help reinforce, or be used as an excuse for, one another. These examples also demonstrate the convenience of the location of the Club and how the *Colonia* revolves around it. The image it has as a place that has always been there, where the members grew up, where they can gather with friends and ‘have lunch’, further suggests that it has become an entrenched part of their everyday lives.

The leaders of the *Colonia* seem aware of the importance of this connection between ethnicity and social status, as the majority of their activities combine the two. For example, the *Colonia* has been celebrating the Lebanese National Day for some years now with a major social event, such as a dinner-ball or ‘dancing bingo’ at the Club.⁹¹ Moreover, even

have a good time... basically the same reason one does anything, to try to have a bit of fun but also try to generate some knowledge... so it’s a social thing with things to look at the country, the culture and at the same time get together and party, you understand? To understand it like this and feel that all of us, apart from being friends, also have in common a culture that is very strong, very heavy, like the Lebanese’ - Alejandro

⁸⁹ I discuss this further in Chapter Eight (ULCM)

⁹⁰ ‘My uncle [told me] “let’s go protest” and I [said] “ok, let’s go! And then we go to the Club to have lunch!” - Maria Camila

⁹¹ The main prize for the 2010 celebration was a plane ticket to Beirut.

the invitation to the 2011 event included a reference to both their ethnicity and the importance of social connections:

‘La unión y la fraternidad en la conmemoración de esta significativa Fiesta Nacional, representa mantener viva la memoria que moldea nuestra identidad... Esta será una gran oportunidad para mantener los vínculos familiares y fortalecer nuestras tradiciones y valores culturales’.⁹²

This is something the ULCM members suggest:

‘... ¿y qué estamos haciendo? pues tratar de continuar ese trabajo, que es reunir a la Colonia... estamos trabajando para hacer actividades culturales y de entretenimiento que atraigan a las personas’.⁹³ (Lucia 2008)

Therefore, the leaders of the *Colonia* seem to have noticed the importance of mixing social events with their ethnic heritage in order to attract more people to the organisation and promote Lebanese culture, suggesting once again that neither social position nor ethnicity on their own is enough to construct a belonging to the *Colonia*.

However, this drive to attract and gather people has not worked for all of my participants and some have even criticised the efforts. In fact, my participant Gabriel says he believes that behind this drive to attract people there are other objectives at play. Even though he says he had been welcomed into the *Colonia*, emphasising that the reception he got was ‘impressive’, he argues he does not feel a part of it as he believes there is a particular interest in him due to his profession as a journalist.⁹⁴

‘No me siento parte de la comunidad. No, y me interesa mantener un contacto cordial, pero no me interesa pertenecer. Esos sentidos de pertenencia no, pero ya es por filosofía propia... no hay interés en pertenecer a clubes y cosas... creo que ahí hay un elemento [de interés]... claro que quieren un periodista en la comunidad,

⁹² ‘The union and the fraternity of the commemoration of this significant National Day Celebration represent keeping the memory that moulds our identity alive... This will be a great opportunity to uphold the family links and strengthen our traditions and cultural values’ – Invitation to Lebanese Independence Day celebrations at the Club

⁹³ ‘...and what are we (the ULCM) doing? Well, we’re continuing that work, to gather the *Colonia*... to consolidate the ties we have, and hopefully if someone needs help be able to help them... we are working on cultural and entertainment activities to attract more people’ - Lucia

⁹⁴ Gabriel wrote an article for *El Tiempo* newspaper after a trip he made to Lebanon where he met his relatives. After the publication he was contacted by members of the *Colonia* who encouraged him to participate more and invited him to different events.

de eso se puede sacar mucho provecho. Pues no voy a decir que ellos me quieren porque de repente conocí a mi familia libanesa...'.⁹⁵ (Gabriel 2008)

Gabriel argues that he does feel a connection to Lebanon, but not to the social side of the *Colonia*, further stressing that he feels pressured by others:

'yo no quiero meterme tanto en el cuento. Quiero decir, es que siento que me obligan a ser sectario. Entonces me obligan a hablar bien del Líbano, y yo, ante todo quiero mantener mi periodismo. [Una señora libanesa] me criticó mucho mi primer artículo sobre el Líbano, me decía:

- [pone acento libanés] "¿usted por qué escribió que hay prostitutas en el Líbano?"
- [acento normal] "pues porque yo vi prostitutas en el Líbano, salí del Hotel Fenicia y ahí estaban las prostitutas".
- [acento libanés] "Ellas no son libanesas, son rusas".

'Mire, igual que los colombianos, le decía a ella, es que yo antes de ser libanés o ser descendiente, soy periodista. Entonces siento que todo esto como que me puede conducir a un camino que no es fácil. Prefiero quedarme con mi oficio, que ser el relacionista público de la comunidad... mi identidad de periodista es mucho más fuerte'.⁹⁶ (Gabriel 2008)

For Gabriel the social aspect of participating in the Club, together with the perceived expectations of portraying a particular image of Lebanon and of the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia*, are the reasons for him staying away from it. As he expresses, he feels more a journalist, and a Colombian, than a Colombian-Lebanese. This suggests he prefers that Colombian-Lebanese identity to happen outside of the *Colonia*, in his case with a personal

⁹⁵ 'I don't feel part of the community. I'm interested in keeping in contact but not in being a part of it. I don't have those feelings of belonging, but it's my own philosophy... no interest in belonging to (social) clubs and things... I think there's an element [of interest] there... of course that they want a journalist in the community, as they can take advantage of it. I'm not going to say that they suddenly want me because I met my Lebanese family...' - Gabriel

⁹⁶ 'I don't want to get that involved with everything. I mean, I feel like I'm obliged to be sectarian, and so I'm obliged to say good things about Lebanon, and above all I want to maintain my journalism. I was criticised a lot by a lady about my first article about Lebanon; she said to me:

- [puts a Lebanese accent in Spanish] "Why did you write there are prostitutes in Lebanon?"
- [his normal voice] "Because I saw prostitutes in Lebanon, I went out of the Phoenicia Hotel and the prostitutes where there"
- [Lebanese accent] "But they're not Lebanese, they're Russian!"

'So I would tell her that, just as Colombians, before being Lebanese or a descendant of one, I was a journalist. I feel all of this can lead me to a path that it's not easy. I prefer to keep my professionalism than to become the public spokesperson for the community... my identity as a journalist is much stronger' - Gabriel

trip to Lebanon.⁹⁷ This situation can be explained following Zhou's (1997 p.997) analysis of communities when she argues that:

'...participation in social relationships and acceptance of group norms and values are interrelated; the more individuals associate with a particular group, the greater the normative conformity to behavioural standard and expectations prescribed by the group'.

Hence, as Gabriel started to get involved with the *Colonia*, he began to be expected to follow these norms and values, which according to him included the promotion of Lebanon and of the Colombian-Lebanese. However, he argues that he felt his belonging to his profession is stronger, and so the norms and values he follows are those connected to it. It is possible that at times the relationship between ethnicity and social behaviour can also have a negative impact on the *Colonia*. These expectations form a metaphorical boundary around the *Colonia* and, in order for individuals to be welcomed, the expectations must be fulfilled. The relationship in this case is not of one influencing the other, but a combination of both factors, ethnic and social, being necessary for participation.

My participant Fernando also does not find the organisations useful, as he feels they are not particularly accessible. I asked him if he is aware of the different events being planned:

'Sí, he escuchado más por el lado del padre que por otro lado. El otro lado de la ULCM y todas esas actividades, para mí es un gremio cerrado o uno es antisocial. Porque uno nunca se entera y los que están allá siempre son los mismos... ahora, no es justificación porque uno también puede acercarse y decir: quiero poner a mi hijo, no me estoy justificando. Por eso le digo, o es cerrado el cuento o uno es el antisocial... me entero más de lo que hace el padre, en la misa los avisos parroquiales...'.⁹⁸ (Fernando 2009)

⁹⁷ More on the influence of trips to Lebanon see Chapter Eight (ULCM)

⁹⁸ 'Yes, I've heard, more from the Priest than anywhere else. For me, the ULCM and all of those activities are a closed guild, or maybe I'm just antisocial. Because one never finds out and the ones involved are always the same... now, that's no justification as one can also approach them and say I want to get my son involved, I'm not justifying myself. As I say, it's either closed or one is antisocial... what I find out is from the Priest through the announcements in the parish...' – Fernando

Both these cases follow Karam's (2007 pp.132-133) experience, as he also mentions a number of his participants who criticised the different organisations, including the social clubs, as elitist and 'closed'. He states that:

'Several Middle Easterners have expressed frustration and even annoyance with the upscale pretensions and prying intrusions of socialites in the varied clubs of the *Colonia*'.

However, Karam also notes how many of these individuals still participate in the social activities they criticise. This also happens in Bogota: Gabriel was invited to several events which he attended, including the premier of the film *Caramel*; and Fernando has participated in several of the Church's receptions after the mass. Karam suggests that despite the criticisms, these spaces provide opportunities to make networking connections, and in the case of some of my participants, they are also useful to be seen and impress others.

Even within wealthy Colombian-Lebanese, time constraints, usually due to work or similar commitments, also limits what a person can dedicate to these organisations and their activities. To become involved, the individual has to sacrifice a substantial amount of their free time. For example, Angelica (2009) says that she got involved with the Ladies' Association in the 1990s for about 10 years, but that she left because she got involved with other initiatives, including the ULCM, and does not have enough time for all. In addition, Cristina (2009) says that she used to be a Ladies member, but had to stop due to work commitments, and now that she is retired she has decided to focus on the Parish. The Colombian-Lebanese organisations also have to compete with each other for members. At the same time, they have to make sure individuals do not become inactive members:

'Mi mamá pertenece a la unión de Damas Libanesas, y mi mamá asiste a las misas, a los almuerzos, a ese tipo de cosas... lo que pasa es que hay un problema ahí, la mayoría de esas señoras son amas de casa y mi mamá trabaja todo el día, entonces mi mamá no tiene como el tiempo de salir al medio día a echar [tomar/comer] té y galletas'.⁹⁹ (Maria Camila 2008)

Ana says that she had not participated in the organisations that much lately:

⁹⁹ 'My mom is part of the Ladies Association, she goes to the services, to the lunches and that type of things... the thing is there's a problem there, the majority of those ladies are house wives and my mum works all day, so my mum doesn't have the time to go during the middle of the day to have tea and biscuits' - Maria Camila

'no, por falta de tiempo... ayudo y todo lo que sea necesario, pero a veces uno como con el tema del trabajo, cuando uno trabaja todo el día en todas cosas, pues no he sacado el tiempo...'.¹⁰⁰ (Ana 2009)

These examples show a number of women in the community that have had close links with the *Colonia*, or a particular organisation, but due to other commitments they have been unable to continue doing so. Some also criticise the timing of the meetings during working hours as this restricts the number of people who can participate. Moreover, it confines those that can participate to a group of wealthier individuals who do not need to work, have plenty of free time and a good network of contact¹⁰¹. As my participants suggest, most of the women who participate in the Ladies Association do not have full-time paid jobs and have enough time and money to organise and participate in its activities, showing how their socio-economic status is important to be able to perform their identity.

The social aspects of the *Colonia* remain closely connected to the elite aspect, which has played an important part on who feels encouraged to be part of the organisations. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, not all the descendants of Lebanese immigrants enjoy access to the Club or the other organisations. Less successful Colombian-Lebanese may not have the time, money, connections or even bonds to their ethnic heritage to be able to participate, and even less, become members of them. At the same time, there is no presence from Muslim Colombian-Lebanese in the different organisations here discussed. The organisations are set-up to strengthen Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity within a group of wealthy upper-class individuals.

6.4.3. The (lack of) Muslim participation

Even though there is no presence of Muslim colombian-Lebanese in the different organisations here discusses, Imam Khalid argues that there is in fact a lot of contact between Christian and Muslim Colombian-Lebanese: 'La amistad que tenemos es muy fuerte'.¹⁰² He also mentions that both the Lebanese and the Palestinian Ambassadors are

¹⁰⁰ 'No, because of lack of time... I help and all but sometimes with work, when one works all day with everything, I haven't made the time...' - Ana

¹⁰¹ Overall, participation is greater from retired people and housewives. However, the ULCM meets mostly in the evenings allowing those that work during daytime to participate.

¹⁰² 'We Muslims have a very strong friendship' - Khalid

Christians and claims that he knows that a lot of Muslims visited the Club *Colombo-Libanes*; however, he did not know them personally:

‘Al Club Libanes van muchos musulmanes, y van cristianos. Claro no es un club religioso, pero eso se llama libanes, no se llama cristiano. Van muchos y ese es uno de los espacios los cuales encuentra musulmanes...’¹⁰³ (Khalid 2013)

However, when I asked Khalid if he had participated in any of the organisations’ activities or knew any of its leaders, he stated that he had only met one of the Lebanese Ladies whilst doing a charitable activity:

‘Tenemos algunos contactos, dependiendo. Hay personas que tienen más contacto que yo, pero no porque yo no quiero sino por circunstancias de la vida, trabajo, tiempo’¹⁰⁴ (Khalid 2013)

Khalid expressed willingness to take part in the activities of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations; however, he stressed time and work constraints as reasons that preventing him from doing so. Indeed, both time and money are needed to participate in these activities, and as mentioned, these characteristics are mostly enjoyed by wealthier individuals.

As I stated in Chapter Two, I was not able to find a single Colombian-Lebanese Muslim at the Club, and Miriam, one of the Club’s directors, stated there were no Muslim members. The only Muslims I encountered there were first, a Colombian-Lebanese woman in her early 30s, daughter of one of my participants, who had converted to Islam as she married an Emirati man, who she lived with in the UAE. She went to the Club with her husband when they went on holiday to Colombia, and she told me she did not have any contact with the larger Muslim community in Bogota and preferred to pray at home; and second, the Colombian converts who headed the Islamic Cultural Centre and had visited the Club during the inauguration of the CACC (see Chapter Two).

For example, Ahmed (2009) is a Muslim bakery owner whose main contact with the wealthy descendants of Christians is through his bakery, as he sells Lebanese bread and

¹⁰³ A lot of Muslims go to the Lebanese Club and Christians too. Of course it’s not a religious Club, that’s why it’s called Lebanese and not Christian. Many go and that’s one of the meeting spaces for Muslims...’ – Khalid

¹⁰⁴ There are some contacts, some people have more contacts that I do, not because I don’t want to but because of circumstances in life, because of work and [lack of] time’ – Khalid

pastries. My participant Cristina was the one who alerted me to the presence of the Muslim owners of the bakery. When I expressed what contact she had with them, she only referred to being a client at their shop:

‘... y son libaneses musulmanes, los de esta panadería. Una panadería donde venden el mejor pan árabe de aquí de Bogotá por ser fresquito... tiene el cedro del Líbano, y tienen cantidades de fotografías, posters y todo del Líbano... y voy allá porque vende el quippe pero sobretodo el pan, porque es fresquito, recién sacado, ahí mismo lo hacen...’¹⁰⁵ (Cristina 2009)

Even though the owners are Colombian-Lebanese, a fact she is aware of, her dealings with them are limited to a merely commercial transaction. In fact, Ahmed expressed similar views as Khalid regarding time constraints. He says he has heard of the ULCM through the Consul and that he would like to be more connected to the *Colonia*, but that he does not have time to get together with other Colombian-Lebanese or go to the Club. His wife, however, disagrees with him on this, and argues she would not like to have more contact than necessary with the Club, mentioning that some of the women there could be ‘antipáticas’.¹⁰⁶ Ahmed and his family are in a different position in society to most of the other Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota. They are not in an unprivileged position as they own the bakery shop; nor is his line of work uncommon in the *Colonia*, as other Colombian-Lebanese families also own bakeries in Bogota. However, the other bakeries specialise in the mass supply of products to supermarkets or cater to large reunions, and the Colombian-Lebanese either employ people to run them or only take care of the top management decisions. Ahmed and his wife work every day at the bakery and serve the daily costumers. I believe it is this difference, a different social status, which explains the lack of involvement on Ahmed’s part, and the unwillingness of his wife to become more involved.¹⁰⁷ They share the same ethnicity with the rest of the other Colombian-Lebanese, but not the social status of those involved in the Club or the organisations. A social boundary has been set restricting those who can participate in the *Colonia* and its organisations.

¹⁰⁵ ‘They’re Lebanese Muslims, the ones from this bakery. It’s the bakery where they sell the best Arab bread here in Bogota, it’s really fresh... it has the Lebanese cedar, and they have lots of photos, posters and everything from Lebanon... I go there because they sell kibbe but more because of the bread, it’s fresh, recently baked, they make it right there...’ - Cristina

¹⁰⁶ unpleasant

¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Ahmed is Muslim, and as discussed in Chapter Seven, Colombian-Lebanese Maronites and the Muslims do not mix much in Bogota, partly due to the lower social status of the Muslim community.

The absence of Muslim Colombian-Lebanese individuals in the organisations is likely to be a reflection of their socio-economic status in Colombia, which does not match that of their wealthier Christian counterparts. As has been seen in Chapter Three, Batrouney (1992) argues that not only the second-wave migrants do not have connections with those from the first wave, but that there is dislike between them. Similarly, as seen in Chapter Seven, Alfaro-Velcamp (2011) argues that there is even an implicit discrimination of Lebanese Muslims in Mexico, coming from the Mexican-Lebanese members of the elite social clubs. At the same time, the Lebanese/Arab Muslim community in Bogota not only has little/no social connections with the larger Christian Colombian-Lebanese community, but they also do not have their own social spaces. Their only Muslim gathering spaces are the mosques (see Chapters Two and Seven) and Imam Khalid argues that the community is too small to be able to sustain a purely social centre. However, his words suggest he would like to have one:

‘Acá por la comunidad es tan pequeña que nos faltan muchas cosas, porque por ejemplo en Brasil, Argentina, Chile, esos países tienen además de mezquita, porque la mezquita es solo un espacio en el cual podrían por ejemplo encontrarse los miembros de la comunidad islámica, hay otros espacios en esas comunidades que tienen club, que significa encuentro familiar, más ameno, más social, no religioso. Siendo musulmanes el encuentro no es religioso para nada, porque se encuentran a hacer asados, a jugar a no sé qué y no hablan ninguna palabra de religión. Siendo musulmanes, pero es un encuentro social, un espacio para vivir el aspecto social.’¹⁰⁸ (Khalid 2013)

Khalid compared the Muslim community in Bogota to the Muslim community in Maicao to explain their absence:

‘...porque la comunidad es muy pequeña relativamente, en comparación con la comunidad de Maicao. Fuera de eso la comunidad de Maicao es una comunidad concentrada, o sea, ubicada en un solo sitio casi. En cambio somos pocos acá en Bogotá y están dispersos geográficamente en una ciudad muy grande, de hecho uno casi como si estuviera viajando para poder visitar a un paisano o algo. Por eso

¹⁰⁸ ‘Here the community is so small here there are many things lacking. For example, in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, on top of having a mosque, because the mosque is only a space where they could meet the members of the Islamic community, there are more spaces in the community. They have a [social] club which means a family place, more homely, more social and not religious. Even though they’re Muslims the gatherings aren’t religious at all. They meet up for BBQs, to play something, and they don’t talk about religion at all. They’re Muslims, but it’s a social gathering, a space to live the social side.’ – Khalid

cualquier árabe o musulmán acá en Bogotá tiene más amigos colombianos que los amigos paisanos...'¹⁰⁹ (Khalid 2013)

Imam Khalid's concerns about numbers are similar as Jose's when he explained why a Colombian-Lebanese country club did not flourish. However, whilst for the wealthy descendants of first-wave Lebanese Christians had to settle for a city club, the consequences for the second-wave Lebanese Muslims could be more poignant. This latter community could arguably be in danger of once again diluting into local Colombian society, as it happened with those that came during the first wave (see Chapter Three). Imam Khalid notes that the lack of a social centre and the fact they are dispersed geographically means Arab Muslims have more Colombian friends. The presence of two mosques is likely to have a positive effect on maintaining the religion active, however, as generation pass, it is likely that the ethnic component will fade away. Khalid seems to be aware of this, as he stressed the importance of having different spaces for the survival of the community. He quoted a Spanish imam who once visited Colombia as saying that:

'Cualquier comunidad que no tiene mezquita para toda la comunidad, colegio para los hijos de los miembros de la comunidad, y club para todos los miembros de la familia, si no tiene esos tres espacios está destinada a desaparecer'¹¹⁰

As seen above, the wealthier Colombian-Lebanese seem to have noticed this and are taking steps towards reinforcing their cultural heritage. Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, however, are in a situation where their social status (and to some extent their religion)¹¹¹ does not allow them to participate in the already established social organisations within the Colonia; whilst their numbers are not large enough to form their own. Unless one of these changes, their survival as a community could be in danger.

¹⁰⁹ '...because the community [in Bogota] is relatively very small, compared to the community in Maicao. Plus the Maicao community are concentrated in a single place. However, we are few here and spread in a large city and they are geographically dispersed. In fact it's as if one had to travel to be able to visit someone. That's why any Arab or Muslim in Bogota has more Colombian friends than Arab/Muslim friends...' – Khalid

¹¹⁰ 'Any community that doesn't have a mosque for all the community, a school for the children of the members of the community, and a [social] club for everyone, if it doesn't have these three spaces it is destined to disappear' – Khalid

¹¹¹ See Chapters Seven and Eight

6.5. Performance of identity

As I have explained, all of the organisations have arranged a variety of activities which take place at the Club. They use their mailing lists to announce their different events including film screenings, music shows, dabkeh dancing lessons, and kermises, among others. These activities can be defined as cultural representations, i.e. strategies used by the organisations for community-building (Nagel and Staeheli 2004 p.13). These strategies mix ethnic and social elements to stimulate the *Colonia*; to promote Colombian-Lebanese culture both inside and outside of it; and sometimes to support an ideology aiming to solidify and spread particular beliefs.

Indeed one of the most important activities of the ULCM has been the dabkeh dance classes that take place every week at the Club. Dabkeh is a dance commonly performed in the Middle East with national variations (Van Aken 2006), and the word can be translated as 'stomping of the feet', or *zapateo* in Spanish, as my participant Jimena interpreted it. The dance is performed by forming a line of men and women holding hands, with choreographies consisting of steps, stomps, jumps and shouts to the rhythm of Arab music.¹¹² The dabkeh group in the *Colonia* has a variety of choreographies assembled with different songs which, according to the dance director, are a combination of both traditional and modern songs¹¹³. It is not the first time the *Colonia* has set up a dabkeh group, as Angelica tells me that they had organised classes before and the groups had done several presentations, including in one of Bogota's largest theatres:

'...se hizo una presentación en Colsubsidio,¹¹⁴ donde fue toda la comunidad Colombo-Libanesa y pues gente colombiana, y fue un éxito muy bonito... después hubo unas presentaciones en Barranquilla, nos presentamos en Maicao...'.¹¹⁵
(Angelica 2009)

The fact that the dabkeh classes have provided a sense of unity before, and that some of the participants of those classes are now organising the current ones, suggests that they are actively and knowingly connecting the dancing with a Colombian-Lebanese identity. It is an invented tradition, implying continuity with the past (Hobsbawn 1983 p.1), with the idea that

¹¹² In some of their choreographies men and women form separate lines, and one particular choreograph performed by the Colombian-Lebanese only features men.

¹¹³ Some of the songs can be heard playing on the radio in Lebanon

¹¹⁴ Colsubsidio is one of the biggest theatres in Bogota

¹¹⁵ '...we did a presentation in *Colsubsidio* which was attended by all the community and by Colombian people, and it was a beautiful success... then there were other presentations, in Barranquilla, in Maicao... - Angelica

just as it happened in the past, it is now being replicated. It is a tradition that has been created, modified and recreated (Giddens 2002) as the *Colonia* has not always had a dabkeh dancing group and the outfits they wear look like a combination of modern and traditional outfits. The fact it is a constructed tradition suggests a conscious decision-making process behind it, which includes the choice of song and outfits for a particular purpose.

The dance group is now formed of Colombian-Lebanese of different generations, and has not only performed in the Club, but also in different events in Bogota and other cities in Colombia. This follows Fortier's (2000 p.150) argument that the performance of traditions and the participation of different generations give a sense of continuity in a community. Current participants want to recreate what their parents did, or their own performances as kids. The preservation of their practises and rituals specific to the *Colonia* suggest the Colombian-Lebanese are motivated to maintain their unity, suggesting continuity with the past and a commonality shared by all within the *Colonia*. This continuity, in turn, is used to promote the ethnic identity and a sense of belonging to the community. The fact the presentations have been open to the wider Colombian public show not only a desire of showcasing their ethnicity, but also the anticipation that the public will find the performances entertaining. This belief places a feeling of uniqueness within the group that can further enhance their ethnic identity.

The classes have been mainly directed towards young people, some of whom have recognised them as increasingly significant for their connection to the *Colonia*. Indeed, Alejandro argues it is the dabkeh classes that have gotten them together:

'El dabkeh unió a los nuevos jóvenes y todo el cuento, porque antes de eso no existía nada que nos unía mucho. Si veníamos [al Club] nos saludábamos todos con todos, como "qué hubo, qué más", ahora ya con el dabkeh todos se encontraron más...'.¹¹⁶ (Alejandro 2009)

Even though at the time he could not dance due to a knee injury, he went to the Club when the lessons were taking place and stayed to meet up with other young Colombian-Lebanese. Moreover, Daniel argues that the dabkeh classes allow them to meet up afterwards and coordinate their plans:

¹¹⁶ 'The dabkeh united the new youth and all, because before that there wasn't anything that united us much. If we came [to the Club] we said hi. Like "how's it going, what's up", but now with the dabkeh everyone re-encountered more...' - Alejandro

‘...y ahora especialmente con lo dabkeh, lo del dabkeh a sido clave. O sea, el que te diga que lo del dabkeh no es importante, es mentira, porque el dabkeh ha sido lo más importante para reunir a los jóvenes actualmente... esto del dabkeh es muy importante, porque aparte de bailar, es lo que se crea después de eso, ¿si me entiendes? Si venimos acá [al Club], y hablamos y discutimos y se generan iniciativas, entonces ha sido supremamente importante... cada vez a sido más, ha sido progresivo pues el cuento’.¹¹⁷ (Daniel 2009)

In this sense, the ULCM have been successful in generating a space for the younger generations to meet up socially and where they have begun to raise their identification with the *Colonia*. As, Fortier (2006 p.74) argues, the events are ‘constructed as scenes for ethnicity’ which both produce and reproduce identification to the ethnic community. By performing this dance, the participants are first introduced to a part of Lebanese culture in a Colombian-Lebanese space, i.e. the Club; they then create a bond with their fellow dancers and continue using the Club’s premises; eventually, they become portrayers of that Colombian-Lebanese identity, whether purposely or not, and encourage others to attend the Club and join in the dancing. Moreover, the ULCM has also been successful at spreading its ideology as a number of these dancers went on to form its Youth wing, which also uses the Club for its meetings and events.

Nevertheless, the social side is also very prominent here: on the one hand, the classes have a cost of \$100,000 CP per month (approx.. £35), meaning only those who can pay for them can attend; on the other, some of the dancers are not Lebanese Colombians but friends of the Colombian-Lebanese dancers. Olivia, who is one of them, tells me she goes to the classes because they are good exercise and more fun than the gym. She was introduced to the group by her Colombian-Lebanese friend and they also used the occasion to socialise. Other dancers also invite their non-Lebanese friends to the Club, sometimes to watch them perform, sometimes simply to get together afterwards, have a drink, smoke *narghile* and have some Lebanese food. All of them have common acquaintances, whether they are dancing or not, Colombian-Lebanese or just Colombian, due to their social status

¹¹⁷ ‘...and now it’s especially with dabkeh, dabkeh has been the key. I mean, whoever says dabkeh hasn’t been important is lying, because currently dabkeh has been the most important [thing] to gather the youth... This is very important because apart from dancing, what ([s] important] it’s what is created afterwards, you know what I mean? If we come here [to the Club] and chat and discuss, and we generate initiatives so it’s been extremely important... every time it’s been growing more’ - Daniel

and social networks. Therefore, the ethnic link is not the only driver towards this activity and, in some cases, not even necessary for participation in the dance or the social activities.

Other activities that have acted as cultural representations/performances of/by the Colombian-Lebanese include conferences, films, music shows (including the visit of a Lebanese opera singer), and trips to Lebanon, among others. There are also cultural events arranged by individuals instead of organisations. One such case is Alejandro who shot an artistic film in 2007 about his family's history of migration to Colombia:¹¹⁸

'esa película surgió básicamente, el interés mío siempre ha estado por la cultura, siempre fui muy cercano a la cultura en mi casa, en la casa de mis abuelos... Y desde ahí la posibilidad de por qué no se hacía una pequeña película de la historia del bisabuelo y de la familia en Colombia... fue supremamente emotivo para todo el mundo, especialmente para la familia...'.¹¹⁹ (Alejandro 2009)

He told me he made the movie in Spanish instead of Arabic, as the latter is 'too difficult', but that they did include some Arabic words.¹²⁰ He got the community involved: casting some Colombian-Lebanese for roles;¹²¹ getting help from Arabic speakers with the language; and using the Club for rehearsals. Alejandro says that he did not want to show the movie in many places, so he just showed it at the Club and gave copies to those interested:

'no quise mostrarla por muchos lados, ¿sabes? La mostré aquí en el Club cuando lo hicimos con la familia... Me pareció como un poco cerrada el tema de la familia y lo quise dejar como ahí, como un legado, digamos familiar, como una historia familiar para la familia... y los niños cuando van creciendo y quieran saber, puedan poner en la televisión y ver...'.¹²² (Alejandro 2009)

He seems to have chosen to keep his expression of heritage fairly private, suggesting there is a limit for him on how far he wants to express his Colombian-Lebanese identification, or

¹¹⁸ Alejandro's Lebanese great-grandfather travelled back and forth from Lebanon to Colombia and his grandfather was born and raised in Lebanon.

¹¹⁹ '(the idea) came out of my interest on the culture of my home, the home of my grandparents... and the idea of making a short movie developed, a movie about the history of my great-grandfather and the family... and it was very emotive for everyone, especially the family...' - Alejandro

¹²⁰ Some of the Arabic words used had entered the lexicon of the *Colonia*, such as *Habibi* (my dear/darling) or *Yalla* (Come on; *vamos* in Spanish).

¹²¹ A Colombian-Lebanese theatre actress was given one of the main roles, others had minor roles in the film.

¹²² 'I didn't want to show it in many places, you know? I showed it here at the Club with the family... I considered it like a family occasion and I wanted to leave it like that, a family legacy... so when the children grow up and want to know they'll be able to watch it...' - Alejandro

more importantly, to whom. In this case, the Colombian-Lebanese chose to keep their performance invisible to those outside of it, as Fortier (2006 p.68) argues, this type of performances still influence the collective belonging of the participants but in a private manner: 'we show ourselves to ourselves'. On the one hand, the social side in this case is reduced to family and friends, instead of the entire *Colonia*; on the other, within this group the social side is still important, and the social circle is used to facilitate the filming, including the casting of actors, the help with the language, and many of the spaces used.

Therefore, the cultural representations of the Colombian-Lebanese have in many ways worked as strategies of community building (see Nagel and Staeheli 2004). Indeed, some individuals have become more involved with the *Colonia* because of these and some have led to further projects. This has been the case even when the socialising has been kept more private. Moreover, as Fortier (2006: 66) argues:

'These leaders are fully aware that 'community' is something that is not merely sustained, but that it must be continually re-created'.

The leaders of the Club, the ULCM and the Ladies Association are actively constructing and maintaining the *Colonia* by organising these different performances. Moreover, as Fortier (2006) argues, these cultural representations or performances are deliberately (re)creating memories in the participants. In turn, these experiences can become collective memories, which are then used as 'symbolic anchors' for the community (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). The memories of dancing as a group will continue acting as symbolic anchors to support the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese after the group stops performing. Moreover, as Fortier (2006) argues, their influence is not confined to the walls of the buildings, as the feeling of belonging they support will continue within the memories of individuals as they cross the boundaries of the community. These feelings do not need to be continuously performed in order to be felt. In this sense, the Club is a space for the performance of traditions and the creation of memories, which leads to the construction of both ethnic and social identity. It is a 'unique' ethnic space for the Colombian-Lebanese, and an open social centre for the upper and middle classes in Bogota.

Nevertheless, these strategies have not managed to build a community feeling in all. For example, Andrea says she had attended some events but does not feel part of the *Colonia*:

'a mi papá le dijeron que si se quería meter, pero nunca, como mi familia nunca fue tan apegada... las familias como que nunca fueron muy unidas y nunca fuimos tan cercanos a eso... pero ahora sí están como más cercanos... [pero] no diría que soy parte de la comunidad, porque, por ejemplo, yo fui al concierto de la mezzosoprano y todos hablaban en libanés, cantaban en libanés, cantaron el himno, y yo no me lo sé, no sé de qué me están hablando, pero la cultura siempre me ha gustado, pero que haga parte [de la comunidad] no creo'¹²³

'...pero me parecería chévere ser parte de la Colonia en el futuro, por lo de las raíces, y yo quiero ir a conocer, sería chévere contactar a los familiares que viven allá'.¹²⁴ (Andrea 2009)

For some of my participants the performances are influencing their identity as Colombian-Lebanese, but they are choosing not to become active participants in the *Colonia* with a more sporadic ethnic engagement than other Colombian-Lebanese. In addition, the dabkeh classes have been unsuccessful in retaining some of the participants, such as Maria, one of the directors of the Club, who told me that she felt she had to stop going to them:

'Comencé con el dabkeh, pero hay que ser prudentes, porque no se pueden mezclar las dos cosas. Porque en determinado momento dejas [de trabajar por el Club], o sea, no se pueden combinar. Es mejor así'.¹²⁵ (2009)

In these cases, the combination of the social and the ethnic in the cultural representations has not generated the response wanted. Maria Camila claims that there is a lack of connection for her, not only a lack of physical connection to the Club but also a cultural one to the *Colonia*. She does not know the 'Lebanese' language or the national anthem, and this lack of connection with the ethnicity has impacted negatively on her desire to participate more actively. Nonetheless, cultural representations have combined both social and ethnic aspects to generate interest in the *Colonia*, some of which have been to a large extent successful.

¹²³ 'My dad was asked if he wanted to join [the Club], but no, as my family never got very involved... our families never were very close... but now yeah, they're getting closer [to the *Colonia*]... for example, I went to the mezzosoprano concert and everyone spoke Lebanese, sang in Lebanese, they sang the anthem and I don't know it, and don't know what they're talking about. I've always liked the culture, but being a part of it [the *Colonia*], I don't think so' – Andrea

¹²⁴ '...but it would be cool to be a part of the *Colonia*, because of the roots and I want to go visit. It would be cool to contact the family that lives there' – Andrea

¹²⁵ 'I started with the dabkeh, but one has to be prudent, because both things cannot be mixed. Because at a certain time you stop [working at the Club], and these cannot be mixed. It's better this way' - Maria

6.6. Summary

As has been seen, the Club as the centre for the *Colonia* is used for a variety of events which combine social and ethnic aspects to promote Colombian-Lebanese identification. In some cases, the social events are used to promote Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity, whilst in others the common ethnicity is an excuse to meet up socially. At the same time, the importance of social connections and the types of participation suggest that society and social status are more important than heritage or ethnicity, and there is an absence of less wealthy Colombian-Lebanese individuals. I have shown how belonging to the social circle of the *Colonia* ensures that access to it remains limited to those of similar socio-economic characteristics. The social connections are not exclusive to the Colombian-Lebanese but also to non-Lebanese Colombians of the same social status as my participants, who access the Club and its facilities, attend the different events and activities, and even become members. In addition, not all Colombian-Lebanese want this social connection and do not have strong links with the *Colonia*: some are not interested and others do not want to fulfil the expectations that come with participation. Of significance here is that they do have the choice to perform or not to perform their identities as Colombian-Lebanese. The only one who reports not feeling welcomed is one of my Muslim Colombian-Lebanese participants, who belongs to a different social circle, and has a lower socio-economic status to the rest of my Colombian-Lebanese participants. As seen in Chapter Seven, Muslim Colombian-Lebanese do not have as much freedom in performing their identities as the wealthier (Christian-Maronite) Colombian-Lebanese do. In this sense, even though both ethnicity and social status are important for the performance of the Colombian-Lebanese identity and for belonging to the *Colonia*, ultimately it is social status that is most prominent and decisive for participation and belonging.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNIC IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION

7.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain the extent of the influence Maronitism has had on Colombian-Lebanese identity, and offer a comparison with the Muslim organisations. As seen in Chapter Two, a Maronite Parish was founded in Bogota in 2008 in a prestigious neighbourhood in the north of the city, housed in the *Santa Clara* church which is shared with a Catholic parish. This chapter looks into how this Maronite Parish has influenced the creation of new spaces for community interaction. I will discuss how the Maronite Parish has had little or no influence on some individuals' identities but that the conflicts that have arisen because of its existence might cause rifts within the *Colonia*. As explained in Chapters Two, Three and Four, the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia are from different religious backgrounds, including Christian Maronites and Orthodox, and Muslim Shiites and Sunnis. Because of the location of this research within Bogota, most of my participants are Maronites or descendants of Maronites, as are most of the attendants to the Maronite masses. Unless I state otherwise, it can be assumed the participants I quote are descendants of Lebanese Maronites.¹ However, these services are not restricted to solely Maronites and Colombian-Lebanese. This church is considered to be a public place where everyone is welcome to attend its masses. I learned that a small number of non-Lebanese Colombians do indeed attend. In terms of the Muslim organisations, I look mainly at the two Sunni mosques, as they are the largest, and make brief comments about the Shiite association. In contrast with the Maronite Parish, the Muslim organisations focus almost entirely on religion and, even though they are also open to everyone, certain restrictions still apply.

This chapter first gives a brief context of the significance of religion for the Colombian-Lebanese; it then looks at the development of the Maronite Church and the Muslim mosques in Bogota, explaining how their religious organisations have been formed.

¹ See Chapter Two for a brief explanation of the Maronite Parish. See Chapter Four for the religious context in Colombia, the connection of the Maronite Church with the Catholic Church, and the presence of Maronitism in Latin America.

It then illustrates the way the organisations are run, as well as the way they perform their ceremonies and the appeal this has for individuals. It then moves on to analyse the rhetoric used by the leaders of the organisations about the place of the Parish in the *Colonia*, and of all of the organisation society in general. The chapter then looks into the role of religion in the construction of a Colombian-Lebanese identity and the possible drawbacks its presence may have.

The influence of religion has been different in the development of Colombia and of Lebanon. In Lebanon, religion has influenced its system of government and contributed to its history of conflict. Officially it has 18 religious 'sects', including several within Christianity and Islam,² and its electoral system is based on confessionalism, where the president, the prime minister and the speaker of the house must be Maronite, Sunni and Shiite respectively. In Colombia, however, religion has had a different significance. Even though it has been influential in Colombia's nation building process, its influence has decreased especially since the signing of the 1991 Constitution (see Chapter Four). Currently, the Colombian government does not collect data on religious allegiances in its censuses. Some of my interviewees commented on the difference. Fernando, a second generation Christian Orthodox who sometimes attends the Maronite masses,³ argued that:

'En Colombia la identidad religiosa no influye para nada. Mire, en los países del Medio Oriente y el Líbano en concreto... la religión se siente... aquí a usted no le preguntan, ¿oiga es que usted qué religión es? ... acá no es una variable... allá sí, por eso el problema, por eso la guerra, por eso los conflictos, porque pura y netamente religiosa...' ⁴ (Fernando 2009)

Fernando suggests that religion is not significant in constructing identity in Colombia, whilst in Lebanon its significance has led to the violent conflicts it has suffered. Gabriel (2008) argues that the Lebanese discriminate because of religion, giving the example of when he went to Lebanon where people would tell him not to visit the South of the country as it was full of Muslims. He acknowledges discrimination in Colombia, but argues that this is in other

² The Christian denominations include Maronite, Orthodox and Melkites; the Muslim include Shiite and Sunni; and other sects include Druze and Jewish

³ His main reason for not attending is lack of time, as we see below

⁴ 'In Colombia religious identity has no influence at all. In the Middle East and in Lebanon specifically... religion can be felt... Here (in Colombia) no one asks "what's your religion?" ... it's not a variable here... but over there, it is. That's the problem, that's the reason for the war, that's the reason for the conflicts, it's purely religious...' - Fernando

aspects and not religion. However, as seen below, Muslims in Colombia have suffered from some discrimination. These views are based on their experience as Christians in Colombia, a mainly Christian (and Catholic) country. Daniel who had recently visited Lebanon for the first time, said religion was a 'very complicated matter' in Lebanon:

'Eso es algo que nosotros acá [en Colombia] no lo entendemos, tiene que nacer allá para entenderlo. Pero me pareció muy juepucha, y quede como 'wow'. Porque de verdad la identidad religiosa significa todos los derechos políticos y civiles... y allá se matan por eso'⁵ (Daniel 2009)

The Colombian-Lebanese are in a particular position, having a connection to a region where religion is very significant, but living in a context where societal factors other than religion are more important.

There are still very devout individuals in Colombia, and the role religion plays for some of my participants is not any different from that of other Colombians: religion may be an important part of their everyday lives, or it may be more of a social activity that they take part in only once in a while. Nevertheless, because of some of the connections the Colombian-Lebanese have with Lebanon, their interaction with religion can be different in a number of ways. For example, at the beginning of my conversations with them, the role of religion was central to their stories. Many told me that their families were Maronite Christians who had escaped the persecution of the Ottoman authorities or had left because of inter-religious violence. As seen in Chapter Three, migration occurred due to a combination of a variety of factors. However, many families have the belief that the religious persecution of the Maronite Christians was of great significance to the migration. Such narratives are important for the construction of identity, and as Hall (1996) argues, migrants use them to make sense of their situation (past, present, and future). Through this process of understanding, the Colombian-Lebanese have attached sentiments to these narratives, which in turn have helped shaped the construction of their identities. This idea of religious persecution became a passed-down memory for some Colombian-Lebanese. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992 p.11) argue, migrants use memory '...to construct imaginatively their new lived world'. This construction was made with the belief that their forefathers had fled guarding their religious beliefs. Nevertheless, this memory of religious persecution did not

⁵ 'That's something we don't understand here (in Colombia), someone has to be born there to understand it. But I thought it was very shocking and I was like 'wow'. Because the truth is that religious identity means all the political and civil rights... and over there they kill each other over it' – Daniel

immediately drive them to replicate their religious spaces in Colombia. As I explain in the first section below, it took them many years, as well as certain conditions, to set up a Maronite space in Bogota.

7.2. The development of the Maronite Parish and the Muslim mosques in Bogota

The Maronite Church has been expanding worldwide recently, opening parishes throughout the world. It has increased its influence in Latin America from the 1990s onwards: in Argentina it opened two new Maronite parishes in 1993 and 2004 (Noufouric 2009); Mexico saw its first Maronite bishop ordained in 1995 (Martinez-Assad 2009); according to Hilu da Rocha (2009) there has been a resurgence of Maronite religion in Rio de Janeiro since the 2000s; and according to my participant and Maronite priest Father Naji, new parishes have also opened in the Dominican Republic and Paraguay in the last decade. In Colombia the Parish was set up in Bogota in 2008 and a Maronite church is currently being constructed in Barranquilla. This expansion has been promoted under the direction of the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir in Lebanon, by dispatching missionaries and setting up religious spaces.

According to Father Naji, this was not the first time the Colombian-Lebanese had tried to set up a Maronite Parish in Bogota. He explained that some individuals had been trying to get a Maronite priest in Colombia for over 30 years to no avail. He said that there had been too many disagreements within the *Colonia*, to do with the location of the proposed parish and with its purpose:

‘No estaban unidos entre ellos [los Colombo-Libaneses] y cuando llegó el padre otro empezaron a pelear, ellos me cuentan, yo no conozco... lamentablemente esto que yo me duele mucho, los libaneses a veces no están unidos para llegar con cualquier persona a un destino bien claro...’⁶ (Father Naji 2009)

Father Naji added during our interview that there was a ‘need for good communication and proper organisation’ before a Parish could be set up. In another interview a Colombian-

⁶ ‘They (the Colombian-Lebanese) were not united amongst themselves and when the other priest arrived they started fighting. That’s what they tell me, I wasn’t there.... Sadly, sometimes the Lebanese are not united to be able reach a clear destiny, and this hurts me a lot’ – Father Naji. As can be seen his Spanish is not always accurate.

Lebanese woman, whose brother lives in Ecuador, suggested the same by stating that even though some Ecuadorian-Lebanese individuals had tried setting up a parish in Guayaquil, there had been a lack of will from the community, and it had not worked. Indeed, this expansionist drive by the Maronite Church has had to meet with willingness from the local communities in order to succeed. The Colombian-Lebanese *Colonias* have been crucial for the foundation of the Parish and the church, as they have provided much of the drive for its establishment. In Bogota this was achieved by the Association of Our Lady of Lebanon (NSL is its acronym in Spanish⁷), a group set-up within the *Colonia* to promote the Maronite rite and develop closer links with the Maronite Church in Lebanon. This included holding talks with the Maronite Patriarch in Lebanon and liaising with the Catholic Church in Bogotá, which finally led to the establishment of the Maronite Parish in 2008. The drive to establish the Parish originated both from outside of Colombia and from a group of individuals within that lobbied for its establishment, by pulling strings and using their network of contacts in both Colombia and Lebanon in order to achieve this. Indeed, when I enquired about the setting up of the Parish, Monica, a member of the NSL, recounted how they not only helped by liaising with the Catholic Church in Bogota, but also, through their contacts helped the priest get his work visa and obtain the necessary signatures for official documents. In addition, the NSL has also used its contacts to organise activities, including booking venues and individuals, such as a Lebanese opera singer. The Colombian-Lebanese have used their influence and status to ensure the Parish and the NSL are able to run. Furthermore, their choice of 'high culture' events such as the Lebanese opera singer can be considered a symbol of status the Colombian-Lebanese are trying to portray.

The individuals involved had to ensure there were no divisions within the group for the project to succeed, so they convened a number of religious Colombian-Lebanese individuals to form the association. My participant Cristina, a member of the NSL, explained that one of the main supporters of the Parish was a devout Colombian-Lebanese woman:

'Pues yo pienso, Sofia es muy religiosa, ella inclusive es del Opus Dei, entonces pues al promover, porque Sofia estuvo en lo de la capillita de San Charbel, como traer parte de eso, que es un pedazo del Líbano, a promoverlo y tuvo eco... pero yo

⁷ Nuestra Señora del Líbano

creo que Sofia, por lo que es tan creyente y es tan espiritual, entonces quiso como traer... como otra parte también de nuestra cultura ¿no?'⁸ (Cristina 2009)

Cristina combines the religious and ethnic identities to explain the goals of the NSL where one influences the other, where religion is a piece of Lebanon and its culture, and deep spirituality was necessary to lead the organisation.

Muslim organisations have also been developing. As I have argued, there are no Muslim Colombian-Lebanese organisations; however, there are a number of Muslim organisations in which Muslim Lebanese individuals participate. The development can be seen in terms of their installations: the Istanbul Mosque moved to its current location in 2005; the Islamic Cultural Centre moved to a larger, yet more remote location in the late 2000s; and the Islamic Beneficial Association has been building its new large mosque for the past couple of years. These moves suggest the organisations have had more money at their disposal and/or a larger congregation that needs to be accommodated.⁹ Eugenio is quoted by Valenzuela (2012) as saying that ten Catholics convert to Islam every week in Bogota. Both imams argue that on a normal week around 70 to 100 people go to their respective mosque for Friday prayers. The numbers seemed to be somewhat smaller when I visited, which Eugenio said it was because of the time of the year – when many people were on holiday. It is difficult to confirm whether the number converts in Bogota is as high as Eugenio suggests (it would add up to more than 500 converts a year in Bogota alone); however, what can be seen is the Muslim organisations seeking larger establishments for their congregations and this, in turn, are likely to further the increase the influence of Islam in Bogota. However, as seen further below, there are deep divisions within the Muslim community.

⁸ 'Well I think Sofia is very religious, she's even of the Opus Dei, and so as she promoted, Sofia was [involved] in the little San Charbel chapel, to bring a part of that which is a piece of Lebanon, to promote it and it gained support... so I think because Sofia is such a believer and so spiritual that she wanted to bring... another part of our (Lebanese) culture, right?' - Cristina

⁹ In terms of other Latin American countries, Argentina seems to have the largest presence of Islamic organisations. Montenegro (2009c) argues that there are four mosques and three Muslim associations in Buenos Aires, including Sunni, Shiite and Alawite organisations. She argues that the newest mosque was built in 2001 and financed by Saudi Arabia. Bertet (2009) argues that the largest mosque in Latin America is in Caracas, built in 1993, and that it was also invested by the Saud family. Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) argues that Mexican Muslims frequent the Islamic Cultural Centre, founded in 1995, as their religious centre, whilst a mosque was built in Morelos in 2003. This indicates that Islam has been growing in influence in Latin America since the early 1990s.

7.3. The Appeal of the Maronite Parish

As seen above, the Colombian-Lebanese combined ethnicity and religiosity when talking of the Maronite Parish. Indeed, together with the NSL, they form one of four types of organisations mentioned, for example, by Rex (1987) as being significant for migrants, because religious organisations often reproduce 'home' (in this case Lebanese) practices. The Parish itself has influenced Colombian-Lebanese identity. Part of the influence comes from the appeal the mass has to the Colombian-Lebanese, based on the perceived differences between Roman Catholic and Maronite liturgy. There is a Maronite mass every Sunday morning attended mostly, but not entirely, by members of the *Colonia*. The mass is conducted in Spanish, Arabic and Syriac (a modern form of Aramaic written in Arabic script), which some of my interviewees say is the part they like the most about the mass.

'Desde cierto punto de vista me parece que es una manera un poco de traer el Líbano a Colombia en su parte religiosa... hay algo que a mí me encanta de ese rito que es la parte de las palabras en arameo en la elevación. Es el momento que más me gusta de la misa... y de alguna forma, es una forma de traer un pedacito más de esa cultura de los católicos en el Líbano a Colombia'¹⁰ (Jimena 2009)

Jimena found the use of Aramaic language during the mass appealing, as she saw it as a reproduction of Lebanese Maronite culture in Colombia. As I show below, these performances are not only reproducing Lebanese Maronite culture, but also producing new identities. The Maronite liturgy has some similarities with the Roman Catholic liturgy, such as the communion and the prayers to the Virgin Mary, but it also puts more emphasis on the senses than current Roman Catholic masses in Colombia: with the use of religious relics; with the whole mass being chanted by the priest, instead of recited; and with the continuous use of incense which is burnt in a censer and fills the air with its smell. As I show below, these differences have been noticed by the Colombian-Lebanese that participate in the masses.

