

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CIVIL MARRIAGE IN A HIGHLY
DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: THE CASE OF
LEBANON

by
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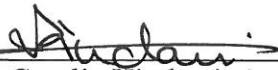
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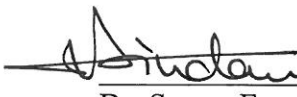
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Soraya Dali-Balta for Master of Arts
Major: Political Studies

Title: Attitudes towards Civil Marriage in a Highly Diverse Educational System: The Case of Lebanon

Education's private sector in Lebanon is an image that reflects, to a large extent, the country's confessional structure; it predominantly comprises schools that were established or are run by different religious authorities, or different groups or individuals. Private schools differ in their missions, orientation, curricula, and teaching methods, and this diversity was encouraged and sustained by a number of legislations issued since the Ottoman Empire, and which continued in the same way after the country received its independence in 1943. Laws covering education stressed communities' right in establishing and operating private schools, provided that they respect public order. These educational institutions continue to enjoy a large margin of freedom at present in their curricula, teaching methods and in the approaches they adopt in dealing with different topics.

With this diversity in orientation and activities, how similar or different are their students' attitudes towards issues debated on a national level? Do their attitudes differ depending on the school they are enrolled in? Are students in secular schools more open to a secular or civil state and civil laws than their peers in schools run by religious authorities? Do different schools approach and deal with contentious topics similarly or differently, depending on their type?

This study aims at finding out whether schools as socializing agencies influence students' attitudes towards civil marriage. Civil marriage has long been debated by decision-makers, civil activists, and in the media, and while it has gathered a group of supporters who attempted to push it forward and make it a law in force, it still faces resistance and rejection among many influential figures. Muslim and Christian religious authorities, in particular, continue to insist on keeping matters of personal affairs exclusively in their own hands, and stand united on both sides, Christian and Muslim, against any efforts to legalize nonreligious ceremonies in the country.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUB: American University of Beirut

BHS: Brummana High School

CSC: Collège du Sacré-Coeur

IHS: Iman High School

LAU: Lebanese American University

MIC: Montana International College

MUN: Model United Nations

SGEC-L: General Secretariat of Catholic Schools in Lebanon

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Situating the Study

When Lebanon gained its independence in 1943, it had inherited an educational system that reflected, to a large extent, the confessional structure of society. Education's private sector, in particular, was composed of institutions established by groups that differed in their religious, social, and political backgrounds. These institutions possessed a large margin of freedom and independence in their teaching methods, approaches, material they covered and the socialization of their students, amongst other things. The diversity that characterized the private sector was encouraged by a number of legislations issued originally during Ottoman rule, and later during the French Mandate, which gave the "different communities" in Mount Lebanon, and then in Greater Lebanon, the right to establish their own schools, and the freedom to manage their own affairs. This approach continued throughout the different phases in Lebanon's history, and when the Lebanese constitution was declared in 1926, Article 10 in it echoed Article 8 in French Mandate's Charter. Article 10 states that "education shall be free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not affect the dignity of any of the religions or sects." It also affirms "the right of religious communities to have their own schools, provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction." This allowed for the propagation of private education and for the continuation of confessionalism, instead of curbing it and promoting social cohesion and national unity. Today, around 70% of students in Lebanon are enrolled in private schools, the majority of which are associated with or

run by religious groups (Alwah, 2011). In this context, this study intends to explore how different private schools in Lebanon deal with one of the crucial issues of national interest.

Specifically, this study intends to explore the extent to which private schools play a role in shaping their students' attitudes towards civil marriage. The assumption behind this intention is that the school as a socializing agency must have played some role in influencing the viewpoints of its students regarding a controversial issue such as civil marriage. Clearly, while examining students' perceptions towards this issue, we cannot reduce all factors of influence to those that lay within the boundaries of schools, and disregard the influence of the home or religious communities, or other factors. In this connection, our choice of schools as possible causes or contributors to shaping attitudes is justified on grounds of interest, rather than exclusivity.

The choice of civil marriage as a test that may reflect the positions of different students was favored specifically because of its religious and political sensitivity. This topic has been highly contentious and has appeared frequently in press and public debates. The Lebanese state has recognized civil marriage's legitimacy as a bonding arrangement since 1936, but only when conducted abroad (Traboulsi, 1994). The state remains on this stance until today. It is to be added that opposition to civil marriage comes from both Christian and Muslim authorities, who continue to oversee matters related to Lebanese personal affairs.

The role of education in contributing to national cohesion is addressed in this study at a time when Lebanon is going through a phase characterized by the increasing influence of the country's sectarian identities over secular and national ones. Moreover, it is attempted shortly after the issue of "optional civil marriage" came to public

attention and debate once again in 2013, when some developments threw the topic back into the spotlight, triggering a heated discussion over it, and even contributing to few unprecedented legal breakthroughs in this domain.

B. Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore and compare the viewpoints of students of different religious groups attending different private schools in Lebanon, towards “optional civil marriage.” The study will attempt to offer an insight into the extent to which different schools may be influencing their students’ attitudes towards issues of national interest, civil marriage in this case, and elaborate on how this is manifested. It will also look into whether there are differences in the viewpoints of students towards civil marriage depending on their sex and chosen fields of studies, taking their religious backgrounds into consideration. While the socio-economic background of students’ families was a variable of interest to compare it with their attitudes towards the topic under consideration, however, pupils’ incomplete or vague answers to this question in the questionnaire were not found reliable by the author to draw a trustworthy conclusion in this respect. Thus, the social and economic background of students was dropped as a variable in this study.

The questions this study will attempt to answer are the following:

- 1.) What attitudes do students of different private schools have towards optional civil marriage?
- 2.) Do students in the same school but of different religious backgrounds have similar or different stances towards civil marriage?
- 3.) Are students in secular schools more open than students in religious schools to optional civil marriage?

4.) Are students in the Humanities more open than students in the Sciences to optional civil marriage? Do attitudes of students towards voluntary civil unions differ depending on their programs of studies?

5.) Do female students look at civil marriage differently from their male peers?

C. Methodology

In pursuit of the questions asked above, schools of different backgrounds, religious and secular, were approached to take part in the research. The author contacted dozens of schools throughout Lebanon, but the majority opted not to take part in the study, explaining that they have time-related constraints, that meeting their students for research purposes is against their regulations, or that they have concerns over discussing the themes of this research paper on campus, whether civil marriage or asking about pupils' religious backgrounds. The writer eventually received the consent of four schools that took part in the research; two secular and two religious (one Muslim and another Christian) located in different regions in the country. The Muslim school is Iman High School in Sidon and the Christian is Collège du Scaré-Coeur in Beirut's Gemmayze neighborhood. The two secular schools are Montana International College and Brummana High School, both located in al-Metn district in Mount Lebanon. A detailed profile of each of these schools is given later (see Chapter IV). The sequence of research activities proceeded as follows:

Brummana High School was the first school visited by the writer on October 31, 2013. The writer met and interviewed the principal and the civic education teacher at the school and gave out the questionnaire to students in Grade 11 on the same day. The writer also held a casual conversation over the schools' activities with the Dean of Students. On November 8, 2013, the writer visited Collège du Sacré-Coeur, when she administered the questionnaire to Grade 11 students, and interviewed the civics teacher.

Her interview with the school's principal was held on November 28, 2013. The study at Montana International College was launched and completed on December 3, 2013, when Grade 11 students completed the questionnaire, and the Vice Principal and the social studies teacher were interviewed by the writer. On December 12, 2013, the writer visited Iman High School first when she met with female students only who filled the questionnaire. Due to the absence of a significant number of their male schoolmates, she returned on December 16, 2013, when a sample of the young men completed the questionnaire. The interviews with IHS' principal and with the civic education teacher were conducted on January 9, 2014.

As for participants in the study, the researcher chose Grade 11 students on the assumption that by that age, they would have acquired a general understanding of topics controversial on a national level, and that the issue of optional civil marriage will be one of them. It was also assumed that at this age, these students would have become more able to express their views clearly.

Profiling the schools was accomplished using several methods including personal interviews, data and document collection, and personal observation. In each school, the writer met with and interviewed its principal, or vice principal, and also met with one civics teacher. The interviews with headmasters aimed at getting to know the history of each school, its background, and its mission and orientation. This was done through asking questions about its establishment, its owners, values and mission statement, its curriculum, the teaching of civics and religion at the school, as well as about the activities and clubs offered there. The researcher also interviewed one civic education teacher at each school, with the aim of gathering information on the teaching of civics, topics that are debated in classrooms, students' opinions, the freedom of

expression and of exchange of ideas allowed, and the approach adopted by teachers and the attitudes of students particularly when the topic of optional civil marriage came up class. The interviews with the schools' principals extended for 30-40 minutes each, and those with the civic education teachers for around 10-15 minutes (See copies of both interviews in appendices B and C).

In addition to interviews, information on the schools, their background, and work were gathered from the headmasters, and/or from their administrative aides and offices of student affairs. These included brochures, yearbooks, agendas, mission statements, calendars, magazines or newsletters, and the schools' lists of activities, events, trips, and holidays. The researcher also examined publications found on display around campus, mainly in waiting rooms and in administration buildings, and these included educational magazines, brochures about sister schools, or NGOs the school may be affiliated with. In addition, the writer scanned the schools' websites and researched for online news articles about their work. Personal observation by the researcher during several visits to the schools was another source for data collection; such visits were very useful for gathering information on the general atmosphere in the educational institutions. During the visits, the researcher took note of different styles of school buildings, of wall posts, statues, wall paintings, pictures, decorations, advertisements and other material, as well as of students and employees' outfits and behaviors.

Meanwhile, profiling pupils and asking for their opinions on civil marriage were done through a questionnaire administered to Grade 11 students of all programs or academic streams at the four schools. The questionnaire included direct questions about students' sex, religious and educational background, social status, hobbies and interests,

while the opinion section included closed-ended and open-ended questions related to the topic of civil marriage (See a copy of the questionnaire in Appendix D). All Lebanese Grade 11 students at the four schools were approached to participate in the study, but only those who secured their parents' consent, and expressed their willingness to take part in this research paper completed the questionnaire. Questionnaires in which questions on civil marriage were left unanswered were discarded from the sample. This concluded with a total number of 156 valid questionnaires distributed as follows:

- Brummana High School (BHS) – 19
- Collège du Sacré-Coeur (CSC) – 67
- Montana International College (MIC) – 17
- Iman High School (IHS) – 53

In all schools, students completed the questionnaire in class and during class time. It took them between 25 and 40 minutes to respond to all questions, depending on their queries and cooperation while completing the form, and on the level of distraction in the classroom. During the entire time, the researcher was in the same classroom with the students to answer their questions.

D. Plan of this Study

After this introduction, Chapter II will offer a general review of the development of education in Lebanon since the Ottoman Empire, focusing on policies and approaches adopted by authorities in the field of education. In the same chapter, special attention will be given to the private sector, following its development, and covering legislation that guided its work. In Chapter III, a review of civil marriage and of the conditions and laws related to it will be presented, including legislation covering

personal affairs. The chapter will then introduce and discuss attempts and legal efforts to legislate optional civil marriage in Lebanon, and review arguments for and against it. Chapter IV will report the views of students in the four private schools towards optional civil marriage based on an analysis of their responses to the questionnaire. The author will start with a general profile of each school, and then present the responses of its students to the questionnaire. The final chapter, Chapter V, will present a summary of the findings, including a discussion and evaluation of students' responses, and it will revise the issue of education, civil attitudes and their relation to national unity.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION IN LEBANON

A. A Historical Overview

At the beginning of the Empire's four-century reign over the region, Ottoman authorities had little interest in social and cultural matters of the population in territories under their occupation, focusing instead on increasing their power and strengthening their political influence (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). The Ottomans adopted the Millet system that granted each minority in the realm the right to manage its own social affairs, and establish its administrative and political systems (Khalifa, 2008; Ftouni, 2013). Accordingly, matters related to personal affairs, such as marriage and inheritance, were put in the hands of the religious authorities of these groups, who represented their communities in front of Ottoman rulers (Ftouni). The Millet system allowed these groups to establish their own institutions, including schools (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). The Millet was actually an extension of the type of relations Ottomans had concluded with the French in the 16th century, and which granted them protection of their freedoms (Ghoussaini, 1964). The French-Ottoman Concordat, known as the "Capitulations," was signed in 1535 and gave French citizens the right to be in charge of their own religious and community matters (Bashshur, 1988). Later, this protection of French's rights was extended to include non-Muslim groups as well (Bashshur). In general, education remained largely outside of the Empire's scope of work and was managed instead by the private sphere, particularly by religious authorities (Ghoussaini, 1964). As such, the early efforts in the field of education in Lebanon can be attributed to religious

authorities, which saw in teaching a tool to preserve their communities' independence, freedoms, rituals and identity (Bashshur, 1978).

The establishment of the Maronite school in Rome in 1584 was an important event that helped in promoting education among the Christians of Mount Lebanon, particularly Maronites. The school was aimed at training clerics, and once they graduated, these religious men returned to Lebanon to establish schools and teach (Bashshur). In 1736, Maronite clergy convened in Louaize in a Congress which was first of its kind, and issued a declaration that stressed the importance of education, urging the opening of schools and monasteries, and calling for providing children with free and mandatory teaching (Oueijan & Tannous, 2011). Though the Congress did not have a direct influence on increasing the number of schools, it was a strong evidence of the involvement of religious authorities, churches in this case, in the business of education (Bashshur, 1978). Gradually, the Maronite church expanded its social and educational activities, which included the establishment of numerous schools throughout the mountain area, and transforming monasteries into educational institutions (Bashshur; El Khazen, 2000). After the Maronites' success in this domain, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics authorities eventually began to open their own schools (Antippa, 1954).

While expansion of schools was taking place, Christians, mainly Maronites, sought to strengthen their ties with the West, particularly with France and Rome. These ties encouraged European Catholic missionaries to come to Mount Lebanon and establish religious and educational institutions (El Khazen, 2000). They perceived schools as instruments to influence people and transmit their teachings and values in the region (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). The first missionaries to come were the French;

Americans came in the second quarter of the 19th century, followed by the British-Syrian missions in the third quarter of this century (Antippa, 1954). Activities of all these groups contributed significantly to changing the perception of education among the population. Gradually, schools were taken from their exclusive religious context and their ties to the church or the mosque (Antippa).

This Christian cultural expansion was eventually followed by Muslim awakening, albeit slowly, in the coastal towns of Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). Education among Muslims was confined first to mosques, and limited to the teaching of Islamic religion (Shahine Saleeby). In 1878, the establishment of the Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association of Beirut changed this situation, as it came to provide a modern educational alternative for Muslim students (Shahine Saleeby). The Makassed was founded by Sunni notables, generally to offset the influence of Christian missionaries, and at the same time provide charitable services to the people. It provided not only an alternative to religious education, but also an alternative to Ottoman schools as well as Christian missionary education (Terc, 2006). As a result, it could be said that all religious communities under Ottoman rule eventually benefited from this approach towards cultural activities, which resulted in the expansion of school establishment (Frayha, 2003).

Although it wasn't among their top interests at first, Ottoman authorities later understood the significance of education for civil administration and progress. They began to introduce certain measures to organize the field, and ended up by establishing a "Maaref" council that later became a ministry in charge of all educational matters. The scope of work of this council, however, did not cover the work of private schools run by religious authorities (Bashshur, 1978). In 1856, they issued the first compulsory

education law in the Empire, and in 1869, they issued other laws distinguishing between private and official institutions (RCPL, 2004; Salibi, 1965; Frayha, 2003). However, by that time, the private sector was already strong and community-run schools were to be found all over Mount Lebanon (Ghoussaini, 1964). Public schools, on the other hand, were limited in number, and did not have much impact; the majority consisted of one room only where students of different academic levels were taught at the same time (Frayha, 2003). Moreover, families whose native language was not Turkish considered these Ottoman public schools as “foreign schools,” since they taught using the Turkish language. This led to a further increase in the number of private and community-run schools (Frayha). By 1887, there were 102 schools in Mount Lebanon alone, catering to 15,000 pupils, the majority of whom were Christians (Gordon, 1980). These institutions came to reflect religious groups’ values and missions, instead of promoting national cohesion. As such, one is justified in concluding that the policy that the Ottomans adopted in the field of education encouraged rather than discouraged social and national divisions (Frayha, 2003).

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Sykes-Picot Agreement distributed the territories that were under its reign, placing them under the French and British mandates (Fares, 2007). In 1920, French authorities declared the creation of the new state of Greater Lebanon and defined new boundaries for the country. The new state included Beirut, the region of Jabal Amel in the South, the Akkar region in the North, and the Bekaa valley, in addition to the original Mount Lebanon (Fares). These new borders, which remained unchanged until this day, drew new numbers of sectarian groups into the state, and signaled the establishment of a precarious religious balance inside Lebanese territories: Christians in Mount Lebanon

and Muslims in the other four districts (Fares; Al-Hajjar, 2002; Cobban, 1985). But when it came to education, the policies followed by the French were to a large extent an extension to Ottoman's approach, as they also strongly stressed freedom in this domain, whether in curricula, books or methods of teaching (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). Article eight of the Mandate Charter issued in 1922 stipulated:

The right of each community to maintain its own schools for the instruction and education of its own members in its own language while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the administration may impose shall not be denied (Bashshur, 1988).

Hence, Mandate authorities, just like their Ottoman predecessors, kept education under the auspices of religious communities. The Charter did not consider it a right for everyone to found schools, but gave "communities" this right. Education thus was not looked at as a national concern, but as a communal right (Ghoussaini, 1964).

Among the achievements of the Mandate authorities in education were abolishing the use of Turkish as an official language in public schools, and founding the Division of Education, which in 1926 became the Lebanese Ministry of Education (Frayha, 2003). The Mandate period saw a remarkable rise in the number of new schools, and a rise in enrollment (Hemsley Longrigg, 1958). Along with upholding diversity and freedom in this field, the French also worked on expanding public education, particularly at the elementary level (Bashshur, 1978). In terms of prestige, these schools, however, could not compete with those established by missionaries or religious communities (Hemsley Longrigg, 1958).

When Lebanon gained its independence in 1943, it inherited an educational system that had been in the making since the 16th century, a system characterized by divisions alongside religious communities. The approach of the independent Republic of Lebanon towards education continued in the same liberal route; Article 10 of the

Lebanese Constitution, which was issued in 1926, calls for freedom in education and remained unchanged to this day. It stipulates:

Education shall be free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not affect the dignity of any of the religions or sects. There shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction (Lebanese Constitution).

Schools continued to thrive in the private sector, and overshadowed public efforts which remained behind, despite repeated calls and promises.

B. Private Education

1. Growth and Development

As mentioned above, the growth of the private schools is largely due to the efforts of religious communities who had a great impact in the proliferation of educational institutions. In Mount Lebanon, Christians operated 245 schools during the Ottoman period, and non-Muslims amounted to 95% of the total number of students. Meanwhile, Sunnis and Druze had 18 schools (El Khazen, 2000). In 1913, there were 20 local schools run by Christian authorities in Mount Lebanon and five others operated by non-Christian religious communities, and that's in addition to the 70 institutions founded by Western missionaries. Meanwhile, there were only five Ottoman-run public schools in Mount Lebanon at the time (El Khazen). The establishment of private schools continued to expand and with the announcement of Greater Lebanon in 1920, Christians had to their credit 471 institutions, the majority of which was located in Mount Lebanon, while Muslims operated 241 others (El Khazen). This trend also continued after independence. In the academic year 1966-1967, there were 1,298 private and 1,257 public schools in the Republic of Lebanon (Ministry of Education, 1967).

Meanwhile, in the academic year 1973-1974, the number of public schools surpassed that of private schools, although to a marginal extent only; there were 1,348 public schools in Lebanon, in comparison to 1,339 private educational institutions.

Nevertheless, the private sector attracted more students during that year, as there were 484,352 students in private schools and 317,156 in public schools (CERD, 1974). In the academic year 1992-1993, 67.3% of students in Lebanon were enrolled in private schools (CERD, 1993). In 2003, there were 905,445 students in schools throughout Lebanon, of whom 557,141 were studying at private education institutions. These amounted to 61.5% of the total number of students (CERD, 2003). Hence, the percentage of students attending private schools decreased a little bit between 1993 and 2003, but remained higher than that of enrollment at public schools. A decade later, in the academic year 2012-2013, the percentage of students attending private schools in Lebanon rose again, reaching 69.3% (CERD, 2013). The Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education linked the low number of students' enrollment in public schools to a widening gap between the achievements of the private and the public sectors. It explained that this gap was caused by low qualifications of teachers and administrators at public institutions, the unavailability of appropriate infrastructure that prepare for a decent teaching environment, and the lack of laws that could improve the situation in public schools (UNICEF, 2011). Hence, and although public education has grown since Lebanon acquired its independence in 1943, this sector has attracted a smaller percentage of the country's students than the private (Frayha, 2003).

While its growth has been substantial, private education in Lebanon has been marked with disparities between the country's different communities. Maronites were pioneers in the domain and had the biggest share of schools, meanwhile, Muslim

development in this field was slower. As stated earlier, Sunnis followed Christians later on, particularly after the establishment of the Makassed association. The Shiite community was late to catch up with the train of political and social development. However, the establishment of Shiite-run schools witnessed a dramatic rise during and after the Lebanese Civil War, and it was largely due to the awareness of the sects' leaders of the importance of education in promoting their ideologies, values and presenting a positive image of the sect's members (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008). Eventually, the gap between Christians and Muslims decreased over the years and for over five decades between the announcement of Greater Lebanon in 1920 and 1978, Maronites and Shiites were leading in the domain, and they were followed by Sunnis, Greek Catholics and Armenians (El Khazen, 2000).

Since private schools have long been linked to religious communities, Lebanon's educational system came to be as diverse as the number of sects in the country (Abou Chedid, n.d.). It reflected a confessional image, and consequently, these sect-run schools attracted students most of whom were from the same religious backgrounds (Bashshur, 1978). It should be noted that not all private schools were confessional, as this sector included foreign and local non-denominational educational institutions as well (Antippa, 1954). This latter type included large numbers of schools, which were founded as business ventures and which witnessed a remarkable expansion after independence. Their numbers, however, remain below that of confessional institutions (Bashshur, 1988; Alwah, 2011).

2. Regulations Covering the Private Sector

Since issuing the Hamayouni decree in 1856, which dealt with the rights of religious minorities to construct churches, and until the collapse of the Empire, Ottomans set two conditions for the establishment of private schools run by sects, and these included securing the approval of the communities' top religious authority, and getting a license from Ottoman authorities (Ghoussaini, 1964). The Ottomans did not go beyond these two conditions for regulating the work of private schools. The French meanwhile were treated specially, thanks to an accord with Ottoman authorities and which allowed them to establish their schools without getting a license. This situation changed one year before the First World War in 1913, when the permit became a requirement (Ghoussaini). The accord between the two authorities, the Ottomans and the French, stated as well that France would not open schools in neighborhoods where Muslims are the predominant population, leaving educational matters of these regions in the hands of the Ottomans (Bashshur, 1978). As for supervising the work of schools, Ottomans' first attempts to regulate the private sector came after the establishment of the Maaref council, and the Empire then issued several decrees detailing the type of relation it has with these institutions. A law issued in 1869 stressed the right of Ottoman authorities to supervise the work of private schools, without listing the guidelines or the rules that should be abided by in these institutions regarding recruitment of teachers, or methods of teaching (Ghoussaini, 1964). However, in 1913, a temporary elementary education law stated that schools must be sanitary, abide by hygienic rules, and that lectures must conform to ethics, religious values and the law. The same law also gave supervisors the right to visit schools whenever they wish to inspect them (Ghoussaini). This law, however, did not refer to teaching methods, or ethical principles to be

followed. Other Ottoman laws called for protecting religious freedoms, and gave private schools the right to offer religious instruction (Ghoussaini).

Rules and regulations during the French Mandate were more strict and more comprehensive. Opening new schools was regulated by newly issued laws that granted the Maaref minister the right to issue licenses and supervise local educational institutions. Licenses to open foreign institutions, however, remained in the hands of the High Commissioner (Ghoussaini). The latter's role included supervising the work of existing French schools in the country, in addition to authorizing the opening of new foreign educational institutions (Hemsley Longrigg, 1958). However, the Mandate Charter made sure to draw a limit to those monitoring activities, as Article 10 stressed that French authorities' supervision of foreign missionaries' work was limited to assuring that public order and the regime were respected and safeguarded. What is noteworthy is that in addition to a license for opening schools, a law issued in 1924 required applicants to present the curriculum and the list of books to be used (Ghoussaini, 1964). This was a kind of indirect supervision of private schools established by local people, while foreign missions were left free from this requirement. In 1931, a new decree required the adoption of an official unified curriculum in all local private institutions. Accordingly, private schools were no longer obliged to submit the list of books they used, as their choice was limited to the books that fulfill the requirements of the official curriculum. The same law, however, granted private schools the right to freely choose their teaching methods (Ghoussaini). Foreign private schools were not obliged to follow the official curriculum according to the 1931 law. However, the introduction of the Lebanese Baccalaureate, and making it in 1933 a requirement for practicing several jobs on Lebanese territories, such as medicine, pharmacy or law, was

an indirect way that necessitated offering the official curriculum at these foreign schools (Ghoussaini). As for teaching religion, Mandate authorities preserved the right of private schools in offering religious instruction, provided that they do not offend other beliefs (Ghoussaini). A number of committees were formed during the Mandate to supervise education in local private schools, and the scope of work of these committees included curricula, teaching methods, examinations, degrees or certificates, books and awards, amongst others. In addition, the Mandate made an unprecedented provision, making the French language an official language in all schools (Ghoussaini).

The requirement of obtaining a license for opening private schools continued in effect after Independence, and other required conditions were added, such as for changing the institution's type, internal organizational structure, the headmaster, or for relocating (Ghoussaini). Arabic became the only official language in schools and it was mandatory for all students. Later, however, a law stipulated that only Lebanese students were obligated to learn Arabic (Ghoussaini). Decree 7000 gave new guidelines for instruction in private schools, leaving the right to choose the method of teaching to schools to decide (Bashshur, 1988). Article 13 of decree 7000 stipulated that the official curriculum is compulsory in all private schools, local and foreign (Ghoussaini, 1964). However in 1950, decree 1436 gave non-governmental schools the right to teach subjects that were not part of the curriculum, hence allowing them to prepare students for other diplomas and certificates, in addition to the Lebanese baccalaureate (Ghoussaini; Bashshur, 1988). Educational regulations issued in 1946 aimed at promoting common national and social orientations in all schools and therefore, required private institutions to restrict their textbooks in crucial subjects such as history, geography, and civics to a selection from a list of books approved by the government,

whereas in other subjects, private schools had the freedom to choose textbooks as they wish, provided that they were not banned (Ghoussaini). As for monitoring private schools, the Ministry of Education had a supervision procedure for this purpose and specific supervisors to perform the job. Of particular interest to the Ministry was to obtain from each private school lists of teachers and students attending at the beginning of each academic year (Ghoussaini).