The Parish and the NSL ensured the Maronite mass was significant and appealing from its first day and the inaugural ceremony was a grand affair promoted in the national newspapers. Indeed two different invitations appeared on separate days in the *El Tiempo*

¹⁰ 'From a certain point of view I think it's a way of bringing a religious side of Lebanon to Colombia... there's something I love about the rite which is the part with the Aramaic words in the elevation. It's the part I like the most of the mass... and in some way it's bringing a little bit of that culture of the Lebanese Catholics to Colombia'

newspaper inviting people to the ceremony at the *Santa Clara* church, one from the NSL and one from the '*Colonia Libanesa*'. The announcement from the former said:

'La Asociación de Nuestra Sra. del Líbano invita a la comunidad colombo-libanesa y a sus amigos a la primera misa que celebrará el Padre Naji Zuein, con motivo de su llegada a Bogotá y el inicio de su misión en Colombia'.¹¹ (El Tiempo 2008b)

Whilst the announcement from the latter stated:

'La colonia libanesa residente en Bogotá invita a la primera misa del Rito Maronita "católico oriental" el domingo 6 de julio a la 1p.m. en la Parroquia de Santa Clara. Contará con la asistencia del Cardenal Pedro Pubiano, Arzobispo de Bogotá'.¹² (El Tiempo Newspaper 2008a)

The NSL focused their invitation on the *Colonia* and their friends, mentioning the Lebanese priest, whilst the '*Colonia Libanesa*' (which could have been the administration of the *Colombo-Libanés*, the ULCM, the Ladies Association, or even an individual or unattached group) took ownership of the *Colonia* in Bogota, separated itself from the Colombian-Lebanese communities of other cities, emphasised the Catholicism of the Maronite rite, and mentioned Monsignor Cardinal Pedro Rubiano,¹³ possibly as a way of placing importance on the event. These announcements suggest that the organisers wanted to give a particular significance to the mass, and the presence of religious dignitaries suggests the Catholic Church in Bogota saw it the same way. At the same time, the quotation marks on Catholic-Oriental suggest a perceived ignorance of what Maronitism is, and possibly signalling vagueness about the statement.

This sort of appeal tactics seem to have been picked up by Imam Khalid as well, as he has similar plans for the inauguration of the new mosque, inviting the press, as well as personalities, in order to promote it:

'Vamos a hacer inauguración y vamos a invitar a todos los medios de comunicación, invitar amigos, amigos intelectuales acá colombianos, profesores universitarios y escritores. Y para que se haga esto como una parte de la propaganda que se va a

¹¹ 'the Colombian-Lebanese community and their friends to the first mass that will be celebrated by Father Naji Zuein, with the motive of his arrival to Bogota and the start of his mission in Colombia' – *El Tiempo*

¹² 'The Lebanese *Colonia* residing in Bogotá invites to the first mass of the Maronite rite "Catholic Oriental" on Sunday 6th of July at 1pm in the Santa Clara Parish. It will have the attendance of Cardinal Pedro Rubiano, Archbishop of Bogotá' – *El Tiempo*, quotes in original.

¹³ Cardinal Rubiano was Archbishop of Bogota until July 2010 and is a Cardinal-elect.

hacer para la mezquita. Como una obra de arte para la ciudad de Bogotá, porque todas las capitales del mundo tienen mezquitas en la forma oficial, forma arquitectónica con minarete... también algún almuerzo o alguna cena, dando algunos discursos agradeciendo los que contribuyeron en la construcción de esta mezquita.¹⁴

His description suggests that the mosque inauguration will also contain a social side, with friends being invited. The imam was also open about using the inauguration being used for propaganda. This inauguration still has not taken place yet.

The Maronite Parish has used a variety of tactics in order to increase its appeal, including the use of several languages during the masses, as well as a widely publicised inauguration ceremony. Seeing the newspaper articles about the new mosque that have already appeared in a number of newspapers, it is likely that its inauguration will also enjoy wide coverage. However, the attention that it receives may also generate negative attitudes in the general population which, as seen below, already seem to be forming.

7.3.1. *The Maronite ceremony in Bogota*

I was able to attend the inaugural Maronite mass for the Maronite Parish. It was well attended, with several Colombian-Lebanese individuals and their families present, including politicians, civil servants and well-known individuals.¹⁵ The church quickly filled up and very few seats were left empty. The ceremony began with a procession of altar boys and priests entering the crowded church. It included several priests: the Lebanese Maronite priests, Father Andres Hannoun¹⁶ and Father Naji Zuein, led the procession behind the altar boys, followed by a number of Colombian priests of Lebanese descent, and finally the Archbishop of Bogota, Cardinal Rubiano. Before the actual ceremony started, an official document was read which stated the establishment of the Maronite Parish in Bogota, signed by Cardinal Rubiano. Inviting the Cardinal gave the mass particular significance, confirming acceptance by the mainstream Catholic Church. The presence of the highest religious dignitary in

¹⁴ 'In the inauguration we're going to invite the press, our friends, Colombian intellectuals, university professors and writers. It'll be part of the propaganda for the new mosque. It's like a work of art for Bogota, because all the capitals in the world have a mosque in the official way, the architecture with a minaret... also some lunch or dinner, we'll give some speeches thanking those that contributed to the construction of the mosque' - Khalid

¹⁵ According to an article in *El Tiempo*, around 400 people attended the inaugural mass (Mojica 2008)

¹⁶ A senior Maronite priest who visited Colombia in time for the inauguration

Colombia together with the participation of the Colombian-Lebanese priests suggested coexistence between the two rites. The Colombian-Lebanese priests normally preside over Roman Catholic masses but during this ceremony they joined in the performance of the Maronite Mass. Their qualification to participate was not to do with religious status within the Catholic Church but with their Lebanese heritage.

Unlike most masses in Colombia which are recited, much of the Maronite mass is chanted by the priests. This chanting is sometimes done in Aramaic, including the creed, and sometimes in Spanish. There are also some hymns sung in Arabic during which a small number of Colombian-Lebanese join in with the singing. At the inaugural ceremony there was a projection of the words on a big screen inside the church which showed what was being chanted and sung in Aramaic/Arabic. It included not only translations of the words and lyrics into Spanish, but also the Aramaic/Arabic sounds written in Latin script. This allowed most of the congregation to follow what was being said and repeat the sounds that they could read, as no-one present seemed to understand Aramaic and very few of them spoke Arabic. In later masses, the translation was printed and handed out before it began. These translations are not used in Maronite masses in Lebanon, but I believe they are introduced in other places, like Colombia, in order to incorporate the congregation who may still be unused to the rites. In my visits to the Parish a year after its inauguration, I noticed some individuals had memorised the chants in Aramaic and they could recite them without the need of the printed hand out. These individuals are likely to have been regular attendees at the mass and it is probable that they were just imitating the sounds. This language difference is significant, as not only does it have a somewhat fashionable middle-eastern appeal (as Karam 2007 suggests) but it also sets itself apart from mainstream Catholicism, aiding the feeling of 'difference'.

There are other differences in the performance of the liturgy. Just as in Roman Catholic masses, there are readings by members of the public, sermons by the priests, a responsorial psalm, the rite of peace, and the communion. In most of them, however, there are slight differences that can also be very noticeable. For example, during the rite of peace in Roman Catholic masses in Colombia, the priest asks the congregation to offer each other the sign of peace and individuals often kiss their relatives around them and shake the hands of strangers. However, in the Maronite liturgy the sign of peace is handed down from the priest to the congregation: the children present are asked to come forward to the altar,

where the priest gives each of them the sign of peace, by asking them to clasp their hands together and by embracing them in his own. The children then spread around the church, passing by each row of seats repeating the sign of peace to each individual at the end of the seat, who in turn passes it to the person next to them and so on. Other differences include processions with religious relics and icons, and the offering of wine to the congregation during the communion, among others. These differences, once again, gave the mass a sense of distinctiveness by introducing most Colombian-Lebanese to rites they may have not experienced before.

The differences noted here are clear enough to those accustomed to the mainstream Christian Latin rites: the language, chanting, processions, and relics, which are not as common in Colombia. However, the structure of the Maronite masses is close enough to the Roman Catholic masses, so the participants who are regular church goers know how to act, when to sit and stand and what to answer to different prayers. In this way those in the congregation do not feel like outsiders, but rather as participants in a religious mass that is somewhat different from other religious masses in Colombia. As stated before, these differences are very appealing for some participants, as Andrea (2008) admits:

‘...la verdad, me gusta más ese rito [maronita], me gusta que entreguen el cuerpo y la sangre, y el rito católico es solo el cuerpo. Entonces es chévere esa parte, la devoción a la virgen María es mucho mayor que en el rito católico, es mucho más lindo, la parte en arameo me encanta, aunque no entienda, le da un simbolismo... me gusta mucho.’¹⁷

All these differences in performance give footing to a possible feeling of identification to something that is not traditionally Colombian, but without it being completely unfamiliar. Therefore, the Maronite Parish has created what Bhabha (1994) calls an ‘in between’ space, i.e. the result of an encounter between two separate sides where new signs of identity can develop. By having masses which are not conventionally found in Colombia, even for the Colombian-Lebanese, both a difference and a novelty are experienced which some find appealing and in turn connected to the non-Colombian part of their identity.

¹⁷ ‘...the truth is that I like that rite better [the Maronite rite], I like that they give both the body and blood¹⁷, when the Catholic rite only gives the body. So that part its cool, the devotion to the Virgin Mary is much greater than in the Catholic rite, it’s much nicer, I love the part in Aramaic, even though I don’t understand it gives it a symbolism... I like it a lot’ – Andrea

7.3.2. Combining ethnicity and religiosity in religious spaces

The Maronite masses have combined religious and ethnic identities. Just outside the doors of the church three flag masts were placed holding large Colombian and Lebanese flags, with a smaller flag from the Vatican in the middle. Even though the positioning may have been due to size, it suggested that the first two flags were united by the third flag in the middle, as if Christianity was what bonded the two countries, religion and nationality were seemingly united (see Figure P.2).

FIGURE P.2. – Parish Flags¹⁸



This combination was also noticeable with the actual performance of the ceremony. For example, at the end of his sermon in the inaugural mass, the Maronite priest announced he was going to address the congregation in ‘Lebanese’ and proceeded to speak in Arabic.

¹⁸ Picture taken by Esteban Devis at the inaugural ceremony of the Maronite Parish

When he finished there was lengthy applause. His choosing to call the language ‘Lebanese’ instead of ‘Arabic’ seems to show that this was not only a religious performance but also a specific ethnic one, with an emphasis on Lebaneseness rather than Arabness. The applause at the end of the sermon may have been a sign of agreement, of amusement, or of enjoyment, but in any case the congregation celebrated what had been said.

This mixture was replicated in other incidents during the ceremony, which stressed both Lebanese and Colombian identities. In the responsorial psalm, also common in the Roman Catholic masses, individuals go forward to ask for a prayer and the congregation replies with ‘Señor ten piedad’.¹⁹ The prayers were delivered by Colombian-Lebanese individuals and included one for Colombia, asking for the release of all kidnapped individuals, followed by one for Lebanon, asking for the peaceful coexistence of its inhabitants. The Colombian prayer related to a specific objective well known by Colombians, especially feared by wealthy ones. The Lebanese prayer asked for the resolution of conflicts which affected the country. This suggests again the importance of the countries in the ceremony, as both are praised and prayed for.

At one point a number of Colombian-Lebanese individuals paraded down the aisle in a procession, holding up different items. As they were walking down the aisle, a Colombian-Lebanese woman explained what they were carrying, before presenting the artefacts to the congregation and placing them on the altar:

‘Presentamos frente al altar las ofrendas que simbolizan nuestra alabanza a Dios nuestro Señor: las banderas de Colombia y el Líbano, que representan la unión de nuestros dos países. La imagen de Nuestra Señora del Líbano, patrona y protectora de nuestra nueva parroquia. La imagen de San Marón, nuestro santo patrón. Nuestros tres santos: Charbel, Rafqa y Nimattullah... algunos productos del Líbano que nos recuerdan el trabajo de nuestros hermanos libaneses...’²⁰ (own recording of mass 2008)

The set of flags, a smaller version of the ones at the entrance, once again showed the importance the national sentiment had in the event, as first in the procession. The

¹⁹ ‘Lord, have mercy’

²⁰ ‘We present in front of the altar the offerings that symbolise our praise to God, our Lord: the flags of Colombia and Lebanon that symbolise the union between our two countries. The image of Our Lady of Lebanon patron saint and protector of our new Parish; the image of Saint Maroun our Patron Saint; our three Saints: Charbel, Rafqa, and Nimattullah... some products from Lebanon that reminds us of the work of our Lebanese brothers...’

organisers made sure both Colombia and Lebanon were represented and talked of the union between them. The use of religious relics is common in Maronite churches and masses in Lebanon, whilst the sample of products from Lebanon is likely to have appealed to the memory of those who had visited the country and the yearning of those who had not. These memories can be seen as 'symbolic anchors' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) for the community, providing a shared connection among participants. Hence, religious and ethnic identities are simultaneously appealed to and enhanced.

In some cases, not only were the religious and ethnic sentiments intertwined, but they moved closer to proactive new consolidated forms of identity by individuals choosing to portray certain articles or participate in the activities. Straight after the ceremony, there was a large reception where a buffet of typical Lebanese food was served. The hall was set up with several tables and a large Lebanese flag hanging from the ceiling, where everybody was invited to join in for free. On the first Sunday of every month, this type of reception is replicated with the NSL members and several families bringing typical Lebanese food. During most other masses there are smaller receptions where free coffee and biscuits are served, and a stand of religious artefacts and mementos is set up, run by the members of the NSL. The stand also sells Lebanese products, some of which were paraded into the church at that inaugural ceremony, including packed Lebanese food and t-shirts with a number of designs with both religious and national images.²¹ There are t-shirts portraying a large Lebanese cedar tree with the red and white Lebanese flag; t-shirts with the image of Saint Charbel; t-shirts with entangled Colombian and Lebanese flags; and t-shirts with the Colombian and the Lebanese maps. Cristina, a member of the NSL, told me that these t-shirts are to promote and reaffirm the integration of Colombia and Lebanon, as well as of Colombian-Lebanese to the Maronite rites.

This suggests a proactive form of identity-awareness, when individuals consciously buy, and possibly wear, articles which portray a connection to the Maronite religion, to the country of Lebanon, or to both Colombia and Lebanon. In addition, the religious and the national sentiments are exalted and intertwined. These articles for sale, together with the religious artefacts serve as tools of belonging by providing the Colombian-Lebanese with items connected to Lebanon. As Vasquez (2010: 132) argues:

²¹ The sales of the stand provide income for the NSL, which also uses raffles and donations for funding; also showing that one of the objectives of the organisation is a financial one. This money is used to maintain the Parish and to save for future projects, one of which includes then construction of their own Maronite church.

‘...artefacts that have been brought over from the homeland became supercharged with nostalgia, desire, hope and power to awe’.

The appeal of the Maronite Parish has been influencing Colombian-Lebanese identity by providing a somewhat different experience to what they are used to, and which they may find enjoyable. The Parish and the NSL are linking religious and national identity markers, by combining Lebanon and Colombia in their masses, and present both difference and continuity.

Conversely, there is little combination of ethnicity and religiosity in the mosques. As explained in Chapter Two, the new mosque’s name is Abu Bakr, after one of the companions of Prophet Mohammed. The name could be thought of as an ethnic name as it is, after all, an Arabic name. However, its choice is likely to have been influenced more by Abu Bakr’s historical and religious significance, than by his Arab sounding name. Moreover, the mosque was often referred to by my participants, and even the press, as Bogota’s mosque or simply the new mosque. This suggests that, even though the Imam is a Lebanese Arab, their focus is on religion. During the prayers I attended, language was a clear ethnic component. Apart from certain prayers which must be recited in Arabic, the imam also gave a sermon first in Arabic and then in Spanish, where he focused on Islamic teachings and on how to be good Muslims. At the same time, during one of the prayers he talked about the civil war in Syria and called for a cease-fire. However, these were the only ethnic components in the new mosque which. Of course, the fact Sunni Islam does not use symbols in its doctrine, making the recognition of the use of ethnicity less likely.

In terms of the Istanbul Mosque, Imam Eugenio seems to want to avoid certain types of ethnic identification, whilst falling into orientalism. The name of the mosque would seem to signal the first clear connection, however, he claims there is no connection between his mosque and Turkey (see chapter Eight). He explains:

‘Ese nombre lo colocamos por varias razones. Primero porque en Colombia a mucha universitaria y mucho niño les gusta *Las Mil y Una Noche*, y *Ali Baba y Los Cuarenta Ladrones*. Entonces Estambul es la más fácil para crear un acceso. Le daba la idea a todos de que eran bienvenidos. Le ponemos un nombre, por ejemplo mezquita *Nar* [Nur], mezquita Luz en árabe, o mezquita Ibrahim no sé qué, eso le parece privado a la gente, “huy allá no vamos porque esa mezquita es de árabes” en

cambio Estambul es un nombre que abre perfectamente las puertas en estos medios... [No otras ciudades], no, porque en Beirut es de guerra y no queríamos comprometernos con ningún otro, con ningún país con nombre así²² (Eugenio 2013)

His answer raises a number of questions: first, his connection between the book *One Thousand and One Nights* is at odds with his proclaimed Muslim strictness;²³ second, it also shows an orientalist view of the Middle East, one which he claims helps the mosque seem more welcoming. This suggests an ethnic orientalism connection with either the Middle East, or at least, a fictionalised version of the region. However, it is also unclear to me why individuals would connect the city of Istanbul with the book *One Thousand and One Nights*, as the name was neither used in the book nor in use during the fictional time frame of the story.²⁴ At the same time, his attitudes towards Arabs seem to have a negative connotation, or at least he believes the general population has negative attitudes towards Arabs, as he argues people would be less likely to go if they made that connection. Moreover, his description of Beirut as 'war' would very likely put him at odds with many Lebanese members of his mosque. Interestingly, an article in *El Espectador*, which described the Eid celebration at the Istanbul mosque, alleged that the 'Asian' Muslims and the Colombian converts merely greeted each other but did not engage in conversation (Valenzuela 2012). It is unclear what 'Asian' means for the author; whether it is Middle Easterners, Pakistanis or Malaysians, or all of them. He also does not explain whether the lack of interaction is due to language difficulties, or if there is animosity between immigrants and local converts. Nevertheless, both the report and with Eugenio's comments do point towards a possible ethnic division within his mosque.

In any case, the fact Eugenio claims the name is accessible to individuals suggests they are also trying to appeal to the general public, whilst seemingly consciously disconnecting themselves from more direct signs of Arabness. This difference seems to be reflected in their claims regarding the heritage of their participants: whilst Khalid argues that

²² 'We chose that name for a variety of reasons. First, because here in Colombia there are many university students, many kids who like the Thousand and One Nights, Ali Baba and the 40 thieves, so Istanbul is easier to generate access. It gives the impression that everyone is welcome. If we name it, for example Mosque Nar [Nur], Mosque 'Light' in Arabic, or Mosque Ibrahim, that sounds like private for people: "let's not go there because it's a mosque for Arabs". However, Istanbul is a name that easily opens the doors... [not other cities] no, because Beirut is war and we didn't want to implicate ourselves with any country like that...'

²³ He believes in the complete separation between Sunni and Shiite Muslims and claims to have expelled Shiite Muslims from his mosque

²⁴ If assuming a name that ought to be connected to the book was in fact at play other cities such as Baghdad, Cairo and Samarkand could have been chosen instead.

half of the participants are native Colombians – including descendants of Lebanese, and of the rest, half are immigrants with dual nationality – like himself; Eugenio says that the majority of participants in his mosque are Colombian converts, though there is participation from immigrants from different countries.

This indicates that, whilst the Maronite Parish uses ethnicity in order to increase its appeal, and also managing to influence Colombian-Lebanese identity by presenting alternative ways of performing Lebaneseness; the Muslim mosques have taken the opposite route, either by not emphasising its ethnic components, as in the new mosque, or ironically in the Istanbul mosque, by actively trying to disconnect from most ethnic associations.

7.4. The positioning of the religious institutions in Bogota's society

As can be expected, each of the religious institutions here discussed occupy a different position in society in terms of access and visibility. Whilst the Maronite Parish is largely invisible and blends with its locality, the mosques have been targeted and intimidated.

7.4.1. The Maronite Parish

The combinations of Colombia and Lebanon, and of Maronite and Roman Catholic rites, have allowed the Colombian-Lebanese to respond to the Maronite Church with its special character without going as far as losing ties with the mainstream Catholic Church. This is noticeable with the closeness between both rites as they are constantly interacting and sharing worshiping spaces: the chapel of *Saint Charbel* was set up inside a Catholic Church, and the *Iglesia Santa Clara de Asís* is shared by the Roman Catholic *Parroquia Santa Clara* and the Maronite *Parroquia Nuestra Señora del Líbano*. The *Santa Clara de Asís* church was already holding the Roman Catholic Parish before the Maronite Parish was set up, and Roman Catholic individuals still go to Catholic mass there. The parishes also share the administrative offices.

In fact, when there is not a Maronite mass taking place, it is difficult to tell that the *Santa Clara* church is home to a Maronite parish, as it does not look particularly different to other churches in Bogotá. The only clues to its connection to Maronitism come from the Sunday timetable of masses, and from two framed images hung on opposite walls just

inside the church, one of Saint *Charbel* and one of Our Lady of Lebanon. The Sunday timetable shows the masses being held that day: there are Roman Catholic masses at 8am, 10am, 12pm and 7pm, and the Maronite mass at 11am. The timetable does not offer any particular explanation about the masses, apart from stating it is a Catholic-Maronite mass. The image of St. *Charbel* looks similar to that of other saints in Catholicism, with a written sign explaining his life story and his curative powers. The sign beneath the image of Our Lady of Lebanon gives the only noticeable difference, as her name is written in Spanish and Arabic with the Lebanese cedar tree in the background. As seen with the Club, the Parish blends into its religious surroundings. The Santa Clara church is visibly a church, however, the Parishes it houses become more or less visible. The Parish's Colombian-Lebanese identity becomes more prominent when Maronite masses are performed, and less prominent with Roman Catholic masses. As De Certau (1984: 118) writes a space can become a 'practised place', fluid and influenced by the processes and the context in which it takes place. Hence the church becomes a Colombian-Lebanese space when the Maronite mass is being performed, and stops being one with the performances of Roman Catholic masses. Indeed, to an outsider that did not know about the Maronite Parish the *Santa Clara* church would look just as any other church, from the inside or the outside.

Nevertheless, even though the physical differences between the *Santa Clara* church and other churches are not noticeable, the drive to be seen as both different and part of mainstream suggests a wariness of being seen as a competitor to the churches of the Latin rite. For example, the close connection between the churches was emphasised several times by Father Najji during our interview. He stressed that the Maronites are part of the Roman Apostolic Catholic church, and that the only difference between them is the rite, either Oriental or Latin:

'... [la diferencia] solamente es la forma, no hay ningún cambio. Nosotros tenemos la misma dogma...' ²⁵ (Father Najji 2009)

In addition, in some of the earlier masses homemade pamphlets were handed out explaining the Maronite Church and emphasising its belonging within Catholicism. It would appear that the Father and/or the NSL feel a need to highlight that the Maronite Church is 'one of us' and it is not 'the other': not in competition but a part of Catholic 'us'.

²⁵ '... the only [difference] is the forma. There's no change. We have the same dogma...' – Father Najji

In order to achieve this, different media outlets, such as radio, television and newspapers, have been used to explain the Maronite rites, to highlight its similarities with Catholicism and to attract individuals to attend. For example, a half-page article was printed in *El Tiempo* newspaper entitled 'Maronitas ya tienen su iglesia' (Mojica 2008).²⁶ It explains how the Parish was formed and gives an explanation of the Maronite rite, being careful to point out that Maronitism is one of the 22 officially recognised Roman Catholic rites and constantly reminding the reader of the connection between Maronites and Catholics. This was noticed by Father Naji who praised *El Tiempo* as having printed the 'mejor artículo que habla bien de los católicos-maronitas'.²⁷ Father Naji's choice of words, of a hyphenated religious identity, emphasise the connection between them. At the same time, the article also mentioned the differences between the rites, such as the language and the fact that priests can marry. Even the images shown in the article highlighted both difference and similarity between Maronites and Catholics. On the one hand, a large photograph of the inaugural ceremony was printed next to the article, showing the procession of Colombian-Lebanese carrying the different religious icons, relics and products. This image itself suggests difference as such processions with numerous objects of this kind do not often occur in mainstream Colombian Roman Catholic masses. On the other hand, a smaller picture next to it showed Father Naji during the ceremony, praying the same way priest do in the mainstream Catholic rite. In this way the media helped to position Maronitism within the mainstream Catholic Church, ensuring it should not be categorised as 'the other'.

This impulse has not only come from within the *Colonia* but also from the mainstream Catholic institutions in Bogotá. A newspaper called *El Catolicismo* published an article about the Maronite Parish which told how the Parish was founded, the story of the Maronites, and the characteristics of their mass. It also placed emphasis on the Maronite Church being 'one of us':

'Los maronitas no son una secta o religión misteriosa, ni una iglesia cristiana disidente, sino un pueblo católico de origen definido, con una comunidad particular dentro de la iglesia' (El Catolicismo 2008: 7)²⁸

²⁶ 'the Maronites now have their church' – *El Tiempo* newspaper. The word 'their' translates from the word 'su' in Spanish. The latter is not as divisive as the word in English; it does not necessarily have the connotation of them and us, which the word in English could imply.

²⁷ 'the best article that gives a good account of the Catholic-Maronites' – Father Naji

²⁸ 'The Maronites are neither a mysterious sect or religion, nor a dissident Christian Church, but a Catholic people with a defined origin, a particular community within the Church' – *El Catolicismo* newspaper

This continuous presentation of the Maronite Church as Catholic and the mentioning of the close bonds between the rites, are not only addressed to the mainstream Catholic Church but also to Colombian people in general to encourage participation and avoid backlashes from outside. This fits with Garcia's (2007) claim that religion has been a significant factor for nation building. Such compatibility is also important for Colombian-Lebanese identity. It allows for fluidity in their choice of religious allegiance, in the same way as what I have shown with social situations. My Colombian-Lebanese participants can identify as Catholic, Maronite or Catholic-Maronite.

Father Naji's conclusion during the interview summarises how the Parish wishes to be seen and how it sees its role in the *Colonia*:

'... Estoy acá para transmitir la fe... estoy acá, no para remplazar a nadie, al contrario, para la riqueza de la vida espiritual de nuestros queridos libaneses, palestinos, sirios, de todos del Medio Oriente y más también, es una buena oportunidad por los colombianos a conocer la espiritualidad oriental y conocer más profundamente la tradición libanesa, las costumbres y la cultura y todo eso. Entonces tenemos aquí mucho trabajo'.²⁹ (Father Naji 2009)

Whilst everyone is welcomed, he signals that the purpose of the expansion of the Maronite Church is not only to provide support for Lebanese migrant communities but also to introduce the rites into many different places. However, he does also suggest that the Parish is a space where the Colombian-Lebanese can experience and identify with Lebanese traditions, customs and culture. This follows Vasquez's (2010: 128) study of a migrant church when he argues that:

'Religion is translocative, because it links the diaspora with the imagined homeland across space and time'

As seen below, not only can the Parish reconnect the Colombian-Lebanese with Maronitism, but it can also create a connection with the 'homeland'. This presentation of the

²⁹ '... there is a very large *Colonia* from the Middle East, whether Syrian, Palestinian, or Lebanese, and all of them need spiritual support... mentoring from a priest, or a priest-missionary from the Middle East to keep transmitting the Oriental faith and traditions to their children. I'm here to transmit the faith... I'm not here to replace anyone; on the contrary, I am here to enrich the spiritual lives of our dear Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, and everyone from the Middle East. It is also a good opportunity for the Colombians to get to know the Oriental spirituality and get to know more deeply the Lebanese traditions, customs, culture and everything else. So, we have a lot of work to do here' – Father Naji

Maronite Church as ‘one of us’, has allowed individuals to identify with the Parish without clashing with their previously held religious identities. The Colombian-Lebanese can at times perform their Maronite identity, at times their Catholic identity, and at times both, if they wish to do so.

7.4.2. The mosques

As seen above, the Maronite Parish looks like a ‘normal’ catholic church from the outside, as well as largely from the inside. The mosques’ visibility, however, works in different ways. On the one hand, the Istanbul Mosque is located inside a large house in a traditional neighbourhood, north of the centre in Bogota (see Figure P.3.).

FIGURE P.3. – Istanbul Mosque³⁰



The house looks like many other houses in the area and it is invisible to outsiders: it looks like a residential house, a large family home. There are no signs at all that distinguish it as a

³⁰ Picture taken by Esteban Devis

mosque, Islamic centre or even any type of religious connection. The lack of distinguishing features are likely to be a response to a variety of factors. First, Imam Eugenio argues they chose the location because of ease of access:

‘por la ubicación tan central, tanto de los que trabajan en el centro, como que trabajan en Chapinero, o en el norte de Bogotá, entonces les queda muy fácil por los medios de transporte también... un barrio muy sano, muy residente y es fácil... las personas llegan fácilmente, que hacerlo por allá en un barrio retirado... en el centro no encontramos un sitio, era imposible. Lo más apropiado para una mezquita en Bogotá está aquí en este sitio.’³¹ (Eugenio 2013)

However, this choice has meant that the building cannot be modified. The building which houses the mosque is classified as having national architectonic heritage; therefore, it is not possible to make any changes to the exterior of the house. This could explain the lack of Islamic architectural features; however, it would not have prevented a sign on the door or in the front yard announcing its presence. It is likely that this is due to a number of attacks the mosque has received, as seen below. Even though Eugenio claims the mosque is in a safe neighbourhood, it may not be safe enough to actively and outwardly portray its Islamic use.³²

On the other hand, architecturally the new mosque is extremely visible as an Islamic place of worship. It is a large white building next to two major roads, displaying a minaret and a large dome with a crescent moon at the top (see Figure P.4). Imam Khalid argues that they chose the new location as it fulfilled the requirements they were looking for:

‘Estábamos buscando en muchas partes de Bogotá y encontramos un lote allá con un precio súper bien que nos ayudó muchísimo el precio... cumplía ese lugar con más de una cosa, el costo y la ubicación geográfica. Allá geográficamente queda casi el centro de Bogotá, y tienen fácil acceso los miembros de la comunidad. Los que vienen del centro, los que vienen del norte, del occidente, del nororiente. Y

³¹ ‘[we decided to have the mosque here] because it’s a central location, not only for those who work in the centre, but also those that work in Chapinero, or in the north of Bogota, so it’s very easy transport wise... it’s a healthy neighbourhood, very residential... in the centre we couldn’t find anywhere, it was impossible. The most appropriate for a mosque in Bogota is right here’

³² In the picture a number of graffiti can also be seen, and the road next to it had several potholes. This comes in stark difference from the Maronite Parish, with its private car park and pristine roads next to Bogota’s World Trade Center

queda en un punto justo para todos. Porque era muy injusto para algunos viajar, por ejemplo yo desde la 140 hasta el centro...³³

Figure P.4. – Abu Bakr Mosque - Minaret³⁴



Khalid claimed that it was larger and cheaper than other locations they had scouted, though that its exact location was ‘pura coincidencia’,³⁵ as it happened to be a suitable empty plot. However, the location also has drawbacks, most significantly that it is situated next to a large bridge which blocks its view on one of its sides (see Figure P.5). This ‘coincidence’ may have been heavily influenced by finances, as the presence of the bridge is likely to have brought the price down. Nevertheless, Khalid remained upbeat about the location:

³³ ‘We were looking in many places around Bogota and we found a lot there, with a very good price... the place was good in more than one way, in terms of cost and location. Geographically is located almost in the centre of Bogota and has easy access to the members of the community. Those that come from the centre, those that come from the north, from the west, from the north-east, it’s a good location for all, because it was hard for some to travel so far, for example I had to travel from 140th street to the centre’ - Khalid

³⁴ Picture taken by Esteban Devis

³⁵ ‘Pure coincidence’

'El puente es la única desventaja, pero también se puede convertir en una ventaja. Los que pasan por el puente lo ven... ¡si pasa por la 30 [oriente-occidente] verá la mezquita, por la 80 [norte-sur] lo mismo!' ³⁶

The fact the bridge passes next to the mosque does support his argument about accessibility, as it marks an intersection between two important carriageways which run north-south and east-west.

As explained above, architecturally the building was intentionally constructed to be recognised as a Muslim mosque; however, even its Islamic features may not be recognisable enough for some Colombians. During one of my trips to the mosque I enquired around the area to find out information about its relationship with the neighbourhood. I casually chatted with a number of individuals I encountered in the surrounding residential streets and most claimed not to know what the construction was about. Moreover, a couple of security guards in the buildings nearby said it was a new church being built. I told Imam Khalid this story and he found it amusing, he said:

'Muy buena pregunta, falta tratar de hacer. No nos afecta que piensen que es una iglesia. Es un templo... hemos tenido contacto con la administradora del conjunto. La administradora ya sabe' ³⁷

Whilst he seemed to be neutral towards the idea of being thought of as a new church, Khalid also stated that more needed to be done in order to divulge its presence. They had informed the administrative team of the nearby housing state, though it seemed as the residents had not been informed. This confusion, however, is likely to have been short-lived. As seen below, this mosque was also a target of intimidation.

³⁶ 'The bridge is the only disadvantage the location has. But it can also be an advantage, because everyone that drives through it sees it... if they drive east-west they see the mosque, and north-south as well!' – Khalid

³⁷ 'We don't have a problem being seen as a church. It's still a temple... We've had contact with the administrator of the block of flats. She knows [about the mosque]...' – Khalid

Figure P.5. – Mosque Abu Bakr - location³⁸



7.4.3. Discrimination against Muslims

The Muslim community in Bogotá has been the victim of a number of threats of violence and intimidation. Eugenio argues that within younger Colombians in southern neighbourhoods of the city there is a degree of discrimination:

'los muchachos no dejan de molestarlas a ellas, a nosotros los hombres no, pero a los mujeres si las molestan, tratan decirles que pobrecitas, que no sé qué, que el velo, cantidad de tonterías...' ³⁹ (Eugenio 2013)

He dismissed this as young people being ignorant, however, he also stressed that a large part of the role of his mosque was to support new Muslim converts in the process of their

³⁸ Picture taken by Esteban Devis

³⁹ 'The boys [older teenagers/young adults] don't stop bothering them, they don't bother us the men, but they do the women. They say "poor you", I don't know, about the veil, a lot of silliness...' - Eugenio

converting, especially with families and friends overcoming the incorrect preconceptions many had.

More significantly, Eugenio argued the 9/11 events generated problems for the mosque he received threats, including of physical violence, as well as general abuse directed at him, his followers and the mosque. He said that he decided to deal with the problem personally and would challenge anyone that called to confront him personally. Bruckmayr (2010) has also reported that Muslims in Latin America in general have suffered greater discrimination since 9/11, not only by the general population but also by government officials and the press, and have been accused of having connections to Hamas, Hezbollah and even Al-Qaeda, and being involved in money laundering and passport forgery. Similarly, a Muslim-Lebanese living in Maicao, quoted in *El Espectador*, complained that people saw 'his' community as 'terroristas, 'hombres bomba' y hasta con Osama Ben Laden'⁴⁰ (Mojica 2007 - Online). It is unclear whether he means 'his' community to be Muslims in general or just Muslims in Maicao. However, *El Tiempo* newspaper reports violence against Muslims as early as 1997,⁴¹ suggesting the problem is not new.

In addition, according to in *El Espectador* in 2013 leaflets began to be distributed in the neighbourhoods surrounding the new mosque with the slogan 'En Colombia, NO al Islam'.⁴² According to the newspaper, the leaflets, who do not name authors, give derogatory remarks towards the Prophet Muhammad and attack his followers:

'Los musulmanes con su religión islámica son terroristas peligrosos. Ellos son los que están matando niños y mujeres en Siria y Nigeria. Matan mujeres a piedra y no las entierran. El mahometano no perdona, no concilia, vive lleno de odio y crimen'⁴³
(*El Espectador* 2013)

The newspaper also reported that Imam Khalid had contacted the police and the threats were under investigation. All of this has led both imams to defend Islam in their own ways:

⁴⁰ 'terrorists, bomb-men of even Osama Bin-Laden'

⁴¹ Franco (1997) reports that the building where the mosque in Barranquilla was housed at the time, was attacked with bricks and bullets, but that luckily no-one was injured.

⁴² 'NO Islam in Colombia'

⁴³ 'Muslims, with their Islamic religion, are dangerous terrorists. They are the ones killing children and women in Syria and Nigeria. They stone women to death and don't bury them. The Mohammedans don't forgive, don't reconcile, live full of hatred and crime'

Eugenio stressed the difference between the terrorist groups and 'true' Islam; whilst Khalid focused on what he considered the successful assimilation of Muslims in Colombia:

'Hay gente que ya entiende que los musulmanes no hicieron eso, eso es un grupo revolucionario, anarquista que está en contra del Corán.'⁴⁴ (Eugenio 2013)

'Los musulmanes son miembros ciento por ciento de la sociedad colombiana, metidos en la vida colombiana, salen en el momento de ir a la mezquita el viernes a asistir y regresan como ciudadanos colombianos. La mayoría de los musulmanes de la mezquita de Bogotá son colombianos.'⁴⁵ (Khalid 2013)

Both imams also gave similar arguments to the press in the different newspaper articles about Islam in Colombia. However, Khalid also stressed during our interview that the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Colombia was excellent. Interestingly, whilst immigrant Khalid sees the need to validate the assimilation of Muslims to Colombian society and comment on the relationship between Muslims and Christians; Colombian convert Eugenio only focuses on defending the religion. This is likely to reflect the composition of their congregations. As seen above, and according to their own estimates, immigrants make a larger percentage of the participants at the new mosque than at the Istanbul Mosque. At the same time, even though there is a large number of non-Colombian participants at the new mosque, the internal focus has remained on religion rather than ethnic identity – two factors which are combined in the Maronite Parish.

7.5. The role of the Maronite Parish in constructing Colombian-Lebanese identity

The Maronite Parish has had an influence on both the religious and the ethnic identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in multiple ways, creating for example, a hybrid identity for some, between old (mainstream Catholic) and new (Maronite) identities. This is expressed by Andrea (2008) as she identifies her family's religion:

⁴⁴ 'There are people that don't understand that it wasn't Muslims that did that, that was a revolutionary group, anarchists that are against the Koran'.

⁴⁵ 'Muslims are one hundred per cent members of Colombian society; they are involved in Colombian way of life. They go out when they attend the mosque on Fridays and go back as Colombian citizens. The majority of Muslims at the Bogota mosque are Colombians.' - Khalid

‘...mis papás son católicos-maronitas y vamos a misa acá Maronita, y estamos almorzando los domingos con la colonia libanesa, y como en contacto con eso...’⁴⁶

Nagel and Staeheli (2004) argue that hyphenated identities demonstrate the ability to belong simultaneously to both identities. Hence by hyphenating the Catholic and Maronite identities, Andrea is suggesting her parents belong to both, reflecting the view the Maronite Parish wants to portray of fluidity within Catholicism.

The Maronite masses are also providing a new meeting space for the *Colonia*. This is a point the NSL has been keen to emphasise, as Cristina (2009), a member of the organisation, says:

‘entonces se quiere también aglutinar no sólo la expresión de religión’.⁴⁷

Through the masses and receptions the Maronite Parish is constructing a ‘space of belonging’ where individuals can meet, and by performing both religion and ethnicity they develop a common identity (Fortier 2006). Indeed, there are a number of examples which signal the influence of the Maronite Parish in (re)connecting Colombian-Lebanese identity with the Lebanese (Maronite) past. The *El Tiempo* newspaper article already mentioned has a subtitle that reads ‘Comunidad Colombo-Libanesa se rencuentra con su fe en parroquia bogotana’ (Mojica 2008).⁴⁸ It suggests a previous union between Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity and Maronite religion which had been lost but has now been found again. The article also quotes Laila Faur de Saab, a first generation Lebanese migrant, who says the Parish

‘...será un refugio para que las nuevas generaciones no se desvinculen de sus raíces y se aferren en la fe con la que sus padres y abuelos han sido educados, así sea lejos del país de los cedros’ (Mojica 2008)⁴⁹

Not only is this quote alluding to the emblematic symbols of Lebanon, the cedars, connecting ethnic belonging with religion, but it also calls for a return to the roots and for the younger generations to engage.

⁴⁶ ‘...my parents are Catholic-Maronites and we are going to Maronite church here, and we’re having lunch on Sundays with the Lebanese *Colonia*, and are in contact with all of that...’ – Andrea

⁴⁷ ‘we also want to bring people together not just as an expression of religion’ - Cristina

⁴⁸ ‘the Colombian-Lebanese community re-encounters its faith in a Bogota parish’ - *El Tiempo* newspaper

⁴⁹ ‘...will also be a refuge so that the new generations do not disassociate from their roots and they cling on to the faith their parents and grandparents were educated in, even if it is far from the country of the cedars’.

In an interview, my participant Sofia conveyed a similar message where she argued the Parish brought opportunities to bring people together:

‘Tenemos que aprovechar y ahora pues ya tenemos digamos el Club, tenemos la Unión Libanesa, la Asociación de Damas, y ahora la iglesia que es la que va a unir a todos, porque no todo el mundo tiene acceso a por ejemplo ni al Club ni a la Asociación. Mejor dicho, hay muchos paisanos, muchos libaneses que no conocemos, entonces ahora pues se está haciendo ese trabajo con la iglesia, de cómo hacer conectar con todo el mundo y unir. La sorpresa muy grande cuando ahorita inauguramos la parroquia libanesa con párroco ya propio y todo eso ¡muchos libaneses se enteraron por el periódico y aparecieron en la iglesia! entonces son gente que queremos recopilar...’⁵⁰ (Sofia 2008)

It can be seen that Sofia believes the Parish to be the most important centre for re-connecting with other Colombian-Lebanese, as she believes it to be the most accessible of all of them. Even her words suggest inclusiveness as she calls it the ‘Lebanese parish’ instead of Maronite. She is right in noticing that access to the Club and the Ladies Association is limited as they require time and money to participate, so in this sense the Parish is more open in terms of socio-economic status than the rest. However, the parish is still a religious Maronite space and, therefore, many non-religious or non-Christian individuals may feel the same lack of access to the Parish as others may do to the Club or the Ladies Association.

Nevertheless, Sofia’s suggestion that the Parish can reconnect the Colombian-Lebanese was reflected by others. Jimena explained that she started attending some masses as a response to the calls to participate by the organisers and commented on the impact the masses were having on her:

‘[ésta] es una faceta de evolución de vida, yo nunca fui una persona muy practicante, nunca lo fui, a pesar de la ‘vaceadas’ de mi mamá... Entonces fui a la misa una vez, dos veces, y la verdad es que con el paso de los días... la misa de

⁵⁰ ‘We have to make the most of it, we have the Club, we have the Lebanese Union (ULCM), the Ladies Association, and now the Church which is the one that is going to unite everybody because not everyone has access to the Club or the association, for example. There are many *paisanos* that we haven’t met, so now that job is being done with the church, to connect and unite everyone. The biggest surprise was when we inaugurated the Lebanese Parish... many Lebanese found out because of the newspaper! And they turned up at the church! So they are people we want to re-gather... - Sofia

rito Maronita empezó a gustarme mucho. Eso no significa que yo ni me involucre con las actividades de la iglesia ni nada de eso, colaboro con tonterías, no formo parte de la asociación, no pienso hacerlo, pero la verdad es que doy la colaboración que me piden... Voy a la misa todos los domingos y pues ayudo a servir el café, o si me piden que un domingo lleve unos bizcochitos o cualquier cosa, lo llevo. Pero digamos mi aporte se limita a eso, y pues mi marido va también, me acompaña a la iglesia. Y la verdad es que he ido encontrando que es un espacio para conversar con Dios en un ambiente, digamos cada día se incorporan más los cánticos libaneses, y como yo siento muy profundamente el tema... lo utilizo como un buen momento como para conversar con Dios. Y pues sigo yendo y si un día me aburro, seguro dejaré de hacerlo, pero por ahora me satisface hacerlo'.⁵¹ (Jimena 2009)

Jimena suggests that the masses have increased her spirituality and with it her connection to the Maronite Parish. She describes it as an 'evolution' in her life, one which she feels deeper as time passes. In this sense, the Maronite mass has become for Jimena a Colombian-Lebanese space where she feels comfortable. At the same time, Jimena believes she has the freedom to control her belonging to the Parish, as she expresses the possibility of getting 'bored' and stop attending the masses.

For others, the reconnection is with the *Colonia*. Cristina is a member of the NSL and a keen participant of the Parish, and for her, the Maronite Parish has served as a reconnection with her Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity, and as a way of performing her Lebaneseness. She states that in the past she had been involved with the Lady's Association but had had to stop going due to work commitments, and that she had remained disconnected from the community for a while. However, the Maronite Parish led her to reconnect and participate more actively once again:

'...y cuando hablaron de que iba a organizarse aquí la iglesia, entonces dije pues alrededor de la parte del rito maronita, de todo eso, pues es la cultura nuestra, es un

⁵¹ '[this] is a phase of evolution in my life, I was never a practising person, never, even though my mom would tell me off for it... so I went to church once or twice, and the truth is that as time went by... I began to really like the Maronite mass. That doesn't mean that I get involved in all the activities, I don't plan on doing so, but the truth is that I help with what they ask me to do... I go to mass every Sunday and I help pouring the coffee, or if they ask me to take some small biscuits or anything I do it. But my help is limited to that, and well my husband comes too, he accompanies me to the mass. And the truth is that I have been finding a space to converse with God. Every day more Lebanese chants are included and I feel very deeply about the subject... so I use it as a good moment to chat with God. And I will keep going, and if one day I get bored then surely I'll stop, but for now it satisfies me to do so' - Jimena

pedacito también de allá como traducido en una actividad, ¿no? que la religión es cultura. Entonces empecé a ir...'⁵² (Cristina 2009)

She says that she was influenced by the memory of her grandparents, who had explained to her who Saint Charbel was and had his image in their house. This suggests that the Parish triggered family memories, which in turn made it easier for her to feel a belonging to the Parish. Moreover, Cristina said that by the time the NSL was formed she was already retired and chose to join it instead of going back to the Ladies Association. Cristina's actions show that the Colombian-Lebanese have a choice when deciding in which activities to participate and which organisations to join. The choice, therefore, is not only about when to perform the identity but also about which particular part of that identity to perform. As Fortier (2006) suggests, these performances are not only helping to reproduce their identities but to produce them too. Depending on the individual, the reproduction and/or the production can be of either religious or ethnic identity.

Significantly, the Parish has also influenced those who did not have close connections to the *Colonia*. For example, Andrea (2008) told me that even though her grandfather had strong connections with the *Colonia*, her father had not, until the formation of the Parish. She states that currently her family's contact with the community is through the Parish: 'se están reconectando otra vez [con la *Colonia*]'.⁵³ Her words show a clear process of identification by the family, with younger generations finding their way back to the *Colonia*, mirroring what Sofia intended the Parish to be: a way for new generations to reconnect with their roots. Andrea (2008) explained that:

'...como que mis papás ahorita yendo a la misa siempre son todos como que se conozcan y los presentan, para que estén con la comunidad, mis papás nunca se metieron con la comunidad y ahora la gente misma es como "quédense".'⁵⁴

Andrea's family was already religious and the Parish provided a way to perform that religiosity whilst connecting with the Colombian-Lebanese community:

⁵² '...and when they talked about organising a church here, I thought that surrounding the Maronite rite, around all of that, it's our culture, it's a little piece from there as well, like translated into an activity, right? As religion is culture. So I started going...'

⁵³ 'they're now reconnecting again with it (the *Colonia*)' – Andrea

⁵⁴ '...as my parents are now always going to mass, it's like everyone knows each other and they are introduced (to other people), so that they are with the community. My parents never got involved with the community and now the people are, like, "stay here".' – Andrea

'mis papás están metidos con los santos libaneses... ahorita están con eso, mis papás son muy católicos'.⁵⁵

The Parish is thus acting as an anchor for belonging, by recreating the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* in a different setting, not merely religious but also social. In this sense, the Parish is also a social space, where participation is encouraged as a way of connecting not only with the abstract community but with the people within it. As such, social connections are made and friendships are formed over time. The Parish has started to gain significance as a base for belonging, as it has provided another space for the Colombian-Lebanese. This belonging can be constructed in religious, ethnic, and/or social terms.

7.5.1. Barriers to identity construction

Nevertheless, the Parish has not had the same positive effect on all the Colombian-Lebanese. For example, Carlos (2008) told me that even though he had read in the paper about the church masses and had talked with his children about attending, he had not done so yet. Even though he said he did not consider himself religious, and his contact with the *Colonia* was sporadic, he seemed interested in the Parish. He expressed his intention of going, stating that the Maronite mass might help him further understand the roots of where he comes from and understand the customs. However, when I enquired a year later, he still had not attended the mass. This suggests that the stronger feelings of belonging explained above seem to be happening to those who already felt a belonging to either the *Colonia* or the Catholic Church. Identification to the *Colonia* through the Parish occurs for those who are already religious. Carlos' lack of deep connectedness to either religion or the *Colonia* has affected his willingness to identify with them.

In addition, even those who are connected to the *Colonia* may still not feel religious. Alejandro, a Colombian-Lebanese in his 20s, explained his lack of involvement in the Parish:

'Nada, no tengo ningún tipo de afinidad con la Iglesia Católica, ni Maronita, ni nada. Creo que soy un poco, tengo cierto rechazo por la iglesia. Pero si me preguntan en el Líbano que qué [religión] soy, digo que soy maronita'.⁵⁶ (Alejandro 2009)

⁵⁵ 'my parents are now involved with the Lebanese Saints... they are very catholic (religious)' – Andrea

Alejandro gives an example of the different significance religion has in Lebanon and Colombia. In Colombia he does not feel any affinity with religion, but in Lebanon it forms part of his identity, probably for reasons of politics rather than with religion. This underlines the fluidity and multiplicity of belonging as suggested by Hall (1996). On changing his context, Alejandro is able to pick up or drop his Maronite identity. At the same time, this demonstrates how Alejandro feels a need to legitimize his Lebanese identity in Lebanon by following what he thinks are the most significant identifiers, in this case his religion.

Others also expressed their dislike of religion. Juanita (2008), also in her 20s, said that she had not yet gone to the Parish as she did not consider herself to be very religious. She mentioned that the fact the mass was Maronite had nothing to do with it, but it was just not part of her 'routine'. Even though her grandmother reproached her for it, she had not gone: 'me da mamera [ir]'⁵⁷ she said. I got a similar answer from Daniel, another young Colombian-Lebanese who argued he was very proud of his heritage. I asked him if he was involved with the Parish, to which he answered in English 'not at all'.⁵⁸ When I asked his reasons not to go he stated:

'Porque nunca me ha gustado. Es muy personal [las razones], fui a un colegio religioso y me saturaron de la iglesia y todo eso, hasta que me cansé... es la religión, la religión en general no me gusta'⁵⁹ (Daniel 2009)

In his case, not even his professed pride for his ancestry influenced him to participate in the masses; rather his lack of participation seems to be partly due to his religious upbringing. Indeed, Juanita told me that even though she thinks that the Parish can have an interesting role in the *Colonia*, as it would be possible to meet people there who do not frequent the Club, she doubts that many young people like her would attend. Participation in the Parish is divided along age, gender and generational lines, with the largest proportion being older

⁵⁶ 'Nothing, I don't have any type of affinity with the Catholic Church, or the Maronite, or anything. I feel certain contempt towards the Church. But if in Lebanon they ask me (about my religion) I say I am a Maronite' – Alejandro

⁵⁷ 'I can't be bothered [to go]' – Juanita

⁵⁸ Daniel told me he speaks Spanish, English and French, and he is learning Arabic. This is another sign of the privileged status of many Colombian-Lebanese, in a country where most people do not speak a second language, Daniel has been able to learn two others and even spend time in Anglophone and Francophone countries.

⁵⁹ 'I don't know, because I've never liked it. They're very personal (reasons), I went to a religious school and they saturated me with the church and all of that, until I got tired of it... it's religion, religion in general that I don't like' – Daniel

Colombian-Lebanese women and with very few of young-adults. However, some young Colombian-Lebanese such as Andrea did attend some masses, and a number of Colombian-Lebanese men.