The post-war Taif Agreement of 1989 had some guidelines related to educational reform. It emphasized freedom of education within the boundaries of the law, and called for protecting private education and “strengthening” public education. In addition, the Agreement stated that “the curricula shall be reviewed and redesigned in a manner that strengthens national belonging, unity, spiritual and cultural openness.” It also called for the unification of textbooks in the subjects of history and national education (Taif Agreement). Years after the Taif Agreement, the Lebanese cabinet approved in 1997 a new curriculum for all subjects, except history (Bashshur, 2003). And while the Taif Agreement called for unifying history textbooks in the process of educational reform, this condition remains unfulfilled to this day. Different textbooks are used in different private schools and it is reported that in 2008, more than 20 series of history textbooks were used in schools throughout Lebanon (Daher, 2009). These books are thought to present differing points of views regarding Lebanon’s history, and reflect the different viewpoints of writers and schools, irrespective of guidelines or instructions set by the government (Daher). The lack of cohesion or unity in history textbooks in Lebanon’s schools is another indication of a tremendous disparity between these educational institutions, particularly since this subject is considered a course that can promote cohesive national sentiments (Nazarian, 2013).

The Lebanese state did attempt to impose supervision over the private sector, but it has never been strict in this regard, and the inspection of private schools remained largely theoretical (Bashshur, 1978; Shahine Saleeby, 1987). In view of this disparity, not to say opposition of trends and orientation, the question of exploring the role different nongovernmental schools play in Lebanon in influencing students' attitudes towards different concepts and issues becomes more urgent.

CHAPTER III

CIVIL MARRIAGE IN LEBANON

While Lebanon is considered a secular state that follows nonreligious laws, confessionalism prevails in many aspects of its life, particularly in matters related to personal affairs and education (Baydoun, 1999; NHDR, 2008). As mentioned in the previous chapter, education's private sector is larger in size than the public, and private religious schools, or schools with a religious orientation and control, are larger in number than private secular schools. Meanwhile, personal affairs in Lebanon were handed over to the care of religious authorities in an exclusive manner, with the absence of any civil laws governing these issues. This chapter will discuss the evolvement of Personal Status laws of the different religious communities in Lebanon, and it will give some details regarding civil marriage in the country. It will then move on to review and shed light on the legal, political and popular efforts that aimed at issuing civil laws for personal affairs. This chapter will conclude with the arguments used by the supporters as well as the opponents in the context of this contentious topic.

A. Personal Affairs and Civil Marriage Status

Regulations governing personal status matters in Lebanon are exclusively derived from religious laws. As explained earlier in Chapter II, the "Millet" system that was adopted as far back as the 16th century gave religious minority groups in territories under Ottoman rule the right to manage their own personal affairs, matters related to education and the right to issue some personal laws (Traboulsi, 1994). After the collapse of the Empire, Article 9 of the Lebanese constitution, issued in 1926 during the French

Mandate, recognized the presence of religious sects and gave them the right of legislation related to matters of personal status (Traboulsi). The article reads as follows:

There shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state in rendering homage to the God Almighty shall respect all religions and creeds and shall guarantee, under its protection the free exercise of all religious rites provided that public order is not disturbed. It shall also guarantee that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, shall be respected (Lebanese Constitution).

During the French mandate, Decree 60 was issued on March 13, 1936, acknowledging the presence of 17 religious communities in Lebanon, whereas during the Ottoman rule, only four were recognized: Sunnis, Armenians, Orthodox Christians and Jews (Traboulsi; Alami, 2012). Decree 60 gave these 17 communities the right to legislate and to establish their own courts. Since then, all matters of personal affairs became in the hands of religious bodies (Traboulsi, 1994). Personal laws of the country's 17 communities were grouped under 10 different religious codes, as some of them fell under the same jurisdiction (Alami, 2012). These codes covered various matters relating to marriage, family life, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, together with some other issues (Clark & Salloukh, 2013). However, Article 25 of this same Decree 60 acknowledged civil unions if conducted abroad, and Article 79 of the Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure stipulated that civil unions conducted abroad are governed by laws applied in the country where the marriage took place (Yaghi, 2001; Fleming-Farrell & Mroueh, 2013).

Taking advantage of this, many Lebanese opted for a nonreligious union outside the country, and neighboring Cyprus turned up to be a favored destination for civil ceremonies. In 2013, Cyprus' ambassador to Lebanon noted that up to 700 Lebanese couples travel each year to conduct a civil marriage in his country (Nash, 2013). In the past few years, the number of Lebanese couples seeking civil marriage in

Cyprus has been increasing: it was 220 in 2008, 436 in 2009 and 600 in 2010 (“Civil marriage for Lebanese: How to,” n.d.). However, these numbers remain significantly lower than those who were married in the country by religious bodies. An average of 35,650 Lebanese couples tied the knot in each year between 2003 and 2012, and of these unions, only an average of 800 yearly ceremonies were civil. Hence only 2.2% of the total number of yearly unions between 2003 and 2012 were civil. This small percentage could be traced to several factors, mainly, to the incapability to bear the cost of traveling abroad in order to wed in a civil union (“Istitlaa ra’y bayn al-zawaj al-dini wal-madani [Survey about religious and civil marriage],” 2013).

B. Efforts to Legislate Civil Marriage

The first efforts to legislate optional civil marriage took place in Lebanon in the 1950s when a law was adopted to determine the powers of Christian and Jewish authorities in regard to personal affairs. The law of April 2, 1951, and which included in the jurisdiction of Christian and Jewish authorities all matters related to personal affairs, such as marriage, divorce and adoption, amongst other issues, sparked opposition from several figures that considered it a further consecration or sectarian bodies’ powers (Traboulsi, 1994). During the parliamentary discussion regarding that decree, MP Nassar Ghelmieh was the only legislator who opposed it, and called instead for a civil code that can unite the country’s communities and that responds to the aspiration of people wanting to marry in front of civil authorities (Traboulsi). The draft, however, gained the necessary votes and became a law in force following its publication in the Official Gazette on April 2, 1951 (Traboulsi). At that time, lawyers were on top of the list of those who favored legislating civil marriage. The Bar Association prepared a

draft law that gained the approval of the Justice Ministry and the proposal was later referred to the cabinet, but it did not make it to parliament for a vote (Yaghi, 2001). As a result, lawyers went on a general strike in 1952 that halted the work of the courts for three months. Those efforts were, obviously, fruitless (“Lebanon: A civil marriage bill which ‘raises the threat of divorce’,” 1998).

After some twenty years, in 1974, lawyers Abdullah Lahoud and Joseph Moughaizel drafted another optional personal status law that was supported by the “Coalition of Independent Maronite Lawmakers” [Tajammaa al-Nouwwab al-Mawarina al-Mostaqelline]. One of the coalition’s lawyers, MP Auguste Bakhos, who was the chair of the Administration and Justice parliamentary committee, placed the draft law on the agenda of the MPs’ work for discussion. The draft, however, never made it through to debate and voting, mainly because of the opposition of religious authorities, particularly the Sunnis, who asked for postponing discussion over optional civil marriage (Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002).

In 1998, near the end of his second term, President Elias Hrawi expressed his intentions of tackling the issue of optional civil marriage (Baydoun, 1999). He brought the topic up officially on January 5, 1998, during a cabinet session, when he handed the ministers copies of a civil personal draft law and gave them a few weeks to study it (Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002). He had tasked a team of judges and legal experts to prepare the draft and reminded the ministers that the Taif Agreement calls for abolishing sectarianism in the country, declaring that the adoption of the draft law could be the entryway for achieving this (“Lebanon: A civil marriage bill which ‘raises the threat of divorce’,” 1998; Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002). Section G of Article II of the Taif Agreement in fact considers abolishing political sectarianism as a “fundamental national objective”

(Taif Agreement). There was a fierce campaign against Hrawi for bringing up the issue in the cabinet, particularly by Sunni religious men, but despite that, the draft law was voted on in March 1998, and it gained the approval of 21 ministers, the opposition of six, and one minister abstained, while two did not attend the session (Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002). Among those who opposed the proposal was late premier Rafic Hariri, who did not refer the draft to the parliament for a vote (Hrawi & Mnassa). Hrawi's step sparked fury among religious authorities with Grand Mufti Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Qabbani threatening to excommunicate any Sunni political figure who supported the proposal. In addition, people took to the streets and staged a sit-in in front of Beirut's Dar al-Fatwa, the headquarters of the Sunni authority in Lebanon, to protest the proposed draft (Hrawi & Mnassa).

In 2011, a non-governmental organization (Chaml) concerned with bridging religious differences in the country prepared a draft law on voluntary civil marriage that covered various matters related to personal affairs like divorce, custody of children, and inheritance, and submitted the draft to the cabinet. The draft passed several formal stages towards legislation, but failed to reach the parliament for a vote (Brophy, 2013).

The issue of civil marriage was revived again in the public sphere in 2013 when a Lebanese couple, Kholoud Succariyeh and Nidal Darwish, announced that they had concluded their marriage in a nonreligious union inside the country. The couple got married in November 2012 in a civil union, after having their respective sects struck out from their family registers ("Suleiman voices support for civil marriage," 2013). They referred to the same constitutional Decree that was issued by the French High Commissioner on March 13, 1936, and which recognized the presence of 17 religious communities in Lebanon and granted each of them its own courts and the right to

legislate and govern matters of personal affairs (Traboulsi, 1994; Meguerditchian, 2013). But Article 10 of Decree 60 declares that personal status affairs of Lebanese citizens who do not have a recognized sect would be governed by civil laws (Salam, 2013). The couple, Succariyeh and Darwish, took refuge in this exception, had their religious affiliation struck out from their registration documents, and concluded their wedding before a public notary (Salam). The couple's move was made possible by virtue of a decree passed by former Interior Minister Ziad Baroud in 2008, and which allowed Lebanese citizens to remove reference to their sect identification from their personal status registration documents (Meguerditchian, 2013).

After much debate and contestation, the Lebanese Supreme Council in the Ministry of Justice voted on February 12, 2013 unanimously to consider all civil unions conducted on Lebanese territory legal, if they are performed by persons whose religious affiliation is not registered in their official documents ("Judicial council approves Succariyeh and Darwish's civil marriage," 2013). Later that year, caretaker Interior Minister Marwan Charbel signed Darwish and Succariyeh's nonreligious union certificate on April 25, 2013, which became the first civil marriage registered in the records of the Directorate General for Personal Affairs in Lebanon ("Charbel signs first ever civil marriage conducted in Lebanon," 2013). Along with this signature, the Minister, however, stated a condition to the effect that Succariyeh and Darwish would not change their religious affiliation, and that they should commit to following the existing laws of personal affairs in matters related to their union, such as birth of children, divorce and inheritance. He explained that this condition was stated in view of the fact that the country does not have laws that govern such affairs of people with no religious affiliation ("Charbel signs first ever civil marriage conducted in Lebanon").

Charbel's condition was met with mixed reactions of legal experts. Some disagreed with his interpretation, stating that matters related to children and divorce could be covered in the law related to the marriage contract, which was the French law in the case of Succariyeh and Darwish. They added that the couple could no longer refer to religious laws, because they removed their sects from their personal registers, and conducted their marriage with the understanding that they had no sect (Fleming-Farrell, 2013; Al-Qusayfi, 2013). Others referred to a vacuum in Lebanese legislation in this regard, explaining that while Article 79 of the Lebanese Code of Civil Procedures and Article 25 of Decree 60 issued in 1936 state that couples who wed abroad would follow the regulations set by the state in which their union was concluded, laws in Lebanon do not cover cases in which a civil marriage was conducted in the country (Fleming-Farrell & Mroueh, 2013; Maroun, 2013). Irrespective, Succariyeh and Darwish's first of a kind civil union succeeded in placing the topic of optional civil marriage back into the spotlight. On January 30, 2014, caretaker Minister of Justice Shakib Qortbawi referred the optional civil marriage draft law to the council of ministers, and noted that in case it gets approved, nonreligious unions would henceforward become possible and legal in Lebanon ("Qortbawi refers civil marriage draft law to cabinet," 2014).

C. Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

Several Lebanese political leaders and religious figures also took part in the debate over Succariyeh and Darwish's marriage, and the possible adoption of nonreligious unions in the country. Among the first to comment on the 2013 developments was President of the Republic Michel Suleiman, who came across as a staunch supporter of the adoption of voluntary civil marriage in Lebanon. He argued

that legalizing civil marriage helps as a step towards abolishing sectarianism and in strengthening religious coexistence in the country (“Suleiman voices support for civil marriage,” 2013). Also in support of civil unions was former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who admitted that a large section of the Lebanese society is in favor of nonreligious marriage, suggesting that an agreement should be reached to go forward with the issue (“Hariri voices support for civil marriage,” 2013). It is worth remembering that Saad Hariri is the son of the late premier Rafic Hariri who, in 1998, refused to sign a draft in favor of optional civil marriage. Samir Geagea, the head of the Lebanese Forces, declared that those wanting to wed in a civil union must have the chance to do so in Lebanon (“Geagea won't take part in Hariri commemoration,” 2013). As well, the predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party expressed its support to the issue, remarking that adopting a civil law for personal affairs in Lebanon is not against religious beliefs, as it does not contradict ethical values which all religions call for. It also urged the cabinet and the parliament to go forward with the necessary procedures and put the draft law into effect, adding that the adoption of optional civil marriage is one step towards assuring Lebanon’s progress and development (“Maa wa dod [With and against],” 2013).