Moreover, lack of attendance is not only dependent on personal feelings about religion, but also on convenience. As Fernando, a second generation Colombian-Lebanese who is married to a Lebanese woman and often travels back to Lebanon says:

‘Definitivamente hay días en que no se puede [ir]. La mayoría del tiempo no se puede. ¿Por qué? Porque el horario del Padre Naji es a las once de la mañana. Cuando usted tiene niños [una misa] un domingo a las once de la mañana, le partió el domingo, y si usted va a salir fuera de Bogotá, salir a las doce del día no lo logra hacer por el congestionamiento... a veces cuando uno no tiene planes de salir fuera de la ciudad para los lados del campo, entonces pues si uno va a misa, a veces no. Es relativo depende del plan que uno tenga’⁶⁰ (Fernando 2009)

I got a similar answer from my grandfather, when I asked him why, after attending the inaugural mass of the Maronite Parish, he had not been back. He was very religious but did not have strong connections to the *Colonia*. He said that one of the reasons for not going was that the mass was too long and that he could not endure it. He preferred to go to his usual shorter Roman Catholic mass, which was also a couple of blocks closer to his house. It seems that both Fernando and my grandfather would have been more willing to participate in the mass if it had been better suited to their routines and their needs. These experiences demonstrate that they have a choice of when and how they might decide to perform their ethnic identity. Fernando chose to perform his religious identity when it suited his social and family activities. It was of secondary importance and therefore attendance was dependant on the mass not clashing with anything else. For my grandfather, neither his religiousness nor his ancestry were influential enough for him to attend the Maronite masses regularly and other factors, such as convenience and health, weighed more heavily. He chose to continue performing his religious identity, but not connecting it with his ethnic identity.

⁶⁰ ‘Definitely there are days that one cannot [go]. Most of the time it’s not possible, why? Because Father Naji’s timetable is at eleven in the morning, and when you have children, (a mass) on Sunday at eleven am splits the day. And if you’re going to go outside of Bogota, you can’t at midday because of traffic... sometimes when one doesn’t have plans to go outside of the city to the countryside, then one goes to mass, sometimes not. It depends on what other plans one has’ - Fernando

Furthermore, for some Colombian-Lebanese, especially younger ones, the Maronite mass is a new activity which did not take place before and has had to compete with other more established activities. This includes traditional Catholic masses, weekend family trips and even personal hobbies. The Parish has not been considered by all of my participants to be an integral part of their lives but rather one that can be dispensed with.

Therefore, it is difficult to assess the influence the Parish is having on the *Colonia* and on Colombian-Lebanese in general. A way to approach this is by looking at the social announcements in the press. It is common for the Bogota elite to make social announcements in newspapers, including invitations to social events, pictures of past events, and printed condolences. These announcements can be very expensive.⁶¹ The *Colonia* has used these announcements in different ways: whilst the organisations have used the social pages to advertise their Colombian-Lebanese events, as seen with the invitations to the inaugural mass, individuals have mainly used the condolences pages.

For example, three days after the inaugural ceremony of the Maronite Parish took place, a photo taken during the reception appeared in the social pages of *El Tiempo* newspaper (2008c). The photo was of a number of important dignitaries, including Rania Abdala, the Lebanese Consul in Colombia; the two Lebanese priests that presided the mass; Cardinal Rubiano; Maria del Rosario Guerra, a Colombian-Lebanese government minister; Laila Faur de Saab, a founding member of the NSL; and Rida Mariette Aljure, the then designated Colombian Ambassador to Lebanon. The presence of this photo in the social pages further suggests that even the religious events of the *Colonia* have been seen as important social events, to be announced and celebrated in the media, ensuring important personalities are seen as having attended. This suggests that part of the image they are trying to portray is that Maronitism in Colombia is a religion practised by individuals in the elite.

Searching through several condolences pages of *El Tiempo* newspaper in March and July 2009, I was able to find three individuals with Lebanese/Arab surnames⁶². Of the

⁶¹ Printed condolences can cost from about \$500,000 Colombian pesos (around \$280 US) for a small notice, to about \$3,000,000 Colombian pesos (around \$1,700 US) for a large one (personal correspondence with *El Tiempo* Newspaper March 2011). Currently, the monthly minimum wage in Colombia is \$535,000 – July 2012.

⁶² As explained in Chapter Two it is difficult to know whether the individuals are descendants of Lebanese migrants and whether they feel any connection to the *Colonia*. Furthermore, I may have missed some individuals who did not have Lebanese/Arab surnames.

three funeral ceremonies, only one was going to take place at the *Santa Clara* church (El Tiempo 2009b) where the Maronite Parish is based. The other two were held at different churches in the city: one of them had the ceremony in the *Cristo Rey* church (El Tiempo 2009a), where the St. Charbel chapel is; the other one at the *Santos Apóstoles* church at the *Gimnasio Moderno* School (El Tiempo 2009c), a traditional school for wealthy upper class families, to which the individual and his children attended. It seems that not all the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogotá feel a connection with the Parish. It is likely that their families have longer-standing ties with other churches, long before the establishment of the Maronite Parish and so the former take precedent. In fact, it is remarkable that the family of one of them did choose to have the ceremony there, after only one year of the Parish having been established. Their choices have more to do with social status than with coincidence. All three churches are in the north of Bogota in the *Chapinero* locality which, as I explained in Chapter Four, is the most expensive in the city. At the same time, all three were either buried or cremated at *Jardines de Paz*, a well-known and expensive cemetery in the northern outskirts of the city. By choosing this particular cemetery, the Colombian-Lebanese were buried among their peers, not necessarily the Colombian-Lebanese, but the Colombians of the same social group. Social factors will frequently override the ethnic connection and the families of these deceased Colombian-Lebanese preferred to keep their ethnicity invisible. Moreover, this further demonstrates the elite social status of the Colombian-Lebanese, which can also act as a deterrent for individuals. Even though the Father Najji claims to welcome individuals from all social backgrounds, the location of the mosque in a wealthy neighbourhood in the north of the city, and the fact the large majority, if not all, of its participants are part of Colombian elite, is likely to discourage the attendance of many individuals of lower socio-economic status.

7.6. A house for all?

This leads to question whether the different religious organisations are actually accessible for everyone, and a 'house for all'. It is important to mention that not all of the Colombian-Lebanese attendees at the Maronite Parish are Maronites, or descendants of Maronites, but in fact individuals from other religious denominations, such as Christian Orthodox, have also attended the masses. Father Najji told me that he wants the Parish to be a place of congregation for the Colombian-Lebanese, regardless of their religion and he pointed out those participants who were not Maronites. The *El Tiempo* article also notes the presence of

the Lebanese Orthodox Christians and claims the Parish will be shared (Mojica 2008).

Indeed, the Maronite Father argues that:

'[la parroquia] no está trabajando solamente de rito maronita-católico, está trabajando como una iglesia oriental. En nuestra parroquia tenemos los ortodoxos, los melquitas, los maronitas, los siríacos, coptos, todos de nuestra región, hasta también tenemos musulmanes...'⁶³ (Father Naji 2009)

Father Naji continued telling me that he had received donations from Christians of different denominations and also from Muslims. He said that he had officiated over the marriage of a Melkite couple, baptised more than five orthodox children and of course many more Maronites. He stressed that he was not there to replace any other priest, stating that in the *Santa Clara* church there are two priests, one that follows the Oriental rite and another the Latin rite.

The Father also proudly told a story about the Lebanese ambassador to Colombia, who, even though he is Muslim, has attended some of the masses:

'El embajador fue a la fiesta de San Marón y encontró a musulmanes en la iglesia, y les preguntó: "¿qué estás haciendo aquí? [esto] no es una mezquita". Ellos dicen: "señor embajador, sentimos aquí es una casa libanesa, un encuentro libanés, es lo más importante para nosotros". Por eso el embajador dice que acá tenemos una casa libanesa'⁶⁴ (Father Naji 2009)

Father Naji told me this story as it represents exactly what he wants the Parish to be: not merely a spiritual space but a Lebanese meeting place for all the Lebanese. Indeed, he wants the Maronite Parish to be what Fortier (2006: 74) describes as a 'scene for ethnicity', where the community becomes a 'common ground for belonging' that is reproduced by the events, which in turn produce an identity to the collective belonging. Father Naji wants this collective belonging to be felt by all Colombian-Lebanese, regardless of social status or religious affiliation, and he was keen to transmit this during the interview.

⁶³ '[I'm] not merely working for the Catholic-Maronite rite, but as an Oriental church. In our Parish we have Orthodox, Melkites, Maronites, Syriacs, Coptic, all of them of our region, we even have Muslims!'

⁶⁴ 'The ambassador recognised a group of Muslims among the congregation and asked them "what are you doing here? [This] is not a mosque" to which they answered, "Mr. Ambassador we feel that this is a Lebanese house, a Lebanese meeting place, that is what is important for us". That's why the Ambassador says that we have here a Lebanese house' – Father Naji

Likewise, Cristina (2009) told me of the non-Maronite individuals participating in the Parish, stressing that:

‘Entonces sin el distingo de la religión, prima la parte Líbano, entonces eso es bonito, porque es el sentimiento por una patria ¿no? por un país’⁶⁵

Here, not only the entanglement of ethnic and religious identities is noticeable, but Cristina expresses preference for the ethnic identity over the religious one. The Parish and the NSL are trying to incorporate into their masses not only the Maronites, but the Colombian-Lebanese in general, reinforcing their wish to become a firm centre for the *Colonia*.

Indeed, in a way the Parish does act as an additional centre of assembly for the Colombian-Lebanese, and significantly unlike the Club, one where social class and economic background are perceived to play a less important role. However, the fact that the Parish is situated in the north of Bogota, near prestigious office blocks and expensive neighbourhoods (see Chapters Two and Four), is likely to influence the type of participants. Even though Father Naji insisted that he wanted its doors to be open to all, his wish may not be the same as that of some individuals in the *Colonia*. He commented that some individuals have reproached him for welcoming and inviting certain people to the masses. He says that everyone is always welcome:

‘y por eso nuestra misa siempre tiene un cafecito, y yo invito toda la gente a la cafecito, si esta [es] un libanés no está [es] un libanés, son muy *bienvenus* a todo’⁶⁶
(Father Naji 2009)

Indeed, during the smaller receptions a table was set out with free coffee and biscuits, mainly served by Colombian-Lebanese women, and a table with different items to buy. Most of the congregation sat around the tables conversing or looked through the items for sale. One particular day, however, I noticed a man seated apart from the rest of the congregation, drinking one of the small cups of coffee on his own. He looked somewhat out of place, seated separately on some stairs and was wearing clothes which looked different and more worn out to the rest of the congregation. He told me he was not Lebanese but was interested in learning Arabic, so he had joined the lessons given by the Father and was also

⁶⁵ ‘So, regardless of religion the Lebanese part prevails and that is nice, because it’s the feeling for a motherland right? For a country...’ - Cristina

⁶⁶ ‘that is why our church always has coffee and I invite everyone to have a small cup of coffee, whether they are Lebanese or not they are welcome [said in French] to everything’ – Father Naji, French is widely spoken in Lebanon, especially by Maronites.

attending the masses. He did not talk to anyone else during the reception and no one else approached him. Even though the Parish is supposed to be open for all, this suggests that there are still sentiments of differentiation present in the congregation, between those that belong and those who do not. It is likely that this individual would not have been able to go into the Club *Colombo-Libanés*, and probably would not have attempted to do so either, as the social conventions would dictate otherwise. The social discriminations of Colombian society, separating 'us' from the 'others', are present even in the Parish.

In terms of the Muslim mosques, both imams also claim the mosques are open centres for the public where everyone is welcome. As seen above, Imam Eugenio argued the name Istanbul was chosen as it would openness. Both also claim to have Colombian and foreign participants:

'La mayoría colombianos que estamos acá, que antes éramos cristianos o católicos, que estamos formando el grueso de la comunidad islámica en esta mezquita. También vienen libaneses, pakistaníes, de Egipto, de todas partes. El trato de nosotros con ellos pues no es diferencial, es igual en todo momento con todos ya que el Islam no distingue ni de raza, ni nacionalismo, ni nada...'⁶⁷ (Eugenio 2013)

Moreover, Khalid also mentions the activities he offers which are open to the general public:

'Los sábados a veces doy clases de árabe y de filosofía islámica. Y muchos de ellos, por ahí la mitad, no son musulmanes... Y no son colombianos solamente, asisten también dos norteamericanas, una de ellas trabaja en la embajada de EEUU.'⁶⁸

Whilst the Maronite Parish claims to be a home for all Colombian-Lebanese/Arabs, regardless of religious beliefs, the mosques claim to be open to all Muslims, regardless of nationality. Furthermore, according to Khalid, the new mosque is also open for everyone who wants to learn about Islam, and he mentions the activities and the diversity of his participants. In fact, the socio-economic differences amongst Muslims at the new mosque was very clear: it included embassy officials who arrived in diplomatic cars with chauffeurs and businessmen dressed in smart and expensive looking suits; as well as individuals who

⁶⁷ 'The majority of people here are Colombians, we used to be Christian or Catholics, we form the main part of the Islamic community in this mosque. Others that come are Lebanese, Pakistanis, Egyptians, from everywhere. The way we treat them is not different, it's the same with everyone because in Islam there is no distinction between races, nationality or anything...'

⁶⁸ 'on Saturdays sometime I give Arabic classes and Islamic philosophy classes, and many of them, around half, are not Muslims. And not only Colombians go, also two North Americans, one works in the US Embassy' - Khalid

arrived by bus or bicycle, wearing clothes that suggested they worked in manual labour, and even the security guard of the mosque, a Muslim Ghanaian man.⁶⁹

This suggests these religious institutions are playing a different role in Bogota's society. Whilst the Maronite Parish has an ethnic outlook, aiming at generating a re-identification within the wealthy Colombian-Lebanese; the mosques seem to be more focused in religion, both as centres of gathering and of the spread of knowledge, where socio-economic status does not seem to be an issue. Eugenio is keen to stress that everyone is the same under Islam, regardless of racial or nationality distinctions. His discourse seems to suggest social discrimination is also not present. However, as I show below, there are deep religious divisions within Muslims in Bogota.

7.6.1. Maronite divisions

This Parish, however, may not last for long as Cristina told me the idea is to have their own temple, not a shared one but a solely Maronite one, and she believes this would help bring together the *Colonia* further. A move like this would represent the fluidity of the Parish as a space, as it does not have to be contained within a particular building, but can be transferred to different places. Nevertheless, the move may not materialise as it is a source of criticism for some, such as Lucia (2008) a member of the ULCM:

‘...para mí no es necesario, digámoslo así, identificarme como maronita, primero porque hay un solo dios para todas las religiones....; segundo, como le digo, creo que hay otras necesidades más importantes que crear un templo; tercero, si vamos a hacer un tema de la parroquia maronita que no sea excluyente, porque en el momento en que hablamos de Nuestra Señora del Líbano, inmediatamente los musulmanes quedan excluidos...’⁷⁰

The disagreement about the construction of the temple lies in the belief that a solely Maronite Parish has the potential for dividing rather than uniting the Colombian-Lebanese,

⁶⁹ Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) suggests that the situation in Mexico is similar. She argues that there is an Islamic Cultural Centre in Mexico City, and that the prayers were attended by a variety of individuals of many nationalities, including embassy employees.

⁷⁰ ‘...for me it's not necessary to identify myself as a Maronite, first because there is only one God for all religions... second, because I believe other priorities are more important than a temple; third, if we're going to talk about a Parish it cannot be exclusive, because the minute that we start talking about Our Lady of Lebanon (the virgin saint), the Muslims are immediately excluded...’ - Lucia

as Lucia (2008) stated: ‘...lo último que necesita cualquier pueblo es una iglesia más. Yo creo que se puede compartir los templos’.⁷¹ Likewise, Jacqueline, another ULCM member, also expressed a dislike for religion in general and argued that the Parish’s role was more about promoting its religion than about the *Colonia*.

Jacqueline and Lucia are descendants of Maronites but they follow the ULCM view of non-division between religious lines, and their criticisms are shared by some of the ULCM members. The division between ethnic and religious identity for them is clear. As Lucia (2008) stated:

‘Además honestamente lo digo: la colonia en Colombia hasta ahora nunca se ha diferenciado por maronita’⁷²

She points towards the newness of the Parish and the Maronite rite in Colombia. Even though their forefathers were indeed Maronite, the *Colonia* never identified as such. It is only now that some Colombian-Lebanese are making a choice to participate in it.

The ULCM members often emphasise the significance of ethnic over religious identities, possibly because of the role religion has had in dividing the Lebanese nation and the ULCM support of a Lebanese sovereign nation. As Lucia (2008) contends:

‘... la misión maronita pretende trabajar para el [Colombo]-Libanés en general, cuando eso se dé, yo participo en eso. Pero en el momento en que polarice a los [Colombo]-Libaneses no hago parte de ese movimiento, precisamente porque yo soy libanesa, no soy maronita’⁷³

Her words suggest that just as some Colombian-Lebanese are making a choice to identify as Maronites, some are purposely choosing not to. Moreover, their argument for the inclusion of Muslims is somewhat weakened, not only because inclusion is not practiced in terms of social class, but also because there are no Muslim Colombian-Lebanese in the ULCM-Colombia, and the organization has not made an approach to either of the mosques or its participants to widen participation.

⁷¹ ‘...the last thing a people need is another church. I think the [current] temples can be shared’ – Lucia

⁷² ‘And I honestly say it, until now the *Colonia* in Colombia had not been differentiated [identified] as Maronite’ - Lucia

⁷³ ‘... the Maronite Parish pretends to work for all the [Colombian]-Lebanese in general, when that happens I will participate. But if it polarises the [Colombian]-Lebanese I will not be a part of that movement, precisely because I am Lebanese, I’m not Maronite’ - Lucia

At the same time, not all of the ULCM members follow this view. Jimena is one of them, and as seen above she has felt a connection to the Parish which she linked to her ethnicity. These arguments suggest that some ULCM members see the Maronite Parish as a threat to the philosophy they promote of non-discrimination between religions; whilst others see it as something that can be linked with ethnicity and be used to (re)connect individuals with their roots. This latter argument is reiterated by the NSL, as member Monica (2008) argued that the Parish was:

‘...no solo por el rito [maronita], sino porque significa también unión, aglutinamiento de la colonia y para que no se pierdan las costumbres en los descendientes’.⁷⁴

Whilst some Colombian-Lebanese argue the Parish can lead to division within the *Colonia*, others argue it can promote unity. Indeed, regardless of the criticisms, both organisations (ULCM and NSL-Parish) have been working together, for example with the trips to Lebanon which they arranged jointly. Moreover, when I asked those ULCM members who had been critical, whether their fears of division were materialising, they replied these had not.

One possible reason for the existence of criticism, but also collaboration, can be explained by the fact that the organisations are in competition with each other within the *Colonia*. Indeed, as has already been seen here and in Chapter Six, the organisations coordinate a variety of social events, including the receptions after the masses, the fashion shows, or the film premieres. The Parish, the ULCM and the Ladies Association have to compete for members, funding, and participation in their events. Each of them has to convince potential participants that involvement in their organisation would be the best way to spend time and money. As a young Colombian-Lebanese commented, some of the activities seem to be there just to keep the older generations busy:

‘Que ahorita se hizo lo de la iglesia maronita, yo pensaría que es un poco más por el hecho de que ya las señoras que eran mamás ahora ya no hacen nada, aburridas, son todas católicas y decidieron que lo único que les podía quitar el aburrimiento era inventarse una iglesia, con todos los abuelos, que tampoco hacen mucho y que tienen algo de plata. Pues dijeron: “no venga pues hagamos una iglesia, porque, ¿qué más vamos a hacer?” Entonces hacen una Asociación de

⁷⁴ ‘...not only about the [Maronite] rite, but also about union, the gathering of the *Colonia*, so that the descendants do not lose their traditions’ - Monica

Damas Libanesas, se inventan kermeses y vainas para estar ocupadas'⁷⁵ (Alejandro 2009)

Alejandro suggests that the construction of these religious, ethnic and social spaces is due to boredom by some Colombian-Lebanese, who choose to participate to do something with their time. Moreover, he implies that it is their socio-economic status which has allowed them to carry out these activities, as they have the economic resources and access to the locations. Regardless of the reasons for participation, what this demonstrates is that the Parish failed to attract all Colombian-Lebanese, and that some regard it as simply a social activity.

7.6.2. Muslim divisions

At the same time, there are deep divisions within the Muslims community that are likely to affect Colombian-Lebanese Muslims. As has been seen, there are two competing Sunni mosques, both of which have participation from Lebanese Muslims, though the new mosque seems to attract more immigrants and their descendants. The animosity between the mosques can be due to competition, as both are Sunni mosques and have to compete for numbers:

‘La mayoría escogen [la mezquita] por razones geográficas, por distancia, pero hay algunos que van a la nuestra algunas veces van a la otra...’⁷⁶ (Khalid 2013)

Even though the location of each mosque is likely to affect attendance, the fluctuating nature of the number of participants, and the development of the new mosque, is likely to be affecting the Istanbul mosque. Khalid argues that they tried contacting Imam Eugenio about joining together, but with little success:

‘La verdad algunos amigos de nuestro grupo de la nueva mezquita fueron y hablaron con el señor de la mezquita Estambul y le dijeron que si quiere vender esto con el precio de eso podemos garantizar hacer bien la nueva mezquita y les dijo que lo va

⁷⁵ ‘The fact that the Maronite Church was done, I would think it’s to do more with the fact the women that used to be mums don’t do anything anymore, are bored and very Catholic, so they decided that the only thing that would take that boredom away was to make up a church, with all the grandfathers that don’t do much either and have some money. They said “let’s have a church because what else are we going to do?” So, they have a Ladies Association that does kermises and things to keep busy’. – Alejandro, who uses the word *señoras*, or ladies, showing a degree of respect towards them, but perhaps not towards their activities.

⁷⁶ ‘The majority of people choose [which mosque to go to] due to geography, because of distance, but some people sometimes come to ours, sometimes go to the other one...’ – Khalid

a pensar, y eso fue hace como un año y no dio respuesta. Entonces no se puede imponer a la gente'⁷⁷ (Khalid 2013)

However, Eugenio denies that there has been this type of contact:

'no, nosotros no [hemos tenido contacto]. Totalmente aparte. Yo no conozco esa mezquita sino por fuera y no pienso entrar allá. Y ellos tampoco han venido acá. Si han venido uno o dos es mucho. Es por lo que le comento, ellos son muy cerrados, los palestinos especialmente, muy cerrados... entonces nosotros mejor nos apartamos totalmente y así nos va mejor.'⁷⁸ (Eugenio 2013)

Both imams criticise each other's organisations and refute the claims placed by the other. Eugenio claims there has been very little contact between the mosques, and criticises what he sees as closed nature of the new mosque, led by Palestinians (see Chapter Eight). Whilst, Khalid claims their mosque is very open and argues that they have made approaches to the Istanbul mosque, but these have been left unanswered.

The problems seem to have originated before either of the mosques in their current state existed. In fact, Eugenio also used to be part of the mosque led by the Islamic Beneficial Association when it was located in the centre of Bogota; however, he argued he left due to disagreements:

'Después de un tiempo entonces por inconvenientes ya en el manejo de la divulgación del Islam yo hice un grupo aparte de musulmanes y empezamos con unas mezquitas en el centro también de Bogotá, donde alquilamos unas oficinas...'⁷⁹ (Eugenio 2013)

This means the mosques were relatively close to each other in the centre of Bogota, and worked under similar circumstances by renting office spaces to use as prayer rooms. As Eugenio argues, the divisions originated on differences about the path to take in terms of

⁷⁷ 'The truth is that some friends of ours went to speak to the gentleman of the Istanbul mosque, and said that if he sold the house with the money they could guarantee and ever better mosque. He said he'd think about it, that was about a year ago and he hasn't answered yet. So, we can't impose on people...' - Khalid

⁷⁸ 'No we haven't [had contact with the new mosque], we're completely separate. I've only seen it from the outside and I'm not planning on going in. And they haven't come here, only maybe one or two max. It's because of what I was saying, they are very close minded, the Palestinians especially are very close minded... so it's better for us to be completely separate. It's better for us'.

⁷⁹ 'After some time, and because of problems with the handling of the dissemination of Islam, I decided to break away and formed a separate group of Muslims. We started with mosques in the centre of Bogota, where we rented some offices...' – Eugenio

spreading Islam: whilst Imam Eugenio claims a stricter following of Islam regarding its teachings; Imam Khalid seems more welcoming to minorities within the religion.

Imam Eugenio has strong views against the mixing of Sunnis and Shiites, and claims the mixing goes against Islamic teaching. He only considers Sunni beliefs to be true Islam and argues his mosque is in the process of being 'cleansed' of Shiites:

'Estamos en una depuración de la mezquita ¿En qué consiste? Estamos identificando el que sea chiita que aquí ya no más. El que sea sufí que aquí ya no más. Vamos a empezar una época de solo sunita y que en Colombia se sepa que esa mezquita es sunita únicamente... se le va explicando cuando viene aquí, "somos sunita por esto y esto, esta es nuestra fe. Los chiita hacen esta otra cosa, los sufís hacen otra cosa distinta, entonces usted es libre de escoger la que quiera". Cuando ya me dicen "no, yo quiero tal" entonces bueno, aquí no vuelva. "Yo quiero sunita", entonces aquí es su casa. Ya. Porque ese revuelto no puede seguir en Colombia.'⁸⁰ (Eugenio 2013)

Eugenio does not explain how the identification of Shiites takes place, apart from simply asking individuals about their beliefs. Moreover, he claimed to have asked several Shiites to stop going to his mosque and to pray elsewhere. He explains that some argue it is better to accept the mixing a temporary arrangement whilst Islam takes a firmer footing in Colombia, however, he does not agree with it.

'Usted va a Cartagena, a Barranquilla, y me dicen, yo no he ido allá, me dicen que tienen la mezquita dividida con una cinta atrás los chiitas o adelante, ahí todos revueltos. ¿Por qué? Porque muchos creen que ahoritica no se pueden hacer diferencias porque estamos empezando y que en lugar de dividirnos, dicen ellos, era mejor unirnos... entonces la lucha que tenemos en esta mezquita, y ya hay algunos que van entendiendo, esos somos sunita o no más...'⁸¹ (Eugenio 2013)

⁸⁰ 'We're doing a purification of the mosque. What is it about? We're identifying Shiites, and here no more. Sufis, here no more. We're going to start an epoch of only Sunnis, and for Colombia to know that this is only a Sunni mosque... we tell them "we're Sunni because this and that, it's our faith. Shiites do something else, Sufis do things differently, so you're free to choose" If they tell me "I want that one" then fine, don't come back here. "I want to be Sunni", then this is your home. That's it. Because that mix cannot keep happening in Colombia.' - Eugenio

⁸¹ 'You go to Cartagena or Barranquilla, I'm told because I haven't been, that the mosque is divided by a tape, at the back the Shiites, or in the front, everyone mixed. Why? Because many believe that right now we cannot have differences, because we're starting instead of dividing ourselves they say we should unite. But I teach and I don't accept that of uniting everyone... so what we're fighting for in this mosque, and some are understanding: we're Sunni or nothing...' - Eugenio

Furthermore, he does not accept Shiites as true Muslims arguing that his Istanbul Mosque is the only truly Muslim mosque in Colombia: En Colombia esta es la única mezquita. En las demás es una mezcla'.⁸² Conversely, Imam Khalid argues they welcome anyone who wants to pray at their mosque, but that the teachings always follow Sunni Islam. He stresses that: 'todos somos la comunidad islámica de Bogotá'.⁸³ Imam Eugenio criticises this about the new mosque: 'en la otra mezquita se recibe mucho a los chiitas, a todo el que quiera. Entonces en el Islam eso no es aceptado...'.⁸⁴

Conversely, Imam Khalid had a more open approach. Refusing to create a division between Sunnis and Shiites, he stresses the openness of his mosque as long as Muslim values are followed, but refutes that it is political:

¿Cuáles son los valores a los que me refiero? No se trata de un Islam folclórico, sino me refiero a un Islam real, un Islam esencial. El Islam esencial quiere que sea yo primero que todo un buen lector. Un buen lector podrá tener herramientas para tender puentes, lograr manejar la lengua, tanto que puede comunicarse positivamente e ir elevando el nivel de la comunicación positiva con los otros grupos humanos en el nuevo entorno...⁸⁵ (Khalid 2013)

However, as seen in Chapters Two and Eight, both Imams argue they do not have links with the Shiite Islamic Cultural Centre. This is unsurprising for Eugenio, due to his aversion to Shiite Islam. Khalid argues the distance is not because they are Shiite, but because they are pro-Iranian Shiites, and he disagrees with it.

This suggests that the divisions within the Muslim community are even greater than those caused by the Maronite Parish. These divisions are likely to have an impact on the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese, dividing them not only along Shiites and Sunnis, but also within each sub-group, and may further lead to an erosion of any possible Muslim Colombian-Lebanese community.

⁸² 'This is the only mosque in Colombia. In the rest there's mixing' - Eugenio

⁸³ 'We're all part of the Islamic community of Bogota' - Khalid

⁸⁴ 'In the other mosque they welcome Shiites a lot, everyone that wants to go there. In Islam that's not accepted...' - Eugenio

⁸⁵ 'Which values do I refer to? It's not about a folkloric Islam but a real Islam, an essential Islam. Essential Islam wants me to be, first of all, a good reader. A good reader will be able to have the tools to build bridges and speak a language to the extent that they can communicate positively; and to elevate that level of positive communication to other human groups around them...' - Khalid

7.7. Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have shown the significance of the Maronite Parish for the ethnic, religious and social identities of the Colombian-Lebanese. The expansion of the Maronite Church has meant that another space has been created where the Colombian-Lebanese can meet and express their Colombian-Lebaneseness, one in which social class is less significant than in their other ethnic spaces. This space has been working as an anchor for belonging, influencing Colombian-Lebanese identity and in many cases reinforcing it. The space that has been created is a fluid space, which switches from Maronite to Catholic and back, just as the Colombian-Lebanese that participate switch between Colombian and Lebanese. At the same time, Muslim organisations have been on the rise, with moves to larger venues and an increase presence of Islam in Bogota's society. However, there is no separate Muslim Colombian-Lebanese group within the larger Islamic community in Bogota, as Islam does not seem to be taking on ethnic links.

In terms of the Maronite Parish, by being presented as both part of the mainstream Catholic Church and as a home for all Lebanese, it has tried to prevent confrontations with previously held religious identities. Religious Colombian-Lebanese individuals have reconnected with the *Colonia* through attending the Maronite masses and active members of the *Colonia* have reconnected with this ('Lebanese') religion. However, not all Colombian-Lebanese have actively participated in the Parish events and some do not feel any connection to it. At the same time, the Parish has tried to present itself as a home for all Colombian-Lebanese, regardless of religion or social status. Nevertheless, the Parish has also received criticism from certain sectors within the *Colonia* who are wary that it may cause divisions. The situation for the Muslim community is more complex, they have been at the receiving end of threats and intimidating tactics targeting their religion. Furthermore, the divisions within Muslims make it difficult to talk of one community. Whether it is religious divisions between Shiites and Sunnis, or disagreements about how to approach the Muslim community, these divisions are surely impacting the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese.

The Maronite Parish has been constructed as an ethno-religious space for the wealthy Colombian-Lebanese, and through its performances it has influenced individuals' ethnicity and religiousness. These individuals have chosen to participate in this organisation,

sometimes instead of other Colombian-Lebanese organisations, sometimes instead of other non-Lebanese Colombian organisations. Likewise, some of those that have chosen not to participate have chosen one of these alternative organisations. This conscious choice to perform their religiosity and connecting it with their ethnicity has strengthened their belonging to the *Colonia*. Conversely, the mosques have been built around religion and the particular view of Islam, whilst being open to individuals of different social classes. For the Istanbul mosque, ethnicity even seems to be an undesired factor to take into account; whilst the new mosque seems to welcome diversity, apart from the Arabic language it arguably does not do much more regarding the particular promotion of Arab culture. Muslim Colombian-Lebanese are likely to find a religious home at the mosques, where their socio-economic status does not prevent them from participating; however, they are unlikely to find an ethnic home in them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL EVENTS TO THE *COLONIA* IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLOMBIAN-LEBANESE IDENTITY

8.1. Introduction

Different external events have impacted the *Colonia* in particular ways, especially on some of its organisations. The Lebanese Cultural Union – Colombian Chapter (ULCM)¹ is the most politically active organisation and hence, the most prone to be influenced by events in Lebanon. This chapter looks at specific events in Lebanon which have impacted the *Colonia*, both recent and past including the Lebanese Civil War, the Lebanese July War of 2006 and the Lebanese elections of 2009. At the same time, it explores events in Colombia in which the ULCM have participated as representatives of the *Colonia*.

This chapter also explores the ULCM itself, its members, activities and events, examining the role of the organisation in the construction of Colombian-Lebanese identity. Most of these are heavily influenced by their political beliefs which at times set boundaries of exclusion. Therefore, since these boundaries have had consequences within the *Colonia*, they are also discussed here.

According to its website the ULCM is a global Lebanese nationalistic organisation that supports Lebanon's right to sovereignty, over any religious or political differences, and aims to maintain the Lebanese diaspora united (ULCM Website).² These sentiments were replicated by my participants, for example, Jacqueline (2008) stated that the ULCM was founded in Colombia in the 1950s by Lebanese migrants to keep a connection for them with Lebanon and Colombia, 'el país que los acogió'³ and had branches in several cities. These days, the organisation is based solely in Bogota and its events and activities underline its

¹ *Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial – Capítulo Colombia*

² Article 3 of the ULCM constitution states that the organisation is '...as a vehicle for promotion and co-operation to attain and achieve the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon as a homeland for all Lebanese, regardless of secular adherence and/or political affiliation, and to responsibly realize the exposition of the distinctive identity of the Lebanese race and its achievement in terms of its immigrant undertakings throughout the world, and in particular the expansion, organization and activity engaged in, collectively, as the Diaspora' – (ULCM Website n.d.)

³ 'the country that welcomed them' – Jacqueline

ideals of supporting Lebanese sovereignty, as well as trying to increase participation within the *Colonia* and aiming to influence Colombian-Lebanese identity.

8.2. Political events

8.2.1. *The Lebanese Civil War*

A significant moment for the Colombian-Lebanese and for the Lebanese in general was the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s and 1980s. It saw fighting between different religions and ideologies,⁴ foreign intervention by Syria and Israel, switching of allegiances and in-fighting.⁵ As the Civil War divided the Lebanese in Lebanon, these divisions were reported by my participants to have also spread to the Lebanese communities outside of Lebanon, including in Colombia:

‘¿En qué sentido? Que se empezó a rivalizar entre musulmanes y católicos, entre el del norte y el del sur, entre aquél que era pro causa de la una y pro causa de la otra, cosa que antes no sucedía en el Líbano...’⁶ (Lucia 2008, ULCM member)

My participants argue that these divisions impacted on the ULCM:

‘La Unión prácticamente se paralizó... la influencia de la guerra desbarató también la presencia de la Unión de los libaneses, porque como se dividieron allá, se dividieron en todas partes. No únicamente en Colombia...’. (Jose 2008, Honorary President of the ULCM)⁷

‘(La ULCM) fue manipulada durante la guerra civil por diferentes bandos, ya que querían controlarla, y esto creó divisiones dentro de Unión. Estuvo dormida, no sólo en Colombia sino en todo el mundo. Todo lo que sucedía en el Líbano, sucedía en

⁴ I show in the Chapter Seven how religion has contributed to divisions within the Lebanese, and how even the Maronite priest blames religion for the conflicts in Lebanon.

⁵ The causes, events and circumstances of the Lebanese Civil War are still a matter of contention. For further information and analysis on the Civil War see Fawwaz Traboulsi’s *A History of Modern Lebanon* (2007)

⁶ ‘In what sense? A rivalry started between Muslims and Christians; between those from the North and those from the South; between those that defended this cause and those that defended that one, something that didn’t use to happen in Lebanon...’ - Lucia

⁷ ‘The Union was practically paralysed...the influence of the (civil) war also destroyed the presence of the Lebanese Union, because just as they divided there, they divided everywhere, not just in Colombia...’ – Jose. He told me he attended a ULCM meeting in Brazil in 1985 where he was elected honorary global president.

la Unión. Había fracciones de los partidos políticos libaneses en la Unión'.⁸
(Eduardo 2008, one of the ULCM directors)

These participants argue that the Civil War caused the ULCM in Colombia to stop meeting. The Civil War of course debilitated Lebanese sovereignty, the fundamental political cause of the ULCM. Rather than generating a defence of that sovereignty, the ULCM found itself weakened until it ceased all activities.

At the same time, the Club managed to continue in existence despite the divisions within the *Colonia*:

'...Se hizo muchas reuniones, se hizo bastantes reuniones, pero en Bogotá la presencia del Club influyó para que no haya presencia de la Unión sino más bien del Club'⁹ (Jose 2008)

Jose suggests that as the ULCM stopped its activities, the Club maintained itself as the gathering base of the *Colonia*. As seen in Chapter Six, Colombian-Lebanese self-define by their social relations and this remains even when extreme events in Lebanon occur. This is further evidence that when political and religious differences threaten the unity of the *Colonia*, the Colombian-Lebanese still have a commonality in their social status.

The Lebanese Civil War also gave rise to another organisation with a strong shared social status: the Colombian-Lebanese Ladies Association (see Chapters Four and Six). My participant Sofia (2008)¹⁰ argues that the Ladies Association was set up to raise funds to send to Lebanon in the 1980s.¹¹ Contrary to what happened with the ULCM, the Civil War ignited a desire to organise and raise funds, offering a space for other ways of connecting to Lebanon. Even though both organisations share many characteristics in terms of the social status of its participants (and sometimes even share members), the nature of their activities and objectives means political events in Lebanon affect them differently. The impact of the Civil War on the ULCM was long-lasting, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s it remained

⁸ (The ULCM) was manipulated during the Civil War by different sides because they wanted to control it, and this created division within the Union. It was dormant, not only in Colombia but in the whole world. Everything that happened in Lebanon happened in the Union. There were political divisions within it.' – Eduardo

⁹ '... there were meetings in the Club but it was less because of the Union and more because of the Club...' – Jose.

¹⁰ Sofia is a founder and past president of the organisation.

¹¹ As seen in Chapter Six the Ladies Association continues working today as a charitable organisation with its members being part of the upper classes of Bogota.

'dormant'. At the same time, as seen in Chapter Three, the Lebanese Civil War had a significant impact on the Muslim community as it triggered a substantial migration of Muslim Lebanese to Colombia, in what was discussed as the second wave. Their later arrival also had implications with their interaction with the Colombian-Lebanese organisations, as well as with Colombian society in general (see Chapters Four, Six and Seven).

8.2.2. The July War

Another event that influenced the *Colonia*, and especially the ULCM, occurred almost three decades after the start of the Civil War. The 2006 July conflict, or Israel-Hezbollah War, took place when Israel bombed Lebanon in the summer of 2006, which according to Ruys (2007 p.266) resulted in the death of more than 1,100 Lebanese, mostly civilians.¹² At the time a number of Colombian-Lebanese were visiting Lebanon and got caught up in the conflict:

'en el 2006 fui con mi familia... y nos resultó con la Guerra de Julio, el ataque de Hezbolá contra los judíos... Teníamos todos los medios, teníamos los tiquetes de avión en primera clase para regresar y no podíamos salir porque acabaron con la infraestructura de las carreteras, de los aeropuertos, de todas partes y nos pusieron en un cerco prácticamente... podían bombardear a quien quieran'¹³ (Jose 2008)

His story not only shows the difficult position he and others were in, but also the irony of the situation. Even though he had the money to pay for a ticket out, the damage to Lebanese infrastructure prevented it. Moreover, flights out of neighbouring countries were also sold out, making it difficult for them to evacuate. The fact that some of them had expensive first class tickets is yet another example of the elite social status of the Colombian-Lebanese.¹⁴ Jose was quoted by *El Tiempo* newspaper at the height of the conflict when he was still in Lebanon. Introduced as a Colombian-Lebanese who has not been able to leave Lebanon, he is quoted on its 'phrase of the day' as saying:

¹² The Israeli bombardment took place after Hezbollah attacked an Israeli military convoy and abducted two Israeli soldiers. It lasted for just over a month (see Ruys 2007; Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2009).

¹³ 'in 2006 I went with my family... and the July War happened, the attack of Hezbollah against the Jews... We had all the means, we had first class tickets to come back but we couldn't get out because they destroyed the entire infrastructure, the roads, the airports, we were practically trapped... they could bomb whatever they wanted...' – Jose

¹⁴ A search on internet websites Kayak and Expedia shows that these tickets could cost between £7000 and £15000 each.

'[Los israelíes] están destrozando el país de una forma salvaje. Dios quiera que tengan conciencia y que paren esto. No es justo. Espero que se pare esta matanza'¹⁵ (El Tiempo 2006a)¹⁶

It is no surprise that the national newspaper chose Jose for the quote, as he occupies a significant position in Colombian society, being the eldest member of a renowned Colombian-Lebanese family and considered as one of the patriarchs¹⁷ by the *Colonia*. It is also likely that the position of the *Colonia* in Colombian society influenced the newspaper to focus on the event. *El Tiempo* ran a number of articles during that month, including four which focused on particular Colombian-Lebanese individuals and families who had been unable to leave Lebanon. During the length of the July War the newspaper also published a number of articles explaining the reasons behind the conflict, from different perspectives. However, no interviews of Colombian-Israeli families in Colombia or Israel were published. The fact the majority of the deaths happened on the Lebanese side (Ruys 2007) may have influenced the focus. Nevertheless, *El Tiempo* printed five articles that focused on the impact of the conflict on the Colombian-Lebanese (whether in Lebanon or in Colombia), including the 'phrase of the day',¹⁸ demonstrating and reinforcing the high level of confidence that the Colombian-Lebanese have of their place in Colombian society.

The anxiety for family members and friends unable to leave Lebanon and the conflict in general led the *Colonia* in Bogota to organise demonstrations against it, calling for an immediate cease-fire, and produce anti-war merchandise:

'...cuando empezó la guerra, yo mandé a hacer unas calcomanías que repartimos en Bogotá, mandamos para la costa, 'cese al fuego' con la bandera del Líbano. ¡No me pregunte cuántos carros en Bogotá circularon con eso!'¹⁹ (Monica 2008)

¹⁵ '[the Israelis] are destroying the country in a savage way. I ask to God that they have a consciousness and that they stop this. It's not fair. I hope this killing stops' – *El Tiempo* Newspaper

¹⁶ Jose is described in the article as a 'Colombian-Lebanese of 74 years who is in Lebanon with his wife, unable to leave as a consequence of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel' (El Tiempo 2006a)

¹⁷ Patriarch is the term given to older Colombian-Lebanese men who have had a prominent position in the *Colonia* (see Chapter One)

¹⁸ Other articles are entitled 'Los colombianos, en medio del conflicto Israel-Hezbollah' (El Tiempo 2006b), 'Dos familias colombianas, atrapadas en el sur del Líbano' (El Tiempo 2006c), and 'A salvo, regresan colombianos' (El Tiempo 2006e). The articles use the label Colombian and Colombian-Lebanese interchangeably.

¹⁹ '...when the war started we produced some stickers with "cease fire" written on them and a Lebanese flag, and distributed them around Bogota and the North of the country. I cannot tell you the (large) number of cars that were going around Bogota with the stickers!' - Monica

In addition to the stickers, pins or badges were also produced with the slogan '*Cese al Fuego en el Medio Oriente*'²⁰ and a Lebanese cedar with the red and white colours of the flag in the background. It is likely that these efforts were the result of a collective of Colombian-Lebanese individuals, but no single Colombian-Lebanese organisation seemed to be behind this. Two different sets of beliefs were visible: on the one hand, the items highlighted the Lebanese national symbols, portraying the flag and emphasising the cedar tree; on the other, the wording focused on the Middle East as a region, not only including the July War but also the conflict between Israel and Palestine in general, and possibly even the Iraq War. These symbols show the dichotomy between the two political branches within the *Colonia*: the Lebanese nationalists supporting Lebanese sovereignty, and the pan-Arabist supporting unity among all Arabs.

Figure P.6. – 'Cease Fire' Badge²¹



Edgar was one of the Colombian-Lebanese who took part in the organisation of the demonstration. He explained the thinking behind it:

²⁰ 'Cease Fire in the Middle East'

²¹ Picture taken by Esteban Devis during an interview with one of my participants, July 2009

‘... [fue] una marcha apolítica... la filosofía de la marcha fue sobretodo pedir apoyo para que cesara el bombardeo porque pues era casi un ataque unilateral, porque un grupo como Hezbolá, que por más armado que esté pues, no puede hacer oposición a un ejército regular. Entonces se quiso eso por varias cosas. Primero para no matizar de política la oposición al bombardeo, ni hacerle perder fuerza a la marcha. En segundo lugar para no excluir a los libaneses musulmanes. Y en tercer lugar para lograr el mayor apoyo posible. Ese fue el criterio... [nos fue] bien porque fue mucha gente y tuvo, digamos, cierta resonancia porque no dieron espacios en los medios del país. Pues muy breve, pero apareció... Nos reunimos en el World Trade Center [WTC]²² en la 100, y nos fuimos caminando hasta el Club... Que podía ser, de la Colonia y todos, unas de 200 a 300 personas calcularía yo...’²³ (Edgar 2008)

His words are somewhat contradictory, as the demonstration and his words do seem to have a political motive, i.e. just protesting against the conflict is a political statement, and Edgar’s argument that the conflict was ‘almost a unilateral attack’ is already taking sides. Rather than apolitical, in my view, the demonstration was planned to be as inclusive as possible, to include those supporting Arab causes in the Middle East, as well as peace activists in general, and Lebanese nationalists in particular.

According to a newspaper article, around 600 people participated in the demonstration (El País 2006),²⁴ including several of my participants. Maria Camila was one of them:

‘Yo en la parte que estuve fue al frente del WTC, y era como, o sea, hubo gente que no era libanesa, o sea gente que uno dice venga y nos apoya. Y me encanta como la solidaridad en ese tipo de cosas. Era como para hacer una llamada, como para hacer sentir la comunidad libanesa de que pues así no estuviéramos allá, pues nos

²² The WTC is an important international business hub in the north of Bogota, formed by a number of large buildings. It houses offices, commercial shops and a hotel.

²³ ‘...it was an apolitical march... the philosophy was to ask for support to cease the bombardment because it was almost an unilateral attack, because a group such as Hezbollah, regardless of how well-armed they are, they cannot oppose a regular army. It was done firstly, in order not to stain with politics the opposition to the bombing, so the march would not lose strength; secondly, to not exclude the Lebanese Muslims; thirdly, to get as much support as possible. That was the criteria... [it was] good, because many people went and had certain echo, because it was reported on the national media. It was brief but it was reported... we gathered outside the World Trade Centre [WTC] on 100th street and walked to the Club... We were about 200-300 people I would say, from within and outside the community...’ – Edgar

²⁴ This was not the only demonstration against the conflict in Colombia. In fact a newspaper article claims at least 3000 people protested in the town of Maicao (El Tiempo 2006d)

afecta que el país al que muchos y que personalmente al que uno se pueda sentir identificado este en semejante conflicto... es una vaina impresionante. Entonces me gustó como el llamado, o sea, el 4 de febrero yo me acordé mucho de eso... yo dije: "juepucha la gente es pues como muy solidaria en ese tipo de cosas", y me gusto, o sea, que no es sólo uno y que la gente acá también se sintió afectada, y es que fue terrible...'²⁵ (Maria Camila 2008)

Maria Camila suggests that the demonstration led to an increase in participation and identification by the Colombian-Lebanese with the *Colonia* and Lebanon. She connects them with the demonstrations against the Farc that took place in February 2008, which at the time contributed to strengthening the feeling of Colombian patriotism. Furthermore, she suggests that these activities also heightened the visibility of the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* as it was making itself felt. Indeed, the conflict led many Colombian-Lebanese to make their ethnicity more visible, either by attending the demonstrations, carrying Lebanese flags, or portraying the anti-war merchandise.²⁶ Castells (2004) argues that there exists a resistance identity which is built in opposition to or on a different basis from mainstream and/or dominant institutions, and can lead to a collective resistance. This opposition was not to Colombian society but rather to international events, i.e. the general conflict in the Middle East, which were seen as a disproportionate and for some unilateral attack from Israel. In this sense, it was their Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity which was heightened as a common resistance identity.

An example of this can be seen with the Colombian-Lebanese singer Shakira, who also took a stance on the conflict. At the times, the Spanish edition of *People Magazine* (2006) reported on an article entitled 'Shakira pide paz',²⁷ that during a concert in Greece, the singer called for a cease-fire in Lebanon. The article states that Shakira, a 'Colombian

²⁵ 'I was there in front of the WTC and there were people who were not Lebanese, people that one would say to them come and support us. And I love the solidarity in those kinds of things. It was, like, to make the Lebanese community be felt, even though we weren't there (in Lebanon) it affects us that the country one can identify with is in such a conflict... it is something incredible. It was like the call for the 4th of February and I remember it a lot ... I said damn-it there's a lot of solidarity for those kind of things, and I liked that it wasn't only us but that people here also felt affected, as it was terrible... I remember that during those weeks we had constant communication with Paris (where her extended Lebanese family lives) and we chatted every day' - Maria Camila

²⁶ In some cases these actions might not have shown a connection to Lebanese ethnicity but could have been seen as general anti-war sentiment. Nevertheless, the Colombian-Lebanese who took part in them were actively choosing to do so.

²⁷ 'Shakira asks for Peace'

singer of Lebanese roots', 'hoped for a diplomatic and international intervention to establish peace'. She is reported as saying:

'Tantas madres y niños están muriendo cada día que es algo que no podemos tolerar, no hoy, no en el siglo XXI... Quiero pedir a los líderes estadounidenses que detengan esta guerra, porque todos sabemos que pueden detenerla'²⁸ (People Magazine 2006)

Even though she was not involved with the demonstrations in Bogota, or elsewhere, the fact that the statement was made by such a well-known artist, and reported on an international media outlet, also heightened the visibility of the Colombian-Lebanese in general. According to Cepeda (2003) Shakira can present herself to the public in a variety of identities, including Colombian-Lebanese, Colombian, Latina, female and singer. Just as the Colombian-Lebanese she seems confident to choose when to perform her different identities and use them to her advantage. In this case her words suggest that the conflict had awakened her sense of her Lebanese roots and led her to perform this identity.

In this sense, the Lebanese-emigrant communities such as the *Colonia* reacted as part of their imagined community (Anderson 2006), where even though they did not know most of their Lebanese counterparts they felt identified with their suffering. The July War evoked a sense of solidarity with Lebanon and the Lebanese among some Colombian-Lebanese, and this feeling of solidarity led them to take action.

It must be noted, however, that these events not only influenced the ethnic identity of the Colombian-Lebanese but also highlighted the social context of the *Colonia*. For example, the demonstration took place in the North of Bogota, starting at the World Trade Centre (WTC) on 100th and 8th street, and ending at the Club, on 87th and 9th street. As I explained in Chapter Four, the north of the city is a wealthy area and the route of the demonstration only took them through upper-class neighbourhoods. The WTC is an important business hub in the north of the city, close enough to the Club but of no specific relevance to the conflict. A newspaper article states that the demonstration took place there as one of the buildings houses a United Nations office (El País 2006). The protest did not take place anywhere near the Israeli Embassy, which is on 35th and 7th street, nor near any

²⁸ 'So many mothers and children are dying every day, and this is something we cannot tolerate, not today, not in the 21st Century... I want to ask the leaders in the US to stop this war, because we all know that they can stop it' – Shakira, quoted in *People Magazine*

Colombian government buildings. This is likely to have been out of a combination of convenience, as these are too far from the Club, and maybe also to prevent the demonstration from turning violent. In this sense, the Colombian-Lebanese made a pragmatic and deliberate choice regarding the space to stage their demonstration and display their discontent with the events in Lebanon.