On the other hand, the campaign in support of optional civil marriage sparked a wave of condemnation in the ranks of many religious figures. Grand Sunni Mufti Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Qabbani, once again, slammed as apostate any Muslim official who approves of the legalization of civil marriage in Lebanon, threatening that religious ulama will make all necessary efforts to prevent the bill from passing in parliament (“Mufti Qabbani issues fatwa against civil marriage,” 2013). Former premier Najib Miqati was also not supportive of a civil marriage bill. He declared that that was

not the right time to introduce new topics for debate in the country, considering the many problems Lebanon is already facing (“Bride’s family rejects her battle for civil marriage in Lebanon,” 2013). The Jamaa Islamiya, a Lebanese Islamic party, lashed out at Succariyeh and Darwish’s union and considered it a legal heresy, stressing that civil marriages are not appropriate for Lebanon (“Maa wa dod [With and against],” 2013). Contrary to the position of Druze political parties, the head of the Druze community Sheikh Naeem Hassan opposed the adoption of voluntary civil union, declaring that marriage is a holy sacrament that should strictly be in the hands of religious authorities (“Druze Sheikh comes out against civil marriage,” 2013). The Maronite Bishops’ Council took a middle of the road position, stating after a meeting presided over by Patriarch Beshara al-Rai in early February 2013, that a religious ceremony must complement any conducted civil marriage (“Maronite Bishops: Those who marry in civil union must complement it with religious ceremony,” 2013). It should be noted that in 2011, the same Maronite Patriarch had a different stance when he supported a compulsory civil marriage in the country, instead of a voluntary one. At that time he explained that laws in general must be obligatory, and that civil marriage should be adopted in Lebanon as a choice for nonbelievers of any faith that want to get married in the country (“Rai pushes for compulsory civil marriage,” 2011).

Supporters and opponents of the adoption of voluntary civil marriage have cited legal, ideological, political, social, and even economical reasons to back their positions on the issue. To some, civil marriages are considered a tool of national unity, because on the one hand they allow for more interfaith marriages to take place, and at the same time, they consolidate all laws in the hands of the state, instead of dividing laws between civil and religious courts (Kabbara, 1998; Yaghi, 2001). It is also believed

by some that the application of religious laws in civic aspects of life in Lebanon weakens the state's power (Kabbara). It has also been noted that the absence of civil marriages in Lebanon harms the state's sovereignty because Lebanese couples who conduct nonreligious unions abroad refer to the laws of that foreign country for issues related to their union, instead of referring to Lebanese laws (Yaghi, 2001). Moreover, referring to local laws and international agreements that the Lebanese state has signed, civil union advocates consider that the absence of a civil marriage law in the country violates both the Constitution of the country, as well as the Universal Declaration for Human Rights (Qabbani, 2000). They considered that a nonreligious law for personal affairs in Lebanon is a first step towards the abolition of political sectarianism, which is stated as a national goal in the Constitution (Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002). In addition, some refer frequently to Article 9 of the Constitution that highlights freedom of belief, and point out that the absence of a civil code for personal status violates this (Al-Husseini, 2013; Qabbani, 2000). Article 9 stresses that the state should guarantee that "the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, shall be respected" (Lebanese Constitution). It was also argued that another violation in this matter occurs with regard to Lebanon's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Point B of the Constitution's preamble states that Lebanon is "a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Lebanese Constitution). The same point B in the Constitution adds that the cabinet must adopt the principles set in that declaration in all domains without exceptions (Lebanese Constitution). Article 16 in the UN Declaration, which Lebanon had signed in 1948, stipulates that "men and women...are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during

marriage and at its dissolution...” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). According to many civil marriage advocates, Lebanese religious laws do not guarantee such equality between the two partners, and point out to polygamy in Islam as an example (Qabbani, 2000).

On the other hand, many criticize laws governing religious marriages and consider their flaws a motive for seeking the adoption of optional civil marriage in the country. Issues that are frequently brought up include equality between men and women. For instance, Islam gives men the permission to have up to four wives while women do not have the right for polygamy (Al-Dahdah, 2012). Also, in both Muslim and Christian unions, men have superiority over their wives (Yaghi, 2001). In Islam the husband has the right to manage the house’s affairs, to act freely, to discipline his wife and is given the final say in all important matters. A woman, meanwhile, cannot show disrespect towards her husband or refuse to have sexual relations with him in an Islamic marriage (Al-Dahdah, 2012). Likewise in Christianity, a wife must obey her husband’s orders and wishes; she cannot reject intercourse with him, is expected to leave to him the final say in important matters, respect his dreams and refrain from doing anything that could harm his plans, and must continue to live at their house and never leave, regardless of what happens between both partners (Al-Dahdah). Divorce is another matter that is highly criticized by civil union advocates (Qabbani, 2000). In Catholic marriages, a couple cannot get a divorce and has instead to go through a long process with religious bodies and file for separation or annulment (Al-Dahdah, 2012). Meanwhile, in Muslim unions, it has been criticized that men can take a unilateral decision to divorce their wives without the need for their consent (Traboulsi, 1994). As for inheritance, the shares allocated to females and males in Sunni Islam are considered

unjust, as males get higher shares than those of their female peers (Alwah, 2013). Another major motive for demanding nonreligious ceremonies in the country is interfaith marriages. Currently, when a man and a woman of different religious identity decide to tie the knot, usually one of them is expected to convert to their partner's faith (Alwah). Furthermore, while Muslim men can marry a Christian or a Jewish woman, Muslim women cannot wed a non-Muslim man (Al-Dahdah, 2012). A recent study has shown that out of a sample of one million Lebanese, 36,500 have converted to another sect to escape the religious laws and go forward with their lives the way they desire (Alwah, 2013). The majority of conversions take place particularly for purposes related to personal affairs such as creating the possibility of having an interfaith union, easing divorce, and for matters related to inheritance and wills (Merhi, 2013; Alwah, 2013). However, once their goal is achieved, most converters return to their sect (Merhi). Qabbani (2000) believes that Lebanon cannot keep abiding by static laws that haven't developed or weren't changed in ages, pointing at religious laws, which in his opinion, are contradictory to notions of modernity, reform, liberation, and progress.

Many people believe that the reason for refusing civil marriage stems from the insistence of religious and political figures to hold onto the status quo, to preserve their interests and power, as well as to keep their margin of interference in matters related to the state and its authority (El-Hrawi & Mnassa, 2002; Qabbani, 2000; Yaghi, 2001). Also, civil unions deprive religious bodies from financial revenues collected through marriage licenses' fees (Yeranian, 1998; Clark & Salloukh, 2013). Many highlight the high cost of religious unions to support their call for adopting civil marriages in Lebanon. Muslim marriages cost around \$200, whereas churches may charge a couple up to \$10,000 (Anderson, 2013). Sheikhs may also receive a part of the bride's dowry in

a Muslim ceremony (Yeranian, 1998). Meanwhile, civil unions can be done for as little as \$100, but since this option is not available in the country, Lebanese couples wed abroad. When they travel, the average cost rises and is estimated at about \$1,250, including travel and accommodation. Also, divorces in religious courts can cost thousands of dollars that are paid to religious authorities (Anderson, 2013). Hence, civil marriages can lift the financial burden off the shoulders of the marrying couple, and can also contribute to the state's treasury instead to that of religious bodies (Yaghi, 2001).

In sum, civil marriage has strong supporters as well as strong opponents in the country, each firmly defending their stance every time the topic comes into the spotlight. In general, opposition to civil marriage unites religious figures from different sects who rarely meet on common grounds in Lebanon. When President Hrawi brought up the matter in 1998, Mufti Qabbani quickly contacted Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, the Maronite Patriarch at the time, declaring his support to the stance he has taken over this matter, while the latter urged solidarity with Muslims in the country against the draft law (Baydoun, 1999; Yeranian, 1998). As mentioned earlier, the Sunni Mufti had declared a "holy war" against civil marriage and other Muslim scholars supported him, warning that the attempt is a threat to Islam's teachings (Yeranian). Similarly, Patriarch Sfeir stated that civil marriage contradicts the teachings of the church, threatening to refuse to grant those who wed in such a union the sacraments of the church (Yeranian). Many Shiite scholars were also against the proposal, some of them claiming that it gives legal grounds to prostitution in the country ("Civil marriage: Tool for unity?," 1998). Ayatollah Mohammed Mahdi Shamseddine said that he was against civil marriage adoption because it contradicts with Islam and Christianity alike. He also warned that it fragments society and subjects it to dangers, and pointed out that it might eventually

lead to the adoption of same sex marriages (“Al-mo’atamar al-islami lil sharia wal-qanoun [Islamic conference on sharia and law],” 1998).

From a social angle, the anti-civil marriage camp warns that the deviation from religious unions violates public order as it encourages people to abandon their social relations and detach themselves from their identities, which set them apart as a group (Baghdadi, 1998). Nonreligious marriage opponents consider that children born to a couple married in a civil union lose their religious affiliation and their identity, describing them as prodigal sons (Baghdadi).

From a political perspective, some deny that civil marriages can eradicate sectarianism, arguing that confessionalism is rooted in public administration, in official posts, and in the distribution of ministerial portfolios in Lebanon (Yaghi, 2001). While supporters of civil marriage point out the rigidity of religious laws, their opponents criticize civil regulations’ laxity and warn that this might lead to more controversial laws such as same sex marriages, etc. (Yaghi). As well, while supporters refer to Article 9 of the Lebanese constitution to highlight their support for freedom of belief and conclude that to be consistent, people should be allowed to choose their type of marital union, others, use this same Article to argue that adopting civil marriage is disrespectful to laws governing personal affairs (Baghdadi, 1998).

Just like political and religious persons, authors, legal professionals, and civil society activists, the public opinion in Lebanon was in general divided on the issue of optional civil marriage. When the topic was brought back to light in 2013 following the announcement of Khoulood Succariyeh and Nidal Darwish’s union, several surveys were conducted to explore the attitudes of Lebanese towards civil marriage. In a survey completed by Information International in early 2013, 46% of the 500 participants said

they only endorsed religious marriages, while only 18% said they were for civil marriages exclusively. Meanwhile, 33% of the surveyed people said they supported a choice between religious or nonreligious unions. Hence, while 46% were for religious marriages only, 51% were for non-religious marriage, but only 18% without another option and 33% with an option of a choice with a religious marriage (“Istitlaa ra’y bayn al-zawaj al-dini wal-madani” [Survey about religious and civil marriage], 2013). In another poll published in April 2013 and which also surveyed a sample of 500 people, 45% of participants said they supported the adoption of optional civil marriage, while 52% said they were against it. Among those who expressed their support to nonreligious unions, 82% said they would also consider an interfaith marriage in their future, and 16% ruled the idea out (“Khamisa wa arbaoun fil mi’a min al-loubnaniyine maa al-zawaj al-madani al-ikhtiari [Forty-five percent of the Lebanese are with optional civil marriage],” 2013). Meanwhile, in a study conducted in May 2013, the majority of 61.4% of surveyed Lebanese stated that they are against former Interior Minister Marwan Charbel’s signing of Succariyeh and Darwish’s nonreligious union, while only 38.6% praised this step. The survey noted that the majority of Sunnis (94.8%) and of Shiites (82.9%) were against ratifying the couple’s union while Christians and Druze were more supportive of the issue, with 68.4% of Christians and 72.9% of Druze endorsing Charbel’s approval (“An Nahar tanchor istitlaan lil ra’y ajrat-hou ‘Statistics Lebanon’ [An Nahar publishes a survey conducted by ‘Statistics Lebanon’],” 2013).

Thus, contrary to what may appear in a first look, civil marriage is not, at present, as popular among the Lebanese, particularly among the Muslims of both Sunni and Shiite affiliations. Hence the Lebanese people continue to be divided on the issue, and while some top statesmen and politicians have recently voiced their support for the

adoption of optional civil unions, the issue remains as contentious as ever.

In the middle of this heated debate over the issue, what are students' attitudes towards civil marriage? Are their stances influenced by the type of school they are enrolled in? Do these attitudes differ depending on pupils' sex or concentration of studies? The following chapter will have this as the main concern.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: ATTITUDES TOWARDS OPTIONAL CIVIL MARRIAGE IN FOUR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Grade 11 students at four different schools in Lebanon were approached and asked to complete a questionnaire to explore their attitudes towards civil marriage. Before reporting their answers, a profile of each participating school is given in the chapter, followed by the responses for each of the four schools.

A. Brummana High School

1. School Profile

a. History, Mission and Values

Brummana High School sits in the town of Brummana in Lebanon's al-Metn region. Its 14 buildings, three dormitories, clinic and library occupy six hectares of the area (Brummana High School, 2013). The School was established in 1873 by missionary Theophilus Waldmeier, who was a British Quaker, at a time when a wave of foreign and Christian missionaries founded several educational institutions in the country. Waldmeier was an inspector of the British Syrian Schools before he decided to open a new school. BHS is still owned and looked after by the British Quakers (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The British Religious Society of Friends, the founder of BHS, is based on the principles of peace, equality and mutual respect between people. It stresses on non-violent means to resolve disputes, and on freedom of belief and expression, principles which have been adopted by BHS. In addition to these values, the School also fosters honesty, kindness, teamwork and

independence. BHS thrives to expand students' horizon and motivate the employment of their full potentials in both the classroom and through their participation in extracurricular activities. Quakers encourage the adoption of new learning techniques, as well as stimulating students' curiosity and encouraging their critical thinking (Brummana High School, 2013). Of a particular interest to this study is what appeared on the School's website i.e., that Quakers emphasize citizens' responsibility towards their community, which is demonstrated in the School's slogan "I Serve," and translated in the academic system adopted and the activities offered at BHS (Brummana High School, 2013).

Although established by a missionary of a religious character, BHS however, presents itself as a strictly nonreligious educational institution that caters to students from a wide array of nationalities and religious backgrounds. As a boarding School, BHS attracts international and Lebanese students from various regions in the country. In the academic year 2012-2013, 49 different nationalities were recorded at the School (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

As for the School's fees for the present academic year 2013-2014, they vary between \$3,500 and \$6,400, depending on the grade level, and on the program of study. Fees for boarding students amount to about \$19,000 per annum, including tuition. Financial aid is also available at the School based on eligibility. In 2012, 26% of enrolled pupils benefitted from financial support (Brummna High School, 2013).

b. Academics at BHS

Students at BHS have the option to either enroll in the Lebanese or in an International Program. The International Program follows a Cambridge curriculum and

is given strictly in English, using international textbooks (Brummana High School, 2013). Students enrolled in this program must complete several British exams that are part of the Cambridge curriculum in order to qualify for a High School Diploma, and these tests prepare them to sit for the International Baccalaureate (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013; Brummana High School, 2013). Pupils registered in the International Program are mostly international or Lebanese students who carry dual citizenship and opt for graduating with a High School Diploma instead of completing the requirements of the Lebanese Program and sit for official Lebanese exams (Brummana High School, 2013). Although English is the main language of teaching in this program, students are required to learn Arabic and French through mandatory language classes at School (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). As for the Lebanese Program, it is designed to fulfill the requirements set by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and hence, prepares students to sit for official exams in Grade 9, and for the Lebanese Baccalaureate in Grade 12. The School offers three of the four concentrations of studies in Grade 12, which are General Sciences, Life Sciences and Sociology-Economics, leaving out the fourth, i.e., Humanities. BHS' headmaster explained that this is due to students' lack of interest in this fourth concentration (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). English is the main language of teaching in the Lebanese Program at all levels and in all subjects, including Math and Sciences. Arabic is used only in Arabic language classes, and in teaching history, geography, and civics (Brummana High School, 2013). French, meanwhile, is taught as a mandatory third language (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). In the academic year 2012-2013, 60% of graduating students were enrolled in the International Program,

while the rest, 40%, were in the Lebanese Program (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

c. Civic Education at BHS

Civic education classes are mandatory for all students enrolled in the Lebanese Program at the Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary levels at BHS (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The textbook used in these classes is the one assigned by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, “Al-Tarbiya Al-Wataniya Wal-Tanshi’a Al-Madaniyya” (National Education and Civil Upbringing) (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The civic education teacher at the School said that she supplements the book with other sources to enrich classes, and these tools include social media platforms, “Al-Bi’a Wal-Tanmiya” (Environment and Development) magazine to support in related topics, as well as newspapers, etc (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). “Al-Bi’a Wal-Tanmiya” magazine is a regional monthly publication that covers environmental and development issues. The magazine collaborates with schools in the Middle East through a variety of activities to spread awareness on environment-related matters (Environment & Development, 2014). Debates in civics classes are frequent, and depend on the topic of the lesson of the day and on the interest of students in the issue. Matters that appear most often in the classroom discussions are usually related to current events and to the situation in the country, public freedoms and the paradox between what civic education textbooks stipulate and reality (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The civic education teacher said she explains this gap of content in the textbooks and the facts in real life to her students, pointing out that the idealism expressed in books is

necessary for building the country (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The BHS principal also agreed on this point, explaining that in order to improve something, the tool of change should not be a replica of what happens in reality (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

d. Holidays, Activities and Clubs at BHS

Brummana High School observes all holidays marked on the official Lebanese calendar, in addition to several other vacations that are particular to the School, such as the Spring Break and the reading period prior to midterm exams. The School closes for an extended period on several holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Adha and Fitr, in order to give time for international boarding students to travel to their home countries and celebrate with their families (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Throughout the year, several celebrations take place at BHS to mark special holidays. On Christmas for example, the School choir performs on campus, while each section prepares its own type of celebratory activity. The Lebanese Independence Day is another date marked with festivities at the School. The holy Muslim month of Ramadan is also observed when it falls during the academic year, and boarding students throw a party to celebrate it. Other celebrations that are particular to the School are International Day, Careers Day, and the May Festival. In November of each year, BHS marks its Founders' Day, during which students prepare activities to celebrate the School's background, history, and present a vision for the future (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). As for activities available at the School which conform to its slogan "I serve," BHS requires its higher intermediate classes and secondary section students to complete 40 hours of mandatory community service in

each academic year (Brummana High School, 2013). The School facilitates the process of social work through getting the students in contact with a number of organizations and through providing transportation to their locations (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). A “walkathon” is another yearly event that has been taking place for the past 13 years at BHS, with the participation of students and their parents. All money raised in connection with this activity is donated to Beirut’s Children’s Cancer Center (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Moreover, BHS includes a diversified list of clubs to which students can subscribe and which serves pupils with different tastes and interests. These clubs include Drama, Choir, Health and Fitness, Food, Music, Arts, Environmental, Heritage, Science, Hiking, Fashion, Photography, Book and Writing, among others (Brummana High School, 2013). A debate club is also available for students whose topics can tackle any issue without any restriction or ban such as social matters, topics related to students’ concerns, or topics tackled on a national level (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). The Dean of Students at BHS noted that among the topics that were debated at one point on campus was optional civil marriage (Ch. Nakhle, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

BHS’ students participate in sports tournaments to compete with their peers in other Lebanese schools. Besides sports, their interaction with pupils in different schools is limited to cultural activities carried out under the umbrella of other institutions such as the Science Fair at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Model United Nations (MUN) at the Lebanese American University (LAU), etc (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Meanwhile, trips and outdoor activities are organized throughout the school year to serve the educational purposes of each class, as

well as for leisure such as camping, ski trips, and tourism of Lebanese regions for foreign students (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

Moreover, among the several publications printed at the School, two of them are prepared, written, and edited by the students. “Portico” is issued 2-3 times per year and has a literature-focused content. It features writings and poetry in English, French and Arabic. Meanwhile, “Speakout” is written and published by students to address the School and its administrative bodies to voice their demands. The School’s principal assured that there are no topics off-limit, and self-censorship is exercised by students themselves based on the general principles and values of BHS (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Students also take part in yearly elections to choose their representatives in the students council and in nominating Prefects, who help in the supervision of classes and of the conduct of their fellow classmates, in addition to acting as role models to pupils (Brummna High School, 2013).

e. Religion at BHS

Although it was established by a Christian mission, BHS officials insist that it is a “non-religious” educational institution that caters to male and female students of different religious and social backgrounds. No classes of religion are given at the School and the offered academic and extra curricular activities are not associated with any faith. Although there is a Christmas choir that performs during the celebrations of the holiday, what is worth noting is that students from different backgrounds and nationalities can take part in these performances, such as boarding Saudis, Iranians, Iraqis, and Kuwaitis, as well as Lebanese Christians and Muslims. Also at Christmastime, a celebration to mark the holiday takes place at the School premises

with the participation of all students. If Ramadan falls during the academic school year, a dinner is thrown at the dormitory to celebrate the holy month in which all students take part (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Despite presenting itself as a nonreligious institution and despite the absence of any reference to religion in its curriculum and activities, BHS is owned and operated by the Quakers and as such, it still seeks to promote the values of its founders. The School's principal stressed that these values are applied in a manner that "does not repulse" students of other faiths. He explained that these values call for "accepting one another," which, as he said, requires appreciating what others have, and avoid imposing one's faith on them (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). It is noteworthy, however, that a Friends Meeting House is located at the School and is used for meetings and prayers every Sunday only by the Lebanese Quakers community. The Meeting House is independent from students, teachers and staff at BHS, but is used as an assembly hall by the School. To honor the BHS' founders and heritage, meetings start in the House with a symbolic one minute of silence, as a sign of respect and to honor the Quakers (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

Religion of applicants is not taken into consideration in the admission of students, or hiring of staff and academic professionals to BHS, as there are no restrictions or qualifications in this regard. As a result, students enrolled at BHS come from different religious backgrounds. The School furthermore is an educational attraction to non-Christian students from Arab countries, and from Beirut and other Lebanese regions, who avail themselves of boarding facilities. No surveys were conducted at BHS to find out the religious make-up of either students or academic and administrative professionals because, as the School principal said, this is not a matter of

concern to the administration. However, the School's application for admission does have an optional field for writing one's religious affiliation. The headmaster said that it is estimated that about 25-30% of students in the secondary section are non-Christians. On the other hand, students in lower grades are mostly locals, thus the percentage of non-Christians is lower than that in upper classes. The School headmaster justified the presence of this "religious identity" field on the students' application by saying that it is put in case statistics were needed or sought "at some point" later (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). As well, no statistics are available regarding teachers' religious affiliation. However, it is commonly known that academic personnel and other employees at BHS are mostly Christian, although there is a "good percentage" of non-Christian. Merit and the ability to deliver the material accurately and objectively are the requirements taken into consideration when hiring, while religious affiliation is "completely ignored," according to the School's headmaster (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

f. Civil Marriage at BHS

The topic of optional civil marriage was tackled at the debate club at BHS few years ago and the discussion over it lasted for three entire sessions instead of the usual one session per subject, due to the heated debate over it. During the debate, the majority of students were opposed to the adoption of optional civil marriage, and the Dean of Students at the School explained that this might have been due to the presence of international students who include many Arab nationals that opposed nonreligious unions (Ch. Nakhle, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Besides the above-mentioned occasion, no other public discussion of optional civil marriage took place at

BHS (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Some discussions of the topic took place in classrooms during which, many students voiced their opposition to civil marriage adoption in the country. The civic education teacher said their stances in this case must have depended on their upbringing at home, and on their parents' background. She said that in fact, many students have expressed their support for the adoption of civil marriage, but refused this option for themselves. She added that students explained their stances in this case by saying that they have worries regarding the religious identity of their kids in case they get married in a nonreligious ceremony (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). As for her own opinion on the topic, she said that she is a staunch supporter of optional civil marriage, but does not wish to express her opinion in front of students unless they ask about it. She also said that she does not attempt to direct students towards the adoption of any position, but only moderates the debate to avoid any verbal clashes that might occur (M. Sarkis, personal communication, October 31, 2013). Close to this is the headmaster's opinion who said that educators must not say anything in front of students that sounds as if they are challenging or provoking them, and that teachers should not put themselves in a position that is perceived as contrary to some students (W. El Khoury, personal communication, October 31, 2013).

g. BHS Profile Overview

Albeit established by a Christian missionary, BHS was able to break away from any religious identity, and present itself as a strictly nonreligious educational institution. The School opened its doors to local and international students, teachers and administrators, without any restriction on religious backgrounds, and garnered a wide

range of nationalities and sects on campus. It did not offer any religious classes or extracurricular activities with a religious bias. Events and performances that celebrated certain religious holidays welcomed the participation of everyone, regardless of religious affiliation. Moreover, in harmony with its belief in civil society and secularism, BHS adopted the “I serve” motto, and included in its curriculum some requirements that teach students about getting involved in their society. An example of this is the mandatory community service hours. As well, freedom of opinion and expression is welcomed on campus, regardless of students’ attitudes and beliefs, and issues of national interest are debated openly and from any perspective. Civil marriage was one of these topics discussed at BHS, and as the School principal and civics teacher assured, students were given the time to debate it freely without any dictation or control from their supervisors.

2. Fieldwork and Data Analysis

The field work at Brummana High School took place on the 31st of October, 2013, when 19 out of 32 Grade 11 Lebanese students completed the questionnaire after receiving their parents’ consent, and expressing their own assent. The participants came from different religious and economical backgrounds, and they had distinct social interests and experiences. Of the 19 students, there were 11 males and 7 females, and one chose not to disclose his or her sex.

a. Religious Background

i. Religious Make-Up

Of the 19 participants, 14 (73.7%) were Christian, 2 Muslim (10.5%), and one was a Druze (5.3%). The remaining two students (10.5%) did not disclose their religion. Among Christians, there were 6 Maronites, one Catholic, one Greek Orthodox, and one Protestant, and the rest preferred not to mention their sect. One of the two Muslim students was a Shiite and the other was a Sunni.

ii. Religious Atmosphere at Home

- Extent of religious commitment in the families

Thirteen (68.4%) of the students were raised in moderately religious families, while three (15.8%) came from very religious households; two (10.5%) were raised in a non practicing atmosphere, and one student, or 5.3%, said he/she were brought up by secular or nonreligious parents.