My participant Maria Camila also expressed the social motives for joining the demonstrations, by stating some of the protesters were friends who she invited along, and by explaining that some of the motives for her own participation were connected to meeting up at the club afterwards to have lunch (see Chapter Six). Even though she expresses emphatic sentiments to do with the suffering of Lebanon and its people, she also used the demonstration as a social event to get together with friends and culminating in a lunch at the Club. Indeed, many of the Colombian-Lebanese who participated in the protest then went on to socialise at the Club. Performing ethnic identity was made attractive by the social activities connected to it. Others talk of the march as if it was a social event:

'yo también estuve en la marcha... lindísima con bandera del Líbano y todo'.²⁹

(Monica 2008)

Even though the protest was against a violent conflict that was killing hundreds of civilians and putting the lives of the Colombian-Lebanese in Lebanon in danger, Monica saw it as a beautiful event to be remembered. The demonstration, therefore, can be seen as an 'in-between' space (Bhabha 1994) for the Colombian-Lebanese. It was created by the encounter of their identities (Colombian social status identity and their Colombian-Lebanese ethnic identity) where factors such as political goals, convenience of location and a social gathering, combined together to generate a common feeling of belonging.

8.3. Re-organisation of ULCM

As I explained above, during the July War there were a number of Colombians and Colombian-Lebanese either visiting or living in Lebanon who were unable to leave because of the conflict. This situation was shared by individuals of different nationalities, many of whom were evacuated. According to Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous (2007) the majority of

²⁹ 'I was also in the protest... beautiful, with a Lebanese flag and everything' – Monica.

those evacuated were Lebanese who had dual citizenship and/or relatives abroad,³⁰ and the Colombian-Lebanese were no exemption. Jose was one of the Colombian-Lebanese who was evacuated and he relates that a group of Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia organised an effort to rescue them,³¹ using their influence and contacts to achieve this:

‘...entonces aquí la colectividad, mis familiares y la gente que conocía, y en especial le agradezco al ministro Juan Manuel Santos³² su preocupación que mandaran a recoger a los colombianos que quedaron allá... la presencia colombiana y la embajadora de Colombia que ha sido una gran colaboradora del gobierno colombiano en el Medio Oriente, ayudó a que salieran un grupo de más de 100 personas colombianas del Líbano, que estaban allá tomadas prácticamente de sorpresa y la aviación militar colombiana mandó un avión de los grandes de transporte militar y nos sacaron por el norte del Líbano, en Siria y de ahí salimos hasta Zaragoza. Pero fue una odisea muy triste y muy dolorosa para mí...’³³ (Jose 2008)

Jose’s words suggest the Colombian-Lebanese worked as a network to organise a rescue for those stranded in Lebanon, using their contacts to get assistance from the government. On their return, the *Colonia* organised a reception at the Club to welcome the Colombian-Lebanese and to thank the authorities, including the then Defence Minister Santos, current Colombian President, and the military commanders who led the mission.

The variety of reactions to the July War, including the demonstrations and the rescue mission, as to a lesser extent those of the Civil War, mirror what Vertovec calls the ‘politics of homeland’. These ‘engage members of diasporas or transnational communities in a variety of ways’, where the ethnic community is both influenced by, and able to influence, particular events (Vertovec 1999: 455). It is likely that the engagement with the July War was intensified due to the technological advances which have allowed for faster communication and transportation. Some of my participants suggested the positive and negative influence that these political events were having on the *Colonia*:

³⁰ Not just Colombians but of many countries and nationalities

³¹ As did groups/governments of other countries

³² Santos was then Defence Minister, and was elected President of Colombia in 2010.

³³ ‘... the community here, my family, and people I know (got together). And I specially thank Minister Juan Manuel Santos for his concern to pick up the Colombians that were there... the Colombian government and embassy in Lebanon helped getting out of Lebanon a group of over 100 Colombian people and the Colombian Air Force sent a big military plane and got us out from the north of Lebanon and took us to Zaragoza ... But it was a very sad and painful odyssey for me...’ – Jose

‘Desafortunadamente viene la guerra [de julio]... que hace que las personas que en algún momento antes se sentían muy libaneses y que habían dejado ese sentimiento como a un ladito por sus vidas propias, es ese momento renace ese amor y ese dolor, y ese rechazo absoluto [a la guerra]. Una cantidad de sentimientos que más que otra cosa hace que se reúnan las personas para ver qué se puede hacer... y a raíz de eso empezamos a recordar las cosas que se habían olvidado, porque entonces empezamos a cantar, empezamos a bailar, empezamos las reuniones que entre los árabes, entre los libaneses... y como alguien dijo una vez que me encanta la frase: las células se encuentran...’³⁴ (Lucia 2008)

My participant Jimena explained the situation as providing a chance to meet up again:

‘...entendimos que nos queríamos mucho, que nos habíamos encontrado y que queríamos seguir estando juntos. Y allí pensamos en la posibilidad de crear alguna cosa... y a mí alguien me mencionó: “¿por qué no pensamos nuevamente en la Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial?”³⁵ (Jimena 2009)

Indeed, the ULCM reorganised and came into operation again after the July War, and the Colombian-Lebanese leaders behind the rescue mission became the leaders of the organisation. For example Eduardo, who led the drive for the evacuation, became the first president of the re-organised ULCM.

In fact, my participants suggest that the different conflicts had an opposite effect on the *Colonia*:

‘En La guerra del 1975 los libaneses se dividieron... Pero el conflicto que dividió, ahora une’³⁶ (Jacqueline 2008).

³⁴ ‘Unfortunately the [July] war comes... and makes those people who felt Lebanese before and had left that feeling to the side... that moment renewed/stirred that love and that pain, that complete rejection [to the war]. A large amount of feelings that above everything made people come together to see what can be done... out of that we started to remember things we had forgotten, we started to dance, we began the meeting between the Arabs, between the Lebanese... and as someone said, the (blood) cells find each other again...’ - Lucia

³⁵ ‘...we understood that we loved each other very much, that we had met again and that we wanted to stay together. So we thought of the possibility of creating something... and someone mentioned to me, why don’t we think again about the ULCM?’ – Jimena. Once again, Jimena is focusing on herself as somebody mention to ‘her’ about reorganising.

³⁶ ‘The Lebanese civil war created divisions between the Lebanese... but such a conflict which once divided, is now uniting us’ - Jacqueline

Whilst the Civil War divided the Lebanese and hurt the ULCM at its core, i.e. Lebanese unity; the July War was an attack on Lebanon as a country:

‘... aquí ya era un problema nacional de soberanía’³⁷ (Angelica 2009),

Nonetheless, the unity generated by the July War strengthened not only the ULCM but it also promoted the social side of the *Colonia*:

‘Mi percepción es que a raíz de lo que ha pasado, la guerra de 2006, la gente empezó a unirse mucho. La gente no iba mucho al Club, no había unión de la gente... Nosotros no éramos socios del Club... Después de guerra empezamos a unirnos otra vez, a buscarnos y nos vimos en el Club en un evento agradeciendo a los que ayudaron durante la guerra del 2006, incluyendo el gobierno colombiano... Creo que a raíz de la guerra sí se han desarrollado un montón de cosas que han sido chéveres’³⁸ (Juanita 2008)

‘Cuando usted se encuentra con un paisano, así no lo haya visto o no sabe si lo conoció alguna vez, igual inmediatamente hay un engrane que yo no sabría como decirlo pero es una verdad, eso pasa en serio entre nosotros. Entonces usted se sienta y es como si fuera el amigo de toda la vida, como si fuera el hermano de toda la vida... coinciden con un momento histórico en el mundo, porque si usted se da cuenta, en este momento todo lo que es árabe está de moda. Entonces pues yo creo que también todo eso hace que se muevan las fibras y... hombre, por qué no recordamos que nuestro orgullo y parte de lo que somos, si no es todo, es gracias a donde venimos... y yo creo que todo son una serie de granitos que se van formando para un todo y hace que además nosotros igual caminemos en ese mismo sentido’³⁹ (Lucia 2008)

Their explanations suggest that the July War was a catalyst for the increased participation of the Colombian-Lebanese in the *Colonia*, as it triggered a re-organisation. It

³⁷ ‘...now it was a national problem about sovereignty’ - Angelica

³⁸ ‘My perception is that because of the July war in 2006 people started uniting a lot. People didn’t use to go to the Club much... We (my family) weren’t members... after the war people started to unite again, to look for one another and went to the Club to an event thanking those that helped during the war, including the Colombian government... I think that because of the war a lot of cool things have been developing’ - Juanita

³⁹ ‘When you meet a *paisano*, even if you haven’t seen them before, there’s immediately an engagement that I wouldn’t be able to explain, but it really happens. So it’s like they were a lifelong friend, like they were a sibling... this coincides with a historic moment, because if you notice, everything Arab is fashionable nowadays. So I think all of this makes the fibres move... why don’t we remember our pride for where we come from... so all of these coincide so we walk along the same path...’ - Lucia

was, as Castells (2004) calls it, a common resistance identity against the perceived aggressor, which came out of a necessity to safeguard their loved ones in Lebanon. It was also about the social context in which the Colombian-Lebanese met, i.e. the Club, which allowed them to continue meeting after the crisis was over and to eventually (re)organise. The ULCM members stress the perceived threat of losing Lebanon, the need to get future generations involved, and the sense of familiarity with other Colombian-Lebanese. The use of words such as love, pride, *paisano* and *paisana*⁴⁰, *hermano* or *hermana*, suggest a perceived shared closeness amongst the Colombian-Lebanese and an ease with reorganisation. The words also reflect the way the ULCM is working to extend that reconnection to other Colombian-Lebanese.

8.3.1. Re-connecting to the Colonia through the ULCM

Indeed, one of the recurrent arguments the ULCM members made was the need to unite individuals around the *Colonia*:

‘...mantener vivas las tradiciones y culturas del libanés emigrante que pretende mantener reunida la Colonia, trabajar para ellos y por ellos... y simplemente a nivel fraternal, como lo sentimos... Entonces parte de los objetivos claros de la Unión Libanesa es propender por la unión de los inmigrantes... y por supuesto trabajar en un pro de las circunstancias que puedan favorecer al Líbano como territorio libre y soberano, sin tendencias políticas ni religiosas’⁴¹ (Lucia 2008)

However, this continuous drive to (re)connect can be seen as a weakness in the *Colonia*. As Fortier argues:

‘The repeated recording of events, and their visual rendition in La Voce [newspaper], fortnight after fortnight, suggests something about the very fragility of community’ (2006 p.70)

She suggests that if an ethnic community was strong it would not have to continuously remind itself of its existence nor would it need to make efforts to (re)connect people. The ULCM members also seem aware of this:

⁴⁰ *Paisano* is a word used to describe the Colombian-Lebanese descendants – see Chapter One

⁴¹ ‘...keep the Lebanese traditions and culture alive, to keep the *Colonia* together, work for them and because of them... and simply at a fraternal level... So the clear objective of the ULCM is to encourage the union between immigrants... and of course work for the circumstances that can favour Lebanon as a free and sovereign territory, without having political or religious tendencies’. - Lucia

‘La mayoría de las personas ya cuando crecieron se casan con personas no libanesas y empiezan a adaptar otra cultura. Sus oficios, sus profesiones los alejan y realmente hay un lapso de unos bastantes años, diría yo, que reúne practicante una generación y quizás hasta dos generaciones en donde hay un vacío completo acerca del tema libanés’⁴² (Lucia 2008).

‘... la migración aquí es muy antigua entonces ya los viejos murieron... entonces ya es la tercera generación la que está luchando para que la cuarta⁴³ siga... entonces pues mientras que nos movamos nosotros, tenemos una garantía de que los chiquitos sigan con ese sentimiento... pues esta es una responsabilidad que tenemos’⁴⁴ (Angelica 2009).

‘[Queremos] desarrollar alguna actividad que de verdad permita un intercambio más activo de culturas, sobretodo en acercar al Líbano en su aspecto cultural a Colombia, pensando mucho, además que con el paso del tiempo las generaciones van cambiando, de mantener un poco viva esas raíces en las nuevas generaciones y en las generaciones incluso ya mayores...’⁴⁵ (Jimena 2009).

‘...para que vuelvan a sentir el Líbano, se conozcan, no pierdan su identidad libanesa porque si se pierde la identidad se pierde el Líbano. Si perdemos la juventud perdemos el Líbano...’⁴⁶ (Eduardo 2008)

Their words suggest a fear that the *Colonia* could disappear, which is not surprising given that many of the active participants are elderly. Their words mirror Alba and Nee’s (1997 p.835) argument that as immigrants (and their descendants) assimilate and no new ones arrive:

⁴² ‘The majority of people got married with non-Lebanese people and started adapting another culture. Their work [also] distanced them. And there really was a lapse of a few years I’d say that included one and maybe two generations where there’s a complete vacuum about the Lebanese theme’ - Lucia

⁴³ Angelica labels the generations as third and fourth, even though there are a number of second generation Colombian-Lebanese of similar age to her, such as the president of the ULCM, who are also involved in promoting the organisation to the younger generations, including their own third generation children.

⁴⁴ ‘... the migration here is very old, and the older ones have died... so it’s the third generation the one that’s fighting for the fourth one to carry on... so as long as we keep working we have a guarantee that the little ones carry on with that sentiment... this is our responsibility’ - Angelica

⁴⁵ ‘[We want] to develop an activity that truly allows for a more active cultural exchange, especially to bring Lebanon closer to Colombia; (also) thinking that with time the generations change and to keep the roots alive with those generations, and even with the older generations...’ - Jimena

⁴⁶ ‘...so they meet each other and don’t lose their Lebanese identity, because if the identity is lost, Lebanon is lost. If we lose the youth we lose Lebanon...’ - Eduardo

‘...organizations dwindle in membership or find that their members belong to early generations or those with a more parochial outlook’.

Indeed, both the Club and the Ladies Association have suffered in terms of the ageing and loss of their members. Moreover, newer migrants have mainly been Muslims and so far have had little/no participation in the organisations of the *Colonia* (see Chapters Three and Four).

The ULCM has been the most proactive organisation in trying to (re)connect individuals with the *Colonia*. It has concentrated on the Colombian-Lebanese youth and the establishment of a ULCM Youth Committee. Alejandro is one of its leaders. The grandson of Jose, he is in his early 20s and said it was now the younger with ‘impetus’ to get organised: ‘básicamente la intención nuestra es como coger a toda la gente que está de alguna manera vinculada con la cultura... todos nuestros papás se han conocido y han hecho amigos por medio del Club, entonces para revivir un poco también eso... [con los jóvenes] ver cómo cada uno entiende la cultura y como realzarla de cierta manera y que la gente tenga, que se den cuenta porque muchos no se dan cuenta de lo bonito que es la cultura libanesa...’⁴⁷ (Alejandro 2009)

Alejandro follows a similar line to that of the older generations, emphasising the importance of solidarity and an understanding of Lebanese culture when introducing new people. Moreover, the more new individuals (re)connected through the ULCM, the more their views will reach other Colombian-Lebanese.

Alejandro also stressed that he wanted to re-live the social experiences enjoyed by the older generations where close friendships were formed at the Club. However, it is not entirely clear which was more important to him: meeting new people or introducing them to Lebanese culture. Indeed, many of the cultural activities revolved around the social events that came with them. They focused more around parties and trips to Lebanon than on conferences or talks. Daniel, another ULCM Youth leader also in his early 20s, became more involved after visiting Lebanon. Likewise, the Youth Committee wanted to plan a trip in the summer of 2010 to take a group of young Colombian-Lebanese to Lebanon:

⁴⁷ ‘it’s basically our aim to gather all people that are in some way linked with the culture... our parents have met and made friends through the Club, so to revive some of that too... to highlight the culture so the young people notice it, because many don’t notice how beautiful Lebanese culture is...’ - Alejandro

‘Nuestro proyecto bandera es poder llevarnos 10 o 15 personas el próximo verano, a meternos a una inmersión dura ahí de la cultura libanesa, aprender un poco de árabe en la universidad, hicimos los contactos...’⁴⁸ (Daniel 2009)

‘Ir al Líbano es importante y vivirlo de todas las maneras que se puede vivir, porque es que el Líbano tienen muchos lugares... [en el Líbano] uno siente que todos son primos’.⁴⁹ (Alejandro 2009)

The Youth Committee members were very excited about the trip and organised a series of fund-raising events for the trip, however, their excitement was short-lived as the planned trip never took place. It is likely that the Youth ULCM lacked the organisational capabilities or the commitment of their older counterparts.

Nevertheless, some of the young ULCM members continued their active involvement with the *Colonia*, especially with the dabkeh lessons. As seen in Chapter Six, some joined the Youth Committee after getting involved with the dabkeh group, whilst others took up the dance after joining the Committee. This suggests, once again, the significance of socio-cultural events in attracting Colombian-Lebanese to the *Colonia* and the organisations. According to Fortier performances are important for community-building as they help ‘cultivate a sense of belonging’. She argues the performances are not just social constructs but also (re)producers of identity (2000: 133). As seen in Chapter Six, these performances combine social and ethnic traits to become appealing to their participants.

8.3.2. Cultural representations

ULCM members have organised a number of events which, they argue, are aimed at increasing participation in the *Colonia*. These have included cultural and academic talks, film premieres, gastronomic festivals, and the dabkeh dance lessons. However, these cultural events have not only been directed towards attracting the Colombian-Lebanese in a social

⁴⁸ ‘Our flagship project is to take 10 to 15 people next summer and immerse ourselves completely in the Lebanese culture, learn some Arabic at a university; we’ve made the contacts...’ – Daniel

⁴⁹ ‘Visiting Lebanon is important and to live it every possible way that it can be lived... [in Lebanon] one feels like everyone’s a cousin’ – Alejandro. The Colombian-Lebanese use the word cousins in two ways: on the one hand, the usual way when they are related to someone. Some of my participants were in fact first cousins, but the term was used even if they were only political cousins or a cousin’s cousin. On the other hand, the word ‘primo’ is used to refer to close friends or even acquaintances. It is also used in certain areas in the north of Colombia (possibly out of an influence from different migrants’ groups).

setting but also as a cultural performance of Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity to the general public in Colombia.

As I explained in Chapter Six the current dabkeh dance group consists of both men and women of different generations, many of them members of the ULCM. It has given several presentations in Bogota at universities and festivals, where the dancers have dressed in traditional Lebanese clothes and performed the dances. The group participated in the first cultural festival 'Bogotá Internacional Espectacular',⁵⁰ held in the Plaza de Bolívar in the centre of Bogota. The festival's programme stated that:

'El Líbano estará representado por este grupo colombo libanés que hará una demostración del baile típico llamado 'dabke''⁵¹ (Alcaldía de Bogotá 2009)

In this sense, the participants were presented as cultural representatives of Lebanon in Colombia through the music, costumes and dances. As shown in Chapter Six, their performances become not only reflections of their identity but also help construct a common sense of belonging.

Other cultural representations took the form of expressions of heritage, by the Colombian-Lebanese actively expressing their empathy with Lebanese culture. One of these is the commissioning by the ULCM of a statue to 'The Lebanese Migrant' to be erected in Bogota.⁵² The fact the ULCM wants to put this statue in Bogota shows they are not only proud of their heritage but also are keen to celebrate it in public, emphasising their self-imposed role as representatives of the *Colonia*. The ULCM has called on the *Colonia* to donate money and materials that can be melted down for this project.⁵³ With this expression of their identity, the ULCM is highlighting the presence of the *Colonia*, celebrating the past immigration and subsequent successful integration. They are also following the example from the Mexican-Lebanese, who not only built a statue to the Lebanese immigrant in the

⁵⁰ 'Primera Feria Cultural Bogotá Internacional Espectacular'

⁵¹ 'Lebanon will be represented by this Colombian-Lebanese group that will perform a folkloric dance called 'dabkeh'.'

⁵² A number of similar statues celebrating Arab/Lebanese immigration already exist in different Latin American cities, including Buenos Aires, Havana, Mexico City, Montevideo, Santiago (Chile) and Sao Paulo.

⁵³ The desired location of the statue has not been made public, but it is likely that if the project is carried out the statue would be erected in the North of Bogota, possibly near the Club. This is also the first time the ULCM have publicly asked for monetary donations.

port of Veracruz,⁵⁴ but also paid to have one built a statue to the Lebanese emigrant in Beirut in 2003, on a busy road next to a mainly Christian Maronite neighbourhood (Alfaro-Velcamp 2013). The statue is the only of its kind in Lebanon, and the Mexican-Lebanese seem to be expressing not only their identification with Lebanon, but also their high economic status, as they are able to commission such endeavour. Similarly, the Colombian-Lebanese would also be expressing their socio-economic status by raising the profile of the community in Bogota.

This suggests that endeavours such as this one are attempts by the *Colonia*, or an organisation within it, to actively construct and reinforce the ethnic community. As Fortier (2006 p.71) further argues, it also offers ‘...a particular vision of who ‘we’ are...’. The statue would stress the ‘uniqueness’ of the Lebanese migrant and could further influence the feeling of belonging of the Colombian-Lebanese to their heritage. Furthermore, the construction of this statue could create a visible Colombian-Lebanese space. A public space would then be appropriated and converted into a space of permanent Colombian-Lebanese performance.

Another activity organised by the ULCM was the showing of the Lebanese film ‘Caramel’ in 2008, a film about the lives of four Lebanese women who work in a beauty salon.⁵⁵ Out of the meetings I attended, it became clear they had chosen this film as they believed it followed the ULCM line of political neutrality and because of the success it achieved internationally. Moreover, through their different contacts in Colombia and Lebanon they secured a visit by its Lebanese director Nadine Labaki. She was unable to attend in the end, but did send a personalised message to the ‘Lebanese community’ in Colombia, thanking them for their support. The premiere started with a cocktail reception at an exclusive cinema in a shopping mall in the north of Bogota. It was decided to have a social event to promote the movie in a prestigious location and attendance was by invitation only. At the cinema’s entrance both the Colombian and the Lebanese flags were placed next to each other⁵⁶ and there were also ULCM banners, which again included an image of the

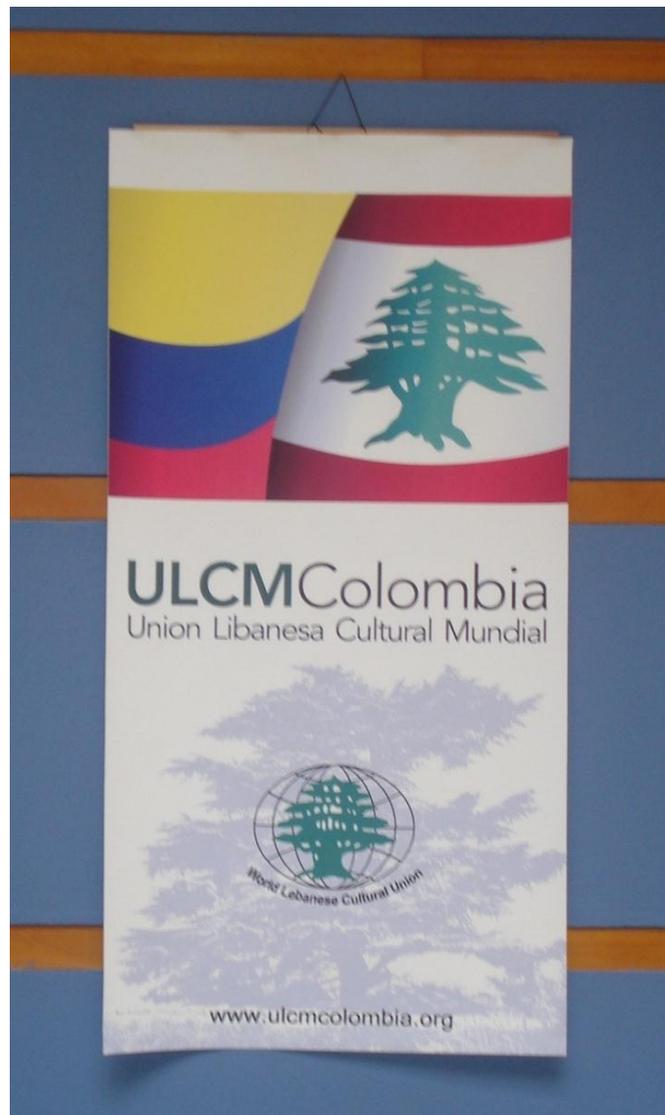
⁵⁴ The Statue in Veracruz was erected in 2007 in a plaza on a wealthy seaside neighbourhood, next to the Veracruz’s Yacht Club.

⁵⁵ They counted with the help from Cineplex, a Colombian film distribution company; the Lebanese embassy in Bogota; and with the sponsorship from Revlon, the large multinational cosmetics company.

⁵⁶ This resembled the flags seen at the inauguration of the Maronite Parish, but without the religious connection – see Chapter Seven.

two flags united, promoting both Colombian and Lebanese identities, as well as a connection between the two (Figure P.7.).

Figure P.7. – ULCM Banner⁵⁷



The premiere was attended by Colombian-Lebanese individuals whom the ULCM considered to be highly regarded members of the *Colonia*, including ‘patriarchs’, politicians, journalists, academics, diplomats and all of the ULCM members. Non-Lebanese individuals close to the *Colonia* were also invited, including the Colombian spouses of some Colombian-Lebanese individuals, and the military personnel who helped evacuate the Colombians in Lebanon during the July War in 2006. The guests were carefully selected,

⁵⁷ Picture taken by Esteban Devis at an ULCM event, July 2008

with invitations going to Colombian-Lebanese families with tight connections to the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. At the same time, some names were rejected because of their political beliefs, such as Vicente who, according to one of my participants, is 'pro-Arabist'. By creating a prestigious social event that brought the *Colonia* together outside of the Club, the ULCM were celebrating Lebanese culture, as well as promoting themselves and, more discretely, their pro-Lebanese views. At the same time, the ULCM was creating boundaries by inviting those that they considered belonged to the *Colonia* and those that did not, taking into account social status, participation, and political leanings.

The film *Caramel* features four women in a beauty salon and discusses the ways different 'taboo' aspects of Lebanese society are dealt with. In an interview for the BBC, the film's director Nadine Labaki explained her motivation for the film:

'We grew up with the word *ʿayb*.⁵⁸ 'shame'. Which means it's shameful. It's shameful to do this; it's shameful to do that. So I think this limits us in a sense, and we do have to deal with this *ʿayb* word all our lives, because we are scared of how people perceive us'. (Elmurr 2011)

Even though the significance of the issues addressed in the film is different in Colombian and Lebanese society, the notion of shame and the importance of 'how others perceive us' is still very relevant in Colombia, as has been seen with the idea of '*vergonzantes*'⁵⁹ in Chapter Six. It is also relevant to what is happening here with the film premiere, who fits in and can be invited, and who should be left out. The fact this movie was chosen has to do with the fact that it was Lebanese and allowed the ULCM to promote Lebanese culture. Nevertheless, the *ʿayb* theme crosses over the cultural boundaries and is reflected in the everyday context where the Colombian-Lebanese organisations work and how individuals interact in Bogota's society. Inadvertently, the ULCM presented a movie that was very relevant to Colombian society.

⁵⁸ عيب in Arabic script

⁵⁹ *Vergonzantes* are people that have lost their financial solvency but not their social status, see Chapter Six.

8.3.3. Performance of identity in a Colombian political event

A significant political event in Colombia, in which the ULCM participated, was the 20 July 2008 march against the Colombian left-wing terrorist organisation, the FARC. Protests took place in different cities, in Colombia and around the world, and focused especially on the kidnappings of both civilians and members of the armed forces. The event was a protest against the FARC as well as a display of Colombian patriotism by the general Colombian public. The march for peace/against the FARC was a repetition of another one which took place on 4 February 2008, which was organised by members of the public and gained coverage by the international media.⁶⁰ The government supported that march but had little involvement with its organisation.

This second march, however, was in a sense appropriated by government to raise patriotism and increase political support. It was promoted as a continuation of the 4 February march but this time it was arranged for 20 July, coinciding with Colombia's Independence Day.⁶¹ The day, usually celebrated with military parades, was this time celebrated with 'peace' marches and concerts across Colombia. The event had a detailed organisation of logistics, with demarcated routes, timetables of the events at the different locations, concerts of famous Colombian artists, video screens and an active participation from the government and the military, as well as politicians from different political parties. The government was able to capitalise on the previous efforts and get millions of Colombians to wave flags in a patriotic atmosphere.

Indeed, even though the original march was organised as a rejection of the FARC, the second march was used by the government to increase support of their anti-FARC policies and encourage Colombian patriotism.⁶² Some of the slogans evoked the coming together of all Colombians for the same purpose, and the freedom of the kidnap victims. In

⁶⁰ For more information see 'Colombians in huge Farc protest' (BBC News 2008a). I participated in the London march, which was well attended, with most people wearing white clothing and carrying Colombian flags, and ended with the singing of the Colombian national anthem. It is worth noting that these were not the first 'peace marches' in Bogota, in fact Reina (2001) reports on the first March for Peace in Colombia, which took place in October 1999. However, it was more a call for peace than a protest against particular insurgents

⁶¹ The government was boosted by the military rescue of politician Ingrid Betancourt from the FARC just a couple of weeks earlier, at the beginning of July. See 'Colombia hostage Betancourt freed' (BBC News 2008b)

⁶² The Government's policy to increase Colombian patriotism began as soon as President Uribe took office and was linked to increasing support for his tough security policies. The patriotism drive included exalting the members of the armed forces and the public-private campaign 'Colombia is Passion', which was partly directed to increase foreign direct investment and partly to increase patriotism of Colombians at home and abroad (Colombia is Passion Representative, personal communication 2009).

others, such as 'Colombia soy yo'⁶³ label, individuals presented themselves as a personal embodiment of Colombia. It was an individualisation of the idea of 'the other', as it was not 'them' versus 'us' but versus 'me' the individual, who could be seen as the personalisation of a FARC victim. The slogan aimed at increasing feelings of patriotism towards Colombia at an individual level and not necessarily linked to other Colombians. Nevertheless, it did express clearly those that were 'the other': in this case, the FARC was not Colombia.

The ULCM participated in this second demonstration and encouraged Colombian-Lebanese individuals to join them under the ULCM banners. A group of around 30-40 Colombian-Lebanese met at the Club for this purpose. They carried a large ULCM banner, Colombian and Lebanese flags, and wore white t-shirts. As the group joined the march from a side street, they were received with applause from other participants.

I joined them in this march from the Club on 87th and 9th street to one of the centres of congregation on 72nd and 7th street. There were a number of arranged routes in Bogota for this protest, as well as several marches in cities around Colombia. Once again, convenience and pragmatism has to be highlighted, as the Colombian-Lebanese stayed in the north of Bogota marching to the congregation centre that was closest to the Club. It is likely that this would have been the same route some would have taken if they had not been part of the group leaving from the Club, as they live near that area. As we walked along on the march, they often greeted friends or colleagues and welcomed other Colombian-Lebanese who joined the group. This was also the same route taken by many other Colombians of similar social characteristics.

Under the ULCM banner the Colombian-Lebanese were proactively presenting themselves to the general public in Colombia as Colombian-Lebanese. This time not in traditional folkloric costumes or giving talks on the subject, but rather as Colombians of Lebanese descent who had joined in a portrayal of Colombian solidarity with a combination of Colombian and Lebanese national symbols. They were sharing a space where Colombianness was being performed and appropriating it to perform their Colombian-Lebanese identity. This was a fluid deterritorialised space, not bound to a particular location but rather to the performance of their ethnicity (De Certau 1984; Faist 1998). The

⁶³ 'I am Colombia'

Colombian-Lebanese ethnic space moved along the streets of Bogota permeating the Colombian space.

Figure P.8. – Peace March ULCM⁶⁴



As stated above, different slogans were used during this march including ‘Colombia soy yo’ t-shirts, which were worn by many individuals, including some Colombian-Lebanese. The latter seemed unaware of the contradiction this could have caused: wearing t-shirts proclaiming to uniquely embody Colombia, whilst carrying Lebanese flags and ULCM banners. However, their words and actions suggested the Colombian-Lebanese were in fact at ease with the performance of their dual ethnic identities and did not consider to be a conflict between them. This demonstrates the multiplicity and fluidity of their identities (Hall 1996) which are able to switch and mould into the particular contexts. Indeed, their ease with the dual portrayal of Colombian and Lebanese symbols suggests that they see their identities as complementary, and as a statement that the Colombian-Lebanese ‘are’ Colombia. This is connected to Alfaro-Velcamp’s (2013) argument of the Lebanese being considered ‘foreign citizens’ in Mexico, and I argue in Colombia as well, where they identify as being born in Colombia whilst portraying their Lebanese heritage. This is done not only to highlight their identity but also to confirm their elite position in society. By presenting

⁶⁴ Picture taken by Esteban Devis at the peace march on July 2008

themselves with Lebanese and Colombian symbols the Colombian-Lebanese presented themselves as part of Colombian society with an added element which differentiate them with average Colombians. They were not only making a political statement against the FARC, nor just portraying their dual identity, but also validating their elite social status.

Figure P.9. – Peace March, Close-up⁶⁵



It is worth noting, however, that as soon as the march ended and people began dispersing, the leaders of the ULCM group were keen to have the flags and banners folded before walking back to the Club. Whether this was done out of convenience to be able to walk faster, as an active move not to be recognised as Colombian-Lebanese, or anything else, the fact is that on the way back to the Club the Colombian-Lebanese were just another group of Colombians wearing white t-shirts and indistinct from those around them. By doing so the Colombian-Lebanese demonstrated that they are able to decide when to perform their Lebaneseness and, just as easily, when to stop performing it. As Garcia (2007)

⁶⁵ Picture taken by Esteban Devis at the peace march, July 2008

suggests, identity is not about what we are but about what we are being. In this sense, the Colombian-Lebanese can easily switch from being Colombian to being Colombian-Lebanese, and vice versa.

This conscious decision of when to perform their ethnic identity was also conveyed by Shakira. As seen above, the march took place on July 20, Colombia's Independence Day. In addition to appropriating the march, the government organised a number of concerts throughout the country. The Colombian-Lebanese singer was invited to perform at the main event of the celebration in the Amazon city of Leticia (see Ramirez 2008), which was attended by President Uribe and other regional leaders. Shakira shared the platform with the politicians as she performed the Colombian national anthem, which was broadcasted nationally and projected on large screens at the other marches. She stood next to the Colombian President as he delivered his speech, suggesting her support for the cause and reinforcing the government's aims of connecting anti-FARC sentiment with Colombian patriotism. The fact Shakira was chosen to accompany the government, and sing the Colombian national anthem at the main event, is more likely a reflection of her worldwide fame than her Colombian-Lebanese heritage.⁶⁶ During the event she was referred to as 'uno de nuestros iconos patrióticos más importantes de nuestros últimos años' (eltiempotv 2008).⁶⁷ These words suggest not only the level of acculturation of the Colombian-Lebanese but also the acceptance, or even appropriation, of Colombian-Lebanese as 'one of us' by the general public. However, Shakira did not show any particular signs of being Colombian-Lebanese during her performance,⁶⁸ unlike when she called for a cease-fire in Lebanon during a concert in Greece. This time she chose to portray what the context required of her and others to portray, Colombian-Lebanese or not: their Colombian patriotism.

This choice was made by many other Colombian-Lebanese, some chose to join the ULCM group and march under its banner, whilst other chose not to, focusing their performance of identity solely on their Colombianness. A number of reasons may have contributed to this: the group was led by the ULCM and, as I discuss below, not all

⁶⁶ During her performance she wore a t-shirt that read 'Unidos y Libres' (United and Free) and sang a couple of her Spanish songs

⁶⁷ 'One of the most important patriotic icons of the past few years'

⁶⁸ At one point during the concert the public chanted asking her to dance, as she is famous for her belly dancing. However, she refused to do so arguing she had only brought her pianist with her. The dancing could have been a portrayal of Colombian-Lebaneseness, even if somewhat stereotypical. See 'Shakira - No. Concierto Nacional por la Liberacion de Secuestrados' (youtube/mobius946 2008)

Colombian-Lebanese are involved in the organisation or share its beliefs; a few may have chosen to march through a different route if it was more convenient to them; and others may have chosen to march with their non-Lebanese Colombian friends. Significantly, the fact the Colombian-Lebanese have this choice of when to portray certain aspects of their ethnicity suggests a high level of flexibility within their identity. Moreover, they are also able chose how to perform their identities (Colombian or Colombian-Lebanese), and are able to switch between them with ease.

The fact that some individuals choose to perform their ethnic identities has been noticed by a number of authors (see Gans 1979; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Pott 2001; Sullivan 2012). For example, Gans (1979 p.8) introduced the idea of 'symbolic ethnicity' which helps explain how newer generations 'have some choice about when and how to play ethnic roles'. He argues that symbolic ethnicity is about the individual's sense of belonging. Likewise, Sullivan (2012 p.431), in his study of Irish Americans, argues that

'these individuals consciously 'perform' their Irish identities... these performances are based, wholly or in part, on a discourse of Irishness constructed from the repetition of the mundane and everyday activities of Irish ethnicity that are embedded in an individual's unconsciousness'.

Both Gans and Sullivan signal the relevance of individuality when it comes to choosing to perform their ethnicity. Moreover, several of these authors also suggest the individuals must be in a privileged position in society, being upwardly mobile not suffering from discrimination (Gans 1979; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Sullivan 2012). All of these characteristics are fulfilled by the Colombian-Lebanese. They are part of the Colombian elite and their ethnicity is enhanced by the different activities and events they participate in. More importantly, they have a choice of when to portray it, making it a 'symbolic ethnicity'.

8.4. Citizenship and Voting Rights

The ease with which the Colombian-Lebanese identify with both their Colombian and Lebanese ethnicities may have been helped by the change in citizenship law brought by the 1991 Constitution in Colombia, discussed in the Chapter Four. This change allowed Colombians to have dual-citizenship, prompting both Lebanese and Colombian nationals to acquire the second nationality. As has been seen, the confidence the Colombian-Lebanese

have with their ethnicity has been influenced by a myriad of factors, including their social status, religion and assimilation into the elite. These factors had been at work many years before the introduction of this law. Therefore, the law is likely to have simply officialised a process of dual identity which had been developing for some time.

More than influencing the daily-life of the Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia, it opened a door for them to influence Lebanese politics, as a greater number of Colombian-Lebanese were able to vote in the Lebanese national elections. In terms of numbers, the electoral presence of Lebanese citizens abroad is very significant as Lebanon has a population of 4.2 million people (World Bank n.d.) and the Lebanese diaspora is thought to be around 14 million (FCO 2012). As the criterion for the requirement to vote in Lebanon is Lebanese citizenship not residency, Lebanese citizens can live abroad and still vote. However, voters have to be physically present in Lebanon to be able to cast their vote. For the 2009 elections there were reports in the media that a large number of Lebanese emigrants and their descendants holding dual citizenship received free air tickets to Lebanon to participate in the elections, provided for by different Muslim and Christian political parties (see Baer 2009).

Some of my participants took advantage of these tickets and travelled to Lebanon, not only to vote, but also to visit relatives and travel around the country. Alejandro was one of those who benefited from this: 'Ahorita nos mandaron los tiquetes... nos mandaron los tiquetes del Líbano y estuvimos allá 15 días'⁶⁹ Alejandro has Lebanese citizenship so he can vote in the elections: 'por eso nos mandaron los tiquetes'⁷⁰ he explained as he showed me his Lebanese identity card. Daniel flew to Lebanon with one of the free tickets that was given to the *Colonia* in Bogota. Even though he could not vote, a number of members in his family did:

'el viaje salió originalmente las elecciones porque a la familia les enviaron los pasajes al-Kataeb.⁷¹ Ahorita el Líbano se gastó el 2.5% del PIB en elecciones... parece ser que al-Kataeb fueron financiados por el gobierno de Arabia Saudita... me fui con mi mamá y estuve ahí 23 días y fue bastante interesante porque me empapé mucho de temas. Haber llegado en el momento electoral fue muy chévere, muy

⁶⁹ 'Just now they sent us the tickets... they sent the tickets to Lebanon and we were there for 15 days' – Alejandro. The interview took place on the 22nd of July 2009 whilst the elections were in early June 2009

⁷⁰ 'that's why they sent us the tickets' - Alejandro

⁷¹ Al-Kataeb is an anti-Syrian right wing Maronite party, also known as the *Phalange*. Many politically active Colombian-Lebanese support Al-Kataeb, though a smaller number support a pro-Syrian Maronite party.

especial, porque no es que haya ido de turista así, sino que mi familia ya está también muy metida en el cuento, y el hecho que mi familia esté metida en el cuento cambia la vaina. No es como si yo me fuera de colombiano equis allá de turista, “ay, que bonitas las ruinas y no sé que”, sino que uno se empapa mucho más del tema... entonces mi tío y mi mama fueron a conocer a Gemayel⁷² y el man los recibió divinamente, con foto y abrazo... Mira, mi familia es muy cercana a el-Kataeb, pues es maronita...⁷³ (Daniel 2009)

Daniel saw his trip as very significant, more so than a visit other ‘random’ Colombians might make. He suggests his Colombian-Lebanese heritage and his family’s involvement in Lebanese politics put him in a privileged position to understand the situation. Moreover, he connects their political participation to their religion which, as seen in Chapters Four and Seven, is not uncommon in Lebanon. Nevertheless, he also used the trip to travel around the country and visit the ‘beautiful ruins’. The trips were as much about citizenship duty as about increasing connections to Lebanon and enjoying some leisure time.

Another one of my interviewees suggested that Muslims in Colombia were also targeted for the elections. Ahmed commented that a number of Shiite Muslims, mainly from the town of Maicao in the north of the country, were given tickets by Lebanese Muslim political parties to vote in Lebanon. He argues, however, that he refused to accept the offer as he did not think it was ethical, stressing that: ‘mi voto no se compra’⁷⁴ (Ahmed 2009). Even though some did take advantage of the opportunity others considered accepting the tickets an immoral practice.

Both Alejandro and Daniel come from Maronite families, even though neither of them considers themselves to be Maronite, and both are connected to the ULCM.⁷⁵ It must be noted that while the ULCM stresses their non-partisan practices, all of the members in

⁷² The Maronite al-Kataeb party has been ruled by the Gemayel family since its origins

⁷³ ‘The trip came out originally for the elections, as al-Kataeb sent the tickets to the family. Just now Lebanon spent 2.5% of their GDP in the elections... it seems that al-Kataeb was financed by the Saudi government... I went with my mum and stayed for 23 days and it was very interesting as I learnt a lot. To have arrived during the elections was very cool, it’s not as if I went as a tourist, but my family is very involved in this and their involvement changes everything. It’s not like I went as a random Colombian tourist “oh what beautiful ruins and what not”, but I learnt a lot... So my uncle and my mum went to meet Gemayel and the guy welcomed them wonderfully, with a picture and hug... Look, my family is very close to al-Kataeb because they’re Maronite...’ – Daniel

⁷⁴ ‘my vote cannot be bought’ - Ahmed

⁷⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, the al-Kataeb party also has nationalist ideology and wide support in the Maronite community.

Bogota are Maronites and, as seen above, some are politically active and voted for Maronite parties in Lebanon. I asked Eduardo about this and he said:

‘Claro que existen musulmanes. La Unión en mundo no es de cristianos. Depende del sitio, si hay mayoría cristianos o mayoría musulmana, pero dentro de estatutos está prohibido hablar de religión... tenemos muy buenos amigos musulmanes, druzos, ortodoxos, maronitas, latinos etcétera... en Bogotá la mayoría somos cristianos maronitas. Pero tienen los brazos abiertos a todos los libaneses sin importar su religión... Si perdemos eso, estamos perdiendo nuestra razón de ser’⁷⁶
(Eduardo 2008)

What he suggests is that as most of the *Colonia* in Bogotá is Maronite, then it should not be a surprise that there are no Muslims members of the ULCM. However, Khater (2001) argues that there is a historical connection between the Maronite Church and Lebanese national identity, coming from a differentiation of the Maronites to the Ottoman Empire. This historical connection might help explain the prevalence of Maronites in the organisation.

Nevertheless, I believe that in Colombia this lack of participation by Muslims has to do more with social status than religious discrimination. As I explained in Chapters Four and Six, there are no Muslim members of the Club *Colombo-Libanés*. Hence, by having its meetings and activities at the Club the ULCM is also restricting the type of individuals who would participate.⁷⁷

All the same, ULCM political activism in Lebanon and some of their rhetoric could suggest more differentiation. Indeed, as suggested by Daniel, his family is connected to that particular Lebanese political party because of their religion. As I have shown, religion is a powerful force in Lebanese politics, and the political system is divided along religious lines. Currently there is a proposal to allow Lebanese citizens to vote abroad at embassies and consulates instead of having to travel to Lebanon to do so (BBC News 2008). A number of my interviewees viewed this change in the law as something positive and even necessary:

⁷⁶ ‘Of course there are Muslims. The ULCM is not only for Christians. It depends on the place, if there’s a Christian or a Muslim majority, but within the statutes it’s prohibited to speak of religion... we have very good friends who are Muslim, Druze, Orthodox, Maronite, Latin etc... In Bogota the majority are Christian Maronites. But we have our arms open to all Lebanese, regardless of religion... if we lose this we lose our reason for existing’ - Eduardo

⁷⁷ It is important to note that the ULCM organisations in other Latin American countries do have Muslim members.

'Pero aquí no tenemos derecho a votar, afuera del Líbano, y esto lo estamos luchando para que sí tengamos derecho como todos los demás países del mundo... Y los libaneses lamentablemente no nos han dado este derecho a votar en las embajadas. Nos gustaría que algún día lo logran, esto lo estamos luchando... Sin ninguna calidad de fanatismo ni diferenciad de religión al contrario...'78 (Jose 2008)

Sofia: '¡ahora el gobierno allá está la inquietud de que tenemos que votar! Tener voz y voto, tener representante de parte de los emigrantes en el Líbano'

Isaac: 'es que el peso del emigrante para el Líbano, el dinero que se va al Líbano es un factor que puede darle la sensación de vida a un país... ese que manda dinero, digamos, tiene derecho a tener voz y voto, ¿no?'

Sofia: 'eso se está luchando en el parlamento'

Isaac: 'y nosotros estamos luchando también que todo hijo de libanés no necesita más que registrar su hijo en la embajada y el hijo que se registró registrando su hijo ya es libanés... se registra y ya es libanés'79

(Sofia and Isaac 2008)

These Colombian-Lebanese individuals have Lebanese citizenship and Jose was one of those that travelled to vote in 2009. They suggest their arguments are based on fairness and even democratic logic. Practically, of course, it would also be beneficial. However, as they further explained, it became clear the religious factor was also of importance:

'... porque precisamente nos estamos dando cuenta de que hay necesidad de presencia, porque allá ya no hay prácticamente presencia de cristianos en el Líbano, tenemos que tenerla por lo menos aquí según nuestras costumbres antiguas... Necesariamente necesitamos que no se pierda la presencia...'80 (Jose 2008)

⁷⁸ 'But we don't have the right to vote here outside of Lebanon, and we are fighting to have that right like the rest of countries in the world... regrettably we haven't been given that right to vote at the embassies. We'd like one day to be able to, we're fighting for it... without any fanaticism or difference or religion...' – Jose

⁷⁹ Sofia: 'now the government over there is considering our voting! To have voice and vote, to have a representative of the emigrants in Lebanon'

Isaac: 'the weight of the emigrant for Lebanon, the money sent, is a factor that can be very significant for a country... that person that sends money has a right to have a voice and a vote, no?'

Sofia: 'that's being fought on in parliament'

Isaac: 'and we're also fighting for it, so that every child of a Lebanese is registered at the embassy, and that they register their own children... that simply by registering they become Lebanese'.

⁸⁰ 'It is precisely because we're noticing there's a need for presence there, as there's practically no Christian presence in Lebanon, we have to have it here according to our traditions... we need not to lose the presence...' – Jose

'Alguien dijo una vez "el que no reconoce su raíz no tiene raíz". ¿Verdad? entonces digamos hay en el Líbano un ministerio dedicado a los emigrantes, el gobierno libanés quiere involucrar a los emigrantes libaneses, hijos de libaneses, descendientes de libaneses, involucrarlo en el crecimiento de Líbano. Y más que todo, nosotros los cristianos estamos haciendo una gestión para que todos los hijos de libaneses deben registrarse, porque va a llegar un momento que vamos a necesitar el aporte intelectual'⁸¹ (Isaac)

Both Jose and Isaac commented on the importance of increasing Christian influence in Lebanon. This suggests that the religious differences that permeate Lebanese politics were also influencing the ideals that the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota had for Lebanon and their drive to get the law changed. Moreover, a discourse of 'them' (Muslims) and 'us' (Christians) also arose:

'Nos favorecería muchísimo, porque en este momento la mayoría de libaneses es musulmana y eso tiene unas complicaciones. Y eso para nosotros, que somos una mayoría cristiana por fuera claramente...'⁸² (Alejandro 2009)

However, Alejandro doubted the law would be passed:

'[Que aprueben la ley] no lo veo muy viable... eso es una democracia entre paréntesis basada en la matanza y en el miedo... y es un miedo todo el tiempo. Estamos rodeados de países interesados en hacer sus propias cosas con el país y con el territorio... es la plata y el terrorismo lo que vive allá...'⁸³

Even though Alejandro was previously very excited when telling me about his trip to Lebanon, including his admiration for the culture and the need to take other young Colombian-Lebanese there, his words here reflect frustration and cynicism towards Lebanese politics. He seems to be correct in his assessment of the situation as the change

⁸¹ 'Someone said once, "He that does not know its roots does not have roots". Right? So in Lebanon there's a ministry dedicated to emigrants, the Lebanese government wants to get the Lebanese emigrants, and the descendants of the Lebanese, involved in the development of Lebanon. And moreover, us as Christians, we're taking action so that every child of the Lebanese must register because there's going to be a time when we're going to need the intellectual contribution' – Isaac

⁸² 'It would be very favourable for us, because right now the majority in Lebanon is Muslim and that has a lot of complications. Outside of Lebanon we are a Christian majority...' – Alejandro

⁸³ '...[but] I don't think it's likely... that's a democracy in parenthesis based on killings and fear... and it's a constant fear. We are surrounded by countries who want to do what they like with the country [Lebanon]... it's money and terrorism what's alive there...' – Alejandro

in law to allow Lebanese citizens to vote abroad was first voted on and rejected in 2008. Even though the BBC reported that the change would take place in 2013 (BBC News 2008c), there have not been any further developments or media reports. It is likely that this delay reflects the divisions in Lebanon and possible consequences to its political balance.⁸⁴

Also of interest here is Alejandro's use of the words 'we'/'us' and how they are constantly changed: at times he refers to Christians in Lebanon i.e. 'nos favorecería muchísimo'; at times to Lebanese Christian emigrants i.e. 'somos una mayoría cristiana'; and at times to Lebanon as a whole i.e. 'estamos rodeados'. Moreover, during the interview he talked of 'us' as the *Colonia* and of himself as Colombian-Lebanese. He also claimed he was not religious in Colombia but that he identified himself as Maronite in Lebanon (see Chapter Seven). His words suggest his Maronite identification is due to political reasons. Alejandro changes his positionality depending on the context, whether the talk is of elections, of the Maronite Parish, of the ULCM etc. This reflects the idea that the nature of belonging depends on the context in which it takes place, i.e. the social standing and personal experiences of individuals (Yuval-Davis 2006). Indeed, Colombian-Lebanese identity and belonging is multiple and fluid. It is influenced by ethnicity, religion, social status and political events among others. Sometimes these identities are expressed independently of one another and sometimes in conjunction, depending on who 'the other' is in the particular situation.