- Extent of religiosity's influence on lifestyle

Twelve or 63.2% of the students said that the religious atmosphere in their families influenced their lifestyles moderately; four (21.1%) said religion influenced their lifestyles to a large extent, while three (15.8%) said religion had no influence on their daily lives.

b. Civic Education at the School

Eighteen out of nineteen students (94.7%) said they have taken at some point or they are currently taking a civic education class at School. Twelve students, or 66.7%, reported that these classes have moderately helped them to understand civic

issues in a better way; 5 (27.8%) said classes have largely contributed to improving their understanding of civic matters, while only one student (5.6%) said lessons had no influence on him/her at all. Half of participants said civic education made them respect and follow laws more often, while these classes had a stronger influence on seven of their schoolmates (38.9%), i.e. in making them more law-abiding citizens. However, two (11.1%) denied that their attitudes were changed after taking civics. As for whether classes have helped them become more tolerant towards others, eight (44.4%) said classes had a moderate influence on them in this regard, and seven (38.9%) stated that lessons played a huge role in changing their attitudes towards others. Three students (16.7%) declared that civic courses played no role at all in this matter. Students were equally divided on whether civics classes contributed to making them become more patriotic to any extent at all, to a large or to a moderate extent, as six (33.3%) chose each of the three options. Regarding their attitudes towards the government, nine (50%) said civics helped them respect its work moderately. Six (33.3%) said classes did not influence their opinions in this issue at all, and the remaining three, or 16.7%, said civic education has largely increased their respect for the cabinet.

c. Optional Civil Marriage Discussion at the School

Thirteen of the participants (68.4%) said the issue of optional civil marriage was discussed at BHS, while the remaining six (31.5%) pointed out that it was tackled on few occasions only. Ten students (52.6%) said that the discussion of this issue was stretched, but that no conclusion or common grounds were reached. Meanwhile, eight (or 42.1%) said a free exchange of opinions was allowed and that the majority was

supportive of the adoption of optional civil marriage. One only, 5.2%, said the view on optional civil marriage was dictated by the teacher in class.

Nine students (47.4%) said their own opinion on civil marriage was influenced to a little extent by the teacher's point of view. Six (31.6%) said their views were not influenced by those of the teacher at all and four others (21%) said they were moderately influenced by their teacher's stance.

Regarding the views of their peers in class, a majority of eight students (42.1%) said they were not influenced by the positions of others at all. Six (31.6%) said they were influenced to a little extent by their fellow classmates' points of views, and the remaining five (26.3%) said they were moderately influenced by their peers' opinions.

d. Students' Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

i. Authority Best to Govern Personal Affairs

Eleven (57.9%) said they believe both religious authorities and civil courts should be in charge of handling personal affairs in the country. Five (26.3%) said they want civil courts alone to take charge of these matters. The least popular option was the handling of personal matters by religious authorities exclusively, and this choice was supported by three students only (15.8%).

ii. Students' Attitudes by Sex

Table 4.1: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Sex at BHS:

	Females	Males	Undisclosed Sex	Total
Support it to a large extent	3	6	1	10
Support it moderately	3	4	-	7
I do not support it at all	1	1	-	2
Total	7	11	1	19

Regarding the adoption of optional civil marriage, six (54.5%) of male students expressed their strong support for this, four (36.4%) supported it moderately, and one student only (9.1%) said he did not support it at all. Among female students, three said they supported it largely (42.9%) and three others (42.9%) supported it moderately, while the remaining one female student rejected the idea (14.3%). This leads us to conclude that the percentage of female students who supported civil marriage at BHS is slightly lower than that of male students. Taking into consideration the opinions of all participants at BHS regardless of their sex, 10 (52.6%) were largely for civil marriage, seven (36.8%) were moderately for it and two (10.5%) were against it totally. Thus, we can conclude that the majority, 17 (89.5%) of the 19 Grade 11 BHS students participating in the study, were supporters of optional civil marriage to a large or to a moderate extent, while only a small number, two students (10.5%), rejected the idea completely.

iii. Attitudes Depending on Religious Background

Table 4.2: Students' Views On Who Should Handle Personal Affairs By Religious

Background at BHS:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Undisclosed	Total
Religious authorities	3	-	-	-	3
Civil courts only	2	1	1	1	5
Both	9	1	-	1	11
Total	14	2	1	2	19

Table 4.3: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Religious

Background at BHS:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Undisclosed	Total
Support it to a large extent	7	1	1	1	10
Support it moderately	5	1	-	1	7
I do not support it at all	2	-	-	-	2
Total	14	2	1	2	19

Half of Christian students at BHS (7 out of 14) were staunch supporters of optional civil marriage; 35.7% (5 out of 14) said they were moderately supportive, and only two students (14.3%) opposed the idea. The two Muslim students were both supportive of optional civil marriage, one of them to a large extent, the other moderately. Similarly, both students who did not disclose their religious sect were supportive of optional civil marriage, with one supporting it to a large extent and the other moderately. Meanwhile, the only Druze student at BHS was a strong supporter of civil marriage.

Table 4.4: Students' Opinions On Marrying In A Civil Union By Religious Background at BHS:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Undisclosed	Total
Yes	7	1	1	2	11
No	7	1	-	-	8
Total	14	2	1	2	19

Regarding whether they would consider marrying in a civil union, Christian and Muslim students at BHS were equally split on the topic, with 50% of pupils of each sect agreeing with the idea, and the other half completely rejecting it. Meanwhile, the Druze student, and both students who did not specify their religious affiliation, said they would consider a civil marriage in the future.

iv. Attitudes Based on Religious Atmosphere in Students' Families

Of the three students whose lifestyles were not at all influenced by religion, two said they would consider getting married in a civil union, while one said he/she would not. Two said they supported optional civil marriage fully, while one said they did not support it at all. As for the four students whose lifestyles were strongly influenced by their families' religious beliefs, three said they would not consider marrying in a civil union, while one said he/she would. One of them said he/she did not support the adoption of optional civil marriage at all, while two said they supported it moderately. The remaining student said they supported the adoption of civil marriage to a large extent.

v. Attitudes Based on Class Atmosphere during Discussion

In this evaluation, only students whose opinions were largely or moderately influenced by those of their teachers (four students) or of their peers (five students) during the class discussion of optional civil marriage were taken into consideration. Of the students whose points of views were moderately influenced by those of their teachers, one said they preferred religious authorities to handle matters of personal affairs. Another student said only civil courts should be in charge of these matters, while the remaining two said both authorities must handle these issues. Three were in favor of civil marriage to a large extent, while one said he/she did not support it at all. Also, three said they would consider tying the knot in a civil union while the remaining student rejected the idea. Taking into consideration students who were moderately or largely swayed by their peers' opinions, three said both civil courts and religious authorities should manage personal affairs, and two said non-religious bodies should be in charge of these issues alone. Meanwhile, three of them said they supported civil marriage to a large extent and two said they supported it moderately. None of these students expressed their rejection of nonreligious ceremonies. Regarding whether they would consider marrying in a civil union in the future or not, a majority of four students said yes, while only one student ruled out this option.

vi. Attitudes Depending on Field or Program of Study

Table 4.5: Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Field Of Study at BHS:

	Humanities	Sciences	Total
Support it to a large extent	4	6	10
Support it moderately	4	3	7
I do not support it at all	2	-	2
Total	10	9	19

Students in the Humanities section were equally largely and moderately in favor of optional civil marriage, as four voted for each of these two options. The remaining two were totally against it. On the other hand, a majority of six students in the Sciences section expressed their great support for civil marriage, while the remaining three said they moderately encouraged this kind of union. No students were against optional civil marriage in the Sciences class. We can conclude from this that students enrolled in the Sciences section were more supportive of civil marriage than their schoolmates enrolled in Humanities. Moreover, some pupils in the Humanities were completely opposed to optional civil marriage, while no student in the Sciences rejected the option.

vii. Opinion on Marrying in a Civil Union, Depending on Support for Civil Marriage.

Although the majority of BHS students participating in the study were largely or moderately supportive of the adoption of optional civil marriage, only 10 (or 58.8%) said they would consider tying the knot in a non-religious ceremony. The remaining seven (41.2%) of those who supported civil marriage to a moderate or to a large extent refused to consider civil marriage as an option in the future.

Table 4.6: Students Who Support Optional Civil Marriage And Marrying In A

Nonreligious Ceremony at BHS:

	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Largely	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Moderately	Total
Yes	8	2	10
No	2	5	7
Total	10	7	17

e. Explaining Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

BHS students gave explanations justifying their attitudes towards the issue of optional civil marriage. Most of those who supported this kind of union emphasized the importance of free choice, as many of them clearly stated that people should be allowed to choose freely the type of marriage they desire. Some stated that religion should not interfere in love, while one student mentioned that civil marriage grants a couple more freedom, particularly in case of divorce. Another student said he/she was influenced by a family member who had a civil marriage, which made them opt for this kind of union as well. Few students pointed out the effect of optional civil marriage on the establishment of a civil state in the country, but one of them remarked that it is a perfect step towards establishing a secular and civil Lebanese society. Another student considered that civil marriage guarantees a step forward towards a “better civilization,” noting also that such a marriage offers a chance for religious diversity. Meanwhile, among the students rejecting the adoption of civil marriage, or refusing to personally get married in a civil union, many warned that non-religious ceremonies are a “dangerous” threat to future generations, as they “confuse, cause problems among family members and corrupt” people. Others just stated that it is “wrong or against (their) religion to get married outside the church,” or that religious ceremonies guarantee a more “true and eternal” union between husband and wife. Also, few students mentioned that they would like to follow in their relatives’ footsteps and marry religiously.

f. Overview

Going over the results obtained from the fieldwork at BHS, we can conclude that the majority of participating students were supportive of optional civil marriage,

some to a moderate and others to a large extent. The endorsement of this issue was slightly larger among males and among students enrolled in the Sciences section. Taking the religious backgrounds of participants into consideration, there were two students among Christians totally against civil unions, while no one opposed the idea among students who belonged to other sects. Meanwhile, there was hesitation in considering marrying in nonreligious unions among all students, regardless of their sect. In fact, and although the support for optional civil unions was relatively large among BHS participants, a good percentage of these supporters ruled out considering civil unions for tying the knot themselves in the future.

B. Collège du Sacré-Coeur

1. School Profile

a. History, Mission and Values

The 120 years old Collège de Sacré-Coeur is situated in the Gemmayze neighborhood of the Lebanese capital Beirut. The School was established in 1894 by a Christian educational missionary, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Collège du Sacré-Coeur, 2013). Founded by French Priest John Baptist de La Salle, the Institute, which is also known as the Lasallian Brothers, aimed at providing education to poor children who could not afford attending schools (Collège du Sacré Coeur, 2013). Currently, there are over 50,000 educators affiliated with the Lasallian Brothers working in over 80 countries (Collège du Scaré-Coeur, 2013). CSC was among the first educational institutions founded by the Lasallian Brothers in Lebanon (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). The School is managed and supervised by the General Secretariat of Catholic Schools in Lebanon (SGEC-L), the Regional

President of Catholic Schools in the Near East and by a board of directors. It should be noted that CSC's educational plan is inspired and designed after SGEC-L's values and mission (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). The benevolence of "God" is a main value CSC educators try to instill in their students, in addition to principles of freedom, sincerity, peace, solidarity, discipline, faith, and hope, among others (Collège du Scaré-Coeur, 2013). What is noteworthy is that the School tries to conform to and implement these mentioned values in response to the needs of the Lebanese society, as CSC mission statement stipulates. In addition, the mission stipulates helping in the growth of human beings, through encouraging social, religious and political engagement, developing relations of brotherhood between students and their communities, instilling faith, promoting interfaith dialogue and at the same time, helping Christian students become engaged in a religious life that conforms to the teachings of Gospels (Collège du Scaré-Coeur, 2013).

Although a Christian institution, teachers and administrators at Lasallian schools are secular, and CSC admits students from different religious backgrounds. It also seeks to promote interreligious dialogue, upholds freedom of religious belief and fosters solidarity between the numerous communal sects in Lebanon (Collège du Scaré-Coeur, 2013). Since catering to children of different social backgrounds was one of the main goals behind the establishment of Lasallian schools, the fees at CSC were designed to attract underprivileged families, as the School principal said. In the academic year 2013-2014, the fees varied between 3,000,000 LBP (\$2000) and 4,500,000 LBP (\$3000), depending on grade level and the section (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). Classes at CSC are large in size and most often surpassing 40 students in one classroom. This is explained in terms of students from

other Lasallian middle and elementary schools shifting to CSC because the upper levels are lacking in their original schools (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). This school transfer is noted in the questionnaires filled by participants in the study as many of them said they have spent 2 or 6 years at CSC.

b. Academics at CSC

The Lebanese Program is the mandatory curriculum taught to all students at CSC, from the early years until graduation. The School prepares students to sit for official exams in Grade 9, and for the Lebanese Baccalaureate in Grade 12. In their senior year, pupils have the option to choose among Life Sciences, General Sciences and Sociology-Economics as a concentration of studies. Like Brummana High School, CSC does not offer a Humanities section due to students' lack of interest in this subject, as the School's headmaster said (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). A French program is also available for students seeking to sit for the French Baccalaureate, alongside the main Lebanese Program (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). French is the language of teaching mathematics and sciences at all levels at CSC. Arabic is solely used in Arabic language classes, and in teaching civics, geography and history (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

c. Civic Education at CSC

Civic classes are mandatory for all students at CSC, and teachers use the official book adopted by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "Al-Tarbiya Al-Wataniya Wal-Tanshi'a Al-Madaniyya" (National Education and Civil

Upbringing) (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). Grade 11's civics teacher at the School said he refers to other resources to support the given lessons, among them are publications and writings by Antoine Messarra, and other articles from the internet for supporting material and term definitions, etc. (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). Messarra is a former ministerial adviser, a university professor, and a member on several educational committees. He has published several articles and books on the Lebanese political system, the democratic process, educational reform and legal and civic engagement (Messarra, 2005). As for multimedia tools, they are rarely used in civics classes at CSC mainly because of the difficulty and the time consuming process of moving over forty students during scheduled time to the theater or to the audiovisual room and the unavailability of audiovisual facilities inside classrooms (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). Discussion in civics classes is frequent and depends on the topic of the lesson introduced in class. The interviewed teacher said topics that are recurrent in discussion have mostly a political tone, such as the role of the Arab League, the nature and character of Lebanese political parties in comparison with political groups elsewhere, etc. Students' participation in class discussions and the type of questions they ask are indicators of the level of interest in topics tackled. The civics teacher reported that politics is not off limit in class discussion, and that students are allowed to debate these issues after asking for permission. The civics teacher stressed that students have the right to express their own opinions, adding that teachers must respect this right and allow pupils to voice out their views in a fair and just manner (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). Meanwhile, and despite expressing interest in several topics, the civics teacher said students usually react to what is taught in classes

as strange and unconnected with reality. An example of this gap prevails for example when discussion tackles values of integrity and idealism, and questions of comparison with corruption in public administration are raised (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013).

d. Holidays, Activities and Clubs at CSC

Collège du Sacré-Coeur closes its doors on all official holidays recognized by the Lebanese government, and on Saturdays and Sundays each week (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). Many holidays are marked with celebration on campus such as Christmas, when the School choir performs, prayers take place, and gifts are exchanged for the occasion. On St. Barbara's Day, each section celebrates its own activities and students get dressed in different customs. In the Muslim month of Ramadan, the School invites the children of the Islamic orphanage to an Iftar. The Lebanese Independence Day is also marked with celebrations at CSC. The School's founder John Baptiste de La Salle is commemorated at CSC each year, when a Mass is held in his honor, and theatrical acts, fairs and movies are presented to celebrate his life and legacy. A lunch is also held on campus on this occasion (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). Other regular celebrations include the "Day of Peace," which is a week dedicated to promoting the values and the culture of peace among students. Each section celebrates this week differently, whether by engaging in presentations about a humanitarian or socio-political topic, presenting artwork, singing or dancing to highlight the theme, or by marching for peace and attending masses dedicated to this purpose at the School's church (Collège du Sacré-Coeur, 2013). Also, each year, a theme is selected to represent the School's mission in the coming phase and

around which CSC's calendar and activities are designed. For the past couple of years, "Lasallian the spreader of joy" has been the School's motto, and it has been applied in activities such as honoring remarkable classmates, or spending time with other schools' students and entertaining them, etc. Meanwhile, teachers are required to take part in the annual "Lasallian Day," during which development and coordination workshops are organized with the participation all sister schools' educators (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

Many clubs offered at CSC have a religious mission, and these include "Signum Fidei" whose members are professors and alumni that strive to make the presence of Jesus Christ felt in education, "Young Lasallians," "Lasallian Friends" and "Lasallian Companions" that promote values of service, faith and fraternity. These three clubs are offered to students of different sections. "Lasallian Mothers" is a club open to the students' mothers and that also aims at spreading the "words of Jesus." Another religious club is the "Group of Prayers" that meets on a weekly basis. Meanwhile, non-religious clubs include the "Scouts of Lebanon," the School's choral and the "Sports Club" (Collège du Sacré-Coeur, 2013). Regarding yearly trips, these are designed to serve the educational purpose of lessons given at each grade (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). As for dialogue, and besides classroom discussions and debates in civic education classes, CSC offers another opportunity for communication among students and educators at the beginning of each school day. Classes open with 10 minutes of "reflection" daily, which are dedicated to discussing a national, social, educational or religious topics. Students have the freedom to express their opinions and share their thoughts on the topics discussed; when it comes to political issues, however, certain guidelines are drawn to avoid verbal disputes on

campus. Grade 12 students also have the opportunity to learn about issues that concern them once every 15 days, when lectures are given about social, religious and ethical issues such as drogues (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). CSC gets engaged with other educational institutions in Lebanon in several sports tournaments throughout the year, and it also participates in educational and cultural competitions with other Lasallian schools in the country. Occasionally, certain classes are taken to visit their peers at another Lasallian school in Lebanon in order for the students to meet, interact, and get to know each other's educational environment (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

e. Religion at CSC

Collège du Sacré-Coeur was founded by a Christian missionary. But as said earlier, the School caters to students of all religious backgrounds. In the present academic year 2013-2014, Muslim students amounted to 35% of the total number of students in the School (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). The religious affiliation of an applicant is not a matter of consideration upon registration, and does not appear on the School's application form. However, Lebanese identification documents, the "*Ikhrāj Qayd*" (Registration Form) state students' sects, hence allowing the School to have an idea of the religious make-up of pupils (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). The School makes sure that Muslims are represented in each class' student council, just as it is keen on the representation of females. It requires that at least one non-Christian is included among the delegates of their class (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). On the other hand, there are no Muslim teachers or employees in the School, despite the absence or

any restrictions on religious affiliation upon recruitment. The headmaster of the School explained that this dominance of Christian employees was not planned, but came to be a reality “by chance.” He emphasized that merit and the possession of a graduate degree in Education are criteria taken into consideration while interviewing applicants (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). Religious affiliation of the CSC is amply demonstrated on its campus; in addition to the presence of a church, statues and posters of saints are spread all over the School. Candles are also lit in a regular manner around statues. Moreover, there are numerous posters displayed on CSC’s walls to acquaint students with certain religious missionaries, activists and Christian figures. Furthermore, the School’s website offers a detailed view into the life of its founder, French Priest John Baptiste de La Salle. As well, biblical prayers and religious messages appear in several School publications such as its yearly agenda and yearbook. In addition, the School’s mission and work are designed and supervised by General Secretariat of Catholic Schools in Lebanon and by a committee of Brothers as mentioned before (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

As for teaching religion, each class in each section at CSC is required to attend one session of Christian studies and one Mass per week. Religion classes are mandatory for all Christian students at CSC and they are not allowed to refuse taking part in them. Students in the terminal Grade 12, and due to the intensity of their program and the pressure on them to complete their curriculum before sitting for official exams, they alternate between one class of Christian teachings and a Mass per week. Classes are given either by religious figures or by secular teachers who possess profound knowledge of the Bible and of Christian teachings (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). In the meantime, and while Christian students

assist in Mass or attend religious classes, their Muslim classmates move to a different classroom and are expected to study, do their homework, or read, etc. Muslims are forbidden from participating in any of the religious requirements at CSC, except in cases when they provide a written consent from their parents or legal guardians. This arrangement is adopted to prevent any objection from parents of Muslim students (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

Regarding religious events and holidays, the School celebrates Christmas with a Mass held at the church on campus, and during which the School's choir performs. The School also dedicates a day to commemorate its founder, John Baptist de La Salle, with a Mass and a lunch, during which documentary films, theater acts, expositions and projects are presented to celebrate his values and achievements and those of the institution. Saint Barbara's holiday is also marked with a celebration during which each section at the School prepares an activity, while students wear costumes for the festivities. During the holy month of Ramadan, the School invites children at the Islamic orphanage to an Iftar (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

f. Civil Marriage at CSC

Optional civil marriage was never discussed on CSC campus in a seminar, debate session or introduced in a presentation (G. Ghanem, personal communication, November 28, 2013). However, most Grade 11 students participating in the questionnaire said they have discussed the topic in class. Meanwhile, the civic education teacher of Grade 11 stated that optional civil marriage was never brought up for discussion in classes he has personally taught, explaining that it is not part of the

curriculum. In case the issue comes up, he said he would be very honest with students and present the advantages and disadvantages, the benefits and the dangers of optional civil marriage. He said that he would cite real life experiences of interfaith couples who wed in a non religious ceremony, and refer to the difficulties they faced in their societies, such as becoming outcast (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). As for what he thinks students' attitudes towards this topic would be, he said this would depend on who are they romantically engaged with at the moment, whether a person from the same religion or not. He added that pupils who are in favor of optional civil marriage today might change their opinion in the future when faced with a real life decision, depending on several factors including social pressure and their parents' consent or disapproval (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013). The civics teacher, as it seems, associated civil marriage with interfaith unions, and pointed out many difficulties facing Lebanese couples if they tie the knot in this manner. He added that societies must be prepared to embrace optional civil marriage before adopting this kind of union in the country (M. Koborsi, personal communication, November 8, 2013).

g. CSC Profile Overview

As a Christian institution, CSC conserves, promotes and practices its religious values in its mission statement, curriculum, and extracurricular activities. It also proudly displays its religious affiliation on campus in several manners that include the presence of a church and the erection of several statues and posters of Christian figures.

Nevertheless, the School accepts applicants, whether students, teachers or administrators, from all religious backgrounds, although no non-Christians are currently

employed at CSC. The School is also keen on the representation of Muslims in students' councils. In a separate matter, CSC offers several daily and monthly platforms for discussing social and national issues, as well as topics of particular connection to students' lives and ages. The topic of optional civil marriage has never been debated in seminars or campus discussions yet, but only inside classrooms. The interviewed civic teacher said the topic did not come up in classes he personally taught, but explained that if it does, he would share with students what he thinks are civil marriage's advantages, disadvantages, as well as society's disapproval of this kind of union.

2. Fieldwork and Data Analysis

Fieldwork at Collège du Sacré-Coeur took place on November 8, 2013 and 67 out of 115 Grade 11 students at the School received their parents' consent, expressed their own assent and completed the questionnaire. Although a religious School, CSC's students came from different backgrounds and their religious make-up will be detailed below. Of these 67 participants, 42 were females, 24 were males and one student preferred not to disclose their sex.

a. Religious Background

i. Religious Make-Up

Forty-six of the 67 participants at CSC were Christians and they amounted to 68.7% of the total number of students. Sixteen, or 23.9%, were Muslims; two said they were Druze (3%) and two others mentioned that they were atheists (3%). Meanwhile, one student did not reveal their religious affiliation. Only one Muslim student revealed their religious sect, citing that they were Sunni. Meanwhile, six among Christian

students mentioned their sectarian affiliation; four were Maronites, and the other two were Orthodox. Also, one student noted that he/she was born to a mixed family where the father was a Muslim and the mother was a Christian.

ii. Religious Atmosphere at Home

- Extent of religious commitment in the families

Most students (46 or 68.7%) said they came from moderately religious families while 12 (17.9%) mentioned that they were raised in a very religious environment. Six or 9% said they were brought up in non-practicing but believing families and three students (4.5%) revealed they had a secular upbringing.

- Extent of religiosity's influence on lifestyle

Forty-one of 67 participants (61.2%) said their lifestyles were moderately influenced by their families' religious beliefs, while 18, or 26.9%, said that religion had a strong influence on their daily lives. The remaining eight students (11.9%) said their lifestyles were not at all influenced by religion.

b. Civic Education at the School

Sixty of the 67 (89.6%) participating Grade 11 students at CSC said they have taken at one point, or they are currently taking civics classes at School. Among those who have taken civics at School, 44 (73.3%) said these classes have helped them understand civic issues in a better way to a moderate extent, while 10 (16.7%) said the classes helped to a larger extent in this regard. Meanwhile, only six (10%) said the classes had no influence at all in regards to their understanding of civic issues. Forty-one students, or 68.3% of the respondents, said taking civics at school moderately

contributed to them becoming more respectful towards laws whereas 10 (16.7%) said civics courses had a great influence on their attitudes towards laws and regulations. However, nine or 15% of CSC participants said civics had no role at all in changing their views on laws. As for tolerance towards others, 33 or 55% acknowledged a moderate role of civics classes in this regard; 17 or 28.3% said civics contributed largely to making them more tolerant, and 10 (16.7%) said that classes had no influence at all. Regarding patriotism, 38 or 63.3% said classes of civics played a moderate role in making them become patriotic, while 12 (20%) said these classes contributed largely to this matter and 10 (16.7%) denied any influence on their patriotic feelings. As for their stances towards Lebanon's government, a majority of 35 (58.3%) said classes of civics moderately made them respect their cabinet more, 14 (or 23.3%) said the lessons learned largely increased positive feelings towards the council of ministers and 11 (18.3%) students denied any influence in this regard.

c. Optional Civil Marriage Discussion at the School

The majority of 52 students at CSC said the topic of optional civil marriage was discussed on campus, although among these 19 expressed that it was debated few times only. Meanwhile, the remaining 15 students denied that the topic of voluntary civil unions was debated at School.

Of students who said the topic was debated in class, 28 described how it was tackled. Sixteen (57.1%) said civil marriage was discussed thoroughly but that no conclusion in favor or against it was reached. Five, 17.9%, said the topic was quickly ended; three (10.7%) said the majority of students were against civil unions, and another

three students said the majority of their schoolmates were in support of civil marriage. One student only (3.6%) said the view on the topic was dictated by the teacher.