As has been seen a number of Maronite Colombian-Lebanese do believe the law should be changed and this could have a significant impact on the balance of power in Lebanon. Therefore, the Lebanese elections have the possibility of creating divisions between politically active Christians and Muslims Colombian-Lebanese. However, due to the reduced number of Muslims in the *Colonia* in Bogota this is not likely to have a major impact on its organisations. In fact, other divisions based on social status or political leanings are having a deeper impact on them.

⁸⁴ Journalist Hussain Abdul Husain, former editor of a Lebanese newspaper, agrees that the change in law would have a deep impact on Lebanese elections because of the size of the diaspora. He argues the Christians are driving this change as the Christian population is declining in Lebanon, however, he does not think the change will actually take place (personal communication 2009). Conversation followed his conference paper at the London School of Economics, *The Lebanese elections and Middle Eastern democracy* (11 June)

8.5. Internal divisions

As I have shown, political events in Lebanon have had an influence on the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota: the Lebanese Civil War created division in the *Colonia* which led to a period of inactivity from the ULCM; the July War helped them reorganise; Lebanese political parties targeted individuals according to religious lines and flew them to vote in Lebanon; and the proposed changes to elections are being supported by some of my Maronite participants, as they see them as beneficial for their religion. Some of these events produced divisions within the *Colonia*, whilst others have helped unite them.⁸⁵ Currently, the most significant division among my participants, mainly descendants of Maronite Christians, is between the Lebanese nationalists and the pan-Arabists. The former are actively supported by the ULCM whilst the latter include not only Colombian-Lebanese individuals but also those of Syrian or Palestinian heritage.

As I have explained, the ULCM is a firm supporter of Lebanese national sovereignty rejecting foreign intervention from its neighbours. Its members claim that membership is non-discriminatory in terms of religion or political affiliation, as long as prospective members adhere to the principle of Lebanese sovereignty:

‘No hay discriminación política con tal que no vaya contra el ideal de la Unión, que es preservar la identidad libanesa. Si está en contra de eso, está en contra de nosotros’⁸⁶ (Eduardo 2008).

Eduardo’s rhetoric shows a clear division between ‘them’ and ‘us’: the defenders of Lebanese sovereignty versus its ‘enemies’. Eduardo had a clear idea of who these enemies are:

‘existe FEDE-árabe, se hizo en los 70s durante la guerra, para diluir la imagen de Líbano como país soberano y hacerlo perderse dentro del mundo árabe. La Unión se opuso en el momento, porque querían diluir la identidad libanesa, y para nosotros es más importante ser libaneses que ser árabes...’⁸⁷ (Eduardo 2008)

⁸⁵ Author Pilar Vargas argues there also have been divisions within the Palestinian community in Bogota, especially inside the Palestinian Ladies Association, as some of the women want to focus their charity work on Colombian projects, just as the Lebanese Ladies, but others would prefer to send money and aid to Palestine. She says this divisions has led to fights within the group.

⁸⁶ ‘There’s no political discrimination as long as (the political ideas) don’t go against the ULCM ideal of preserving the Lebanese identity. If it’s against that, it’s against us’ - Eduardo

⁸⁷ ‘There’s Fede-Árabe, which was organised in the 1970s during the war to dilute the image of Lebanon as a sovereign country and to make it dissolve within the Arab world. The ULCM opposed it, because the others wanted to dilute Lebanese identity, and for us being Lebanese is more important than being Arab...’ – Eduardo

Those who were thought to reject Lebanese sovereignty were also rejected from the ULCM. The pan-Arabists fall into this category, as they argue for the union of all Arab descendants, regardless of nationality.

A short review of pan-Arabism can be useful as a context. The ideology gained notoriety first in the late 1940s with the formation of the Baathist party in Syria, and its expansion elsewhere, as it called for the union of Arab lands; and then with the Suez Canal Crisis in Egypt and its Arab nationalist leader Nasser. Being Syria's neighbour, Lebanon did not escape its influence and the ideology began to gain force, especially within Muslim and Druze communities (Alfaro-Velcamp 2011). The creation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 between Egypt and Syria by Arab nationalists brought its influence even closer to Lebanon and divided its politicians into supporters and opponents of the regime. The division roughly followed religious lines, with some Lebanese Muslims arguing for a union with UAR, and mostly Christians opposing it. The conflict escalated when a Muslim rebellion attempted to force a union, and eventually led to US involvement and the sending of ground troops (Yaqub 2004). However, the divisions between the Lebanese nationalists and pan-Arabists were felt, and further deepened, in other conflicts discussed above, such as the Lebanese Civil War, the Syrian occupation of Lebanon after the war, and the Cedar Revolution.

There is a significant number of Colombian-Lebanese who support the pan-Arabist cause. Salomon, one of the directors of the Club, is a pan-Arabist and he argues that 'uno tiene que trabajar de acuerdo con las realidades',⁸⁸ the reality for him being that it is not only the Lebanese who live in Lebanon anymore and that there is a demographic problem, as the Muslims have a higher birth rate and the Christians have migrated. He concluded saying:

'pero hoy en día me parece que lo que hay que tratar de buscar es un poco la convivencia y la hermandad entre los pueblos'.⁸⁹ (Salomon 2008)

Throughout the interview he stressed his belief in the significance of Arabness for the *Colonia* and argued for a combination of Lebanese and Arab heritages, a clear difference

⁸⁸ 'One has to work within reality' – Salomon

⁸⁹ 'But nowadays I think that there needs to be harmony and friendship between people' – Salomon

from the views of the ULCM members. At the same time, his beliefs are likely to be influenced by the possibility of maximising commercial and business opportunities, both for the Club and for the business of the Colombian-Lebanese, such as his own.⁹⁰ Indeed, Salomon was one of the leading figures for the formation of the Colombian-Arab/Lebanese Chamber of Commerce (CACC), which he described as 'a bridge to reactivate the economic links between the *Colonia* and the Middle East'. The divisions within the *Colonia* were visible in this organisation. I have written the name of the organisation as 'Colombian-Lebanese/Arab' because whilst in Spanish the organisation was written as Colombian-Lebanese, in Arabic it was written as Colombian-Arab. The inaugural ceremony took place at the Club, attended by a number of Colombian-Lebanese individuals, including one of the directors of the ULCM, diplomats from Arab embassies, and a number of businesses (with and without connections to Lebanon/the Middle East). I witnessed how the ULCM member complained to the organisers about the name differences, and how his complaint was largely ignored. A similar organisation exists in Brazil, the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (CCAB) and its president has views very much like that of Salomon, and it is quoted as saying that rather than individual nations, the focus of the organisation is on the 'Arab collective' (Karam 2007: 37). Karam argues this expressions of Arabness have been useful when creating links with governments in the Middle East and increasing business abroad, however, he suggests that this drive has to do more with Brazilian interests rather than Arab aspirations. Thus, it is likely to be beneficial for the CACC to portray itself as Colombian-Arab to the Middle East, instead of singling out particular nationalities, to ease the opening of markets; whilst presenting itself as Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia, to ensure a wider support from within the community.

Another event supported by pan-Arabists is the Colombian-Arab Cultural Congress (ECCA)⁹¹. So far there have been three congresses: Barranquilla (2004), Cartagena (2006), and Bogota (2011). The latter two events were also presented as Arab-Latin American congresses. All of them were attended by large numbers of people of Middle Eastern descent and from different parts of Colombia. *El Tiempo* newspaper reported on the 2004 event, quoting the Colombian-Palestinian organiser saying it was an 'unprecedented' event in Latin America:

⁹⁰ Salomon is head of an import-export company owned by his family which can be in a position to gain from deeper commercial connections with Arab countries.

⁹¹ *Encuentro Cultural Colombo-Árabe*

'Son tres días en los que se integrarán cerca de mil personas de origen sirio, libanés y palestino... para discutir sobre el aporte árabe a Colombia, y el modo en que se fundieron las dos culturas en muchos sitios del territorio nacional'⁹² (El Tiempo 2004)

The article goes on to name the different celebrities and personalities who are attending the congress and concludes by stating:

'Se trata de una cita del más alto nivel para analizar la única migración masiva que ha tenido Colombia en toda su historia'.⁹³

The language used in the article exalts not only the congress but also Arab migration, even with some questionable statements such as 'the only massive migration Colombia has had'. Nevertheless, the article does suggest the congress represents the Colombian-Arab community as a whole.

The inaugural ceremony in Bogota was a grand event at an exclusive theatre in the North of Bogota. It included emotive speeches, a performance by the Bogota Philharmonic⁹⁴; and a dance presentation by a dance academy which focused on Arabic dancing, mainly belly dancing; and Arab food was on offer. Significantly, it was not the dabkeh group giving the dance performance but a Colombian dance academy. The dabkeh group is connected to the ULCM and, therefore, influenced by its political beliefs. None of the dancers at the congress 'seemed' of Arab heritage, and among their Arab dance routines they also incorporated a cumbia dance, typical from the north of Colombia, representing the duality of identities present in the Colombian-Arab community.

As seen above, the congresses were presented as representing the whole of the Colombian-Arab community in Colombia. However, the ULCM members had significant objections against the events. Eduardo, one of the directors of the ULCM, argues that the ECCA wanted to 'diluir la identidad libanesa':⁹⁵

⁹² 'It is three days in which more than one thousand people of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian origin will come together... to discuss the Arab contribution to Colombia and how both culture melted in many parts of the country'.

⁹³ 'It is a gathering of the highest level to analyse the only massive migration that Colombia has had in all its history' – ibid

⁹⁴ With an Arab-Peruvian director and an Arab-Ecuadorian violinist

⁹⁵ 'dilute Lebanese identity' - Eduardo

'... para nosotros es más importante ser libaneses que ser árabes. Por eso no hemos participado, pero tampoco estamos en contra...'⁹⁶ (Eduardo 2008)

Moreover, Lucia explained why the ULCM was planning to have its own congress, different to the ECCA:⁹⁷

'Primero porque el congreso de la Unión Libanesa sólo aglutinaría a los libaneses y sus descendientes, el colombo-árabe reúne a todo el Medio Oriente, cosa que me parece maravillosa y nosotros no es que seamos excluyentes sino que la Unión pues es para los libaneses, eso es una diferencia ya categórica'⁹⁸ (Lucia 2008)

Furthermore, Lucia stressed that the ECCA had over 5,000 attendees whilst the ULCM wanted to have a smaller, more family oriented congress, to celebrate the life of the patriarchs of the Colonia. This suggests a degree of exclusivity in the event, as only some ought to be celebrated. This differentiation between 'the Lebanese' and 'the Arabs' is replicated by other ULCM supporters:

'no, yo no fui pero no estaba aquí, estaba viajando en el Líbano... pero sí supe de la reunión y dije está muy bien, no hay ningún inconveniente mientras no toquen lo distintivo que es el libanés'⁹⁹ (Jose 2008)

Nevertheless, it was not only the ULCM members that voiced their disapproval. During an interview, this interaction took place between Sofia, her brother Isaac and Sofia's daughter (who had been listening to the conversation):

Sofia: yo no fui [al ECCA], pues la verdad no me llama la atención. No, ¿por qué?

¿Por qué Colombo-Árabe? Yo no me, mejor dicho, es que nosotros los libaneses

Isaac: es que había una cosa después de la guerra [civil] del Líbano

Sofia: después de la guerra del Líbano nosotros fuimos muy muy

Isaac: resentidos con los países árabes... porque digamos fuimos maltratados

Sofia: sí, entonces no queríamos nada, yo por lo menos

Sofia's daughter: igual el origen no es árabe¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ '... for us being Lebanese is more important than being Arab. That's why we haven't participated, but we're not against it either...' - Eduardo

⁹⁷ This ULCM congress has not taken place

⁹⁸ 'Because the congress of the ULCM will only bring together the Lebanese and their descendants, the Colombian-Arab gathers all the Middle East, which I think is wonderful and it's not that we're exclusive but that the ULCM is for Lebanese, and that's a categorical difference' - Lucia

⁹⁹ 'I didn't go because I was in Lebanon... but I did hear about it and I said that's all fine, there's no inconvenience as long as they don't try to erase the distinctiveness of the Lebanese' - Jose

Sofia: Somos árabes, somos árabes, no lo podemos negar. Pero por ejemplo la guerra del Líbano fue originada por los palestinos... entonces por esa razón no me llamaba la [atención], y le pusieron Colombo-Árabe, pero fíjese, la mayoría que fueron condecorados eran libaneses'¹⁰¹

(Sofia and Isaac 2008)

Sofia gives a clear differentiation between the Lebanese and first the Arabs, and then the Palestinians. The connection is likely to be due to the fact that the main organisers of the ECCA are Colombian-Palestinians. In this case, the differentiation is presented in more political than ethnic lines. Sofia concedes that the Lebanese are Arabs, but expresses rejection towards Palestinians due to 'their' role during the Civil War. At the same time, she is right in noticing that many Colombian-Lebanese did participate. Monica, for example, not only enjoyed the ECCA but also defended her participation:

'bellísimos los encuentros, llenos de nostalgia, de historia del Líbano, de un querer unir a los países árabes en torno a ese sentimiento de estar por fuera del país pero tener sus raíces en otro sitio... algunos de la Colonia me criticaron por asistir a eso porque la organizadora es palestina, pero yo no manejo esas diferencias'¹⁰² (Monica 2008)

Likewise, Salomon argues the name was of little importance:

'Ahora, que sea árabe o no, uno puede ponerle otro título... porque yo he ido a los congresos... y la gran mayoría de los asistentes eran de origen libanés... es equivocado pensar que uno va a ir a un congreso que se llame Colombo-Árabe, y se va a encontrar árabes, ¡allá lo que hay es libaneses! ¡Porque aquí no somos sino

¹⁰⁰ There are a number of Colombian-Lebanese, and Lebanese in general, that believe they are descendants of the Phoenicians and not the Arabs.

¹⁰¹ Sofia: 'I didn't go [to the ECCA] in all truth I'm not interested. No. Why? Because Colombian-Arab, I'm not, I mean, we are Lebanese'

Isaac: 'the thing is that after the [civil] war'

Sofia: 'after the war we felt very, very'

Isaac: 'resentful with the Arab countries... because we were mistreated '

Sofia 'yes, so we didn't want anything, or at least I didn't'

Daughter: 'anyway our origin is not Arab'

Sofia: 'we're Arabs, we're Arabs, we cannot deny it, but the war in Lebanon was started by the Palestinians... that's why I wasn't [interested], and they named it Colombian-Arab, but notice that the majority of the *condecorados* were Lebanese' – Sofia and Isaac

¹⁰² 'the ECCA were wonderful, full of nostalgia, of Lebanese history, of wanting to unite the Arab countries around that feeling of being away from the country but having the roots elsewhere... some in the community criticised me for attending because the organiser is Palestinian, but I don't pay attention to those differentiations' - Monica

libaneses!... entonces, de pronto quizás, no sé si sea cuestión semántica... Yo no veo a esos pueblos como unos pueblos enemigos...'¹⁰³ (Salomon 2008)

Salomon seems inclusionary in his words, talking of semantics and against enmities.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, his words are also accusatory towards those that see a differentiation between Arabs and Lebanese, namely the ULCM. It is not surprising that these organisations have (re)formed in the last 15 years, as according to Bruckmayr (2010) globalisation has helped in creating new community organisations which replicate the divisions at home, separated by national and religious lines, as well as the creation of over-reaching organizations. Both the ULCM and the ECCA support different views for the future of Lebanon. However, these divisions are not only based on Lebanese political differences.

It has been reported that the audience at the ECCA is different from that of the Club or the ULCM in terms of social status. The public at this social event did include a number of elite individuals, such as a number of politicians and the Colombian Ambassador to Lebanon – who is Colombian-Lebanese. However, a large number of participants seemed to be of lower social status than my participants (personal communication November 2011). This suggests that membership to the ECCA is less exclusive than to the ULCM. As seen in Chapter Six, the ULCM works within the Club and this creates boundaries on participation, due to its exclusivity. Of course, the fact the ECCA includes all Colombian-Arabs, and not just the Colombian-Lebanese, already makes it less exclusive in ethnic terms. However, it also shows that the ECCA is not an elite-only organisation. This reflects Vallejo's (2009) finding in her study of Latinas in the US that those more upwardly mobile were more likely to distance themselves from less mobile ones. Indeed, it was my participants who were the ones that chose not to attend these congresses. Whether it was for political, ethnic or social reasons, my Colombian-Lebanese participants that chose not to become involved are also differentiating themselves from those who did.

In addition, the struggle between pan-Arabism and Lebanese nationalism may have even further connotations. The animosity may also be related to the status of the

¹⁰³ 'now that it's Arab or not, one can put another title... I've been to the congresses... and the majority of people have been Lebanese anyway... it's wrong to think that if one goes to a Colombian-Arab congress one will find Arabs, it'll be Lebanese! Because here we're nothing but Lebanese!... maybe it's just semantics... and anyway I don't see other pueblos as enemies' – Salomon

¹⁰⁴ However, it is worth noticing that Salomon did not experience the Civil War first hand, nor did anyone in his family, and he is not actively involved in Lebanese politics.

Colombian-Lebanese as 'foreign citizens'. As Alfaro-Velcamp (2011: 157) argues for Mexican-Lebanese:

'...the construction of Lebaneseness has been created by a Mexican myth of uniqueness wherein the second and third generations blended the real and the imaginary, thereby fashioning a hybrid Lebanese Mexican community'.

This hybridity is built on the basis that the Lebanese fall within the desired categories of foreigners and where their ethnicity supports their high socio-economic status. However, recent developments have meant the idea of 'the Arab' might no longer be 'desired'. As has been argued, events like 9/11 brought Muslim, as well as Arab communities to the forefront in many societies, and this has led to discrimination. I discussed in Chapter Seven the extent of discrimination felt by the general Muslim community in Bogota. At the same time, the Muslim Colombian-Arab community in the town of Maicao has had to defend itself in the media against accusations of connections to Islamic extremist organisations. According to *El Heraldo* newspaper a number of Colombian-Arabs from the northern town of Maicao have been accused of money laundering and of having links to *Hezbollah*. The article reports that these accusations led a city councillor to stress that 'No todos los colombo-árabes somos narcotraficantes ni terroristas'¹⁰⁵ (Guerrero 2012). Even though the news only received local regional coverage, it does imply that Arabs immigrants and their descendants may be losing their claim to being 'desired foreign citizens'.

My participants did not report feeling discriminated against within Colombia due to the 9/11 attacks, but they did mention that their surnames have led to difficulties or inconveniences when going through border control in other countries. For example Andrea (2009) says:

'a mi papá lo pararon en la frontera [de Israel] y no lo dejaban pasar, y fue un interrogatorio, por el apellido, ¡qué susto! Solo por el apellido y él decía: "yo soy colombiano".'¹⁰⁶

Even though she reports her parents are getting more involved with the *Colonia*, mainly through the Parish (see Chapter Seven), in this case she expressed indignation for her father being stopped due to his surname, given he 'is Colombian'. Here, Andrea's father

¹⁰⁵ 'Not all of us, Colombian-Arabs, are drug traffickers or terrorists' – (Guerrero 2012)

¹⁰⁶ My dad was stopped at the [Israeli] frontier and they wouldn't let him through. It was an interrogation/a grilling because of the surname, scary! Just because of the surname and he'd say, "I'm Colombian!" – Andrea

seems to have wanted to be able select his ethnic identity, just as they are used to doing in Colombia. However, internationally, his surname does not allow him such freedoms. It seems, the Colombian-Lebanese, and in particular the ULCM, have seen a threat to their status in Colombia by the negative reports and want to differentiate themselves from it. As my participant Lucia argues the current context and the different events lead to a reaction:

'Todo eso hace que se muevan las fibras y que diga "un momentico" primero. Lo que está mostrando del mundo árabe no es completamente la realidad, porque muestran una parranda de locos, todos terroristas, todas las mujeres son locas tapadas, y nada que ver con la verdad.'¹⁰⁷ (Lucia 2008)

In this sense, the ULCM may not only be defending Lebanese identity to prevent its fading into Arab identity, but they might also be defending their current position in society and the benefits that it brings them. Even though the origins of the conflict between Lebanese nationalism and pan-Arabism date back many years, and have been acerbated by different historical events, for the Colombian-Lebanese, the current situation is further increasing the division. Whilst pan-Arabists like Salomon see their Arab identity as a tool to open markets in the Middle East, Lebanese nationalists like Lucia and Eduardo, see it as an attack on their ethnicity and a possible wakening of their social status.

Moreover, the differentiation between Lebanese nationalism and pan-Arabism may also be drawing on religious differences, as they do in Lebanon. According to Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) elite Mexican-Lebanese have constructed an ethnic discourse which does not have room for Islam. She stresses that they have appropriated Lebanese identity and have equated it to being Maronite, distancing themselves from Arab Muslims and Druze. Alfaro-Velcamp even reports that her participants claimed that there was anti-Islamic sentiment within elite, Maronite, Lebanese organisations in Mexico. Seeing the lack of participation of Muslim Colombian-Lebanese in the elite organisations; the lack of interaction between Christians and Muslims, their socio-economic differences, and the claims by some, such as Ahmed's wife, that they do not feel welcome in the Club, suggest that the same is happening in Colombia. This further deepens the arguments seen in Chapter Four, where Batrouney (1992) argues that there is friction between the mostly Christian descendants of the first migratory wave, and those mostly Muslims that came in the second. However, the

¹⁰⁷ 'All of this makes the roots vibrate, and so we first say: "one moment". What's being shown about the Arab world is not completely true, because they show a gang of crazies, all terrorist, all the women are covered crazies, and that's nothing to do with reality' - Lucia

division may have to do more with social status than religion. As argued in Chapter Four, the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese have not managed to climb the social ladder to the extent of the Christian Colombian-Lebanese. As Bruckmayr (2010: 173) argues:

‘Muslim Syro-Lebanese appear to be less likely to reach highest political positions as was achieved by Christian descendants of the first wave... western Islamophobia and the critical stance towards democracy among certain currents of present-day globalised Islam may play a role.’

The explicit discrimination discussed in chapter Seven, together with their slower social mobility seen in Chapter Four, have prevented their rise. In turn, this is likely to have deepened the divisions between Christians and Muslims, a division which could be easily appropriated by Lebanese nationalists.

8.5.1. Political influence on Muslim divisions

Political and religious differences in the Middle East also seem to be influencing the Muslim community in Bogota. Different sources claim that each of the Muslim organisations, the Istanbul Mosque, the new Abu Bakr Mosque, and the Islamic Cultural Association, have received financial help from Middle Eastern countries, however, all of them vehemently deny it. The Istanbul Mosque was alleged to have received money from Turkey, the new mosque from Saudi Arabia, and the Shiite association from Iran, which roughly follows the political divisions within the Middle East.

In terms of the Istanbul Mosque, its name does raise questions regarding its connection to Turkey. As seen in Chapter Seven, Imam Eugenio claimed the name was given so the mosque was seen as welcoming. However, Imam Khalid from the rival mosque claimed that the name came because of financial help from Turkey:

‘El mismo solía ir a la misma mezquita nuestra en el centro hace muchos años y después de eso alguien de Turquía donó una cierta cifra con la cual compraron esa casa... Y la convirtieron en una mezquita y le dieron el nombre Estambul...’¹⁰⁸
(Khalid 2013)

¹⁰⁸ ‘He used to go to our mosque in the centre many years ago and after that someone from Turkey donated some money and they bought that house... It became a mosque and they called it Istanbul...’ – Khalid

However, Imam Eugenio stressed they did not receive any financial help from Turkey and that only a couple of Turkish individuals:

‘No, no. Directamente no. En qué sentido, creo que entre los 60 o 70 que dieron la ayuda para escoger la casa habían algunos de los turcos pero luego mínimo, y no se identificaron siquiera, porque para eso no se identifican ni nada...’¹⁰⁹ (Eugenio 2013)

As seen in Chapter Seven, he gave an ample explanation of the choice of name, including giving different reasons for not naming it after other cities in Muslim countries. Interestingly, he concluded by saying: ‘Y no queríamos comprometernos con ningún otro, con ningún país con nombre así.’¹¹⁰ Eugenio corrected himself as he was about to say they did not want to be committed to ‘another country’, and instead said ‘any country’. His correction may suggest a connection with Turkey, or another country, he may want to hide. However, it would be strange to want to hide a connection with Turkey, whilst keeping the Istanbul name.

At the same time, the new mosque has also been signalled as having Saudi financial backing. *El Espectador* reported that the mosque was built with financial help from the community as well as from Saudi Arabia, and that it cost up to 4,000 million CP (more than two million US dollars) (Valenzuela 2012). Imam Eugenio from the Istanbul mosque also made this allegation. However, Imam Khalid denied it, explaining all the money came from within the community:

‘Primero que todo del precio de la mezquita del centro, que es casi la mitad del costo. Y la otra mitad pues llevamos desde el 79 ahorrando hasta que logramos tener, y algunas ayudas de algunos musulmanes acá y de las otras comunidades de musulmanes, de Maicao, de Barranquilla, pero no hay nadie del exterior. Porque una vez hicieron un reportaje en el periódico *El Espectador* y el periodista la embarró, yo no sé a quién entrevistó y la persona entrevistada le dijo “sí, ellos trajeron cuatro mil millones de pesos del exterior, de Arabia Saudita”. Mentira, no hemos recibido ni un

¹⁰⁹ ‘there was no direct help [from Turkey]. I mean, I think that amongst the 60-70 people that helped finance the house there were some Turks, but minimal, and they didn’t identify as such’.

¹¹⁰ ‘and we didn’t want to implicate ourselves with any country like that...’ - Eugenio

centavo de Arabia Saudita, ni un centavo del exterior, ni mucho menos de Arabia Saudita...'¹¹¹ (Khalid 2013)

As seen in Chapter Two, the inauguration of the mosque has been delayed several times, and different members of the community commented on the lack of progress being linked to lack of funds. If Saudi Arabia was in fact financing the project, it could be expected not to run into financial difficulties. At the same time, Saudi backing of religious organisations in Latin America is common, including the mosque in Caracas (Bartet 2009) and the new mosque in Buenos Aires (Montenegro 2009c). The mutual allegations by the Sunni imams coincide with the competition; not only in terms of numbers but also disagreements on how to spread Islamic thought (see Chapter Seven).

What both imams do seem to agree with is their dislike for the Islamic Cultural Centre, the Shiite organisation they claim is backed by Iran. Khalid claims that the Iranian financial support has also meant a political influence:

'Son pro-iraníes... y pro-iraníes significa posibilidad de tener algunos problemas porque siempre Irán ciertos intereses, a veces bajo el nombre de un proyecto económico siempre tratan de acceder a ciertos sectores de la sociedad... Y siempre tienen unos intereses políticos que no nos interesan, y no queremos tener problemas porque somos colombianos que queremos a Colombia y no estamos dispuestos a hacer algo medio espionaje en contra de nuestro querido país...'¹¹² (Khalid 2013)

Khalid expresses a dislike in the way he perceives Iran has political influence over certain Muslim communities, and goes as far to suggest that the influence could be equated to espionage. The Islamic Cultural Centre does not deny it has links with Iran, as a number of its leaders have studied in Qom, Iran. However, they say the connection is merely

¹¹¹ 'First of all from the money of the mosque in the centre, which covered almost half. The other half, well we have been saving since 79 and with the help of some Muslims here, and in Maicao and Barranquilla, but from no-one abroad. Because in *El Espectador* they published an article and the journalist messed up. I don't know who he interviewed and that person said "yes they brought four billion pesos from abroad, from Saudi Arabia". That's a lie; we haven't gotten a single cent from Saudi Arabia, not a single penny from abroad and even less from Saudi Arabia...' – Khalid

¹¹² 'They are pro-Iranian... and Pro-Iranian means the possibility of having problems, because Iran has its own interests. Sometimes under the guise of an economic project they try to gain access to certain sectors of society... They always have political interests that we are not interested and we don't want to have problems because we're Colombians who love Colombia. We're not willing to do something that is almost espionage against our beloved country...' – Khalid

educational and not political. However, Eugenio does not seem convinced by this defence and has strong words regarding his interactions with them:

‘Yo no lo admito en ninguna parte, a mí cuando llegan los medios de comunicación que quieren que estemos yo les digo “si ese señor está yo no asisto porque él no es musulmán” Si va con su chiita bueno que defienda el chiismo, respetable, pero que se haga pasar como musulmán no lo acepto’.¹¹³ (Eugenio 2013)

Eugenio not only argues that he does not welcome the Shiite Imam in his mosque, but that he also refuses to share a platform with him. His comments suggest that the animosity comes from the religious differences (see chapter Seven) rather than his political or international affiliation.

8.6. Summary

Throughout this chapter I have explored how different political events have impacted the identity of the Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota. I explained the influence of two major conflicts in Lebanon on the *Colonia*: first the Civil War by creating divisions and bringing ULCM activities to a halt; and then the July War by provoking a reaction from the Colombian-Lebanese and leading to the re-organisation of the ULCM. The demonstrations that took place against the July War, and the subsequent re-organisation of the ULCM operated within the social context in which my Colombian-Lebanese participants interact, combining their ethnic awareness with their social status. These two aspects were necessary to encourage people to protest and then to re-organise.

I demonstrated how the ULCM is using a series of activities and events to encourage participation in the *Colonia*, to influence a sense of Colombian-Lebanese identity and to promote support for Lebanese-national sovereignty. These activities take place within a particular social context. Furthermore, the ULCM has participated in some events where its members proactively present themselves as Colombian-Lebanese to the general public, by portraying symbols that label them as Colombian-Lebanese.

¹¹³ The *Centro Cultural Islámico*: ‘I don’t accept him anywhere. When the media come to me and ask for our participation I say: “if that gentleman is there I won’t go, because he’s not Muslim”. If he goes as a Shiite fine, he can defend Shiism, but to claim that he is Muslim, I don’t accept that’.

Significantly, these performances suggest that the Colombian-Lebanese are able to choose when to display their Colombian-Lebanese identity and when not to. They can decide whether to join in a particular activity, to wear clothing or carry items that can identify them as Colombian-Lebanese, and even the location of these performances. In addition, they can also manage the visibility of their performances, ensuring some remain visible only within the *Colonia* (as seen in Chapter Six) or as seen here opening up to the general public. Moreover, especially during the marches for peace, the Colombian-Lebanese were able to portray their dual identity with Colombia and Lebanon seemingly without any discomfort, and as if the identities were complementary.

At the same time, the ULCM has used the events to pursue its goals: to present itself as the representative of Lebanon in Bogota; as an incentive for the Colombian-Lebanese to join their organisation; and to promote its own political beliefs of supporting Lebanese national sovereignty, especially against views that conflicted with their own, such as the pan-Arabist ideology. This last point has contributed to rifts within the *Colonia* with individuals supporting one side or the other. Even though the roots of the division are political and religious, the elite context the Colombian-Lebanese live in has meant their social status has also come into play. Nowadays the differentiation is also being fuelled by a drive so the Lebanese continue being seen as 'desirable foreign-citizens', as opposed to 'undesirable' Arabs, which also closes the door to Muslims and other religious minorities. Moreover, the Muslim community has experienced further divisions, this time based around political differences, which are likely to influence the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese.

This chapter shows that the *Colonia* does not act in unison or follow the same ideals. Nevertheless, as my participants share the same social characteristics and work in the same social spaces, their interaction with the wider Colombian society is very similar. Regardless of their political beliefs the Colombian-Lebanese are able to choose when, where and how to perform their ethnicity, and to combine this with their Colombian patriotism.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter I seek to answer the research questions I outlined in Chapter One, drawing from the data analysis I have discussed in the previous chapters. The conclusion further analyses the extent to which ethnicity is a choice for the Colombian-Lebanese, as individuals and as a community. Then, it reflects on the significance and the limitations of my research, finishing with a number of suggestions for further research.

9.2. Answering the thesis' research questions

This thesis sets out to try to answer who the Colombian-Lebanese are with four research questions: what are the characteristics that mark out the Colombian-Lebanese community explored here? What roles do ethnicity and social status play in identity construction for this community? In what ways do these Colombian-Lebanese perform their identity? And finally, what is the role of space and place in this performance and identity construction?

A significant characteristic of the active participants of the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* in Bogota is that they form an upper-class/upwardly-mobile community. As seen in Chapter Two, its members belong to the socio-economic, and sometimes political, elite of Bogota and Colombia. In Chapters Three and Four I demonstrated how the Colombian-Lebanese had achieved this social status, beginning with their migration to Colombia, their settlement patterns and their climb up the social ladder, which included successes in business ventures, marriages and educational opportunities. I also explored their participation in Colombian politics and their electoral success. Their education, professions, success in politics and everyday activities resemble those of their Colombian counterparts of the same social status.

Unlike other countries, such as Argentina, where ethnic Lebanese religious institutions were set up early in the migration process, and had the capacity to cut through social barriers and create a possibility for less successful Lebanese and their descendants to keep a connection with an ethnic organisation, in Colombia the

organisations were based around economic and social factors. This meant that the organisations which promoted Lebanese identity were confined to the elites. This further separated the successful and wealthy descendants of Lebanese immigrants, who were able to maintain their Lebanese cultural heritage, and the less successful and poorer descendants, who had little choice but to fully assimilate into Colombian society. As has been discussed, nowadays the Colombian-Lebanese within elite social circles in Bogota use their network to connect them to other wealthy Colombian-Lebanese, as well as to other wealthy Colombians. The network's barriers limit access to Colombian-Lebanese of lower socioeconomic status and Colombian-Lebanese Muslims.

9.2.1. Ethnicity and social status

Both privately and publicly, ethnicity and social status are very important in the construction of Colombian-Lebanese identity within the *Colonia*. Throughout this thesis, it has been evident that the Colombian-Lebanese have combined these factors in creating a common identity, as both ethnicity and social status are necessary to be members of the organisations and belong to the *Colonia*. On the one hand, as discussed by Alfaro-Velcamp (2013) the descendants of Lebanese migrants have used their ethnicity and their classification as 'foreign citizens' to validate their position in society and differentiate themselves from less successful immigrants. As Agar-Corbinos (2009) has noted, these elite descendants of immigrants behave in many ways as other national elites. In fact, elite non-Lebanese Colombians (such as the spouses and friends of Colombian-Lebanese individuals) are more likely to be welcomed to the Colombian-Lebanese organisations, than non-elite Colombians with clear Lebanese roots. This can be seen with the Club's membership, involvement with the Ladies Association, and access to the ULCM activities. Moreover, the connections the wealthy Colombian-Lebanese have formed with Colombians of lower-socioeconomic status are through their position as providers –linking their ethnic identity to establish clear social boundaries between socioeconomic classes.

On the other hand, the leaders of the *Colonia* have realised that a combination of ethnicity and social status is the most successful way of sustaining the Colombian-Lebanese community. The elite social status of my Colombian-Lebanese participants allows them to be flexible in the way they perform their ethnicity. They can choose when to identify with their Lebanese heritage and when not to, and in some ways, they can relatively easily 'turn on and off' their ethnic performances, what Gans (1979) calls 'symbolic ethnicity'. In Chapter Six I discuss this fluidity by exploring the extent to which my participants will go with their ethnicity within upper-class society in Bogota. When

necessary, my participants sacrifice their ethnic ties to the *Colonia*, in favour of their social status. This is showed not only in the composition of the active community, who are all part of the socio-economic elite, but also on a variety of activities in which they are in contact with the general Colombian public. For example, the idea of the school has not taken hold as some of my participants argue they would prefer to keep sending their children to the traditionally elite schools, where they will meet other children of elite families, over an ethnic school where they would be more likely to meet children of Colombian-Lebanese families. It was a similar situation regarding the funerals of a number of Colombian-Lebanese individuals. As seen in Chapter Seven, even though some ceremonies took places at the Maronite Parish, and some at traditional Catholic churches, all of them were buried in the same expensive cemetery in the north of the city. It is also seen in Chapter Eight, during the peace demonstration in Bogota some Colombian-Lebanese marched under the ULCM banner, actively and visibly presenting themselves as ethnic Colombian-Lebanese. However, as soon as the march ended, they folded the banner and flags, 'turning off' their ethnicity. Their elite social status impacts any other type of identification they may express. It allows them to feel secure (Sullivan 2012) and confident (Pott 2001) about issues surrounding their ethnic identity. These feelings of confidence and security allow them to choose the visibility of their ethnicity: when to perform it publicly, when to do so privately, and when to stop performing. This suggests that ethnicity has its limits, as wealthy Colombian-Lebanese seem more likely to choose their social circles over their ethnic ones.

Religion

As seen in Chapter 7, religion is perceived to play a much larger role in Lebanese society than in Colombian society, therefore, there is an assumed ethnic identity drawn from religion at the Maronite Parish. At the same time, religion is also a choice for many of my participants, whose involvement with the Maronite Parish fluctuates, and whose identity as Maronites is also flexible (for example, with my participant Alejandro, who in Colombia does not feel religious, but in Lebanon identifies with Maronitism). For some Colombian-Lebanese their ethnic identity is also built within the interaction between Catholicism, as a cultural representative of Colombia, and Maronitism, as a cultural representative of Lebanon. This phenomenon appears to be part of the isolation of Islam as a contributor to Colombian-Lebanese ethnic identity. It segregates itself locally for religious purposes, both from Christianity and from rival Islamic strands, and is also discriminated against, both by other Islamic strands, as well as because of pre-conceived notions regarding Islam in general post 9/11 society. This allows the Maronite Parish a larger capacity to combine ethnicity and religiosity within its ceremonies.

I discuss how socio-economic status also plays a role in identity construction through religion. The locations of the religious institutions reflect the socio-economic status of its participants, the wealthy north for the Maronite Parish, and a combined participation for the mosques, i.e. there is a greater variety of socio-economic backgrounds in the mosques. My Christian/Maronite Colombian-Lebanese participants use their social status as an ethnic identifier, and this trickles into religion; whilst social status does not appear to be as relevant for the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese. Significantly, whilst the Maronite Parish is largely viewed as a medium through which the Colombian-Lebanese can perform their hyphenated ethnic identity, the mosques do not seem to offer this and confine themselves to performing religion.

In addition, it is not only the 'when and how to perform ethnic roles', as Gans (1979 p.8) suggests, but also the 'where', as the Colombian-Lebanese can choose the locations where they want to perform their ethnicity. The spaces and places the elite Colombian-Lebanese use for their activities are also influenced by, and help maintain, their social status. The locations of the spaces used by my elite participants to perform their Colombian-Lebanese ethnicity, including the Club and the Parish are in the wealthy north of Bogota. The buildings do not outwardly display their ethnicity, whilst at the same time blending in their upper-class neighbourhoods- implicitly demonstrating their social status, yet concealing their ethnic attachments. Conversely, the Muslim organisations do not display any connection with a particular ethnicity, but their organisations can be either highly visible, as in the case of the Abu Bakr mosque, or hidden, instead of invisible, because of intimidation and threats.

Political events

Political events in the Middle East, and specifically in Lebanon, have impacted the Colombian-Lebanese community in Bogota, both causing tensions as well as generating reconnections. These have affected both the elite Christian/Maronite and the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese. Some, like the Lebanese Civil War, impacted all. However, some political events that are causing tension within the Muslim community differ to those experienced in the Colombian-Lebanese organisations within the elite. This contributes to the pre-existing divisions between the two groups.

Even though the political situations in both Colombia and Lebanon have created spaces for the Colombian-Lebanese to unite; these take place under specific circumstances. Firstly, the Colombian-Lebanese in the elite choose when it is convenient

to emphasize and when to minimize their hyphenated identities. Importantly, social class influences these decisions. For example, their choice of locations to protest are not only in certain areas of the city, but all near the Club so they can meet socially afterwards; the cultural representations are performed in elite public spaces; the construction of the statue of the Lebanese immigrant not only would also be located within elite spaces, but would also be a way of showcasing their current socio-economic status. All of this contributes to the construction of an imagined community that links class and ethnicity. In the case of my participants, these elite locations become temporary Colombian-Lebanese spaces, which travel with them, such as the routes they chose for the demonstrations, the film premier etc. Also significantly, as seen above, most of the time they behave like other Colombian elites, frequenting the same social and entertainment spaces, attending the same educational establishments, pursuing professional careers (lawyers, doctors, business, and even becoming successful politicians), as well as benefiting from transnational processes, which allow them easily keep in contact with people and events elsewhere, as well as to travel, study and work abroad.

Further divisions

As has been seen, however, the community is not always united and there are divisions within it. Some factors affect the community as they do the rest of the Colombian elite, for example the social issues I have discussed, or perhaps political party allegiance, i.e. supporters of a particular Colombian political party over another. However, a specific dividing factor among active Colombian-Lebanese is the Pan-Arabism versus Lebanese nationalism dichotomy. This division has its roots decades ago on the religious divisions in Lebanon, with many Maronite Christians drawing on a Phoenician heritage to claim a distinct identity from the rest of the Arab world, and some Muslims holding Pan-Arabist views, seeing Arabs in general as brothers and sisters. As seen in chapter Eight, these divisions deepened with a number of events that influenced the divisions between the two camps. As discussed, these divisions have also impacted on the Colombian-Lebanese and the way the community operates, with individuals in both sides of the argument. Religion still plays a part on the division: even though Colombian-Lebanese Christians are supporters of both camps, there is an inclination towards Lebanese nationalism; at the same time, Colombian-Lebanese Muslims tend to support Pan-Arabism. The religious difference, however, did not play a large part in the dynamics of the division, as there is little interaction between Christians and Muslims.

A more significant influence is connected to social class and the idea of maintaining their positive image of the community as being composed of 'foreign-

citizens', who are able to use their ethnicity to validate their social status, as well as use their social status to support their ethnic endeavours. Because of this the Lebanese nationalism versus Pan-Arabism has taken a new dimension. For some time, and especially after 9/11, the image of Arabs in general deteriorated, to the point of being presented as 'undesirable'. Because of this, those supporting Lebanese nationalism have stepped up their efforts to differentiate themselves from Arabs and see Pan-Arabist ideas as possible danger to their position. Even though they are a confident group within Colombian elite society, they have taken steps to ensure nothing jeopardises this positioning. Therefore, for some Colombian-Lebanese this differentiation not only has political and religious connotations relating to Lebanon and the Middle East, but also social significance within Colombian society. In order to continue being able to validate their elite social position in Colombian, and be able to further their ethnic activities as they have in the past, the Colombian-Lebanese 'foreignness' has to be seen in a positive light, giving a further argument for the differentiation from Arabs in general.

9.3. Significance of the Study

It is the combination of ethnicity and social status that has placed my elite participants in a particular and advantageous situation compared to other migrant groups. The Colombian-Lebanese do not have to endure the negative aspects of ethnic labelling that other groups experience. In Colombia, this discrimination involves racial and religious minorities, as well as individuals of lower social classes. My Colombian-Lebanese participants are representative of those who participate in the *Colonia*: wealthy and part of the elite in Bogota and Colombia. However, this beneficial situation is not enjoyed by all Colombian-Lebanese, including Muslims and those who belong to working-class families. As seen in Chapters Two and Four, due to their assimilation process it is impossible to know the number of Lebanese descendants who instead of enjoying upward mobility assimilated downwardly. Many may not even be aware of their Lebanese heritage as earlier generations may have discarded their Colombian-Lebanese ethnic identity. In addition, Muslim Colombian-Lebanese are not recognised by their ethnicity, but rather by their religion, and have suffered the same discrimination as other followers of Islam in Colombia. Those who do not belong to the elite are not as free or even 'knowledgeable' to perform their ethnicity.

As seen in Chapter Four, Pott (2001) and Vallejo (2009) question the notion that descendants of immigrants cannot ascend the social ladder without shedding their ethnic identity. My wealthy Colombian-Lebanese participants corroborate their questioning, as

they have been able to do what disadvantaged groups cannot: the Colombian-Lebanese have been upwardly mobile, reaching the socio-economic elite, whilst maintaining a connection to the *Colonia*. My thesis offers a further perspective to the suggestion of ethnicity helping social mobility. Indeed, the Colombian-Lebanese do 'perform' their ethnicity to their own advantage and use their 'foreignness' to validate their elite social status (Alfaro-Velcamp 2013). However, as they already are part of a confident upper-class group, they are able to use the tools and social capital available to promote and intensify their ethnicity (both in private and public spaces). I have analysed different examples of situations when the Colombian-Lebanese have used their social capital for the advantage of the *Colonia*, for example, by speeding up the process to set up the Maronite Parish and helping the Maronite priest acquire the necessary legal documents; or by ensuring the Colombian-Lebanese in Lebanon received government assistance during the Lebanese July War, including a military plane rescue. In this sense, the Colombian-Lebanese have used their upper-class 'ethnic (and social) capital' to their own advantage, be it to promote their ethnic identity, their religious beliefs, the safety of their loved ones, or the revenues of their organisations.

Vallejo (2009) argues that even though her Latino participants are upwardly mobile, it does not mean that they do not suffer from discrimination because of their ethnicity. She argues this is because there is a history of discrimination in the context where they live, and because there has been continued migration by Latinos into the US. I argue that, partly due to the absence of these circumstances, my Colombian-Lebanese participants are no longer the target of ethnic discrimination. As I have argued there have been two migratory waves, one which lasted until the 1930s and another which started in 1975 with the Lebanese Civil War. As seen in Chapter Three, the second wave was much smaller than the first, and it was dominated by Muslim migrants. Both of these factors meant that the older migration remained a majority within the descendants of the Lebanese, and as such could continue commanding the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. More importantly, it could also differentiate itself from the new migration due to the religious differences and still use their Colombian-Lebanese status as the 'right' type of 'foreign-citizens'. Of course, the experience of the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese has been different.

Therefore, it is not necessary for individuals to lose connection to their ethnic community as they upwardly climb the social ladder. This is something economically successful Colombian-Lebanese have experienced: as they reached their current elite social status, many maintained their connection to the *Colonia* and now use this position

to enhance their identity and strengthen the *Colonia*. These experiences can be replicated in other groups of ethnic migrants who maintain a connection to their ethnic communities, as long as they are not characterised as 'the other' in the host society. This characterisation will depend on the local context, and issues of race, religion, gender, class and language, among others, can all play a role in this process. If they do not suffer it, or if they are able to overcome it, the migrant communities may also be able to develop tools that will allow their social position to support their common ethnic identity.

9.4. Limitations of the Study

The interviews I conducted, together with the many hours of participant observation allowed me to have a particular view on the Colombian-Lebanese and its *Colonia*. Therefore, it might be argued that one limitation in this study could be an over-reliance on empirical methods over theoretical models. This thesis is not attempting to contribute to major new theoretical debates on identity, but rather is offering a way of looking at, and understanding, established and confident ethnic communities.

As discussed in Chapter Two, my own positioning has also impacted my research, both in terms of ethnicity and social status. On the one hand, it has opened doors and given me access to channels relatively easily, which may not have been so readily available had my personal positioning been different. On the other hand, it has also created obstacles for my distancing to the study and the participants. It is something I have had to struggle with throughout my data collection stages, analysis, and write-up. Access to the Muslim Colombian-Lebanese was also difficult, partly because of the lack of solely Muslim Colombian-Lebanese organisations, but also due to the lack of connection with the wealthy Christian/Maronite Colombian-Lebanese, and the reduced influence their networks have on the Muslim community. Nevertheless, I was able to access the general Muslim organisations which can be used to represent the wider community.

There are some themes which, due to lack of space, are not covered in great detail in this thesis. These include the role of gender in the relations of the Colombian-Lebanese and its connection to ethnicity. Likewise, their connections with other particular ethnic communities are not analysed in depth. Even though certain groups are mentioned, such as Palestinians, or Germans or British in Colombia, the connections and/or its influence on belonging are not analysed in depth. These themes, among others, fall outside the scope of this thesis.

Moreover, my data does not cover all Colombian-Lebanese in Colombia but it focuses on the active group within the Colombian-Lebanese *Colonia* in Bogota. As explained, poor Colombian-Lebanese in Bogota remain invisible and hence inaccessible for participation. By focusing on the *Colonia* in Bogota, my dataset was restricted mainly to the capital and other important Colombian cities, however, I was able to offer comparisons with Barranquilla, Cartagena and Maicao. Unfortunately, financial constraints prevented me from conducting interviews in a larger geographical area. Nevertheless, I have incorporated into the thesis other studies as well as internet research, which have addressed issues of the larger Colombian-Lebanese community in Colombia.

9.5. Future Research

Future areas of research might aim to fill these gaps left open by my research, focusing on gender issues within the *Colonia* and their relation with ethnicity and social status. A comparison of the roles of men and women in Colombian and Lebanese society would shed light into the development of the gender boundaries within the Colombian-Lebanese community. It could also reveal the extent to which ethnicity plays a role in gender identity within the *Colonia*, or whether social status remains the most important and influential factor. Similarly, a study of the poor descendants of first wave Lebanese migrants could be beneficial, comparing the history of their migration and assimilation processes and the role ethnicity plays in their everyday lives, if any. Of course, this latter study would encounter the same obstacles in terms of the invisibility of these individuals.

Similar studies of different migrant groups in Colombia might be interesting to carry out, such as looking at the Jewish community in Bogota. Their histories of migration and settlement have already been documented (Fawcett and Posada-Carbo 1998; Sourdis-Najera 1999; Sourdis-Najera and Velasco-Rojas 2011). However, few studies have been carried out about its present status. The study into the Jewish organisations could be focused in a similar way to my research on the Colombian-Lebanese, including its social club and two synagogues. A significant difference will be the influence of their religion and the implications it may have on their social status. Research into other visible communities, such as the German, Italian, French and British could also be conducted. Significantly, the same paradigms of ethnicity and social class could be applied to these groups. As they would have been considered 'desirable' immigrants of white European Christian background, their attitudes, community dealings

and even dual identities should to some extent mirror those of the Colombian-Lebanese. A comparison into their assimilation processes and the ways in which they may have kept their ethnic *Colonias* alive could offer interesting insights into intra-community relations and their particular developments within the Colombian state.

Moreover, insights into other wealthy ethnic groups can serve to further corroborate the arguments here presented. Studies into the German, British and/or French hyphenated communities in Colombia remain largely unexplored. As I have argued, the social status of immigrants can be very influential for the development of their ethnic communities, and will help determine their position in society. Furthermore, other factors can be imperative for participation, such as religion, race and political beliefs. The activities within ethnic communities often combine these factors, and the social aspect is a very influential one. As the older generations strive to get younger generations to (re)connect with the ethnic community with the use of cultural performances, they are also providing spaces for the young to socialise. In the *Colonia*, young Colombian-Lebanese from upper-class families can interact with others with similar socio-economic backgrounds. The Colombian-Lebanese organisations and their activities help maintain the social networks of the community, perpetuating the privileged positioning of the Colombian-Lebanese as a confident group in Bogota's elite society.

APPENDIX ONE

BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Edgar – interviewed 9 July 2008

Edgar is a lawyer in his late 40s whose family has been connected to the *Colonia*. He is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese. Both his parents were born in Lebanon and met in Colombia. They travelled to Colombia when young, with their respective parents. Edgar uses the Club's facilities and participated actively in the demonstrations against the July War. The interview took place in his office.

Jose – interviewed 10 July 2008

Jose is a first generation Colombian-Lebanese is in his late 70s and he is considered one of the patriarchs of the *Colonia*. He migrated to Colombia following members of his family who had migrated years before his arrival in 1950. He was one of the founders of the Club *Colombo-Libanés* and a leader and active member of the ULCM⁵³⁷ before the Lebanese Civil War. His family set up a successful textile brand in Colombia which is still owned by them. He also regularly attends the Maronite mass. The interview took place at his home.

Maria Camila – interviewed 11 July 2008

Maria Camila is a young fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese. She was in her late teens at the time of the interview and about to start her university degree. She regularly visits the Club but it is not part of the ULCM or the dabkeh dancing group. She participated in the demonstration against the July War. Her uncle has been President of the Club. The interview took place in my parent's house.

Monica – interviewed 14 July 2008

Monica is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese in her mid-50s. Over the years she has held different governmental posts at the local and national level, both political and civil service posts. She is a member of the NSL⁵³⁸ and has been a member of the Ladies

⁵³⁷ World Lebanese Cultural Union (*Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial*)

⁵³⁸ Our Lady of Lebanon Association (*Asociación de Nuestra Señora del Líbano*)

Association. She gets involved in most of the activities of the *Colonia* and often travels to Lebanon. The interview took place in her home.

Gabriel – interviewed 15 July 2008

Gabriel is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in his mid-30s. He is a journalist and has written a number of articles about Lebanon, covering topics ranging from travel and culture to the political situation in the region. He went on a trip to Lebanon to reunite with his family there. He is not a member of any of the organisations but he does attend some of the social events. The interview took place in his office.

Jacqueline – interviewed 17 July 2008

Jacqueline is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese in her mid-50s. She was born and raised in Colombia, but travels regularly to Lebanon. Her family owns a large export company, with several branches in Colombia and South America. She is an active member of the Club and one of the directors of the ULCM. The interview took place at the Club.

Enrique – interviewed 17 July 2008

Enrique is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese, in his late-30s, and lawyer by profession. He is married to Jacqueline's daughter. He met his wife at the Club when he was a young boy. He still uses the Club's facilities and takes his own children there. The interview took place at the Club.

Lucia – interviewed 18 July 2008

Lucia is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese in her early-50s, who is actively involved in different organisations in the *Colonia*. She is a member of the Club, the Ladies Association, and the ULCM. She is also part of the dabkeh group. Her husband, a non-Lebanese Colombian, has been president of the Club. The interview took place at the Club.

Sofia – interviewed 21 July 2008

Sofia is a first generation Colombian-Lebanese in her mid-60s. She is a founder and former president of the Ladies Association, as well as founder of the NSL and a Club member. She is a devout Christian and member of the Opus Dei. She is still heavily involved with all of these organisations. She led the cooking classes organised by the Ladies Association and attends the Maronite Parish every Sunday. The interview took place in her home.

Isaac – interviewed 21 July 2008

Isaac is Sofia's brother, a first generation Colombian-Lebanese in his early 70s who lives between Colombia and Ecuador. He is a member of the NSL, attends the Maronite masses and uses the Club's facilities. The interview took place at Sofia's home.

Vicente – interviewed 21 July 2008

Vicente is a second generation Colombian-Syrian in his 80s. He still works as a lawyer and a lecturer at university. He participated in the *Colonia* when he was younger but now has little contact with it. The interview took place at the university where he works.

Eduardo – interviewed 22 July 2008

Eduardo is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese doctor in his late-40s. He was born in Colombia and grew up between Colombia and Lebanon. He was living in Lebanon with his parents when the Lebanese Civil War broke out and they moved back to Colombia. He is one of the leaders behind the reorganisation of the ULCM and is an active member of the Club. The interview took place at the Club, after a ULCM meeting.

Salomon – interviewed 23 July 2008

Salomon is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in his mid-50s. He is an active member of the Club and has held different posts in the Club's board of directors. He was one of the founders of the CCCA/L⁵³⁹. He is an entrepreneur and owns his own company. The interview took place in his office, which is decorated with Lebanese/Middle eastern objects, such as narghiles.

⁵³⁹ Colombo-Arab/Lebanese Chamber of Commerce (Cámara de Comercio Colombo-Árabe/Libanesa)

Juanita – interviewed 24 July 2008

Juanita is a fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese in her mid-20s. At the time of the interview she had just finished her university degree and was starting a career in the banking sector. Her parents and grandparents are members of the Club, however, she did not frequent it much. She began participating more in the activities after the reorganisation of the ULCM. She is also part of the dabkeh dancing group and she often takes non-Lebanese Colombian friends to join her. The interview took place at her parents' home.

Carlos – interviewed 21 August 2008

Carlos is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in his mid-40s. He is a university lecturer. His uncles were members of the Club but he has not acquired membership and he is not a member of any of the Colombian-Lebanese organisations. His contact with the *Colonia* is limited to certain social events. The interview took place in his office at the university where he works.

Andrea – interviewed 21 July 2009

Andrea is a fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese in her mid-20s. She works as a researcher at a university. Even though her family has not had a close connection to the *Colonia*, they have begun to reconnect since the opening of the Maronite Parish. The interview took place at a restaurant near the university where she works.

Alejandro – interviewed 22 July 2009

Alejandro is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in his early 20s. He was a university student at the time. He is Eduardo's nephew and one of the leaders of the ULCM Youth. He made a short-film about the history of his family in Colombia and showed it at the Club. The interview took place at the Club.

Daniel – interviewed 22 July 2009

Daniel is a fourth generation Colombian-Lebanese student in his early 20s. His Lebanese ancestry comes from both his father and mother. He is another one of the

leaders of the ULCM Youth. He is a member of the dabkeh dancing group and regularly visits the Club. The interview took place at the Club, after a dabkeh class.

Cristina – interviewed 23 July 2009

Cristina is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in her 60's. She is a retired journalist. She has been connected to the *Colonia* at different times throughout her life. When she was younger she was a member of the Ladies Association and now she is a member of the NSL. She attends the Maronite mass every Sunday. The interview took place in her home.

Ana – interviewed 27 July 2009

Ana is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in her 50's. She is the head of a large commerce company in Bogota. When she was in her teenage years she was involved in the dabkeh group of that time but after got disconnected from the *Colonia* for some years. She reconnected after the foundation of the Parish, where she often attends the Maronite mass. The interview took place in her office.

Angelica - 20 August 2009

Angelica is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in her late 50s. A retired teacher, she has been involved in different Colombian-Lebanese organisations. Her family has had membership of the Club for many years and her father was one of its founders. She used to be a member of the Ladies Association and now is a member of the ULCM. She also used to participate in the dabkeh group during her teenage years, and sometimes still joins in the classes. The interview took place at the Club.

Father Naji - 21 August 2009

Father Naji is the Maronite priest presiding over the Parish in Bogota. He was born in Lebanon and arrived in Colombia in 2008 after training in Argentina. He is in his 40s. The interview took place at the Parish.

Fernando - 26 August 2009

Fernando is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese in his late 30s. He is an entrepreneur and runs his own import/export company. He is a Christian Orthodox and is married to a first generation Colombian-Lebanese woman. Even though he grew up with a close connection to the *Colonia*, he does not actively participate in the organisations. Currently his strongest connection is through the Maronite Parish. The interview took place in his office.

Jimena - 27 August 2009

Jimena is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in her early-50s. She is a senior civil servant. Her family has always had some connection to the *Colonia* but she only began participating regularly since the reorganisation of the ULCM. Since then she has acquired a Club membership and frequently attends the Maronite mass with her non-Lebanese Colombian husband. The interview took place at the Club.

Ahmed - 31 August 2009

Ahmed is a first generation Colombian-Lebanese Shiite Muslim. He is in his mid-30s and married to a second generation Colombian-Lebanese Muslim woman. He owns and runs a Lebanese bakery in the north of Bogota. He has little connection with the social activities of the *Colonia* but has some contact with the Maronite priest and with the Colombian-Lebanese individuals who shop at his bakery. The interview took place there.

Maria - 01 September 2009

Maria is a third generation Colombian-Lebanese in her early-40s. She has Lebanese ancestry from both sides of her family. Her parents frequented the Club but were not members. Nowadays, she is a member of the Club and one of its directors. The interview took place at the Club.

Myriam - 02 September 2009

Myriam is a second generation Colombian-Lebanese in her late 40s. She works as a travel agent. Her family has always been connected to the *Colonia* and she has been going to the Club since she was a young girl. She is a Club member, part of the ULCM

and of the dabkeh group. The interview took place at the Club, before one of the dabkeh classes.

Imam Khalid – 08 January 2013

Khalid is a first generation Lebanese immigrant who arrived in Colombia with his Lebanese wife and two young children in 1992. He is Sunni Muslim. He stayed a year in Maicao as Imam at the mosque and then moved to Bogota to serve as imam for the mosque of the Islamic Beneficial Association, now the Abu Bakr mosque. He also works as a correspondent to a European newspaper. The interview took place at a shopping mall.

Imam Eugenio – 09 January 2013

Eugenio is a Colombian convert to Islam; he was born a Catholic but converted to Sunni Islam in the late 1970s. He used to belong to the Islamic Beneficial Association, but in the early 2000s broke away to form a new organisation. He is currently the imam of the Istanbul mosque in Bogota. The interview took place at the mosque.

APPENDIX TWO

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEWS

A.2.1 Edgar

Chapter Four

Esteban: ¿usted qué se siente?

Edgar: 'me siento digamos colombiano en gran parte, pero que parte del corazón y del alma estar en el Líbano. Y digamos que esa proporción mayor para Colombia pues lo da también el hecho de que al fin de al cabo pues toda la vida ha vivido en Colombia ¿no? Entonces yo creo que no está uno completamente aquí porque siempre hay parte del alma y del corazón que están allá. Sí'.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y fue a la marcha?

Edgar: 'Sí, la marcha sí. Una marcha apolítica... la filosofía de la marcha fue sobretodo pedir apoyo para que cesara el bombardeo porque pues era casi un ataque unilateral porque un grupo como Hezbolá que por más armado que este pues no puede hacer oposición a un ejército regular. Entonces se quiso eso por varias cosas. Primero para no matizar de política la oposición al bombardeo, ni hacerle perder fuerza a la marcha. En segundo lugar para no excluir a los libaneses musulmanes. Y en tercer lugar para lograr el mayor apoyo posible. Ese fue el criterio.'

Esteban: ¿qué tal les fue?

Edgar: 'bien porque fue mucha gente y tuvo digamos cierta resonancia porque no dieron espacios en los medios del país. Pues muy breve pero apareció. Nos reunimos en el *World Trade Center* en la 100 y nos fuimos caminando hasta el Club. Que podía ser, de la Colonia y todos, unas de 200 a 300 personas calcularía yo'

Esteban: y todas eran

Edgar: 'Vinculadas, de alguna manera vinculadas. Si no había nadie gratuitamente, no.'

A.2.2. Jose

Chapter One

Esteban: ¿usted fue [al Encuentro Cultural Colombo-Árabe?

Jose: 'no, yo no fui pero no estaba aquí, estaba viajando en el Líbano... seis meses en el Líbano seis meses aquí (Colombia) desde 1990, pero sí supe de la reunión y dije está

muy bien, no hay ningún inconveniente mientras no toquen lo distintivo que es el libanés. Nosotros somos libaneses-árabes. Indudablemente somos de mucha ascendencia y mucha presencia árabe... pero somos libaneses antes que todo. [Libaneses antes que árabes]. Y entendieron, muchos entendieron. Muchos no han querido entender y, no que somos primero árabes dicen. No, somos primero libaneses después árabes, uno primero es americano pero después colombiano porque nació en América'.

Chapter Two

Esteban: ¿me puede contar sobre la fundación del Club?

Jose: '¡El Club!... En el año 50 más o menos que yo llegué aquí a Colombia, trataron de formar el primer Club. Lo llamamos Club Europeo digamos, duro como un año estuvimos en el Club Europeo y después dijimos, no vamos a tratar de fundar un club libanés. Nos reunimos e hicimos el primer club libanés con la presencia de... [dice varios nombres de Colombo-Libaneses] hicimos en el año 54 la primera reunión y en el 55 compramos el primer lote enfrente a Guaymaral... era grande. La Colonia en Bogotá todavía estaba con un complejo del nombre turco por la cosa de la política que había todavía de no mucha aceptación de los turcos y no había mucha gente que estaba entusiasmada con tener un Club propio. Pero se hizo una gran propaganda, hicimos grandes empresas en el año 58, 59, se hizo reinado del Club y se hizo una gran obra y se reunió mucha plata para hacer la construcción. Invertimos en aquel entonces una suma muy grande porque para aquel entonces invertir entre terreno y Club más o menos unos 2 millones y medio de pesos era mucha plata, porque con dos millones y medio de pesos (risas) es un puesto de un departamento. Y se montó el Club en esta época, pero lamentablemente hubo unos problemas internos de la colectividad y se paralizó el Club por falta de recursos y falta de gente que entraran al club. Porque la mayoría de la Colonia estaban metidos en Los Lagartos, en el Country, en varios clubes... todos los sobrinos míos y los primos estaban metidos en todos los clubes entonces no había un club específico. Entonces era más fácil entrar a cualquier club que montar un club nuevo con tan poca gente porque no había más de 100 personas que estaban haciendo el club campestre y esto es poco para un club campestre. Se necesitan 500 socios para que puedan andar. Entonces tuvimos en el año 64 un pequeño club, lo llamamos Centro Unión, en la Calle 39b con la Carrera 20, junto al *Park Way*. Allá hicimos una casa donde nos reunimos y llamamos este Centro Unión y al ver que si andaba que a la gente le gustaba reunirse, le gustaba jugar, hacer sus cartas, las fiestas y celebraciones de la colectividad para la fiesta patria del Líbano, la fiesta patria Colombiana, se hacía dentro del Club, entonces... viendo que sí se

necesitaba un Club en cambio de hacer un Club campestre un Club urbano digamos de Club social, resolvieron vender el Club. Lo vendimos a los Agustonianos [hay queda un colegio de los Agustonianos ahora] y compramos la casa de un señor que se llama Shaio, de apellido oriental judío. Y metimos la plata de la venta que fue por un millón setecientos mil pesos de aquel entonces, era mucha plata en el año 65, perdón 67, y la invertimos en la casa ya reformándola y haciéndola más adecuada a un Club, siendo que era muy grande. Pero se adecuo más al Club para fiestas y cosas por el estilo. Y se fundó el Club Colombo libanés de la calle 89 con la 9na [queda en la 87 con novena]. Y esto si es la historia del club pero lástima que se vendió este lote, que era muy grande era 35 hectáreas al principio... y era muy bonito indudablemente, seguía desde la carretera la autopista hasta la séptima, entre las dos paralelas y lo dividía la carrilera del tren. Era grande, 35 hectáreas de la tierra. Dejamos 17 hectáreas y vendimos la parte de abajo para la construcción, pero con todo eso no alcanzamos a terminarlo, entonces por esto fue la venta ya hecho el edificio, ya estaba hecho pero no había alma, no había gente porque la construcción se hacía pero se necesita gente, se necesita corazón para que fuera a andar y no había tanta gente para hacerlo andar. Entonces el club central se hizo allá, pero para mí personalmente me pareció que era un Club de carácter muy reducido para Club en si porque yo aspiraba a un Club digamos como Los Arrayanes, como el Country pero fuera de Bogotá, donde podían los hijos crecer mucho más abiertos a los deportes, a la equitación, todos esos deportes al aire libre que son necesarios para la juventud... En todo caso estamos en un Club central muy bonito, muy interesante. Pero tenemos que conformarnos con un club social no un club deportivo un club de carácter grande como lo tenemos en México, por ejemplo. Tenemos un Club Mexicano-libanés en la Ciudad de México impresionante, donde dentro de la misma ciudad es una ciudad prácticamente... lo mismo el famoso Club de Buenos Aires y sobretodo en Río de Janeiro y Sao Paulo, donde tenemos Montelibano que es un club muy bonito, es el más importante prácticamente de Sao Paulo, y en Río de Janeiro también el club Montelibano es de los más importantes, ¡es dónde arranca el carnaval!

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿me puede contar sobre la fundación del Club?

Jose: ¡El Club! eso si es simpático porque desde tiempos inmemorables, desde la primera presencia de los libaneses aquí trataron de fundar unas asociaciones. Llamaron la primera 'asociación de amistad colombo-libanesa, porque muchas libanesas se casaron con colombianos y muchas colombianas se casaron con libaneses viceversa. Usted sabe por ejemplo, su abuelo, el hermano de tu abuelo se casó con la hermana del presidente Echandía y hay mucha gente. Un sobrino mío se casó con la hija de Belisario

Betancourt, y muchos se han casado con los Santos y con muchas familias, Ospinas y por ese estilo. Entonces trataron de formar una asociación de amistad colombo-libanesa...'

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿qué pasó con la Unión [Libanesa Cultural Mundial]?

Jose: 'La unión prácticamente se paralizó, pero no se dejó de existir, siempre ha existido. Pero no era tan pujante porque hubo la influencia de la guerra desbarato también la presencia de la unión de los libaneses porque como se dividieron allá, se dividieron en todas partes. No únicamente en Colombia... Se paralizó entre el 75 y el 85. No se paralizó totalmente pero bajo el ritmo. Se hizo muchas reuniones, se hizo bastantes reuniones pero en Bogotá la presencia del Club influyó para que no haya presencia de la unión sino más bien del Club'.

Esteban: ¿y qué pasó en el 2006?

Jose: 'En el 2006 fui con mi familia, bastante gente que estaba con nosotros, y nos fuimos como todos los años íbamos y nos resultó con la guerra de Julio, el ataque de Hezbolá contra los judíos... Acabaron con la infraestructura libanesa que me sentí completamente incapacitado de venir con 12 personas que estaban conmigo del Líbano, entonces aquí [en Colombia] la colectividad, mis familiares y la gente que conocía y en especial le agradezco al ministro Juan Manuel Santos [ahora presidente] su preocupación que mandaran a recoger a los colombianos que quedaron allá. Teníamos todos los medios, teníamos los tiquetes de avión en primera clase para regresar [risas] y no podíamos salir porque acabaron con la infraestructura de las carreteras, de los aeropuertos, de todas partes y nos pusieron en un cerco, prácticamente que no dejaban que nadie nada. Los satélites manejaban lo que querían, mejor dicho podían bombardear a quien quieran. Entonces la presencia colombiana y la embajadora de Colombia, que ha sido una gran colaboradora del gobierno colombiano en el Medio Oriente, ayudo a que salieran un grupo de más de 100 personas colombianas del Líbano que estaban allá tomadas prácticamente de sorpresa. La aviación militar colombiana mando un avión de los grandes de transporte militar y nos sacaron por el puerto de Nataquiye en el norte del Líbano, en Siria y de ahí salimos hasta Zaragoza. Allá yo por mi edad y yo tengo una fractura en la rodilla no pude seguir y me vine en un avión comercial de Madrid hasta Colombia. Pero fue una odisea muy triste y muy dolorosa para mí, y jure no regresar al Líbano. Pero lógico me toca ir a ver a mi hermano, el ultimo que queda allá...'

Esteban: ¿ha votado en Líbano?

Jose: 'sí, yo voté en elecciones de Colombia en el Líbano. Yo cuando estaba, por eso ahorita tengo que volver a escribirme en Colombia porque escribí mi cedula en la embajada y voté allá por las elecciones del referendo del Presidente Uribe que lo apoyo en todo sentido. Lo apoyo en la segunda re-elección, apoyo al presidente y lo considero un gran presidente'.

Esteban: ¿y para el gobierno libanés?

Jose: 'Al gobierno libanés no, sí únicamente sí voté por mi representante en el año 72, vote en el 80 y pico, cuando estaba allá y se presentaba una elección digamos... he votado. Pero aquí no tenemos derecho a votar, afuera del Líbano y esto lo estamos luchando para que sí tengamos derecho como todos los demás países del mundo. Los ciudadanos que son conscientes tienen derecho a votar en la embajada, esto es normal. Y los libaneses lamentablemente no nos han dado este derecho a votar en las embajadas. Nos gustaría que algún día lo logran. Esto lo estamos luchando no es que esté fuera de la idea, hay mucha gente que está explicando porque se debe hacer. Sin ninguna calidad de fanatismo ni diferenciación de religión, al contrario...'

Esteban: ¿Por qué está pasando esto ahora?

Jose: 'Eso porque precisamente nos estamos dando cuenta de que hay necesidad de presencia, porque allá ya no hay prácticamente presencia de cristianos en el Líbano, tenemos que tenerla por lo menos aquí según nuestras costumbres antiguas. Es bonito tenerlas. También tenemos la presencia de nuestro Club, que es un club social, no hay ningún problema, se reúnen los de origen y se charlan como le digo la diferencia entre la sociedad colombiana y la sociedad libanesa es nula, no hay. Son la misma calidad de gente, son las mismas formas de vida. No hay diferencia, usted ve aquí que somos la misma cosa de vivir como cualquier tipo del país, autóctono. Necesariamente necesitamos que no se pierda la presencia de la idea del digamos los primeros que han llegado aquí ya perdieron. Porque si hubiéramos hecho una iglesia maronita hace unos 100 años sería como esta en Argentina, como están en México, como esta en los Estados Unidos, hay presencia... Entonces el catolicismo es una cosa que vale la pena mantener...'

Esteban: ¿usted fue [al Encuentro Cultural Colombo-Árabe?

Jose: 'no, yo no fui pero no estaba aquí, estaba viajando en el Líbano... seis meses en el Líbano seis meses aquí (Colombia) desde 1990, pero sí supe de la reunión y dije está muy bien, no hay ningún inconveniente mientras no toquen lo distintivo que es el libanés...'

A.2.3. Maria Camila

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y digamos en tu casa qué cosas son libanesas?

Maria Camila: 'En la casa de mi abuela y en la mía todavía hay mesas con cuadros de maderas, escritorios también, bandejas doradas para servir la comida, jarras árabes con copas, vajilla especial para eso. Además, mis quince fueron con vestido árabe y joyas árabes, como princesa árabe. Me regalaron un vestido del Líbano para mis quince años, la fiesta fue árabe'.

Esteban: ¿Por qué está pasando ahorita?

Maria Camila: '...antes se hacían otro tipo de eventos [en el Club], eran más privados como de estilo judío, en el club. Las presentaciones eran privadas, el club era muy cerrado, de libaneses para libaneses. En estos últimos años le toco abrirse, porque el club se volvió solo de viejos y a los jóvenes ya no les gustaba ir, y ahora cualquiera puede ir al club, hacer eventos allá. Antes era muy cerrado, era un 'ghetto', pero le toco abrirse y se remodelo para que fuera más atractivo, para hacer fiestas, también comida libanesa y comida internacional'.

Esteban: ¿y las organizaciones?

Maria Camila: '...digamos mí mamá pertenece a la unión de damas libanesas y mi mamá asiste a las misas, a los almuerzos, a ese tipo de cosas. Yo no fui a la misa y mi mamá tampoco porque no estábamos en Bogotá. Lo que pasa es que hay un problema ahí, la mayoría de esas señoras son amas de casa y mi mama trabaja todo el día entonces mi mama no tiene como el tiempo de salir al medio día a echar té y galletas'

Chapters Five and Seven

Esteban: ¿y fuiste a la marcha?

Maria Camila: 'sí yo fui a esa marcha y tengo pines y de todo. Sí yo digamos a mis amigas las involucre en eso, dije, como, me compran el pin y me apoyan. Yo las involucre en eso, digamos yo a mis amigas como les dije miren esto es súper grave, digamos como a mi comunidad, porque digamos mis compañeras sí ¿por qué tú tienes este pin?... yo en la parte que estuve fue al frente del WTC y era como, ósea, hubo gente que no era libanesa o sea gente que uno dice venga y nos apoya, y me encanta como la solidaridad en ese tipo de cosas y era como para hacer un llamada, como para hacer sentir la comunidad libanesa de que pues así no estuviéramos allá pues nos

afecta que el país al que muchos y que personalmente al que uno se pueda sentir identificado este en semejante conflicto y pues realmente es verdad, ósea el Líbano y la población civil está en medio de un conflicto en el cual el gobierno no es que promueva ni nada sino es una vaina impresionante, entonces me gusto como el llamado o sea el 4 de febrero yo me acorde mucho de eso, me sentía como es muy parecido, uno creería que la comunidad, yo dije *juepucha* la gente es pues como muy solidaria en ese tipo de cosas y me gusto ósea que no es solo uno y que la gente acá también se sintió afectada, y es que fue terrible, o sea... me acuerdo que esas semanas tuvimos constante comunicación con Paris y hablamos todos los días, me acuerdo mucho de eso porque nosotros hablábamos mucho con ellos... mi tío (me dijo) vamos a marchar, y yo (dije) bueno vamos y vamos al club después a almorzar. El Club es el punto de encuentro’.

A.2.4. Monica

Chapter One

Esteban: ¿es colonia o comunidad?

Monica: 'No sé, ¡hasta ahora fue que se inventaron ponerle de título a nuestro entorno la palabra comunidad! ¡Eso es un invento reciente! comunidad. Toda la vida, desde que nacimos, se dijo la colonia libanesa y los paisanos. Toda la vida. Tanto que mucha gente amiga me dice ¿usted por qué cuando dice colonia o cuando dice paisanos de una vez piensa que son paisanos libaneses? Jamás se me ha ocurrido decirle a alguien de Girardot paisano, no... aquí a poco se les ocurrió que comunidad, eso nunca decíamos así.'

Chapter Five

Monica: ‘...Nunca me he desvinculado del Club Libanés, mi papá fue fundador. En algún momento tuve que dejar club para ocuparme de otras cosas, como carrera y hermanos menores. Pero hace 20 años el club llamo a los hijos mayores de socios activos y fundadores para que recuperaran acciones. Y desde entonces no me ha desvinculado’.

Esteban: ¿y me puedes contar de las Damas?

Monica: 'Las Damas cumplieron 20 años de fundadas, no soy una socia activa pero siempre ayudo. La Asociación de Damas tiene sus actividades para recoger fondos para ayudar al hospital santa clara, o para ayudar a las familias libanesas que tengan algún miembro, como pobre avergonzante. No sé si entiende esa figura, personas que han

tenido medios económicos, entran a una mala situación y por su rango no pueden ir a pedir. Eso se llama el pobre vergonzante'.

Esteban: ¿y qué conexiones tienes con lo libanés?

Monica: 'Pues libros, CDs etcétera, todos estos son nostalgias, ¿no? en últimas son nostalgias porque tienen que ver con la infancia y la juventud de uno. Y dentro de mis hermanos que somos 7... si usted entrevistara a los 7 encontraría diferencias. Por ejemplo mi hermano ha viajado por el mundo... y nunca ha ido al Líbano. Entonces dentro de los mismos hermanos usted encuentra gente llena de nostalgia como yo, y totalmente entendida en esa cultura como yo y unos otros, y encuentra a gente o a personas como mi hermano que no ha sentido esa curiosidad'.

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿y la Asociación de Nuestra Señora del Líbano?

Monica: 'Nuestra Señora del Líbano para hecha traer el rito maronita a Colombia. No solo por el rito, sino porque significa también la unión, el aglutinamiento de la colonia y para que no se pierdan las costumbres en los descendientes. Antes se hicieron algunas misas con el obispo de México, pero esta fue la primera dada por un párroco en la parroquia. Nosotras hablamos con el cardenal y el nuncio para la autorización de usar la iglesia... Acompañamos a los padres para ayudarles con la visa. El padre tenía visa de turista pero necesitaba visa religiosa para poder firmar actas, sacramentos, etc.'

Monica: '... cuando empezó la guerra. Yo mande a hacer unas calcomanías que repartimos en Bogotá y mandamos para la costa con 'cese al fuego' con la bandera del Líbano. No me pregunte cuantos carros en Bogotá circularon con eso...yo también estuve en la marcha... lindísima con bandera del Líbano y todo'.

Esteban: ¿y fuiste al Encuentro Colombo-Árabe?

Monica: 'Yo organicé la comitiva familiar más grande, con 14 de mi familia. Bellísimos los encuentros son llenos de nostalgia, de historia del Líbano, de un querer unir a los países árabes a ese sentimiento de estar por fuera del país, pero tener sus raíces en otro sitio. Uno fue en Barranquilla y otro en Cartagena. Ahora queremos que el próximo sea en Bogotá. Algunos de la colonia me criticaron por asistir a eso porque la organizadora es palestina, pero yo no manejo esas diferencias'

A.2.5. Gabriel

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿se siente parte de la comunidad?

Gabriel: 'no, no me siento parte de la comunidad. No y me interesa mantener un contacto cordial, pero no me interesa pertenecer. Esos sentidos de pertenencia no, pero ya es por filosofía propia y casi hasta mi abuelo también era así, no le interesaba pertenecer a clubes y cosas. Como que no, no sé, no me nace, me parece que es un pensamiento sectario que no me gusto del Líbano. Le repito, yo llegue enamorado del Líbano, pero puedo decir que ese rasgo de su personalidad me parece detestable, que es un país tan sectario.

Esteban: y personalmente, ¿se siente algo más que colombiano?

...

Gabriel: 'yo llegué aquí a la oficina y ya la confirmación de que ese apodo que me habían puesto si me pertenecía. Más en la embajada, la persistencia de que sacara el pasaporte era confirmación que ese pasado sí me pertenecía. Esta entrevista, es la confirmación que ese pasado sí pertenece. El hecho que me quieran vincular a los clubes libaneses, que me quieran hacer partícipe del colegio libanés. Bueno creo que ahí hay un elemento que uno puede decir que los libaneses son buenos negociantes y claro que quieran un periodista en la comunidad, de eso se puede sacar mucho provecho. Pues no voy a decir que ellos me quieren porque de repente conocí a mi familia libanesa. Pero no, me están vinculando. A la inauguración de la iglesia maronita de Colombia y todo eso. Que me hagan partícipe de eso pues dice hombre, ese pasado es mío. Es el 25% de mi vida pero por los rasgos, por las cosas que han caracterizado mi vida creo que puedo expandir un poco más y decir que soy más libanés, ósea que soy migrante sin saberlo... que no se puede quedar quieto... bueno y la acogida que me han dado, que ha sido impresionante.'

Esteban: ¿y fue a los encuentros colombo-árabes?

Gabriel: 'no fui. No, de hecho yo no quiero meterme tanto en el cuento. Quiero decir, es que siento que me obligan a ser sectario. Entonces me obligan a hablar bien del Líbano, y yo ante todo quiero mantener mi periodismo. [Una señora libanesa] me critico mucho mi primer artículo sobre el Líbano, me decía (pone acento libanés) "usted porqué escribió que hay prostitutas en el Líbano", pues porque yo vi prostitutas en el Líbano, salí del hotel fenicia y ahí estaban las prostitutas. "Ellas no son libanesas, son rusas". Mire igual que los colombianos, le decía a ella, es que yo antes de ser libanés o ser descendiente, soy periodista. Entonces siento que todo esto como que me puede

conducir a un camino que no es fácil. Prefiero quedarme con mi oficio que ser el relacionista público de la comunidad... Mi identidad de periodista es mucho más fuerte.'

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿Cuál cree que ha sido el impacto de los libaneses y sus descendientes en Colombia?

Gabriel: 'mire, Colombia es un país cerrado, a causa de su geografía y desarrollo. Creo que los libaneses fueron fundamentales para demostrarle a los colombianos que el mundo iba un poquito más allá de sus tres cordilleras. Me parece que eso fue importante. Pero creo que el libanés encajo muy bien en la cultura colombiana porque son muy parecidos... los índices de depresión, ansiedad y trastornos mentales en el Líbano son los mismos que en Colombia, lo cual me hace pensar que había una empatía impresionante... allá los libaneses discriminan por religión, cuando fuimos al Líbano nos decían que no fuéramos al sur porque estaba lleno de musulmanes. En Colombia existe también esa discriminación, no con religión pero con otras cosas.'

A.2.6. Jacqueline

Chapter One

Esteban: ¿y sirio-libaneses o árabes?

Jacqueline: 'los Sirio-libaneses no existen, o unos u otros. Cuando Francia toma el protectorado los pasaportes dicen Siria y Líbano. Pero no es gentilismo. Turcos es peor porque étnicamente también es incorrecto. Árabe es como latinoamericanos, libanés es una comunidad adentro de árabe. No se pueden contrarrestar.'

Esteban: ¿y es comunidad o colonia?

Jacqueline: 'Comunidad y colonia son lo mismo, simplemente que comunidad es más actual. Colonia se hablaba desde antes.'

Chapters Two and Seven

Esteban: bueno, ¿y me puede contar de la unión?

Jacqueline: 'La unión se fundó en los 50s para mantener una relación entre ellos, con Líbano y con el país que los acogió. Las guerras, los conflictos etcétera diluyeron la unión por diferencias políticas. Después del bombardeo israelita nos juntamos varios amigos libaneses en Colombia y eso dio origen para la unión. Seguimos con la unión para tener figura jurídica y poder mandar dinero más fácilmente. Para que hacer algo nuevo si la unión ya había existido. Entonces retomaron los principios filosóficos de la

unión, para fomentar lazos entre libaneses y el país que los acogió; entre libaneses y generaciones futuras; promocionar la cultura.’

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿es socia del Club?

Jacqueline: ‘soy socia y mi papá fue fundador del club. Yo fui presidenta del Club, y soy hija de presidente y hermana de presidente... el rol de presidente incluye la administración, al fin el club es la casa de todos y así se comportan. El fin del club es para la promoción de la cultura para nuevas generaciones y mantener un vínculo con raíces. Se hacen eventos sociales y está abierto para las organizaciones de la colonia. Para que los hijos se conozcan y mantener contactos con otros. Es un punto de encuentro’.

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿y ha ido a otros eventos, cómo los encuentros o la misa?

Jacqueline: ‘Yo hubiera querido ir a los encuentros pero no estaba en Colombia. No voy a misa. Mi papá era maronita, me case con maronita, mis hijas nacieron maronitas, yo respeta la fe maronita. Pero no me gusta la religión en general. Quiero a los libaneses sin importar la religión... Yo veo ahí más promoción de la iglesia que de colonia...’

Chapter Seven

Esteban: pero la historia del Líbano parece contraria a la unificación

Jacqueline: ‘mire la guerra del 75 fue en Líbano, entre libaneses y fue por el contexto en el Medio Oriente, más que todo la presencia de Israel. Los libaneses se dividieron políticamente y todavía hay problemas. Sin solución al pueblo palestino siempre habrá conflicto en Oriente Medio. El Líbano es el único país pluralista política y religiosamente. Pero el conflicto que dividió, ahora une.’

A.2.7 Enrique

Chapter Four

Esteban: ¿usted qué se siente?

Enrique: ‘yo me siento colombiano, pero con glóbulos rojos libaneses. Sí, bueno la vida me dio la oportunidad, yo soy 25% libanés. Sí porque soy hijo de un hijo de un libanés. Pero mis hijos son 75% libaneses’

Esteban: ¿entonces usted se siente colombiano?

Enrique: 'sí claro, sí yo soy ciento por ciento colombiano, eso sí pregúnteme lo que quiera del Líbano y se lo contesto, siento mucho orgullo de tener un pedacito de sangre libanesa, pero sí soy colombiano. Soy ciento por ciento colombiano.'

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿Por qué es casado con descendiente?

Enrique: 'bueno primero la familia de mi suegra con mi familia se conocían... toda la vida por el club libanés y por la amistad, se han conocido de toda la vida. Mi abuelo con el papá, eran muy amigos, departíamos aquí. Mi abuelo y mi tío son fundadores del Club Libanés y se fueron estrechando lazos... Yo ya la conocía de chiquitica [a la esposa] y jugaba con ella en el jardín de mi casa... y nos enamoramos y nos casamos, por coincidencias de la vida. No como mucha gente piensa, ahí como se dice, de puertas pa' fuera, que fue arreglado. No, eso no'.

A.2.8. Lucia

Chapter Two

Esteban ¿bueno y ha habido racismo?

Lucia: 'sí claro, claro en la época que ellos inmigraron... claro que sí, aquí la gente era xenofóbica definitivamente, de hecho la expresión de turco era una expresión despectiva, y ahora que usted lo pregunta no hace mucho después de este libro que hizo la señora Pilar Vargas acerca de las migración de los árabes a Colombia, y leyendo lo que la gente de alguna manera sufrió en la xenofobia, por la xenofobia, es que nosotros construimos hoy en día una razón más para que nuestro padres no nos hubieran enseñado a hablar el árabe, para que no sufriéramos la discriminación que sufrieron ellos recién llegados... en alguna ocasión cuentan que había una gran fiesta en el club Ocaña y mi papa y mi tío, que teóricamente ya estaban aceptados dentro de la sociedad, quisieron ir a la fiesta y no los dejaron entrar por ser turcos. Pues eso dio lugar a que al día siguiente mi papa y mi tío decidieron fundar un club en donde fuera bienvenido todo el mundo, incluyendo los extranjeros, y es el club que hoy en día existe que se llama el club del comercio de Ocaña, y en donde se hizo desde entonces hubo un énfasis por el deporte, por el arte, por la música, además del tema social y es un club que tiene unos campos grandísimos... sin embargo debo decir muy claramente que jamás oímos de boca de parte de mi familia nada diferente al agradecimiento y al amor que tienen por la gente de Colombia y por lo bien recibidos que se sintieron. Esta anécdota que le estoy contando y los cuentos de la discriminación los sabemos por otras personas o porque la historia misma lo cuenta, pero no porque mi familia alguna

vez hubiera hablado mal y hubiera difundido entre nosotros el sectarismo o las angustias que hubieran pasado en algún momento, nunca'.

Chapters Two and Five

Esteban: ¿y hace parte de otras organizaciones?

Lucia: 'sí, de todo, todo lo que sea por una causa noble y objetiva ahí estoy yo. Yo desde que se fundó la Asociación de Damas Colombo Libanesas entidad sin ánimo de lucro que también trabaja para trabajo solidario hacia personas menos favorecidas. Hace 21 años se fundó la asociación de damas y desde entonces yo pertenezco a la asociación he sido presidenta y miembro activo durante los 21 años de su existencia que trabajamos como le digo para personas menos favorecidas, ayudamos a familias venidas a menos tanto de la colonia como colombianos, y principalmente trabajamos para el pabellón infantil del hospital santa clara que trabaja para niños de estrato 0, 1 y 2. Del club porque sí... he sido miembro activo de la colonia, en la antigua Unión Libanesa Juvenil también tuve mientras existió pertenecía, y actualmente esto [ULCM], la embajada igual es parte como de mi dinámica... como le digo siempre recalando que sea un tema objetivo, sin tendencias 'parcialistas', siempre estoy pero mis dos entidades así que pueda decir claramente la asociación de damas libanesas y la unión libanesa cultural.'

Chapters Four and Five

Esteban: ¿de qué se trataría este congreso [de la ULCM]?

Lucia: 'es un propósito y no es diferente al mismo objetivo de la misma Unión que es el reconocernos el re-encontrarnos o el conocernos y encontrarnos, el que nos unamos como una familia en el extranjero... en general ese tipo de congresos es eso, a través de la diversión afianzar los lazos. Y es una manera divertida además de que esto se crea como una bola de nieve, pues para todos es lógico que si estamos contentos en un ambiente con nuestros amigos y nuestros amigos igual quieren pertenecer o los traemos para que pertenezcan a ese ambiente agradable... Algo de lo que estamos haciendo es para las juventudes eh ciclos de charlas, más que la conferencia pesada y eso, son ciclos de charlas con personas normalmente escogemos que sean personas fuera de la colonia para que el tema sea un poco más objetivo, en donde se hablan históricamente el trascender del Líbano, la iglesia de oriente en occidente, quienes somos, de donde vinimos, porque las segundas y terceras generaciones desafortunadamente están perdiendo sus vínculos a un sentimental con el Líbano, porque le decía al principio muchos nos casamos con no-libaneses entonces pues ya empiezan las otras culturas a participar en el diario vivir y a veces las mismas

ocupaciones pues alejan un poco este, este es nuestro objetivo, que no se pierda la cultura y que los que no saben lo aprendan y los que lo tienen conocido no lo olviden y lo vivan permanentemente'.

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y qué tanto se siente parte de la comunidad?

Lucia: 'Yo, es decir sin ser arrogante, yo contestaría que yo que yo me siento la comunidad, siempre he estado muy cerca de todos, siempre me han gustado las personas mayores... cuando nosotros éramos pequeños era como digo yo una época dorada dentro de la colonia, porque era la época en que estaban los inmigrantes o la primera generación pero estaban los viejos las personas que realmente inmigraron y que llegaron a este país a hacer sus vidas. Nosotros siendo hijos de ellos pues no conocimos y nos acercamos muchísimo porque entre todos éramos la familia que habían dejado allá... En esa época se crea al club precisamente para que fuera la casa de todos, y en ese club hoy en día esta casa, pues aquí veníamos todos y aquí crecimos todos, y como le digo como eran los inmigrantes, eran las primeras generaciones pues entonces era la razón de ser, era el sitio de encuentro, aquí crecimos todos, aquí se casaron, aquí se enovieron, aquí se pelearon, aquí todo y esos son los amigos que hoy en día por ejemplo somos los que en este momento somos de una edad madura que estamos retomando ojala de la misma manera que los viejos, este tema de los libaneses y la comunidad. Era una colonia muy unida desafortunadamente toda esa época, pues los mayores han muerto y muchos nos hemos casado con no libaneses. Sin embargo yo he persistido porque me siento muy feliz, porque acá no se ha hecho nada sin que yo participe, porque me encanta, porque la cultura libanesa me encanta, porque los paisanos me encantan, porque los quiero muchísimo, y que rol tengo yo, yo diría que el que necesiten de mí. yo he participado y participo en prácticamente todo lo que sucede alrededor de la colonia mientras tenga un objetivo claro sin tendencias políticas ni religiosas, porque presumo de ser una libanesa con un sentimiento nacional, en mi familia nunca ha habido discriminación por religiones ni por políticas ni como colombiano ni como libanés y eso es lo que yo siento y así mismo actúo en consecuencia, de manera pues que rol tengo yo, soy miembro de la colonia de la cual me siento muy orgullosa, y participo pues en todo lo que pueda y de acuerdo a mis capacidades'.

Chapters Five and Seven

Esteban: ¿y por qué volvió ULCM?

Lucia: 'bueno la Unión Libanesa en Colombia era muy importante incluso con mucha influencia sobre las otras uniones libanesas en el mundo. Desafortunadamente por los

conflictos que sucedieron en el Líbano y en el mundo entero realmente porque la guerra y la distorsión del problema que hubo en el Líbano creó igualmente diferencias entre los libaneses emigrantes. ¿En qué sentido? que se empezó a rivalizar entre musulmanes, católico, entre el del norte y el del sur, entre aquel que era pro causa de la una y pro causa de la otra, cosa que antes no sucedía en el Líbano, y los inmigrantes han sido un ejemplo absoluto de la convivencia pluralista, entonces eso produjo un rompimiento en el seguir de la unión libanesa y digamos que quedo la gente pero no se siguió trabajando. Entonces en el verano de 2006 arranca la guerra y eso hace que nos encontremos muchas personas que desde hace mucho tiempo no nos veíamos, porque realmente el momento fue demasiado dramático y dolido por todos nosotros y como de costumbre este es el sitio de reunión a.C. empezó a llegar la gente porque sabían que a.C. iban a encontrar alguien a quien preguntar quehacer, ¿sí? como bien dice usted ese fue el origen de este renacer que fue realmente en marzo de 2007 que renació nuevamente... cuando legalmente se constituye la nueva ULCM en Colombia, y que estamos haciendo, pues tratar de continuar ese trabajo que es subjetivo, que es reunir a la colonia, es establecer la base de datos para tener un censo de los libaneses en Colombia, a partir de esa base de datos pues lógicamente podremos continuar con el objetivo que es afianzar los lazos y ojala en caso de necesidad pues ayudar a la persona que necesite

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿y ha ido a la misa?

Lucia: 'voy a ser muy sincera, yo considero que las necesidades de Colombia y el mundo son tan grandes que lo último que necesita cualquier pueblo es una iglesia más. Yo creo que primero se puede compartir los templos que ya existen para hacer el ritual, la iglesia maronita no compite con la iglesia católica como tal, hace parte de la iglesia católica, sencillamente el ritual tiene alguna diferencia en su idioma y su procedimiento, pero somos la misma iglesia. Por lo tanto yo no puedo, para mí no es necesario digámoslo así, identificarme como maronita, primero porque hay un solo dios para todas las religiones.... segundo, como le digo creo que hay otras necesidades más importantes que crear un templo, tercero si vamos a hacer un tema de la parroquia maronita que no sea excluyente porque en el momento en que hablamos de nuestra señora del Líbano, iglesia maronita inmediatamente los musulmanes quedan excluidos aunque la misión maronita pretende trabajar para el libanés en general, cuando eso se dé yo participo en eso. Pero en el momento en que polarice a los libaneses no hago parte de ese movimiento precisamente porque yo soy libanesa no soy maronita. El maronitismo es un algo más pero no la esencia de mí ser. Además honestamente lo

digo la colonia en Colombia hasta ahora nunca se ha diferenciado por maronita. Todo lo contrario, católicos, o musulmanes, pero nunca había diferencia entre nosotros. O sea, yo no voy a la mezquita pero tampoco me impiden entrar, y ellos entran a la iglesia católica y de hecho estamos siempre juntos en los matrimonios, en los entierros, en los bautizos, en las primeras comuniones o en las fiestas de ellos. O sea que no ha habido discriminación, no tenemos por qué empezar a parcializar ese tipo de cosas, es mi pensar. No quiere decir que no sea una cosa importante y para los que pertenecen a ello si significa mucho y ojala realmente haga lo que si están diciendo que van a hacer que es ampliarlo a todos sin discriminar los ritos religiosos. Ojalá sea una realidad. Mientras no esté así, es decir iría cuando tengo que ir, si muere alguien, si se casa alguien y se va a hacer en ese rito lo hago de la misma manera que lo haría en cualquier otra iglesia cristiana'.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y todo esto está pasando ahora o es mi percepción?'

Lucia: 'no, sí tiene razón. Yo pienso que está pasando ahora y creo que son muchas cosas las que se juntan. Bueno, yo creo que si está pasando algo y no solamente aquí, creo que a nivel mundial. Pero hablando de acá, como le decía en un principio nosotros somos una generación que crecimos entre nosotros porque nuestros papas y nuestros abuelos eran los emigrantes, entonces crearon la familia alrededor y nosotros crecimos dentro de ese momento de familiaridad entre los inmigrantes. Pero luego viene, y esa es una responsabilidad nuestra realmente, nosotros crecemos, nos casamos indistintamente con descendientes de libaneses, con libaneses o con extranjeros o de otra parte del mundo, y los avatares de la vida, las circunstancias de la vida ya eh traen otros objetivos del diario vivir. Yo presumo de no haber sido así... somos varios los que siempre hemos estado acá, pero no es la gran mayoría. La mayoría de las personas ya cuando crecieron se casan con personas no libanesas y empiezan a adaptar otra cultura, sus oficios, sus profesiones, los alejan y realmente hay un lapso de unos bastantes años diría yo que reúne practicante una generación y quizás hasta dos generaciones en donde hay un vacío completo acerca del tema libanés. a pesar de que esto ha existido siempre, hay deserción en los accionistas, la gente tienen otros objetivos, buscan o prefieren ser de clubes campestres y no pertenecer a este, porque pues este es un club social en la mitad de la ciudad y esto, aunque parezca tonto, una sede implica el reunir a las personas. Entonces se volvió la sede en donde los mayores venían a jugar cartas y donde los jóvenes y menores no tenían lugar... Desafortunadamente viene la guerra y esa guerra fue cuando supremamente imprevista y tan descontrolada que eh hace que las personas que en algún momento antes se

sentían muy libaneses y que habían dejado ese sentimiento como a un ladito por sus vidas propias (tose) es ese momento renace ese amor y ese dolor, y ese rechazo absoluto, una cantidad de sentimientos que más que otra cosa hace que se reúnan las personas para ver que se puede hacer. entonces empieza a haber todo ese trabajo que se hizo en ese momento de verano de 2006, y a raíz de eso empezamos a recordar las cosas que se habían olvidado, porque entonces empezamos a cantar, empezamos a bailar, empezamos las reuniones que entre los árabes, entre los libaneses, entre los mediterráneos en general son bulliciosas, entonces la gente empieza a encontrar como alguien dijo una vez que me encanta la frase, las células se encuentran, y cuando usted se encuentran con un paisano, así no lo haya visto o no sabe si lo conoció alguna vez, igual inmediatamente hay un engrane que yo no sabría cómo decirlo pero es una verdad, eso pasa en serio entre nosotros. Entonces usted se sienta y es como si fuera el amigo de toda la vida, como si fuera el hermano de toda la vida, hay una integración rápida somos gritones, somos susceptibles, entendemos nuestras buenas y nuestras malas, y sobretodo nos reunimos en los momentos de penuria y dolor. Coinciden con un momento histórico en el mundo, porque si usted se da cuenta en este momento todo lo que es árabe está de moda, entonces pues yo creo que también todo eso hace que se muevan las fibras y que diga un momentico primero lo que está mostrando del mundo árabe no es completamente la realidad, porque muestran una parranda de locos, todos terroristas, todas las mujeres son locas tapadas, y nada que ver con la verdad. Y segundo hombre porque no recordamos que nuestro orgullo y parte de lo que somos si no es todo es gracias a dónde venimos, es mucho lo que tenemos que recoger y agradecer de nuestro ancestro árabe y la moda y el momento y todas las cosas coinciden y yo creo que todo son una seria de granitos que se van formando para un todo y hace que además nosotros igual caminemos en ese mismo sentido'.

Esteban: ¿me puede contar de la Unión?

Lucia: '...hacia finales de los años 50 principios de los 60's estos inmigrantes que le cuento incluyendo mi papa empiezan a tener esta inquietud de ver que el Líbano tiene más hijos afuera que adentro del territorio. Todavía no se han sucedido las guerras... entonces en aquel momento varios de los personajes de la época entre los libaneses emigrantes, deciden reunirse y crean una entidad un rol donde el libanés emigrante tenga una fuera importante y trabaje en pro del Líbano como sus hijos de ultramar. Tan es así que es la única entidad no gubernamental que esta aceptada y aprobada por el gobierno libanés, la Unión existe en todas partes del mundo y tiene la base central en Beirut. Entonces se crea una seria de estatutos y de todo que se aplican de acuerdo a cada país, por supuesto siguiendo las leyes locales, pero en general que es, es

sencillamente una entidad que quiere mantener viva las tradiciones y culturas del libanés emigrante que pretende mantener reunida la colonia, trabajar para ellos y por ellos, al nivel cultural, al nivel laboral si se puede, simplemente a nivel fraternal como lo sentimos porque el mundo árabe y el Líbano tiene un concepto muy importante de lo que es la amistad y los amigos son hermanos y las familias son todavía, todavía siguen siendo los núcleos real de las sociedades, todavía tenemos la cultura familiar, en el mundo árabe en general y el Líbano no es la excepción. entonces parte de los objetivos claros de la unión libanesa es propender por la unión de los inmigrantes en la localidad a la que se pertenezca, y por supuesto trabajar en un pro de las circunstancias que puedan favorecer al Líbano como territorio libre y soberano, sin tendencias políticas ni religiosas’.

Esteban: ¿y cuál sería la diferencia [del congreso de la Unión Libanesa] con el congreso Colombo-Árabe?

Lucia: ‘Primero porque el congreso de la Unión Libanesa solo aglutinaría a los libaneses y sus descendientes. El Colombo-Árabe reúne a todo el medio oriente, cosa que me parece maravillosa y nosotros no es que seamos excluyentes sino que la unión pues es para los libaneses eso es una diferencia ya categórica. Estos Congresos Colombo-Árabes han sido muy lindos, muy exitosos, pero se han dirigido mucho más al homenaje hacia personajes que realmente han hecho historia en Colombia cosa que me parece maravillosa resaltar los méritos que tienen porque es mucho lo que la gente árabe ha hecho en este país, árabe en general. Nosotros no creo que el primer congreso estemos dados para dar tantos homenajes sino más bien para el encuentro fraternal. Además el congreso colombo-árabe llevo a aglutinar cinco o seis mil asistentes de todo el país incluso trajeron personas de fuera con unas conferencias de personajes importantísimos de mérito internacional. No, entre nosotros mismos nos gusta más que los pocos patriarcas que quedan en nuestra la colonia sean ellos los de alguna manera sean los homenajeados, es un poco un tema más familiar, ¿no?’

Chapter Eight

Esteban: ‘¿y si yo le preguntara qué se siente?’

Lucia: ‘total, yo siento, es decir tengo el sentido de pertenencia real y lo siento para las dos patrias realmente. Porque estando aquí la añoranza del Líbano y el sufrimiento de todo lo que sucede allá es real cuando se del tema o de persona que vienen de allá o que están allá o que sucesos que acontecen los siento como propio. Me siento feliz con los éxitos lloro con las tragedias. Y lo mismo ni hablar de Colombia.

A.2.9. Sofia and Isaac

Chapter One

Esteban: '¿quiénes son parte de la colonia?'

Isaac: la colonia se considera la colonia libanesa todo apellido árabe

Sofia: libanés

Isaac: Todo apellido libanés. Ahora, el quien quiere involucrarse y entrar en acción digamos con, todo el mundo es orgulloso de su apellido, especialmente los que son mestizos, eh mezclados, ¿no? eh son orgullosos al decir que son de origen libanés. Y lo que más lo identifica es la comida, digamos buscan por donde para decir ese es comida de mis antepasados.'

Chapters Two and Five

Esteban: ¿y otras actividades [de la Asociación de Damas Libanesas]?

Sofia: 'Otra actividad que hacemos, se sostienen varias familias de la colonia que son vergonzantes, entonces usted les pasa mensualmente una suma de dinero para su sostenimiento. Otra cosa cuando hay alguna cosa entonces en el país o ahora en el Líbano también, entonces se apoya ¿no? Entonces ¿qué hacemos para lograr esa plata? Hacemos bingos, hacemos bazares, cuando se hizo esa excursión al Líbano, así fue digamos yo la organicé y nos fuimos 15-16 personas... Con esa plata compramos artesanías en el Líbano y la trajimos para acá a vender, entonces ahí iniciamos también la traída de artesanías del Líbano de manteles, de cosas típicas de allá, y entonces eso es otra forma también de coleccionar fondos para las actividades'.

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y quién iba a las clases [de cocina]?

Sofia: ¿A las clases mías? Mire yo nunca puse un aviso en el periódico ni nada. Primero digamos amigas, y la amiga iba diciéndola a su amiga, mamas de compañeros de mis hijos, que yo prefería que vinieran a trabajar en mi casa y no que mis hijos fueran a otros sitios, entonces siempre ellos llegaban y yo les ofrecía su empanada, digamos para los cumpleaños y todo eso, y entonces muchas de las mamás de ellos, hermanas. Y también es la obra con, yo soy del Opus Dei entonces yo doy todo mi eso para becas, me encanta la educación la formación de la gente entonces yo doy esa plata para ayudar a formar gente de educación. Entonces muchas de mis amigas en la obra y conocidas digamos se fue corriendo la voz y la voz y, y les ha encanto mi comida, entonces pues eso. Y muchas que son casadas con libaneses, esas que les encante porque, por ejemplo, ahí una a veces que: "yo le aprendí todo a mi suegra", y alguien le

dijo vaya, entonces y le digo la verdad y la cocine diferente, porque se había ido desvirtuando mucho, ¿ve? entonces ya la da sin ningún egoísmo. Un día alguien me dijo, “¿pero usted no se guarda ningún secreto?” le dije: “¡pues no se trata de guardarse secretos!” Hay algunos datos que me reservo, que son muy poquitos con recetas de familia, entonces esos si no los he divulgado, pero de resto sí y me encanta cuando me dicen, por ejemplo ahorita con el libro, "hay hice esta receta y me salió perfecta" ¿no? Entonces ya que la gente aprende a comer la comida del libanesa como debe ser, auténtica'.

Esteban: '¿y qué más hacen las damas?'

Sofia: 'Bueno, las damas en primer lugar, la obra nuestra es el Hospital Santa Clara. Entonces el Hospital Santa Clara al principio se entró dotando cuatro camas, me parece, de cuidados intensivos, que no tenía el hospital, había un pabellón infantil... yo fui presidenta de la asociación en esa época cuando yo no conocía el hospital pues iban las que estaban encargadas... y cuando vi entro a ese pabellón me da tristeza, le digo francamente, y a lo último hay la sala de cuidados intensivos con una placa damas colombo-libanesas, cuando entra ya era otra cosa la sala. Yo dije “no puede estar el nombre de nosotros en un sitio como deplorable la verdad”. Entonces ahí si me puse en contacto con una arquitecta que es una hija de libaneses acá de la colonia y le dije bueno vamos a ver cómo nos metemos a reformar eso. Entonces se empezó con una parte del pabellón... y algunas de nosotras tenían conocidos en el ministerio en el distrito entonces se abogó y se presionó un poco para que completaran las ocho camas ahorita en la sala de cuidados intensivos nueva, entonces sí al Hospital Santa Clara con el apoyo nuestro... nos dijeron casi el mejor del estrato de eso, el hospital... y eso da mucha alegría sobretodo el porcentaje de mortalidad ha mermado muchísimo...'

Esteban '¿quiénes son parte de la colonia?'

...

Sofia: hay muchos acá digamos que están lejos de la colonia, porque no han tenido oportunidad de involucrarse

Isaac: perdieron el contacto

Sofia: no es que perdieron el contacto sino no lo han tenido el contacto por que viene mucha gente de afuera de Bogotá, de la costa, de todo y si no tienen aquí nexos que los unan, entonces no pueden, no pueden. Por ejemplo yo viví mucho fuera de Bogotá, al principio yo viví en Neiva, luego en Barranquilla, en el 82 fue que vinimos a vivir acá, pero ¿por qué me involucre? porque tenía mi marido si estaba muy en contacto, pero de pronto yo hubiera venido sola o con mi mirado y que fuéramos los dos los que no

teníamos contacto y no conocíamos, uno podía quedarse como muchos ahora que no están en contacto, entonces ahora, por eso le digo lo de la iglesia, entonces se le abre la puerta a todo el mundo, ¿ve? y ahora estamos haciendo en que después de cada misa, y eso se acostumbra fuera del Líbano donde hay iglesias nuestras, en que se brinda aunque sea un tinto y una galleta después de la misa como para conocernos, para compartir para así ir estrechando los lazos y hacer amistad con todo el mundo.'

Chapter Six

Esteban: 'en la vida diaria de ustedes ¿qué tan importante sigue siendo el Líbano?'

...

Sofía: '...entonces eso es importante porque en realidad eso es lo que aquí estamos tratando ahorita otra vez de hacer de revivir eso porque hay mucha persona que no saben de donde son los papás, ni de qué pueblo, ni si tienen familia allá, ni nada de eso entonces pero usted les habla del Líbano y ellos se les abre.... Mejor dicho el interés es todo, ve/ porque yo le digo que no sea que comemos tabule y kibbe y por eso somos libaneses, ¿no? Tenemos que aprovechar y ahora pues ya tenemos digamos el club, tenemos la unión libanesa, la asociación de damas, y ahora la iglesia que es la que va a unir a todos porque no todo el mundo tiene acceso a por ejemplo ni al club ni a la asociación, mejor dicho hay muchos paisanos muchos libaneses que no conocemos, entonces ahora pues se está haciendo ese trabajo con la iglesia de cómo hacer conectar con todo el mundo y unir. La sorpresa muy grande cuando ahorita inauguramos la parroquia libanesa con párroco ya propio y todo eso, ¡muchos libaneses se enteraron por el periódico y aparecieron en la iglesia! Entonces son gente que queremos recopilar y ver como pues se trabaja para que haya y en la próxima oportunidad pues organizar excursiones, porque la misión libanesa maronita acá tiene ese trabajo de que conecta y le buscan los familiares en el Líbano... yo encabezé una excursión en el año 97, y fuimos como 15 personas, muchos de ellos no conocían sus familiares allá, sabían que son de ese pueblo, entonces les buscamos allá sus familias y les hicimos encuentro, eso fue muy emocionante y esa gente vive loca por volver y llevar sus hijos y todo.'

Chapter Seven

Esteban: 'en la vida diaria de ustedes ¿qué tan importante sigue siendo el Líbano?'

...

Sofía: '¡Ahora el gobierno allá esta la inquietud de que tenemos que votar! tener voz y voto tener representante de parte de los emigrantes en el Líbano

Isaac: 'es que el peso del emigrante para el Líbano, el dinero que se va al Líbano es un factor que puede darle la *insación* de vida a un país... ese que manda dinero digamos tiene derecho a tener voz y voto, ¿no?

Sofia: eso se está luchando en el parlamento

Isaac: y nosotros estamos luchando también que todo hijo de libanés no necesita más que depositar, que registrar su hijo en la embajada y el hijo que se registró registrando su hijo ya es libanés, no necesita tramite con la partida de nacimiento nada más, se registra y ya es libanés.'

Esteban: ¿y el encuentro Colombo-Árabe?

Sofia: yo no fui, pues la verdad no me llama la atención. No, ¿por qué? ¿Por qué Colombo-Árabe? yo no me, mejor dicho, es que nosotros los libaneses [risas]

Isaac: es que había una cosa después de la guerra del Líbano

Sofia: después de la guerra del Líbano nosotros fuimos muy muy

Isaac: resentidos con los países árabes, porque digamos fuimos maltratados

Sofia: si, entonces no queríamos nada, yo por lo menos

Hija: igual el origen no es árabe

Sofia: Somos árabes, somos árabes, no lo podemos negar. Pero por ejemplo la guerra del Líbano fue originada por los palestinos... entonces por esa razón no me llamaba la [atención], y le pusieron Colombo-Árabe pero fíjese la mayoría, todos los que fueron condecorados eran libaneses'.

Esteban: ¿en la vida diaria de ustedes, qué tan importante sigue siendo el Líbano?

Isaac: 'Uff digamos nosotros somos de la primera generación, por ejemplo mis hijos, los hijos de Sofia también, están relacionados directamente

Sofia: mire, desde que nacieron nuestros hijos se les ha hablado de la familia, y conocen

Isaac: y se les ha comunicado, se les ha contactado y han visitado. Hay una cosa muy importante que debe, no sé, las personas que naces aquí eh pueden conocer su familia o algo de su familia allá, se involucran mucho digamos pero la gente de allá, del Líbano, conoce todo los detalles de lo que pasa aquí...'

...

Isaac: 'alguien dijo una vez el que no reconoce su raíz no tiene raíz. Verdad, entonces digamos hay en el Líbano un ministerio dedicado a los emigrantes he nuestro papel, el gobierno libanés quiere involucrar a los emigrantes libaneses, hijos de libaneses, descendientes de libaneses, involucrarlo en el crecimiento de Líbano y más que todo

nosotros los cristianos estamos haciendo una gestión para que todos los hijos de libaneses deben registrarse porque va a llegar un momento que vamos a necesitar el aporte intelectual

Sofia: 'y la presencia porque el cristiano emigra muchísimo'

Isaac: sabemos que hay libaneses fuera del Líbano, descendientes de libaneses, 10 o 15 veces más de los que están allá. Los libaneses están arraigados en todo el mundo. Entonces especialmente quien se ha ido, son la mayoría cristianos. Después de la guerra hay migración musulmana dependiendo de la guerra con Israel toda esa vaina ¿no? y la guerra civil ahuyentó mucho de los libaneses fuera del país, entonces es muy importante para los libaneses que se vuelvan a reunirse y a contactarse y uno tiene que empezar por su familia.

A.2.10 Eduardo

Chapter Two

Esteban: ¿y por qué la Unión ahora?

Eduardo: 'Es la influencia de la estabilidad en el Medio Oriente y más que todo en el Líbano. Después de la guerra estuvo bajo dominio sirio y no sabían hacia donde iba el Líbano, y estuvieron quietos. Ahora el Líbano más estable e ideal es seguir trabajando. Antes no se dejó de trabajar, participamos en la organización del primer regreso de jóvenes al Líbano con participación de muchos países. Ahora hay más estabilidad en Líbano, más madurez de miembros de la Unión, y una nueva reactivación del deseo de volver a las raíces han pasado todas estas cosas. La Unión no es solo para trabajar por el Líbano sino para hacerse sentir en Colombia. La parroquia es algo que hace parte de la identidad libanesa. Las Damas nunca han dejado de trabajar. Es un resurgir del Líbano porque creemos que es el momento. El Líbano ha mostrado que es un país soberano, tienen presidente y ministros elegidos no bajo régimen dictatorial de Siria. Está pidiendo a gritos ayuda de emigrantes, y si nosotros sus hijos no respondemos vamos a perder lo que nuestros hijos deben heredar de nosotros, que es el Líbano.'

Chapters Four and Eight

Esteban: ¿Y qué te sientes?

Eduardo: 'Un libanés orgullosamente colombiano. Nací en Colombia y la amo con todo el corazón, pero amo al Líbano también, tuve la fortuna de vivir en el Líbano algunos años, en una época de esplendor. Me siento tanto colombiano como libanés'.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y por qué dejó de existir la Unión?

Eduardo: 'La Unión no dejó de existir, se creó en los 1950s pero fue manipulada durante la Guerra Civil por diferentes bandos ya que querían controlarla, y esto creó divisiones dentro de Unión. Estuvo dormida no solo en Colombia sino en todo el mundo. Todo lo que sucedía en el Líbano, sucedía en la Unión. Había fracciones de los partidos políticos libaneses en la Unión. Estuvo dormida por un tiempo mientras esperaban a ver qué pasaba y volvió a unirse en Colombia después de la guerra con Israel. En Colombia la Unión seguía teniendo personería jurídica, pero debimos re-activarla sacando nueva personería jurídica. Primero adentro de Bogotá, después en Colombia, después conexiones con resto del mundo'.

Esteban: ¿Qué han hecho?

Eduardo: 'La movilización para el rescate y la repatriación de colombianos en el Líbano [durante guerra del 2006]. Después nos hemos dedicado a fortalecernos como Unión, tenemos un plan de trabajo con afiliaciones, página de Internet y contacto con otras uniones de libaneses. Traer la película Caramel, pequeñas cosas que esperamos sean fuertes y marquen una diferencia en la colectividad colombo-libanesa para volver a reactivarla y despertar ese amor hacia el Líbano. Obviamente tenemos muchas ideas, vamos a hacer comités de jóvenes para que vuelvan a sentir el Líbano, se conozcan, no pierdan su identidad libanesa porque si se pierde la identidad se pierde el Líbano. Si perdemos la juventud perdemos el Líbano porque son realmente lo que queda de ese mundo que les enseñaron los padres.'

Esteban: bueno y hablando de la Unión y religión, la mayoría de la Colonia son cristianos ¿y en la Unión?

Eduardo: 'Claro que existen los musulmanes. La Unión en el mundo no es de cristianos. Depende del sitio hay mayoría cristianos o mayoría musulmana, pero dentro de los estatutos está prohibido hablar de religión. No hay discriminación política con tal que no vaya contra ideal de la Unión que es preservar la identidad libanesa. Si está en contra de eso está en contra de nosotros. Tenemos muy buenos amigos musulmanes, drusos, ortodoxos, maronitas, latinos etc. Existe de todo en la Colonia, en Bogotá la mayoría somos cristianos maronitas, probablemente. Pero tenemos los brazos abiertos a todos los libaneses sin importar su religión. El Líbano está hecho de eso, de un multi-confesionalismo y esto le da su identidad propia. Si perdemos eso estamos perdiendo la razón de ser'.

Esteban: ¿y a los encuentros?

Eduardo: 'Son encuentros Colombo-Árabes. Existe FEDE-árabe se hizo en 70s durante la guerra para diluir la imagen de Líbano como país soberano y hacerlo perderse dentro del mundo árabe. La unión se opuso en el momento, porque querían diluir la identidad libanesa, y para ellos es más importante ser libaneses que ser árabes. Por eso no hemos participado, pero tampoco estamos en contra. Los países árabes son importantes, y participaríamos como Unión Libanesa.'

A.2.11 Salomon

Chapter Seven

Esteban: 'El Encuentro Colombo-Árabe, ¿por qué unos no van y usted si?'

Salomon: 'hombre porque uno tiene que trabajar de acuerdo con las realidades, el Líbano es un país que de todas maneras como ya lo comentábamos es un país pluricultural en el sentido de que no solamente es el puente de todas estas culturas, sino el punto de encuentro de muchas religiones, y de la influencia de los países que están alrededor. Y uno no se puede esconder de las realidades, buena parte de la migración que hay en el Líbano no es solamente de libaneses sino que han venido de otros países árabes, vecinos por todos los problemas que conocemos. Y tarde o temprano de todas maneras tiene que haber una integración cultural y económica, de todos esos países y la paz tiene que llegar algún día, no solamente entre los países Árabes que tengan contradicciones sino también con el propio Israel, uno suena digámoslo así, puede que sea un sueño y que nunca se cumpla, pero por lo menos hay que sonar con la paz y con que esos pueblos puedan convivir en paz. Y que entonces cesen los problemas del medio oriente. Entonces ahí digamos que se mezclan dos cosas pienso yo, hay un tema interno del Líbano y uno tiene que entender las personas que piensan así, puede que uno no lo comparta pero hay que respetarlas y entenderlas, porque el Líbano digamos ahí suceden dos fenómenos, o tres fenómenos. Un primer fenómeno interno, donde la mayor parte del Líbano era de origen cristiano maronita, llamémoslo pro-occidental de alguna manera. Y por esa razón la constitución se hizo de esa manera. Sin embargo por todos los problemas que conocemos que han influenciado en la región, no solamente en el Líbano sino la región, y el Líbano ha sido básicamente una víctima de todos estos problemas que ha habido allí, generados en buena parte por los intereses extranjeros, lamentablemente pues el balance de fuerzas internas especialmente el tema demográfico, pues ha ido en contra de los cristianos y de los maronitas, esa es la verdad. Porque han llegado palestinos, porque los musulmanes se han reproducido mucho más que los cristianos, porque también buena parte de los cristianos han migrado a raíz de todas estas guerras. Entonces si ha habido un desbalance interno y

entonces ahí sí han emitido la mano pues todo el mundo, Israel, Egipto, Siria, Irán, los Estados Unidos, Europa. Entonces digamos que en el tema interno pues uno entiende que los maronitas o los cristianos sientan como que ha habido una invasión de su país, un poco ese equilibrio religioso-político, o político religioso que había, y que haya digamos una cierta reticencia/resistencia con el tema árabe, porque han sido víctimas un poco de la cosa, y siendo un país demócrata y un país que ha querido albergar a todos estos inmigrantes, ¿no? Entonces digamos ese es un factor que influye. De otro factor, pues están los factores de orden regional donde buena parte de los países árabes también algunos han contribuido, digamos de manera positiva o negativa depende de cómo se vea el tema, y han tratado de intervenir en los asuntos internos del Líbano, como sucede en el Líbano de hoy de manera clara. Y está también la oposición de las grandes potencias también ejerce su influencia en el país. Naturalmente pues uno vuelve a lo mismo, no se trata de que el Líbano este en el último lugar. Tiene que estar en el primer lugar porque es la mayor parte la migración, sin ninguna duda, a la cual pertenecemos. Pero me parece que hay que tratar de extendernos los lazos de hermandad con los mismo libaneses no cristianos, y con los hermanos vecinos, llamémoslo así de alguna manera, o regionales. Porque es una realidad. Uno no puede vivir en un *ghetto* religioso o político aislado del mundo, y más cuando uno está rodeado de equis millones de musulmanes o de árabes, y que no haya una integración con ellos, y finalmente quiéralo uno o no pertenecemos a ese mundo, puede que no seamos exactamente del mismo origen, ni que tengamos las mismas cosas de acuerdo que no somos, pero hoy en día me parece que lo que hay que tratar de buscar es un poco la convivencia y la hermandad entre los pueblos. Ahora que sea árabe o no, uno puede ponerle otro título. Que sea un encuentro libanés y árabe, pues magnífico, ¿por qué no? porque a ver ¿quiénes van a ir a eso? Quienes son los que irían a un congreso o los que fueron, porque yo he ido a los congresos que se han hecho en Barranquilla y Cartagena, y he estado en el de Brasilia también. Y allí igualmente sucedió lo mismo porque la realidad es la realidad, el 90 o el 95% de los asistentes eran de origen libanés, tanto los locales como los que fueron de otros países. De Colombia prácticamente estaba yo solamente, creo que no había más... pero no había mayor presencia en el tema de Brasil. Y en tema de la costa también ha habido algunos de Bogotá, algunos del Club muy pocos pero algunos si fueron, y otros de la colonia que son amigos del club o que van lo frecuentan pero no son socios, y asistieron. Entonces la realidad concreta es que quienes asisten a esos congresos, lo que se ve en esos congresos, de lo que se habla en esos congresos, lo que se muestra y lo que se estudia es en un 95 por no decir 98% libanés, porque es que lo que hay aquí es descendientes de libanés. Cuando usted va y habla con los queridos vecinos nuestros y hablo de Egipto, hablo de

Palestina, o los de Marruecos o de Argelia, de cualquiera de estos países, no importa, o de Kuwait, cualquier país, habla usted con las embajadas y la cantidad de miembros que hay de esas comunidades son contados con los dedos de la mano... es decir son números despreciables, frente a la cantidad tan abrumadora de libaneses. Entonces, no ir a un encuentro porque se llama árabe... pero es equivocado pensar que uno va a ir a un congreso que se llame Colombo-Árabe y se va a encontrar árabes, ¡allá lo que hay es libaneses! ¡Porque aquí no somos sino libaneses! ... entonces de pronto quizás, no sé si sea cuestión semántica, no hay que fijarse tanto en los detalles sino en el fondo de las cosas, ¿no? Hombre que sea colombo-árabe, el título se puede discutir si quieren, pero la realidad concreta es que ¡ese es un encuentro prácticamente colombo-libanés! Porque no hay más, no hay más de donde... entonces por eso yo pienso que no tiene ningún problema en que se vuelva un poco libanés y árabe, si estamos en un 95% libanés... eso no va a deslegitimar o va a quitarle la esencia de los asuntos a estos encuentros. Porque no va a ir más gente que esa. Entonces yo no veo porque sea un problema y además son gente que tienen muchas cosas afines con el Líbano, además de la lengua y cosas culturales, la comida y tal. Yo no veo a esos pueblos como unos pueblos enemigos, yo personalmente no los veo, mejor dicho no veo porque uno tenga que ser enemigo o mirar con malos ojos a un egipcio, o a un iraquí, o a un iraní, claro hay una serie de problemas políticos sin ninguna duda que uno no maneja y que seguramente a la larga tendrán que solucionar...'

A.2.12. Juanita

Chapter Three

Esteban: ¿y sabes cómo funciona lo de la ciudadanía?

Juanita: 'Sí, yo sé cómo es el procedimiento, y sé que en mi caso nunca va a pasar porque es el hombre el que lleva la ciudadanía. El problema, es que suena feo, pero los que tienen ciudadanía prefieren viajar el pasaporte colombiano porque en este momento ser árabe implica un montón de cosas que menos mal que yo no tengo el apellido, porque puede traer problemas. Me gustaría tenerla si pudiera, así me sienta completamente colombiana'.

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y por qué dices comunidad y no colonia?

Juanita: 'no sé porque, digo comunidad porque siento que es más de unión, más unido, más de familia. Siempre lo he visto así, el club es mi punto de referencia. Uno va al club y se siente en la casa, es la familia, entonces por eso digo comunidad. Muchos no son

de familia pero me siento en mi casa, conozco a muchos, y nos tratamos como primos. Siempre todos son 'primos'. Ahora me siento en casa, hay preocupación, ahora me parece rico ir a almorzar al club antes no lo hubiera pensado. Ahora me parece rico y siento que es mi casa.'

Esteban: ¿y cuál es tu rol en la Unión?

Juanita: 'soy la menor de la Unión, me uní con otras dos jóvenes. La generación de mi mamá saben quiénes son y son unidos, pero no en mi generación. La idea de unir y conocer a gente joven que, por ejemplo, van al club que es lo más cercano. Todavía no hemos hecho un evento, pero quieren hacer un almuerzo campestre para empezar a conocerse. Yo conozco a mis primos directos pero más no mucho. Ya hay sentido de ir al club, a mí me daba pereza ir al club, detestaba ir al club, hasta que la Unión volvió. A partir de la Unión empecé a ir y a interesarme, desde ahí me empezó a gustar. Cuando estaba chiquita mi abuela era la conexión a la comunidad libanesa, yo iba al club con mi abuelita a verla jugar cartas con las amigas. Fui pocas veces después de eso, me daba 'física *mamera*'. Conocí a otros jóvenes, otros sabía quiénes eran pero no los conocía bien.'

Esteban: ¿Por qué pereza?

Juanita: 'Porque sentía que iba y no conocía a nadie. Mi núcleo familiar no ha sido muy libanés, no me ha importado mucho ese lado libanés. Ahorita mi prima y mi tía llegaron a la Unión hace un mes, otras familias se conocen todos y ahora son amigos. Mi mamá es la más unida a lo libanés, entonces yo era la única de los [de mi familia] que iba y la que se quedaba sola siempre, todos se conocían y yo no. Pero poco a poco fui conociendo a gente de mi edad y me gusta más.'

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿y cómo es lo de la parroquia?

Juanita: 'Fue un proceso, antes hacían misas en el club buscando que gente se involucrara. No he ido a la parroquia porque no soy muy religiosa. No es porque la parroquia sea maronita, creo en dios pero no voy a iglesia, no es parte de mi rutina. Mi abuela me lo reprocha. En el Líbano el tema religioso es muy importante. Mis papás si han ido y son un poco más religiosos, pero a mi le da *mamera*'.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿por qué ahora?

Juanita: 'Mi percepción es que a raíz de lo que ha pasado, la Guerra de 2006, la gente empezó a unirse mucho. La gente no iba mucho al club, no había unión de la gente, no

iban los domingos. Nosotros no éramos socios del club, pero mi papá conoció a una persona libanesa y le regalaron la acción. Por eso fuimos al club. Después de la guerra empezamos a unirnos otra vez, a buscarnos y nos vimos en el Club en el evento agradeciendo a los que ayudaron durante la Guerra del 2006, incluyendo el gobierno colombiano. Nos volvimos a ver y se ha desarrollado. Otras asociaciones como las damas si llevan más tiempo. Pero creo que a raíz de la guerra si se han desarrollado un montón de cosas que han sido chéveres.'

A.2.13.Carlos

Chapter One

Esteban: ¿y se siente árabe?

Carlos: 'Mas que árabe, libanés. No tengo tanta conexión con árabes, pero con libaneses si tengo una empatía y un orgullo. El contexto latino es diferente, de pronto si me encuentro con un latino afuera quizás si haya empatía. Pero es diferente, es más nostalgia. Pero con ambas hay.'

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y va al club?

Carlos: 'Me llevaron mis tíos un par de veces... [pero] Ni mi abuelo ni mi papá eran del club, tal vez por la vida colombiana. Mi abuela tampoco instigo eso, no le interesaban tanto esas raíces sino la parte colombiana. Tengo un apellido muy libanés pero una educación muy poco libanesa.'

A.2.14.Andrea

Chapters Five and Six

Esteban: ¿y qué contacto tienen con la comunidad libanesa?

Andrea: 'en el club colombo-libanés, a mi papá le dijeron que si se quería meter, pero nunca, como mi familia nunca fue tan apegada... las familias como que nunca fueron muy unidas y nunca fuimos tan cercanos a eso. Pero a mí sí me parece la cultura, desde chiquita... pero ahora sí están como más cercanos. Sí sé que existen las Damas Libanesas por el libro. Mis papás están metidos con los santos libaneses... ahorita están con eso, mis papás son muy católicos... Pero no diría que soy parte de la comunidad... porque por ejemplo, yo fui al concierto de la mezo-soprano y todos hablaban en libanés, cantaban en libanés, cantaron el himno y yo no me lo sé, no sé de qué me están hablando, pero la cultura siempre me ha gustado, pero que haga parte [de la

comunidad] no creo... [pero] me parecería 'chévere' ser parte de la colonia en el futuro, por lo de las raíces y yo quiero ir a conocer, sería chévere contactar a los familiares que viven allá'.

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿eres Católica o maronita?

Andrea: 'Católica maronita... la verdad me gusta más ese rito, me gusta que entreguen el cuerpo y la sangre, y el rito católico es solo el cuerpo. Entonces es chévere esa parte, la devoción a la virgen María es mucho mayor que en el rito católico, es mucho más lindo, la parte en arameo me encanta, aunque no entienda le da un simbolismo... me gusta mucho.'

Esteban: ¿y ustedes tienen los papeles libaneses?

Andrea: 'mi papá los está sacando y quiere que nosotros los saquemos... En el Líbano son Católicos Maronitas, y mis papás son Católicos Maronitas y vamos a misa acá Maronita, y estamos almorzando los domingos con la colonia libanesa, y como en contacto con eso y a mi si me parecería chévere ser libanesa y además como que el padre, uno de los padres que está ahorita con esa misión tiene una base de datos increíble de los libaneses acá en Colombia entonces como que ya están buscando familiares de mi Papá en el Líbano pues para contactarlos'.

Esteban: ¿y qué interés tienes en el Líbano?

Andrea: ... 'es muy triste la guerra que está pasando allá, no tengo familiares o no sé si tengo, pero me entero por una amiga y me dice que hubo un ataque, una bomba, y es triste... por las noticias. Y como que mis papás ahorita están yendo a la misa siempre son todos como que se conozcan y los presentan, para que estén con la comunidad, mis papás nunca se metieron con la comunidad y ahora la gente misma es como "quédense". Por ejemplo había unas clases en el Club Libanés de danza árabe y a mí me querían meter, pero no, no tengo tiempo pero me gustaría meterme'.

Chapter Eight

Esteban: [le explico cómo funciona ley de ciudadanía libanesa]

Andrea: '...es igual que la cultura, mi mamá es venezolana, y nosotros teníamos los papeles venezolanos y mi papá no podía porque la mujer no puede darle la ciudadanía al hombre. Tengo ciudadanía venezolana y pues sí quisiera tener la libanesa tendría que renunciar a una... sería la venezolana, porque ya tengo la colombiana y Venezuela y Colombia me parecen muy parecidos, aunque la venezolana tiene sus, no te piden

visa en Europa, mientras que a los libaneses... eh a mi papa lo pararon en la frontera [de Israel] y no lo dejaban pasar, y fue un interrogatorio, por el apellido, ¡que susto! Solo por el apellido y él decía “yo soy colombiano”. Mi papa no ha ido al Líbano, estuvieron allá y no fueron pero yo creo que quieren ir, mi papa dice que quiere ir’.

A.2.15 Alejandro

Chapter Five

Esteban ¿y le ves futuro a todo esto?

Alejandro: ‘sí básicamente como por una cosa social sabes, social y cultural. O sea el hecho de que se reúnan los jóvenes que comparten ese mismo sentimiento, que no lo tienen vivo, que lo reviven, que lo sientan... y pasarla muy bueno, divertirse...

básicamente igual que uno hace cualquier cosa para tratar de divertirse un poco, pero también tratar de generar conocimiento porque en últimas se está buscando... entonces es una cosa social con unas cosas para mirar como es el país, la cultura, y al mismo tiempo agruparse y hacer la fiesta, me entiendes? Entenderlo así y sentir que todos aparte de que somos amigos tenemos una cosa en común que es una cultura muy fuerte, muy pesada, como la libanesa’.

Esteban: ¿y cómo fue lo de la película?

Alejandro: ‘Eso fue en el 2007 que hice la película, esa película surgió básicamente, el interés mío siempre ha estado por la cultura, siempre fui muy cercano a la cultura en mi casa, en la casa de mis abuelos... o me decían mis primas que llegaron de Baabda esa vez, de Beirut esa vez. Mi prima y sus amigas se quedaron aquí y nos sentimos en Baabda básicamente, o sea la casa típica Baabda, la comida todos los días libanesa... porque los libaneses son una cultura muy particular. Y desde ahí un día salido en un comida con mi papá y unos primos del Líbano que vinieron en esa época, la posibilidad de porque no se hacía una pequeña película de la historia del bisabuelo y de la familia en Colombia... y a los 5-7 meses yo tenía la visión, tenía unos personajes, tenía todo el tema. Mi intención en principio era hacer la película en árabe toda, pero la fonética... entonces decidimos hacerla en español con unas palabras en árabe. Y bueno, investigación de eso fue una investigación importante, documentos por todos lados, lecturas, tratar de hacer un guion que hablara la parte documental y de archivos mezclados un poco con medio novela... fue supremamente emotivo para todo el mundo, especialmente para la familia... y todos los que vengan van a tener una idea de cómo fue, una idea novelesca que es chévere, que las ideas siempre son un poco, los recuerdos de unas cosas esta bueno que tengan un poco de ficción también, entonces

también fue como con esa intención, y también siendo muy puntual con la parte histórica. Siendo muy puntual y tratando de recrearles los espacios... mi abuelo me dio mucha información’.

Esteban: ¿y dónde la mostraron?

Alejandro: ‘no quise mostrarla por muchos lados, ¿sabes? La mostré aquí en el Club cuando lo hicimos con la familia, y a la gente interesada le regale unas copias pero no quise hacer absolutamente nada con eso ¿sabes? Me pareció como un poco cerrada el tema de la familia y lo quise dejar como ahí, como un legado digamos familiar, como una historia familiar para la familia y para que mientras dure también tengan como una referencia de lo que es y los niños cuando van creciendo y quieran saber puedan poner en la televisión y ver de dónde viene el tema, quien fue el que llegó, como llegó, todo eso’.

Chapters Five and Six

Esteban: ¿y por qué ahora?

Alejandro: ‘no hace mucho tiempo los viejos han tenido mil cosas que han hecho, ellos han hecho desde obras de teatro representando textos de Jalil Gibran hasta fiestas de Halloween... alcanzaron a comprar dos ambulancias para mandar al Líbano, unas cosas muy grandes desde hace mucho tiempo. Han hecho viajes a países del mundo a encontrarse con el resto de la gente. Que ahorita se hizo lo de la iglesia maronita, yo pensaría que es un poco más por el hecho de que ya las señoras que eran mamás ahora ya no hacen nada, aburridas, son todas católicas y decidieron que lo único que les podía quitar el aburrimiento era inventarse una iglesia, con todos los abuelos que tampoco hacen mucho y que tienen algo de plata, pues dijeron “no venga pues hagamos una iglesia porque que más vamos a hacer”. Entonces hacen una asociación de damas libanesas, se inventan kermeses y vainas para estar ocupadas y básicamente yo veo que es el momento de pronto las de antes, las mamás de ellas no hicieron nada porque estaba un poco crudo como la llegada y las cosas entonces ahora tienen la capacidad, el espacio y han dicho “listo venga, ¿qué más hacemos? Inventémonos una iglesia”. Y nosotros somos la nueva generación que hasta ahora tiene como ímpeto de hacerlo, ¿me entiendes? Es justo en el momento... y precisamente más que todo existe porque nosotros viajamos al Líbano con [otros jóvenes libaneses], y yo sentado un día les dije “vamos a hacer una vaina del putas”, el año entrante vamos a hacer un viaje todos... eso a raíz del dabkeh. El dabkeh unió a los nuevos jóvenes y todo el cuento, porque antes de eso no existía nada que nos unía mucho. Si veníamos nos

saludábamos todos con todos, como “que hubo, que más” ahora ya con el dabkeh todos se encontraron más...’

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿y qué contacto tienes con la iglesia?

Alejandro: ‘nada, no tengo ningún tipo de afinidad con la iglesia católica, ni maronita, ni nada. Creo que soy un poco, tengo cierto rechazo por la iglesia, pero si me preguntan en el Líbano que qué soy digo que soy maronita’.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y qué están planeando en la Unión?

SH: ‘La Unión, básicamente la intención nuestra es como coger a toda la gente que está de alguna manera vinculada con la cultura... todos nuestros papás se han conocido y han hecho amigos por medio del Club, entonces para revivir un poco también eso... [con los jóvenes] ver como cada uno entiende la cultura y como realzarla de cierta manera y que la gente tenga, que se den cuenta porque muchos no se dan cuenta de lo bonito que es la cultura libanesa... realmente cuando uno la explora y está en el territorio se da cuenta de la cantidad de cosas especiales que tiene el Líbano, como cultura, como territorio, como todo, como espacio... [ir al Líbano es importante] y vivirlo de todas las maneras que se puede vivir, porque es que el Líbano tienen muchos lugares... En el Líbano uno siente que todos son primos’

Esteban: ¿y tú hablas árabe?

Alejandro: ‘yo la primera vez que fui al Líbano tenía por ahí unos 7 o unos 8 años. He ido 4 veces en los 2000s y tres veces antes. He ido con mi familia al Líbano, ya sea con mis papás o abuelos, y una vez fui solo a visitar familia allá en el 2006. Tenía planeado quedarme por dos meses, pero al mes decidí que quería quedarme por un año, a aprender árabe y tomar cursos en la universidad. Estando yo tramitando los papeles... empezó la guerra del 2006. Y fue un mes entero de guerra allá y claramente una experiencia única, esa vaina fue una locura y después la mandada a recoger en Hércules... quede aburrido porque yo quería quedarme, ya tenía todo cuadrado y ya mis papás sabían que yo me quedaba en el Líbano, que iba a estar un año allá... En el 2008 hicimos un crucero por el mediterráneo y después pasamos al Líbano 15 días. Ahorita nos mandaron los tiquetes... nos mandaron los tiquetes del Líbano y estuvimos allá 15 días’

Esteban: ¿tú tienes ciudadanía?

Alejandro: ‘sí’

Esteban: entonces puedes votar

Alejandro: 'sí por eso nos mandaron los tiquetes, ¿sí has visto la cedula?'

Esteban: no [me muestra la cedula libanesa]

Esteban: ¿sabes de la ley de emigrantes, que dejarían votar por afuera?

Alejandro: 'nos favorecería muchísimo, porque en este momento la mayoría de libaneses es musulmana y eso tiene unas complicaciones, y eso para nosotros que somos una mayoría cristiana por fuera claramente... de hecho la gran mayoría de migración libanesa fue cristiana... [Que aprueben la ley] no lo veo muy viable, porque la política libanesa y lo que se está viviendo... ver lo sucio que es realmente, eso es una democracia entre paréntesis basada en la matanza y en el miedo, y en unos intereses políticos y el poder es lo que rige ahí... y es un miedo todo el tiempo, estamos rodeados de países interesados en hacer sus propias cosas con el país y con el territorio... y van a dominarla, y es la plata y el terrorismo lo que vive allá... obviamente están pujando toda la vida los cristianos que son los más pasionales, digamos, y los de las ideas más lúcidas, pero seguirá siendo en mi concepto muy difícil...'

A.2.16. Daniel

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y cuántos son? [en el comité de jóvenes de la Unión]

Daniel: 'ahorita somos cinco liderando, pero contamos más o menos con unos treinta que conocemos, que conocemos, los que están de una manera u otra vinculados al grupo libanés, esperamos que sea mucho más grande, porque hay muchos más'.

Esteban: ¿y cómo esperan poder contactarlos?

Daniel: 'mira en Bogotá a través de nosotros y conocido del conocido no sé qué porque aquí al fin de al cabo las familias libanesas todas se conocen entre todos, en Bogotá. Lo que queremos hacer más adelante... porque yo le pregunte a los grandes que abrieran un grupo de Facebook, entonces que no hacían un grupo de Facebook porque se metían a hablar de política y a madrearse... entonces queremos por ahora manejarlo así con los conocidos de los conocidos igual si, nuestro proyecto bandera digamos va a ser ir el próximo verano al Líbano no queremos que vaya gente equis, queremos que vaya gente que conocemos'.

Esteban: ¿y personalmente? [¿Cuál ha sido la influencia libanesa?]

Daniel: 'a mí, mira, cuando uno es más chiquito como que uno no conoce muy bien el tema y no le importa tanto.... estoy estudiando negocios, empresas en el CESA. Pero yo

estudie historia un año en los Andes y eso mismo como que me despertó el interés por los conflictos y modelos de la ONU... y cada vez se me fue despertando más lo que quería saber sobre el Líbano. A raíz del bombardeo del 2006, yo estaba en Canadá, yo me había ido apenas me gradué del colegio a Canadá... a raíz de eso como me empecé a unir porque mi prima estaba ahí y mi prima y yo somos como hermanos, y claro yo me entere de eso y *juepucha*, y yo estaba en Canadá y tenía una clase con un profesor un bacán... y él hablaba mucho del tema... y empecé a ver un montón de documentales... y ahora especialmente con lo dabkeh, lo del dabkeh ha sido clave, o sea el que te diga que lo del dabkeh no es importante es mentira, porque el dabkeh ha sido lo más importante para reunir a los jóvenes actualmente... esto del dabkeh es muy importante porque aparte de bailar es lo que se crea después de eso, si me entiendes. Si venimos acá y hablamos y discutimos, y se generan iniciativas entonces ha sido supremamente importante y pues obviamente ahorita con mi viaje al Líbano más aun, cada vez a sido más, ha sido progresivo pues el cuento'.

Chapter Six

Esteban: [le expliqué a Daniel que un libanés que conocí en Inglaterra no quiso decirme de que religión era]

Daniel: 'eso es algo que nosotros acá no lo entendemos, tiene que nacer allá para entenderlo. Pero me pareció muy *juepucha*, y quede como *wow*. Porque de verdad la identidad religiosa significa todos los derechos políticos y civiles... y allá se matan por eso'.

Esteban: ¿y estás metido en lo de la misa?

Daniel: 'not at all,

Esteban: ¿Por qué?

Daniel: 'no sé, porque nunca me ha gustado. Es muy personal, fui a un colegio religioso y me saturaron de la iglesia y todo eso hasta que me cansé... es la religión, la religión en general no me gusta'.

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y ahora estás más metido?

Daniel: 'mucho más, antes de ir al Líbano yo pensé que iba a ir al Líbano y punto, pero ahora... nuestro proyecto bandera es poder llevarnos 10 o 15 personas el próximo verano a meternos a una inmersión dura ahí de la cultura libanesa, aprender un poco de árabe en la universidad St. Joseph, hicimos los contactos, hicimos todo, estamos en esas. Por ejemplo ya habíamos pensado en hacer lo del cineclub desde mucho tiempo

antes, yo me fui a un mercado de pulgas allá y conseguí 35 películas y documentales... fui preparando la vaina para llegar acá'

Esteban: Cuéntame del viaje al Líbano

Daniel: 'el viaje salió originalmente de las elecciones porque a la familia les enviaron los pasajes al-Kataeb. Ahorita el Líbano se gastó el 2.5% del PIB en elecciones... parece ser que financiados por el gobierno de Arabia Saudita al-Kataeb... me fui con mi mamá y estuve ahí 23 días y fue bastante interesante porque me empape mucho de temas. Haber llegado en el momento electoral fue muy chévere, muy especial, porque no es que haya ido de turistas así sino que mi familia ya está también muy metida en el cuento, y el hecho que mi familia esté metida en el cuento cambia la vaina. No es como si yo me fuera de colombiano equis allá de turista, hay que bonitas las ruinas y no sé qué, sino que uno se empapa mucho más del tema y sobre todo que está muy metidos en el tema, entonces mi tío y mi mamá fueron a conocer a Gemayel y el *man* los recibió divinamente... con foto y abrazo...

Esteban: ¿y qué tal les fue en las elecciones?

Daniel: 'Les fue muy bien, es más el partido que más escaños en el parlamento ganó fue al-Kataeb, sin embargo fue muy criticado. Mira... mi familia es muy cercana a al-Kataeb, pues es maronita...'

Chapter Eight

Esteban: ¿y qué te sientes?

Daniel: 'yo en Colombia yo soy colombo-libanés, en el Líbano yo decía que era nacido en Colombia, y cuando estaba en Canadá también yo decía que era libanés nacido en Colombia. Porque yo si me considero muy metido en la cultura ¿me entiendes? y yo he sido criado sobre la cultura libanesa además que mis apellidos son libaneses. Mis cuatro primeros apellidos, tres son libaneses y uno es alemán'.

A.2.17.Cristina

Chapters Five and Six

Esteban: ¿por qué decidiste involucrarse con la Asociación Nuestra Señora del Líbano?

Cristina: 'porque pues yo digamos a mis abuelitos si algo que tengo una imagen muy gravada, aunque como te decía yo estaba muy pequeña cuando ellos murieron, iba en las vacaciones, pero desde chiquita cuando iba a la casa de ellos veía la imagen de San Charbel entonces siempre ellos lo tenían encima de la cama ellos, tenían el cuadro de San Charbel y hablaban del santo y un tío un primo de mi abuelito que fue al Líbano y

trajo el aceite y trajo todas las reliquias de San Charbel, entonces como que cuando empezaron me dijeron unas primas, porque yo realmente en Neiva si con los de la colonia muy metidos allá en Neiva con los de allá... aquí en Bogotá no era mucho, con mis primas si... pero entonces me hablaron, yo empecé a ir a lo de la asociación de Damas Colombo-Libanesas estuve un tiempo ahí en esa asociación pero ellas hacían siempre las reuniones dos de la tarde tres y yo trabajaba entonces siempre era excusándome, entonces decía yo no es que no quiera, es que me queda difícil estar pidiendo yo permisos en el trabajo para ir a esas reuniones, entonces eso fue lo que hizo que me retirara de la Asociación de Damas. Entonces después supe ahí en Cristo rey que organizaron la capillita de San Charbel ahí, entonces estuve en la misa inaugural y empecé ya entonces a estar más involucrada con ellos y cuando hablaron de que iba a organizarse aquí la iglesia entonces dije pues alrededor de la parte del rito maronita de todo eso pues es la cultura nuestra es un pedacito también de allá como traducido en una actividad, no, que la religión es cultura. Entonces empecé a, a ir y con [otra señora] que la conocía desde Neiva aunque casi no nos veíamos aquí... entonces cuando ya la vi allá en la iglesia entonces me dijo "hay porque no entra" y yo ya pensionada entonces yo dije ya me queda más tiempo entonces en vez de regresar a la Asociación de Damas Colombo-Libanesas que a la hora de la verdad pues es casi el mismo grupo, entonces ya me vincule, desde hace un año desde que empezó la lo de la misa en la iglesia, entonces todos los domingos, salvo pues que no esté aquí entonces no voy, y estoy entonces en la junta directiva de suplente pero estoy ahí en la junta siempre y les colaboro, el año pasado estuve ahí colaborando cuando vino Tania la cantante, Tania Kassis, y ahora estamos organizando lo de la nueva venida de ella en Noviembre... logre con un amigo por coincidencia que supe que era del teatro de bellas artes de Cafam, que es tan lindo ese teatro, porque el año pasado fue en El Nogal aquí en el club [EL Nogal] pero aunque dejaron a buen precio en El Nogal siempre era un poco más costoso y cabe menos gente y no está adaptado más como para ese tipo de espectáculos, y como mucha gente quiere y ese teatro de bellas artes de Cafam es espectacular.'

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿por qué ahora Asociación Nuestra Señora del Líbano?

Cristina: 'pues yo pienso, ella es muy religiosa, ella inclusive es del Opus Dei, entonces pues al promover porque ella estuvo en lo de la capillita de San Charbel como traer parte de eso que es un pedazo del Líbano a promoverlo y tuvo eco, y hay un grupo interesante de señoras que están ahí... entonces como que encontró eco y apoyo pero

yo creo que [ella] por lo que es tan creyente y es tan espiritual entonces quiso como traer... como otra parte también de nuestra cultura ¿no?'

Esteban: ¿y dónde la quieren construir? [la nueva iglesia]

Cristina: 'no, hay que buscar lote, entonces estamos viendo para tener la iglesia propia. Porque además yo creo que así alrededor, teniendo ya el templo, pues la parroquia solo nuestra señora del Líbano, no compartida, se puede aglutinar más todavía la colonia porque por ahora no hay sino una misa semanal, que es la de los domingos. Entonces ya por ejemplo ahora que murió [hombre libanes] que el todos los domingos estaba en la misa el entierro de hizo ahí, con el rito maronita. Entonces ya muchas actividades de la vida de la colonia ya están girando alrededor de esto, así suenen que si es la muerte, bueno no importa es una etapa de la vida no es la parte religiosa en si sino el final de una etapa de la vida corriente, entonces pues si se está buscando un sitio para tener... tener solo y no solo decir en la iglesia santa clara y es NSL esta como prestado sino la parroquia ya que sea propia... entonces ya como que es un símbolo mayor, y por ejemplo ha ayudado ha colaborado en la iglesia... la cónsul del Líbano que es ortodoxa. Entonces fíjate como se ha aglutinado alrededor de la iglesia de esta misión libanesa, ortodoxos pues básicamente si católicos, que porque la iglesia es católica, ortodoxos y musulmanes. Entonces sin el distingo de la religión prima la parte Líbano, entonces eso es bonito, porque es el sentimiento por una patria ¿no? por un país. Y ya se sacaron a la venta unas camisetas, se sacaron el día que celebramos el primer año de la iglesia unas camisetas que se mandaron a hacer se vendieron bastantes ese día pero pues van a seguir porque se mandaron más, unas camisetas donde aquí [señala] el logo de asociación de nuestra señora del Líbano... las iniciales ANSL, aquí [señala] es bordadito el cedro del Líbano y atrás en unas está el mapa del Líbano, en otras esta la bandera del Líbano y la de Colombia cruzaditas, y en otro el mapa del Líbano y el mapa de Colombia, así integrados. Entonces como para promover esa integración, entonces pues son cositas que ayudan y colaboran y como decíamos se reafirma'.

Esteban: ¿y cómo se organizó lo de la iglesia?

Cristina: '[nombre de señora libanesa], ella fue la que empezó a contactarlos para buscar que vinieran. En Ecuador la iglesia no tuvo acogida y le toco regresarse al sacerdote, lo habían pedido pero no tuvo acogida. Y lo mismo nos decía el padre Andrés que está en República Dominicana cuando vino aquí y que ya llevaba casi un año pero que allá tampoco a pesar de que habían solicitado, como que no, no habían tenido como mucho apoyo en últimas, como mucha acogida y el padre Andrés viaja ahora para el Paraguay, Asunción, que solicitaron allá en Asunción. entonces decía el a

lo mejor allá si pueden tener apoyo, lo mismo en el Perú, en Lima que también solicitaron y ya están allá como montando la iglesia, que se sepa que es fuerte hace muchos años en Argentina que tienen hasta sede propia, iglesia... entonces la idea aquí en Colombia, ellos están muy contentos y nos decía el Padre Naji que ahora que estuvo allá con el patriarca y todo en el Líbano, y el padre Andrés que vio aquí pues que ha tenido pues poco a poco pero ha tenido mucha acogida y... entonces están contentos porque es otra proyección del Líbano ¿no? así como está la unión libanesa, la asociación de Damas, las parte pues de la iglesia también es una proyección de allá del Líbano en otro de los aspectos y además como ahí cada mes se hace una comida un almuerzo después de la misa, el primer domingo entonces es comida árabe, comida libanesa que preparan las mismas señoras... entonces se quiere también aglutinar no solo la expresión eh de religión y también se dan clases de dabkeh, de lengua árabe, a través de Nuestra Señora del Líbano'.

Chapter Eight

Esteban: ¿y es colombiana, libanesa, libanesa-colombiana, colombo-libanesa?

Cristina: 'no pues generalmente uno relaciona más colombo-libanesa, ¿no? Como por fonética o por no sé, uno dice colombo-libanesa... y yo siempre a mí me gusto siempre firmarme [dice apellido español/colombiano y apellido libanes], por como una confirmación una afirmación ratificación como que me da, no sé, un carácter, me gusta siempre el segundo apellido por como una afirmación de mi raza, de esa parte, ese pedacito.'

A.2.18.Ana

Chapter One

Esteban: ¿me podrías contar la historia de tu familia?

Ana: 'Sí, mi Abuelo llegó a principios del siglo, eran jóvenes que buscaban oportunidades fuera del país. El Líbano como sabemos tiene mayoría de población fuera de las fronteras que adentro. Mi abuelo llegó a Colombia porque América era la tierra prometida y familiares y amigos ya habían ido a Colombia... las historias que cuenta mi familia materna de mi abuelo también son absolutamente mágicas, el ser más maravilloso que ellos habían conocido, el más inteligente, todos sus hijos intelectuales, todos sus hijos intelectuales... y las historias que nos contaban del Líbano, la poesía que nos leían de Gibran, el amor por toda la cultura y por todo el orgullo que tenían de ser libaneses y descendientes de los fenicios y las diferencias que cuando estábamos chiquitos no entendíamos y mirábamos como con un poco de burla a mi papá, porque

cuando nosotros llegábamos a decirle que habíamos conocido a unas personas, unas niñas que también eran descendientes de libaneses de apellidos equis, mi papa decía “no, no confundan, ellos son palestinos”. “Ellos son drusos”. “Ellos son musulmanes”. “Esos son sirios, y nosotros libaneses somos mayoritariamente maronitas” y somos los descendientes realmente de los fenicios y esa es la cultura que más aporte le hizo a la comunidad. Somos distintos. Inclusive racialmente fueron menos mezclados. Cuando les decían que los turcos se sentían ofendidísimos, y cuando les decían en el mejor de los casos, los sirio-libaneses, ofendidísimos. Y mi papa siempre nos decía es como si nos dijeran a nosotros colombo-venezolanos, igual de ofensivo. Somos libaneses punto. Somos país independiente... cuando se acaba el protectorado francés ya las diferencias se hacen mucho más notorias...’.

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y eres parte de las organizaciones?

Ana: ‘no, por falta de tiempo. Lo que traté de participar y estuve como tratando de hacer porque toda las cosas que tenían que ver con la cultura libanesa y con las diferencias con el resto del mundo, incluso del mundo cristiano, me llamaban mucho la atención, como el tema de las misas maronitas. Entonces quise conocer un poco de estos ritos y como era esa iglesia maronita de oriente, y estuve como muy entusiasmada, e hice parte tal vez de los fundadores de todo este tema... ayudo y todo lo que sea necesario pero a veces uno como con el tema del trabajo cuando uno trabaja todo el día en otras cosas, pues no he sacado el tiempo...’.

A.2.19. Angelica

Chapters Two and Five

Esteban: ¿y qué hacen las Damas?

Angelica: 'Tienen actividades muy definidas hace años. Tienen dos kermeses al año de comida, de artesanías..., hacen una misa para los difuntos en el mes de Marzo, de las personas de la comunidad, ayudan a algunas familias con algún presupuesto, a familias de la comunidad que han quedado en mala situación. Entonces las damas estudian eso en junto y aprueban una mensualidad de algún tipo para ayudarle a la gente... solo son de la comunidad, porque la obra social para Colombia es el hospital. Fuera de eso difunde la cultura también, has sacado dos libros que fue la enseñanza de árabe romanizado un libro lo sacaron con muy buena venta al público y todo eso, y ahorita creo que van a sacar el mismo pero con un CD y sacaron el libro de cocina libanesa... hacen bingos dos veces al año, que son bingos buenísimos que van 300 personas...'

rifas... Entonces la idea es que hay la Asociación de Damas Colombo Libanesas que lleva 20 años, que es muy sólida.'

Chapter Four

Esteban: ¿y qué te sientes?

Angelica: 'yo me siento colombiana y libanesa... en un momento dado uno no sabe ni de donde es ¿no? pero de corazón me siento de ambos países y pues uno ratifica ese sentimiento cuando llega al Líbano. Me identifico perfectamente con muchas de las costumbres libanesas, mucho del comportamiento'.

Esteban: ¿y cuáles son las costumbres y el comportamiento?

Angelica: 'realmente están muy arraigados en nosotros porque fueron hábitos y pensamiento desde muy pequeños, entonces carga uno dentro de su conciencia... yo diría un poco el afecto, el afecto primero que todo, la generosidad, y ya pues las costumbres de la comida, de la música, se identifica uno mucho con eso. De pronto una mentalidad un poco, no sé si será el colombo-libanés o el libanés de ascendencia que tiene una mentalidad un poco más amplia, no sé si en el Líbano se ve allá adentro pero el descendiente del libanés me parece que tiene una mentalidad más amplia y por otro lado un liderazgo innato en cualquier trabajo que haya que emprender y esto que he visto por mi experiencia a través del tiempo.'

Chapter Five

Esteban: Conexión con la Colonia

Angelica: 'Nosotras desde chiquitas crecimos en el Centro Unión, hacíamos parte de todas las actividades y conocíamos a todas las personas... hicimos siempre parte de las actividades del Club, bailamos dabkeh desde chiquitas y por temporadas obviamente todo el mundo está con sus actividades y el desarrollo de sus carreras y todo eso pero pues siempre que ha habido la necesidad de apoyar las instituciones libanesas lo hemos hecho porque siempre estuvo muy arraigado por ambos lados, no? y después ya con el paso del tiempo y todo siempre fuimos muy activas, mis hermanas y yo... siempre fuimos como muy inquietas desde que empezaron los conflictos en el Líbano porque siempre quisimos como apoyar desde afuera cualquier iniciativa que se hiciera a favor de la soberanía del Líbano, entonces pues siempre participamos desde la unión libanesa o desde las reuniones o actividades que hacíamos como para sentar un precedente en la prensa o poder ayudar desde Colombia al Líbano y siempre hicimos parte de eso'.

Esteban: ¿y cuánto tiempo en las Damas?

Angelica: 'hubo como un tiempo, porque inclusive la asociación de damas en el año 87 se fundó y la Asociación de Damas salió de una iniciativa de los jóvenes en ese momento, nosotros como que las motivamos a que se asociaran... en ese momento pues ya los jóvenes se disgregaron un poco, vino el dabkeh, entonces no había cabeza sino para el dabkeh y así como te cuento ha sido un poco desordenado pero en el momento que el Líbano nos ha necesitado ahí hemos estado. Yo entré en el 99 a las damas y creo que duré 10 años hasta el 2008, me salí porque me vinculé a las otras iniciativas, entonces ya no tenía tiempo'

Esteban: ¿Y con la Unión?

Angelica: 'esta Unión donde habían trabajado nuestros papás y todo eso tuvo como un pare y como que no volvieron a, o sea no hubo continuidad en el trabajo de la Unión y las regionales y todo eso que lo habían formado lo habían consolidado bastante y tubo un tiempo como de, precisamente yo creo que a raíz de la guerra y todo esto, entonces tajaron diferencias en la emigración y el trabajo paro, y paro un poco la institución como tal entonces disgrego un poco la gente... entonces aquí hubo un grupo de jóvenes que se vinculó con la unión internacional... entonces desde ahí fuimos muy activos, cuando se hacían cosas aquí en el Club he teníamos muy buena convocatoria, teníamos muy buena respuesta de la gente. Las cosas que se tenían que hacer a favor del Líbano se hacían, pero eventualmente, no era una cosa constante... Ese mismo grupo participaba en los congresos de la Unión Libanesa Juvenil en México, en Brasil, en Uruguay y eso nos mantenía al día. Y de esos congresos y de esos viajes salieron actividades como el dabkeh del 88, que eso reunía mucho a la gente como ahora y se hizo una presentación en Colsubsidio donde fue toda la comunidad colombo-libanesa y pues gente colombiana y fue un éxito muy bonito... después hubo unas presentaciones en Barranquilla, nos presentamos en Maicao, pero era eventualmente que se hacía y en un momento dado pues paro... a principios de los 90.'

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿Por qué ahora?

Angelica: 'fue tan fuerte la guerra en el Líbano después de la reconstrucción de 14 años de guerra, pues a los libaneses que estábamos en emigración y yo me imagino que a los que estaban dentro les dio muy duro y el hecho de que fuera un país extranjero que lo estuviera agrediendo pues fue mucho más y el hecho de que fuera por problemas de la región pues mucho más todavía, entonces ver esa agresión tan fuerte nos movió a todos a retomar una cultura libanesa y a retomar las actividades pensando en un

momento dado en que tú no sabes el día de mañana si va a haber Líbano o no va a haber Líbano'.

Esteban: ¿entonces pasó lo contrario con la guerra de los 80s?

Angelica: 'exactamente, precisamente porque aquí ya era un problema nacional de soberanía y en la guerra de los 14 años el conflicto podía ser el mismo porque seguramente era el mismo pero estaba más matizado por las diferencias confesionales, y los poderes en el Líbano como tal.

Esteban: ¿Cuál quieres que sea el futuro de la Colonia?

Angelica: 'lo ideal es que el Líbano siguiera siendo soberano y pues que se respetara, la región respetara al Líbano como país soberano sin tratar de traspasar sus fronteras...'el futuro de la colonia si mientras que nosotros nos sigamos moviendo garantiza unas dos generaciones más, digamos porque la migración aquí es muy antigua entonces ya los viejos murieron todos, muy poquitos quedan uno o dos, la segunda generación quedan muy poquitos, entonces ya es la tercera generación la que está luchando para que la cuarta siga y no tenemos mucha gente que haya migrado entonces... entonces pues mientras que nos movamos nosotros tenemos una garantía de que los chiquitos ahora los chiquitos sigan con ese sentimiento... hemos venido trabajando todos juntos con objetivos diferentes... pues esta es una responsabilidad que tenemos'.

A.2.20. Father Naji

Chapters Three and Six

[Contándome la historia de la iglesia maronita]

Father Naji:

'El 6 julio de 2008 fue la primera misa maronita, con cuatro obispos de origen libanés en Conferencia episcopal en Colombia. Tenemos una parroquia del rito católico-maronita con toda la protección, el permiso, el apoyo del cardenal y de la conferencia episcopal de Colombia... Usamos medios de comunicación, periódico y televisión, para propagar y conocer la colonia... En el periódico el Tiempo, el periódico el Catolicismo... el artículo de El Tiempo es el mejor artículo que habla bien de los católicos-maronitas... nosotros somos todos en la iglesia católica, apostólica universal romana, estamos, solamente la iglesia católica tiene una parte de ritos orientales, como tiene diferente rito, también en occidental, pero la mayoría, el más importante conocido acá en América latina es el rito Latino, entonces para entender la diferencia entre rito, o que significa rito, solamente es la forma, no hay ningún cambio nosotros tenemos la misma dogma... solamente la forma'.

Chapter Six

[Contándome como llego la misión maronita a Colombia]

Father Naji: '[antes] toda la prueba para formar una diócesis, una parroquia maronita o cualquier cosa, oriental si podemos decir, sí salió mal porque no está muy bien hecha y tampoco los libaneses entre ellos no están unidos lamentablemente. Ahora gracias a dios hay una asociación de nuestra señora del Líbano, el objeto de ella solamente para una parroquia de libaneses, es el objeto, no tiene otro objeto ni para hacer una obra de caridad ni nada, solamente trabaja apoyando la parroquia, yo soy el párroco representante legal de la parroquia frente a una persona jurídica, frente del diócesis y frente al estado como Colombia, entonces de esta manera estamos trabajando... [antes] no estaban unidos entre ellos y cuando llego el padre otro empezaron a pelear, ellos me cuentan, yo no conozco'.

Esteban: ¿Cuál le gustaría que fuera el futuro de la colonia libanesa?

Father Naji: 'el futuro es muy importante aquí... la vida y el futuro de los libaneses o de la parroquia libanesa o de la parroquia oriental, tiene un futuro muy grande y muy importante, porque hay una colonia muy importante del Medio Oriente, cualquier sirios, palestinos o libaneses, y todos necesitan un apoyo espiritual... un acompañamiento de un sacerdote o más que un sacerdote de misioneros del Medio Oriente para seguir transmitiendo la fe la tradición oriental a sus hijos, es lo más importante del proyecto, Estoy acá para transmitir la fe. Estoy acá, no para remplazar a nadie, el contrario, para la riqueza de la vida espiritual de nuestros queridos libaneses, palestinos, sirios, de todos del Medio Oriente y mas también es una buena oportunidad por los colombianos a conocer la espiritualidad oriental y conocer más profundamente la tradición libanesa, las costumbres y la cultura y todo eso. Entonces tenemos aquí mucho trabajo'.

Esteban: 'habló antes de falta de unión en la colonia, ¿y ahora?

Father Naji: 'yo no estoy trabajando solamente de rito maronita-católico, estoy trabajando como una iglesia oriental, una iglesia oriental. En nuestra parroquia tenemos los ortodoxos, los melquitas, los maronitas, los siríacos, coptos, todos de nuestra región, hasta también tenemos musulmanes... cuando están juntos pueden construir fácilmente... La embajada y el embajador musulmán lo está apoyando 100%. Tengo el apoyo de la parroquia, de la comunidad, de los ortodoxos que también le han dado donaciones... el embajador fue a la fiesta de San Marón y encontró a musulmanes en la iglesia, y les pregunto que estaban haciendo allá: "que estás haciendo aquí, no es una mezquita", ellos dicen "señor embajador, sentimos aquí es una casa libanesa, un

encuentro libanés, es lo más importante para nosotros”. Por eso el embajador dice que acá tenemos una casa libanesa... acá recibimos mucha gente y yo no pregunto de que religión son... Case un melquita, bauticé 5 ortodoxos, y muchos maronitas.’

[el padre contando qué es ser libanes]

Father Najji: ‘... me han reprochado el saludar a alguna persona o me preguntan quién es esta o aquella persona en la misa... y por eso nuestra misa siempre tiene un cafecito y yo invito toda la gente a la cafecito si esta un libanés no está un libanés, son muy *vienense* a todo’.

A.2.21. Fernando

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿sabe de las organizaciones y eventos?

Fernando: ‘Si, he escuchado más por el lado del padre que por otro lado. El otro lado de la Unión Libanesa y todas esas actividades para mí es un gremio cerrado o uno es antisocial. Porque uno nunca se entera y los que están allá siempre son los mismos. Entonces es como en la política, quienes son los del senado pues los mismos o puede ser uno antisocial... ahora no es justificación porque uno también puede acercarse y decir quiero poner a mi hijo, no me estoy justificando. Por eso le digo, o es cerrado el cuento o uno es el antisocial. Es un tema que uno tocaría mirarlo muy bien pero yo no me entero mucho de la Unión Libanesa, me entero más de lo que hace el padre. Por allá escuche en la misa los avisos parroquiales: “que viaje para el Líbano el 24 de Septiembre, los que quieran ir por favor contactarse con el padre”, o el correo que dejan del padre.’

Chapter Six

Esteban: ¿ha recibido discriminación por religión?

Fernando: ‘No. En Colombia la identidad religiosa no influye para nada. Mire, en los países del Medio Oriente y el Líbano en concreto... la religión se siente, porque definitivamente la religión nace allá... entonces claro si yo como cristiano me voy a sentar con un musulmán: “huy no *guacala*, que tal que no sé qué”. Aquí no, ¡aquí usted se sienta con musulmanes, con lo que sea! Si me entiende, aquí a usted no le preguntan, ¿oiga es que usted qué religión es? ... acá no es una variable... allá si, por eso el problema, por eso la guerra, por eso los conflictos, porque pura y netamente religiosa...’

[Hablando de la misa]

Fernando: 'Sí, definitivamente hay días en que no se puede. La mayoría del tiempo no se puede. ¿Por qué? Porque el horario del Padre Naji es a las 11 de la mañana. Cuando usted tiene niños un domingo a las 11 de la mañana, le partió el domingo, y si usted va a salir fuera de Bogotá salir a las 12 del día no lo logra hacer por el congestionamiento... a veces cuando uno no tiene planes de salir fuera de la ciudad para los lados del campo, entonces pues si uno va a misa, a veces no. Es relativo depende del plan que uno tenga'.

A.2.22.Jimena

Chapter Five

[Hablando sobre el Club]

Jimena: '...nunca quise, por ejemplo, me parecía hartísimo ser socia del Club, mi marido me decía por que no compramos una acción y yo decía pues que pereza, ¿eso como pa' qué? Para ir a almorzar eso que pereza...'

Esteban: 'Entonces me dijiste que nunca quisiste ser socia, ¿todavía no lo eres?'

Jimena: 'No sí, sí somos ahora sí,... sí tal vez [desde] 2006... socios mi marido y yo... al final del camino, ya después cuando esto se hizo, digamos multitudinario, las reuniones y todo, entonces ya meritaba... hoy en día ya para mí sí definitivamente es una casa más. Y de verdad que es como mi casa, y pues te lo dirán, te lo habrán dicho seguramente muchos de quienes has entrevistado y esto para muchos de nosotros es nuestra segunda casa, y es muy agradable tenerla'.

[Hablando de la Unión]

Jimena: 'Y pues continuamos en esto que tú ya has venido conociendo y que realmente ya forma parte de la vida de todos y cada uno de nosotros. Muchas veces no hay nada nuevo de que hablar pero siempre encontramos cualquier cosa, cualquier tema. Es bueno para reunirnos, para vernos, para darnos un beso y un abrazo simplemente.'

[Hablando de la Unión]

Jimena: 'La parte del folclor pues ha sido algo que ha pegado muy duro y que ha sido un gran aglutinador indudablemente, y hemos hecho tres o cuatro actividades más que definitivamente hacen que ese propósito se esté cumpliendo, lentamente... esto es de paciencia y de ir ganándose adeptos lentamente a base de que vayan observando... y en la medida en que se han ido involucrando jóvenes y eso, vamos poco a poco... estas organizaciones, miradas cada una dentro de su objetivo, al final del camino, ayudan a lo

que todos quisiéramos que es mantener prendida la llama del Líbano en los corazones de todos’.

Chapter Six

[Hablando de la Asociación Nuestra Señora del Líbano]

Jimena: ‘Desde cierto punto de vista me parece que es una manera un poco de traer el Líbano a Colombia en su parte religiosa, es un rito que tiene un origen allá, hay algo que a mí me encanta de ese rito que es la parte de las palabras en arameo en la elevación, es el momento que más me gusta de la misa... y de alguna forma es una forma de traer un pedacito más de esa cultura de los católicos en el Líbano a Colombia’

[Hablando de la Iglesia Maronita]

La iglesia Maronita ‘es una faceta de evolución de vida, yo nunca fui una persona muy practicante, nunca lo fui, a pesar de la *vaceadas* de mi mamá... nunca he sido una activa participante en los temas de la iglesia pero, pues, como apoyo he respondido digamos a un llamado de algunas señoras de la comunidad cuando un grupo de personas resolvió embarcarse en un empeño que es en el que están avanzando de traer la iglesia Maronita a Colombia... Entonces sí, fui a la misa una vez, dos veces, y la verdad es que con el paso de los días y a pesar de las dificultades muchas veces para expresarse del Padre Naji, la misa de rito Maronita empezó a gustarme mucho. Eso no significa que yo ni me involucre con las actividades de la iglesia ni nada de eso, colaboro con tonterías, no formo parte de la asociación, no pienso hacerlo, pero la verdad es que doy la colaboración que me piden en todas las organizaciones que están estructuradas alrededor de la comunidad. Voy a la misa todos los domingos y pues ayudo a servir el café, o si me piden que un domingo lleve unos bizcochitos o cualquier cosa lo llevo pero digamos mi aporte se limita a eso y pues mi marido va también, me acompaña a la iglesia. Y la verdad es que he ido encontrando que es un espacio para conversar con Dios en un ambiente, digamos cada día se incorporan más los cánticos libaneses, y como yo siento muy profundamente el tema, entonces me parece, lo utilizo como un buen momento como para conversar con Dios. Y pues sigo yendo y si un día me aburro seguro dejare de hacerlo pero por ahora me satisface hacerlo. Pero no pretendo ir más allá, porque tampoco.’

Chapter Seven

[Hablando de la Unión]

Jimena: ‘... entendimos que nos queríamos mucho, que nos habíamos encontrado y que queríamos seguir estando juntos. Y allí pensamos en la posibilidad de crear alguna

cosa, pasaron los días y a mi alguien me menciona porque no pensamos nuevamente en la Unión Libanesa Cultural Mundial y desarrollar alguna actividad que de verdad permita un intercambio más activo de culturas, sobretodo en acercar al Líbano en su aspecto cultural a Colombia, pensando mucho además que con el paso del tiempo las generaciones van cambiando, de mantener un poco viva esas raíces en las nuevas generaciones y en las generaciones incluso ya mayores pero que por alguna razón no han estado tan cercanas o se han distanciado’.

A.2.23. Maria

Chapter Five

Esteban: ¿y el futuro del club en general?

Maria: ‘es que ahí de fijo porque lo que se espera es algo muy bueno, es un sitio bastante agradable, yo creo que por eso ha sido, yo reconsidero que algo que sé hacer bien es vender, tengo muy buen producto, que hemos sabido sacar ventaja y lo estamos vendiendo muy bien. Entonces este club tiene un futuro muy grande, si y únicamente nos unimos para hacer de esto un objetivo entre todos. Es un *sítiazazo*, es la mejor esquina de Bogotá, la casa tiene un ambiente delicioso. Esta casa, tú llegas y te sientes muy rico acá, con todo el stress que yo manejo yo me siento feliz acá, es una casa linda, rico recibir a la gente. Y yo les digo que el slogan, mi jefe me regaña, yo les digo que el slogan del Club Colombo-Libanés debiera ser llegue, quítese los zapatos y la corbata, es lo primero que tú llegas a hacer a tu casa’.

Esteban: te pregunto un poco sobre el Club, bueno los que quieren ser socios, ¿tienen que ser descendientes de libaneses?

Maria: ‘o de acá, por eso es Colombo-Libanés, y tenemos gente colombiana

Esteban: pero si muchos de los colombianos son porque están casados ¿cierto?

Maria: no, no, hay gente que por ejemplo no.

Esteban: y digamos ¿qué no tengan contacto? Pues amigos me imagino

Maria: exacto, pero les parece rico la comida, el ambiente, la hospitalidad, entonces les parece rico estar acá.

Esteban: y digamos ¿cómo es el proceso de admisión acá?

Maria: se tienen que presentar dos socios que no estén en la junta directiva, dirigencia del formulario, ese formulario entra a primer debate en junta, después lo colocas 15 días en cartelera, si no hay ninguna objeción de nadie, vuelve a entrar a junta para ser aprobado en segundo debate, si no hay balota negra, quedas aprobado como socio,

pagas el derecho que en este momento está en 8 millones de pesos y las cuotas mensuales que son de 373mil pesos mensuales.

Esteban: y digamos comparado con otros clubs, porque la verdad si no se, por un lado el derecho por otro lado la cuota, digamos ¿dónde se ubica?

Maria: ¿te digo la verdad? No tenemos punto de comparación. Porque comenzando por el número de socios, ¿con quién tendríamos a parecernos más o menos? Con el Gun, pero el Gun es supremamente elitista de pinchado, con el club médico, con el club de abogados, que son clubes de ciudad.

Esteban: y eso, pero digamos ¿ellos manejan también ese número de socios o tienen más?

Maria: noo, ellos tienen muchísimos socios

Esteban: y me imagino que el Carmel, pues aunque yo sé que el Carmel también tiene golf y todo eso pero también tiene muchos más

Maria: u claro, el Carmel Club además de judíos ¿no?

Esteban: si por eso

Maria: no, tiene muchísimos más socios y una de las ventajas de acá por ejemplo, que nosotros somos club que todas las reformas que hemos hecho han sido por la operación, no hemos pedido ni una sola cuota extraordinaria. Todo lo hemos hecho con la operación y financiados

...

Esteban: y digamos pues para eso de presentar por dos socios y todos si pasa harto o es más bien

Maria: si, porque es igual es una condición de estatutos, además tú tienes que tener la hoja de vida y en la hoja de vida está tu formulario donde están los dos socios que presentan y eso debe quedar en acta, tu sabes que las actas pues si se tienen que cumplir. Diferente se maneja cuando ya eres hijo de socio, que quieres entrar ya como pues te conocen y todo pues entras en primer debate.

Esteban: ¿y han negado mucha gente?

Maria: no, mientras yo he estado no

Esteban: ¿no han negado a nadie?

Maria: no, no y además, no porque la mayoría pues han sido socios y ya se han ido y han vuelto y los otros son gente muy allegada digámoslo pues que conoce a fulano a mengano, son gente chévere. Muy poquitos realmente, es que yo creo que en la medida de un Club grande que si imagínate entran yo creo que unas veinte hojas de vida mensuales, por bajito, tienes de donde colar'.

Esteban: y digamos ¿si hay un matrimonio qué hacen con los socios?

Maria: 'los atendemos en el bar o los mandamos arriba en un salón para que coman o almuercen.

Esteban: pero entran y ¿cómo?

Maria: entran normalmente, tratamos de que no se afecte el área, además que son eventos que son súper lindos. Los matrimonios acá, entonces si te vas a casar me cuentas y entonces aquí que es muy bonito.

Esteban: todavía no, todavía no

Maria: ¡sí! son eventos que salen muy bonitos, la gente están llegando empresas como proexport, kouala, y han quedado encantados con el servicio y algo que les llama mucho la atención es el contacto face to face. O sea aquí tratamos de ser personalizados. Tú me veras funequiando por todas partes y tratando de hablar con todo el mundo.'

Esteban: ¿y tienen contactos con otros clubs?

Maria: canjes sí, tenemos canjes con el Club la Pradera de Potosí que es mas allá de la Calera, es un club muy lindo, tenemos canje con el Club de Abogados, con el Club de Ingenieros, con el Club de Banqueros, con el Club Campestre de Neiva, con el Club Campestre de Barranquilla, con el Club Campestre de creo que es Montería, y con el Club Libanés-Sirio-Palestino de Republica Dominicana

Esteban: el campestre de Barranquilla fue el que también fue fundado por libaneses

Maria: Sí, teníamos canje con el Club Unión de Cartagena que también era pero no, no nos atendieron muy bien

Esteban: ah OK y ¿sabes si el campestre de Neiva o el campestre de Montería también fue?

Maria: no esos han sido trabajos míos que me dicen los socios "oiga Maria en tal parte necesitamos" entonces comienzo yo a hacer como el trabajo

Esteban: y digamos ¿con el de México, el libanés o el de Argentina que son grandes?

Maria: no, no, no, yo pues no he tenido, el de Republica Dominicana es porque un socio era amigo de un socio de allá que es de la junta directiva, se me fue el apellido, y el vino a dictar una charla acá sobre el Líbano muy linda, y sobre los viajes que organizan allá ellos al Líbano todos, entonces con él se hizo el contacto por intermedio del socio de acá'.

Esteban: ¿y cómo es que se llama el juego?

Maria: 'pues yo no sé cómo se llama el juego, pero había un momento en que jugaban tele, creo que se llamaba tele, o tede se llama. Es como un algo de un continental, algo así. Y son nuestros, nuestros socios consentidos

Esteban: ¿ah sí?

Maria: ¡claro! Claro, yo pienso que ellos son el muro de contención

Esteban: ¿vienen todos los días? ¿O casi todos los días?

Maria: no, ya solo están viniendo, es que igual se les ha ido acabando el grupo... se han ido, unos se han muerto, y entonces se les ha ido acabando el grupo. Entonces ya vienen casi tres veces por semana, máximo. Dos, tres veces por semana.

Esteban: ¿y cuántos son, por ahí?

Maria: cuatro o cinco

Esteban: a ¿no más?

Maria: ¡no más! Pues de nuestros jugadores, de nuestros. Porque los martes se reúne un grupo de *quin*, esos si son como 30 personas'

Esteban: bueno y fuera de las cartas, ¿qué más tiene el club digamos para ofrecerle a los socios?

Maria: 'bueno pues aparte del restaurante que gracias a dios con el esfuerzo ya lo hemos ido poniendo a la altura de, porque la competencia de competir con la abuela, la tía, la mama, la esposa, era muy complicado entonces pues ha sido un esfuerzo y un escuchar a la asociación de damas y a la tía, a la mama, "mijo esto no se hace así, esto sí" porque ellas de meten a la cocina, lo agradecemos porque eso nos ha ayudado a mejorar nuestra calidad. Entonces fuera de un buen restaurante, hay un proyecto que esta ya comenzando, el café Internet y ya estamos a punto de terminar. Una sala nueva de billares. El proyecto grande que tenemos ahora, que es bastante interesante, se está haciendo un estudio de donde quedaría bien un spa con unas muy buenas zonas húmedas, y una sala de masajes y sala de belleza, y un salón bastante amplio para eventos.

Esteban: ¿ese ya lo tienen?

Maria: lo vamos a tener. Pues ahorita usamos el comedor principal, pero la idea es no tener que incomodar al socio en su comedor sino ya tener un sitio para eventos.

Esteban: y bueno ¿tienen acá salones para conferencias?

Maria: si lógicamente, ósea para matrimonios, primeras comuniones, fiestas infantiles, reuniones de trabajo, tenemos Wifi, Internet abierto para todos, ayudas audiovisuales, refrigerios, almuerzos de trabajo, desayunos de trabajo. Y eso es lo que nos ha ayudado a mantener el Club porque únicamente tenemos 80 socios, entonces así es muy difícil

Esteban: ¿A sí? ¿Solo 80?

Maria: sí, pero ha sido una tarea maratónica, gracias a dios ya estamos viendo la luz al final del túnel. Ha sido un esfuerzo bastante grande, hicimos remodelación de almacenes, estamos haciendo cuartos fríos

Esteban: te acuerdas cuando llegaste ¿cuántos socios había?

Maria: 45

Esteban: ¿y esos nuevos socios, son socios que volvieron o socios?

Maria: hay algunos que volvieron y hay otros que son nuevos.'

Esteban: ¿has estado involucrada en alguna de las otras cosas?

Maria: 'estoy en la Unión, comencé con el dabkeh pero hay que ser prudentes, porque no se pueden mezclar las dos cosas. Porque en determinado momento dejas [de trabajar por el Club] o sea, no se pueden combinar. Es mejor así'

A.2.24. Imam Khalid

Chapter Four

Esteban: En términos de los números entre sunitas y chiitas, ¿en Bogotá hay más sunitas o hay más chiitas?

Khalid: 'Más sunitas, muchas más. Por lo menos diez veces más. Que es el mismo porcentaje entre los sunitas en el mundo y los chiitas, el mismo porcentaje acá.'

Esteban: ¿Qué porcentaje serían los sirio-libaneses?

Khalid: 'Claro, vamos a corregir ese término sirio-libanés, porque a propósito se llamaban sirios-libaneses los que venían a Colombia antes de mil novecientos veintialgo, antes de la separación del Líbano. Después de esa fecha, o libaneses o sirios. O sea, ahora en la comunidad o son sirios o son libaneses, ningún sirio-libanés en sentido político o en sentido de pasaporte, ninguno de los miembros. Porque creo que la mayoría se murieron, los que vinieron en la primera generación desde 1800 algo y a principios de 1900, la mayoría murieron. Los sirios son muy pocos, menos de 10 personas. Los libaneses musulmanes son como alrededor de 100 personas. Pero claro si nos referimos a los Libaneses acá en Colombia, 80% de ellos no son musulmanes, son católicos-maronitas, u ortodoxos, si la mayoría. Muchos de ellos han llegado en la primera oleada de inmigración a Colombia.'

Chapter Six

Esteban: Y en términos de la comunidad libanesa en Bogotá, ¿Qué tanto contacto existe entre los cristianos y los musulmanes libaneses?

Khalid: '... al Club Libanés van muchos musulmanes, y van cristianos. Claro no es un Club religioso, pero eso se llama libanés, no se llama cristiano. Van muchos y ese es uno de los espacios los cuales encuentra musulmanes. Por eso los espacios económicos, de negocios, fuera de esos a veces los encuentros... A veces las embajadas hacen reuniones, invitan a todo el mundo. Las embajadas a veces juegan

un rol importante en unir también, en acercar también los componentes de la comunidad árabe... Entonces tenemos algunos contactos, dependiendo. Hay personas que tienen más contacto que yo, pero no porque yo no quiero sino por circunstancias de la vida, trabajo, tiempo.'

Esteban: Entonces se conocen por medio de la mezquita me imagino

Khalid: 'Sí los padres y los hijos, por las relaciones sociales que mantienen las familias aquí. Claro acá por la comunidad es tan pequeña que nos faltan muchas cosas, porque por ejemplo en Brasil, Argentina, Venezuela inclusive, Chile, esos países tienen además de mezquita, porque la mezquita es solo un espacio en el cual podrían por ejemplo encontrarse los miembros de la comunidad islámica, hay otros espacios en esas comunidades que tienen club, que significa encuentro familiar, más ameno, más social, no religioso. Siendo musulmanes el encuentro no es religioso para nada, porque se encuentran a hacer asados, a jugar a no sé qué y no hablan ninguna palabra de religión. Siendo musulmanes, pero es un encuentro social, un espacio para vivir el aspecto social. Fuera de eso tienen colegios. Hicimos hace más de quince años un campamento islámico acá, un encuentro de jóvenes, y fuera de eso de las actividades deportivas y todo, algunas charlitas y orientaciones. [Un invitado español] dio una conferencia y dijo "cualquier comunidad que no tiene mezquita para toda la comunidad, colegio para los hijos de los miembros de la comunidad, y club para todos los miembros de la familia, si no tiene esos tres espacios está destinada a desaparecer.'

Esteban: En Maicao sé que está el colegio Colombo-Árabe, pero en Bogotá no hay un equivalente, ¿o sí?

Khalid: 'No porque la comunidad es muy pequeña relativamente, en comparación con la comunidad de Maicao. Fuera de eso la comunidad de Maicao es una comunidad concentrada, o sea, ubicada en un solo sitio casi. En cambio somos poco acá en Bogotá y dispersos en una ciudad muy grande, de hecho uno casi como si estuviera viajando para poder visitar a un paisano o algo. Por eso cualquier árabe o musulmán acá en Bogotá tiene más amigos colombianos que los amigos paisanos... Están dispersos geográficamente.'

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿y tienen algo planeado para la inauguración?

Khalid: 'Claro, vamos a hacer inauguración y vamos a invitar a todos los medios de comunicación, invitar amigos, tenemos muchos amigos intelectuales acá colombianos. Con profesores universitarios y escritores. Y para que se haga esto como una parte de

la propaganda que se va a hacer para la mezquita. Como una obra de arte para la ciudad de Bogotá, porque todas las capitales del mundo tienen mezquitas en la forma oficial, forma arquitectónica con minarete.'

Esteban: ¿y entonces que tienen planeado para esa inauguración?

Khalid: 'Algún almuerzo o alguna cena, dando algunos discursos agradeciendo los que contribuyeron en la construcción de esta mezquita, cualquier forma de contribución, ya sea forma de trabajo.'

Esteban: ¿Por qué las locaciones de las mezquitas? ¿Por qué en estos lugares?

Khalid: 'Puras coincidencias. En el caso del centro llegué y he encontrado que alguien que ha tenido todo el edificio de la mezquita del centro, entonces vendió el cuarto piso y dejó el cuarto piso como mezquita allá en el centro de Bogotá, porque todos estaban o tenían almacenes en el centro. Y porque alguien de allá, de los fundadores de esa asociación benéfica islámica, fue la persona que vendió a la comunidad parte del edificio. Se murió hace unos años. Después de esto, con respecto a la razón por la cual hemos he buscado la otra mezquita, la nueva ubicación. También estábamos buscando en muchas partes de Bogotá y encontramos un lote allá con un precio súper bien que nos ayudó muchísimo el precio.'

Esteban: Entonces la decisión fue más económica

Khalid: 'Pues la verdad cumplía ese lugar con más de una cosa, el costo y la ubicación geográfica. Allá geográficamente queda casi el centro de Bogotá, y tienen fácil acceso los miembros de la comunidad. Los que vienen del centro, los que vienen del norte, del occidente, del nororiente. Y queda en un punto justo para todos. Porque era muy injusto para algunos viajar, por ejemplo yo desde la 140 hasta el centro. Y la mayoría de veces iba en taxi, porque siempre como muy buen colombiano salgo en el último momento... La única desventaja [es que el puente opaque el edificio] pero también se puede convertir en una ventaja. Los que pasan por el puente lo ven... si pasa por la 30 vera la mezquita, por la 80 lo mismo.'

Esteban: [le cuento historia de visita a la mezquita y como un portero de edificios cercanos dijo que estaban construyendo una nueva iglesia].

Khalid: 'Muy buena pregunta, falta tratar de hacer. No nos afecta que piensen que es una iglesia. Es un templo.'

Esteban: ¿han tenido contacto con los vecinos?

Khalid: 'Sí, con la administradora del conjunto en la parte occidental. La administradora ya sabe.'

Esteban: Entonces es un poco social, ¿hay otras reuniones sociales dentro de la comunidad que sean un poco más oficiales?

Khalid: 'En general no. Los musulmanes son miembros ciento por ciento de la sociedad colombiana, metidos en la vida colombiana, salen en el momento de ir a la mezquita el viernes a asistir y regresan como ciudadanos colombianos. La mayoría de los musulmanes de la mezquita de Bogotá son colombianos. La mitad colombianos nativos, y casi más de la mitad de los demás, como yo, nacionalizados. Los descendientes van con los nativos.'

Esteban: ¿Y por ahí cuantas personas tendrá la comunidad en Bogotá?

Khalid: 'ehmm Entre 500 y mil, ¿por qué esa brecha tan grande? Pues porque nunca hemos hecho un censo de esos.'

Esteban: ¿Y activos por ahí cuantos hay?

Khalid: 'Los que van a la mezquita el viernes son entre 70 y 100'

Esteban: ¿Y cuándo van?

Khalid: 'Los viernes, y los sábados a veces doy clases de árabe y de filosofía islámica. Y muchos de ellos, por ahí la mitad, no son musulmanes, que van solo para tener idea, como tú que estás haciendo, sin la intención de adoctrinar a las personas, sino para que tenga la gente acceso a la esencia del islam... son clases más de árabe para colombianos, la mitad de ellos no son musulmanes y clases de Islam. Y no son colombianos solamente, asisten también dos norteamericanas, una de ellas trabaja en la embajada de EEUU.'

Esteban: ¿y en términos de la relación? siendo que la comunidad es tan pequeña de pronto no se ve la necesidad de tener dos mezquitas

Khalid: 'La verdad algunos amigos de nuestro grupo de la nueva mezquita fueron y hablaron con el señor de la mezquita Estambul y le dijeron que si quiere vender esto con el precio de eso podemos garantizar hacer bien la nueva mezquita y les dijo que lo va a pensar, y eso fue hace como un año y no dio respuesta. Entonces no se puede imponer a la gente... La mayoría prefieren por razones geográficas, por distancia, pero hay algunos que van a la nuestra algunas veces van a la otra.'

Esteban: ¿se consideran parte de la misma comunidad?

Khalid: 'Claro todos somos la comunidad islámica de Bogotá'

Esteban: Viendo que sus hijos no están en un colegio musulmán o de la comunidad ¿Cómo ha hecho para mantener esos valores?

Khalid: 'No choca con los valores de un musulmán el hecho de vivir en un lugar de mayoría no musulmana no causa problemas. ¿Cuáles son los valores a los que me refiero? No se trata de un Islam folclórico, sino me refiero a un Islam real, un Islam esencial. El Islam esencial quiere que sea yo primero que todo un buen lector, un buen lector podrá tener herramientas para tender puentes, lograr manejar el idioma, tanto que puede comunicarse positivamente e ir elevando el nivel de la comunicación positiva con los otros grupos humanos en el nuevo entorno...'

Chapter Eight

Esteban: Yo sé que existe otra mezquita, ¿qué contacto existe con esa parte de la comunidad?

Khalid: 'Pues claro por el tiempo y la distancia es difícil tener contacto con todos, por el mismo señor encargado de esa mezquita es un señor colombiano convertido hace como 20 años. El mismo solía ir a la misma mezquita nuestra en el centro hace muchos años y después de eso alguien de Turquía donó una cierta cifra con la cual compraron esa casa. Es una casa patrimonio que no se puede modificar externamente. Y la convirtieron en una mezquita y le dieron el nombre Estambul. Tienen algunas actividades.'

Esteban: ¿y de dónde sacaron los fondos para construirla? [la mezquita de Bogotá]

Khalid: 'Primero que todo el precio de la mezquita del centro, que es casi la mitad del costo. Y la otra mitad pues llevamos desde el 79' ahorrando hasta que logramos tener, y algunas ayudas de algunos musulmanes acá y de las otras comunidades de musulmanes, de Maicao, de Barranquilla, pero no hay nadie del exterior. Porque una vez hicieron un reportaje en el periódico *El Espectador* y el periodista la embarro, yo no sé a quién entrevistó y la persona entrevistada le dijo "sí, ellos trajeron cuatro mil millones de pesos del exterior, de Arabia Saudita". Mentira, no hemos recibido ni un centavo de Arabia Saudita, ni un centavo del exterior, ni mucho menos de Arabia Saudita...'

Esteban: ¿tengo entendido que son chiitas? [Centro Cultural Islámico]

Khalid: 'Sí chiitas, no solamente chiitas sino pro-iraníes. Al estilo iraní. Para ser más sincero también, una de las razones por las cuales no hemos tenido mucho contacto con él es porque son chiitas pro-iraníes, no porque son chiitas. Y pro-iraníes significa posibilidad de tener algunos problemas porque siempre Irán ciertos intereses, a veces bajo el nombre de un proyecto económico siempre tratan de acceder a ciertos sectores de la sociedad, por ejemplo acá en Colombia ellos accedieron fuertemente al sector izquierdista acá en Colombia. Y siempre tienen unos intereses políticos que no nos

interesan, y no queremos tener problemas porque somos colombianos que queremos a Colombia y no estamos dispuestos a hacer algo medio espionaje en contra de nuestro querido país.'

A.2.25. Imam Eugenio

Chapters Two and Seven

[Historia y comunidad]

Eugenio: 'Después de un tiempo entonces por inconvenientes ya en el manejo de la divulgación del Islam yo hice un grupo aparte de musulmanes y empezamos con unas mezquitas en el centro también de Bogotá, donde alquilamos unas oficinas, fue creciendo, luego nos tocó otra oficina más grande, donde las mujeres aparte, los hombres aparte, y de hace ocho años estamos aquí en la mezquita Estambul, calle 45ª 14-81.'

Chapter Two

[Historia y comunidad]

Eugenio: 'Para hablar de libaneses pues sí han venido varios, conocemos varios, especialmente conozco varios shias, aunque sí que tuve que pedirles el favor de que ellos tienen su comunidad y entonces que se fueran para allá porque tanto la creencia como la forma de adoración, las oraciones y todo es diferente a nosotros que somos sunni, y entonces por eso en el momento creo que hay unos dos que vienen pero sunni también ¿no? Todo este tiempo sí he conocido bastantes libaneses, bastantes, pero como le digo en el momento ellos fluctúan, vienen van salen...'

Chapter Four

Esteban: ¿Qué porcentajes son?

Eugenio: 'Chiitas y sufís son una cosa muy minoritaria, a ver yo creo que por cada cien [sunitas] habrá unos ocho máximo, eso es muy poquito lo que hay. Como en el mundo, en el mundo todos los países del mundo son sunni menos Irán. Son religiones inventadas por el hombre 200 años después de la muerte del profeta...'

Chapters Seven and Eight

Esteban: ¿Por qué se llama Estambul?

Eugenio: 'Ese nombre lo colocamos por varias razones. Primero porque en Colombia mucha universitaria y mucho niño entonces les gusta *Las Mil y Una Noche*, y *Ali Baba y Los Cuarenta Ladrones*. Entonces Estambul es la más fácil para crear un acceso. Le

daba la idea a todos de que eran bienvenidos. Le ponemos un nombre, por ejemplo mezquita Nar [Nur], mezquita Luz en árabe, mezquita Ibrahim no sé qué, eso da privacidad a la gente, “huy allá no vamos porque esa mezquita es de árabes” en cambio Estambul es un nombre que abre perfectamente las puertas en estos medios.’

Esteban: ¿Y alguna razón por la cual escogieron Estambul y no Beirut o Cairo?

Eugenio: ‘No, únicamente porque en Beirut es de guerra, otra cosa sí. Y no queríamos comprometernos con ningún otro, eh con ningún país con nombre así. Le íbamos a poner mezquita Bogotá, pero no tiene sentido. En Bogotá la gente dice eso no es una mezquita es una iglesia, en Bogotá le quita y le resta Islam a la mezquita. Estambul no, Estambul todo el mundo sabe que es de árabes por decir algo, entonces ya mucha gente llegó al comienzo “queremos conocerla” el nombre llamó la atención y sigue llamando la atención.’

Chapter Seven

Esteban: ¿Por qué decidieron construir, o radicar la mezquita en este lugar?

Eugenio: ‘Por la ubicación tan central, tanto de los que trabajan en el centro, como que trabajan en Chapinero, o en el norte de Bogotá, entonces les queda muy fácil por los medios de transporte también... un barrio muy sano, muy residente y es fácil... las personas llegan fácilmente, que hacerlo por allá en un barrio retirado... en el centro no encontramos un sitio, era imposible. Lo más apropiado para una mezquita en Bogotá está aquí en este sitio.’

Esteban: [discriminación]

Eugenio; ‘...Los muchachos no dejan de molestarlas a ellas, a nosotros los hombres no, pero a los mujeres si las molestan, tratan decirles que pobrecitas, que no sé qué, que el velo, cantidad de tonterías... ‘

Eugenio: ‘...Algunos muchachos del sur, hay unos sitios donde uno no debe meterse mucho por allá ir a caminar o algo, sobretodo que digo yo, en algunas épocas ‘en ese momento [2001] hubo unos pequeños inconvenientes, pequeños digo yo, unas llamadas, unas amenazas, cosas que hubo así. Entonces ya llegó un punto en donde a mí también ya me molestó esto y me tocaba también decirles por teléfono “venga aquí directamente, sabe dónde estoy, venga y hablamos o venga lo que quiera y lo resolvemos los dos. No amenace” y me fui quitando de encima un poco de gente así. Pero el común de la gente no. Hay gente que ya entiende que los musulmanes no hicieron eso, eso es un grupo revolucionario, anarquista que está en contra del Corán.’

Esteban: [historia y comunidad]

Eugenio: 'La mayoría colombianos que estamos acá, que antes éramos cristianos o católicos, que estamos formando el grueso de la comunidad islámica en esta mezquita. También vienen libaneses, pakistaníes, de Egipto, de todas partes. El trato de nosotros con ellos pues no es diferencial, es igual en todo momento con todos ya que el Islam no distingue ni de raza, ni nacionalismo, ni nada...'

Esteban: ¿Han colaborado con nueva mezquita?

Eugenio: 'No, nosotros no. Totalmente aparte. Yo no conozco esa mezquita sino por fuera y no pienso entrar allá. Y ellos tampoco han venido acá. Si han venido uno o dos es mucho. Es por lo que le comento, ellos son muy cerrados, los palestinos especialmente, muy cerrados... entonces nosotros mejor nos apartamos totalmente y así nos va mejor.'

Esteban: ¿Cuántas personas?

Eugenio: 'Nunca hay un número fijo, nunca porque no se vincula bajo lista ni nada. Entonces a veces vienen 100 aquí, a veces vienen más, a veces vienen menos. En esta época es la temporada que menos vienen. Vienen unos 60, 70, porque no hay universidades, no hay colegios, nadie está estudiando, muchos están en vacaciones, entonces viene muy poca gente, unos 70 entre hombres y mujeres. Además estamos en una depuración de la mezquita. En qué consiste, estamos identificando el que sea shia que aquí ya no más. El que sea sufí que aquí ya no más. Vamos a empezar una época de solo sunni y que en Colombia se sepa que esa mezquita es sunni únicamente.'

Esteban: Pero también debe ser un poco difícil saber cuáles son y cuales no son.

Eugenio: 'No, pues una persona que inicia que tiene confusión, entonces va a un lado, va a otro, entonces hay que darle esa libertad para que aprenda. Pero se le va explicando cuando viene aquí, "somos sunni por esto y esto, esta es nuestra fe. A los shias hacen esta otra cosa, los sufís hacen otra cosa distinta, entonces usted es libre de escoger la que quiera". Cuando ya me dicen "no, yo quiero tal" entonces bueno, aquí no vuelva. "Yo quiero sunni", entonces aquí es su casa. Ya. Porque ese revuelto no puede seguir en Colombia. Aquí es el único país del mundo en donde se revuelven todos a hacer una oración al que quiera, entonces no es Islam.'

Eugenio: 'En Colombia todas se identifican, el 90% como sunni, se identifican así. Pero en la práctica no lo son, porque se revuelven, son mezcla. Usted va a Cartagena, a Barranquilla, y me dicen, yo no he ido allá, me dicen que tienen la mezquita dividida con una cinta atrás los shias o adelante, ahí todos revueltos. Es por qué, porque muchos

creen que ahoritica no se pueden hacer diferencias porque estamos empezando y que en lugar de dividirnos, dicen ellos, era mejor unirnos. Pero yo enseñó y no acepto eso de que unirnos con quiénes. Si es lo contrario, si es salirnos todos del Islam. O somos musulmanes o no lo somos, no hay otra cosa... entonces la lucha que tenemos en esta mezquita, y ya hay algunos que van entendiendo, esos somos sunni o no más.'

Esteban: [Mezquita]

Eugenio: 'Ocho años vamos a cumplir ya ahorita nosotros de estar acá, bueno es abierta, es aquí de todo mundo, sunni, nos identificamos plenamente como sunni, en la otra mezquita se recibe mucho a los shias, a todo el que quiera. Entonces en el Islam eso no es aceptado, por eso aquí se les instruye a la gente, se les enseña, que eso es un revuelto porque son creencias totalmente diferentes al Islam y no se puede estar adorando por un lado a Alah y por otro lado estar adorando a Jesús... Acá estamos identificando esta mezquita únicamente sunni.'

Chapter Eight

Esteban: ¿entonces no hubo alguna ayuda de Turquía?

Eugenio: 'No, no. Directamente no. En qué sentido, creo que entre los 60 o 70 que dieron la ayuda para escoger la casa habían algunos de los turcos pero luego mínimo, y no se identificaron siquiera, porque para eso no se identifican ni nada...'

[Refiriéndose al líder del Centro Cultural Islámico]

Eugenio: 'Yo no lo admito en ninguna parte, a mí cuando llegan los medios de comunicación que quieren que estemos yo les digo: "si ese señor está yo no asisto porque él no es musulmán". Si va con su shia bueno que defienda el shiismo, respetable, pero que se haga pasar como musulmán no lo acepto.'

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