Thirty-five students (67.3%) said their own views on civil marriage were not at all influenced or influenced to a minor extent by those of their teachers. Eleven, or 21.2%, said they were moderately influenced by their teachers' attitudes, while a minority of six students, 11.5%, said they were largely influenced by their teachers.

Regarding the influence of their peers on them, a majority of 35 students (67.3%) said they were not, or were barely, influenced by their classmates regarding attitudes towards civil marriage, while 15 (28.9%) said they were moderately swayed by their peers' stances. Only two students (3.9%) said their opinions were largely influenced by their peers.

d. Students' Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

i. Authority Best to Govern Personal Affairs

The question was answered by 66 out of the 67 CSC participants. A majority of 38 students (57.6%) said they supported that both civil courts and religious authorities handle matters of personal affairs; 20 (30.3%) said only religious authorities should take care of these matters and the remaining eight (12.1%) stated that only civil courts should manage personal affairs.

ii. Students' Attitudes by Sex

Table 4.7: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Sex at CSC:

	Females	Males	Undisclosed Sex	Total
Support it to a large extent	12	3	1	16
Support it moderately	25	12	-	37
I do not support it at all	5	9	-	14
Total	42	24	1	67

Most female students, 25 (59.5%), said they moderately supported optional civil marriage while 12 (28.6%) were more enthusiastic, expressing that they were in favor of it to a large extent. Five (11.9%) said they did not support it at all. Half of male students (12) said they backed civil marriage moderately while three (12.5%) were supportive of it to a large extent. Meanwhile nine (37.5%) said they did not support it at all. Based on these results, we can conclude that female students at CSC were more supportive of optional civil marriage than their male peers. Also, it must be noted that the percentage of male students who rejected the idea totally is much higher than that of their female classmates (37.5% to 11.9%). As for the attitudes of all Grade 11 CSC students, 37 or 55.2% backed optional civil marriage moderately; 16 or 23.9% were supportive of it to a large extent, and a minority of 20.9%, or 14 students, rejected it totally. Hence, 53 (79.1%) of all participating students at CSC were with nonreligious unions, to a moderate or to a large extent.

iii. Attitudes Depending on Religious Background

Table 4.8: Students' Views On Who Should Handle Personal Affairs By Religious

Background at CSC:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed*	Total
Religious authorities	15	5	-	-	-	20
Civil courts only	5	1	-	2	-	8
Both	26	10	2	-	-	38
Total	46	16	2	2	-	66

*The one student who did not disclose his/her religious sect did not answer this question.

A majority of 26 (56.5%) Christian students at CSC supported that both civil courts and religious authorities handle personal affairs, 15 (32.6%) said they wanted only religious courts to take control of these matters, and five (10.9%) supported civil courts only in this regard. Similarly, a majority of Muslim students (10 or 62.5%) were in favor of both civil and religious authorities in the handling of personal affairs; five (31.3%) supported religious authorities only in this regard, and one student (6.3%) only voted for civil courts. The two students that said they were atheists both supported civil courts only to take charge of personal affairs.

Table 4.9: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Religious

Background at CSC:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed	Total
Support it to a large extent	8	4	2	2	-	16
Support it moderately	29	7	-	-	1	37
I do not support it at all	9	5	-	-	-	14
Total	46	16	2	2	1	67

Among Christian students, 29 (63%) supported optional civil marriage moderately. Nine (19.6%) did not support it at all, while eight (17.4%) expressed their support for it to a large extent. The majority of Muslim students, seven or 43.8%, also supported optional civil marriage to a moderate extent, while four (25%) supported it to a larger degree, and five (31.3%) said they did not support it at all. All Druze and atheist students said they supported optional civil marriage to a large extent, and the only pupil that did not disclose his/her religious sect said he/she supported it to a moderate extent. Thus, we can conclude that the attitudes of Muslim and Christian students were generally similar towards civil marriage, as the majority of in both supported it to a moderate extent. Opponents of civil marriage in both religions came in the second place, while a minority of both supported it to a large extent.

Table 4.10: Students' Opinions On Marrying In A Civil Union By Religious Background at CSC:

	Christians	Muslims	Druze	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed	Total
Yes	23	8	1	2	-	34
No	23	8	1	-	1	33
Total	46	16	2	2	1	67

Regarding whether students of different religious backgrounds would consider marrying in a civil union in the future, the results obtained show that students were equally divided on this matter regardless of their sect. Meanwhile the two atheist students expressed that they would consider civil marriage as a type of union in their future. The one student who did not mention their religious sect ruled out the idea.

iv. Attitudes Based on Religious Atmosphere in Students' Families

Of the 18 students whose lifestyles at home were highly influenced by religion, 10 (55.6%) said they supported voluntary civil marriage moderately, while four others (22.2%) said they supported it to a large extent. Another four students (22.2%) said they did not support optional civil marriage at all. As for whether they would consider marrying in a civil union in the future, a majority of 12 students (66.7%) said they would not, while the remaining six (33.3%) expressed that they might think about it. Meanwhile, of the eight students whose lifestyles were not at all influenced by religion, half of them said that they supported optional civil marriage to a large extent. Two said they supported it moderately, and another two of their schoolmates said they did not encourage such step at all. Meanwhile, six students (75%) said they would consider marrying in a civil union in the future and the remaining two (25%) expressed that they would not.

v. Attitudes Based on Class Atmosphere during Discussion

In this section, only students whose opinions were largely or moderately influenced by those of their teachers (17) or by those of their peers (17) during class discussion of optional civil marriage were taken into consideration. Of students that said they were moderately or largely influenced by their peers' stances towards optional civil marriage, the majority of 14 (82.3%) stated that both civil courts and religious authorities should take charge of personal affairs. Two (11.8%) preferred that only religious authorities take care of these matters, while one remaining student (5.9%) favored the exclusive handling of these matters by civil courts. Regarding their own attitudes towards civil marriage, nine (52.9%) said they backed it moderately, while seven (41.2%) voiced their total support for this step. Only one student (5.9%) said he/she did not support civil unions at all. Students' answers regarding whether they would marry in a civil union were close as 10 (58.8%) said they would consider the option, while seven (41.2%) ruled it out. As for students whose answers were moderately or largely influenced by their teachers' points of views, 12 (70.6%) said they wanted both civil courts and religious authorities to be in charge of personal matters; four (23.5%) said they believe that religious authorities should handle these matters alone, while one student (5.9%) opted for civil courts alone. Nine (52.9%) of these students said they supported civil marriage moderately and five (29.4%) were more enthusiastic about this matter, expressing their support for it to a large extent. The remaining three students (17.7%) said they were not at all in favor of this type of unions. Regarding how would they prefer to tie the knot in the future, 12 students (70.6%) said they would consider civil marriage as an option, while the remaining five (29.4%) rejected it.

vi. Attitudes Depending on Field or Program of Study

Table 4.11: Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Field of Study at CSC:

	Humanities	Sciences	Total*
Support it to a large extent	4	11	15
Support it moderately	10	27	37
I do not support it at all	3	11	14
Total	17	49	66

*One student did not specify his/her field of study and as such, his/her answers were not included in this table.

The majority of students in both Humanities (10 or 58.8%) and Sciences (27 or 55.1%) supported optional civil marriage moderately. Meanwhile, the numbers of students who supported it largely or did not support it at all were very close in both fields of studies. Among students in the Humanities, four or 23.5% supported civil marriage to a large extent, while three (17.6%) did not accept the idea at all. Among those in the Sciences, 27 (55.1%) supported civil marriage to a moderate extent, 11 (22.4%) were supporters to a large extent, and the same percentage rejected the issue also to a large extent. Hence we can conclude that there were no remarkable variations between the attitudes of students towards optional civil marriage at CSC if looked in terms of their fields of studies, although the support was slightly higher among students in Humanities (82.3% to 77.5%).

vii. Opinion on Marrying in a Civil Union, Depending on Support for Civil Marriage

Table 4.12: Students Who Support Optional Civil Marriage And Marrying In A

Nonreligious Ceremony at CSC:

	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Largely	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Moderately	Total
Yes	15	19	34
No	1	18	19
Total	15	37	53

Among students who said they supported optional civil marriage largely or moderately, 34 (64.2%) expressed that they would consider marrying in a civil union in the future whereas 19 (35.8%) said they would not.

e. Explaining Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

Many CSC students gave explanations to justify their attitudes towards optional civil marriage. Sixteen students of those who voiced their support for civil unions said it was a solution for interfaith marriages in the country. One of them even mentioned that they were in a relationship with a person of another sect, and would like to be able to marry in a civil ceremony in the future. Meanwhile, 11 participants referred to equal rights between men and women to justify their support for civil marriage. Also among supporters of civil marriage, six stated that they were in favor of adopting it in Lebanon because it is a solution for atheists and nonbelievers who do not want to abide by religious laws in concluding their marriages, and other matters of personal affairs. Four of these students revealed that they themselves were either atheists or were raised by a family of nonbelievers, and hence were staunch supporters of civil marriage. Four students mentioned that these nonreligious unions would ease

the process of divorce for many couples facing problems in their marital lives. However, four others of their schoolmates referred to this same reason, divorce, to express their rejection of civil unions. One of them warned that the adoption of optional civil marriage would transform the Lebanese society into a westernized one, more specifically an American one, which in their opinion is a negative consequence of such a union. Also among students who expressed their rejection of optional civil marriage, seven said it was because their religious beliefs did not approve of it or because it was rejected by their religious authorities. Meanwhile three students said it was a “bad idea” because it might generate problems when couples of interfaith marriages have kids. They explained that children “will be lost,” and that each parent will want to raise their kids according to the teachings of their own religion, hence creating disputes between couples. Two of the students who would not marry in a civil union mentioned the religious atmosphere in their families as a cause that influenced their views in this matter. Two other students said marriage can only be conducted by a religious authority, one of them explained that unions are a spiritual matter, and a “contract between a couple and God.” Another student slammed civil marriage saying it disrespected Islam and “insulted” women rather than granting them more rights. One student, meanwhile, linked civil unions to same sex marriage, saying that although they “accepted gays,” they did not support marriage between homosexuals.

f. Overview

Contrary to what would have been expected at a religious school, a great majority of CSC students expressed that they supported civil unions to a moderate or to a large extent. These amounted to 79.1% of the total number of participants, a

percentage that can be considered high. Moreover, the percentage of those who would consider marrying in a civil union (64.2%) was also noteworthy, in comparison to 58.8% at the secular BHS. Also, females at the School were remarkably more supportive of nonreligious unions than their male peers. As for the field of studies, there were no major variations between the attitudes of those studying Humanities and those enrolled in the Sciences section. The majority of both Christians and Muslims at CSC supported civil marriage. However, there were more students totally opposed to this kind of union among Muslims than among Christians (31.3% to 19.6%). As for their Druze and atheist peers, they were all in support of nonreligious unions.

It can be noted from the comments given by students that their understanding of civil marriage was limited to its relation with interfaith unions and divorce, while few of them mentioned equal rights between men and women and other arguments. Hence, it might be accurate to say that not all CSC participants in the study had a comprehensive understanding of civil marriage. One student stated clearly that he/she never understood the issue.

C. Montana International College

1. School Profile

a. History, Mission and Values

Montana International College was established in 2000 in al-Metn neighborhood of Deek al-Mehdi in the governorate of Mount Lebanon. The School was built on a 25000 m²-land owned by Joseph Semaan, a wealthy businessman who does not have any background in education. Semaan wanted to use his fortune to provide to the region's families an alternative to schools already present in al-Metn. The region's

schools were mostly religious, specifically Christian institutions established by missionaries and Semaan opted to found a secular institution in the area (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Although he is the head of the School's Board of Directors and its founder, Semaan does not interfere in its work because he is not an expert in the field of education, as the MIC's Vice Principal explained. Semaan's wife, Ghada Semaan, has been the headmaster of the School since 2013, after she gained knowledge about the field by watching the School's growth, and participated in all decision-making processes concerning MIC's future and mission (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Secularism is a characteristic that is repeatedly emphasized in several MIC publications and texts describing the School's mission and values. Moreover, this nonreligious character is promoted and implemented in many aspects and procedures adopted at MIC, which will be discussed later. MIC welcomes students of all religious backgrounds, without any restriction upon registration. The School strives to introduce students to religious, cultural and social diversities while recognizing the individuality of each pupil. It also seeks to promote values of citizenship among students (Montana International College, 2013). In addition to its nonreligious identity, Semaan sought to establish a large-scale educational compound, not only a high school. In 2007, a technical school was opened, and a "Lebanese French University" is planned for the future. The university will be operated by specialists in higher education (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Another characteristic of the School is the small number of students in classrooms, which should not exceed 20 pupils per class (Montana International College, 2013).

Montana International College is a self-supporting school that covers its expenses from the income it generates, without any other financing source. If additional funds are needed, Semaan pledges to provide them. The School's tuition ranges from \$5,000 to \$7,000 depending on the grade level, section, and program of study (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

b. Academics at MIC

Montana International College combines three programs in its curriculum; a French, an American and a Lebanese. In terms of organization, the programs are divided into two sections, a French and an English section. Students enrolled in the French section are taught both the French and the Lebanese programs and they are prepared to sit for the Lebanese official exams in Grades 9 and 12, and also for the French Baccalaureate. As for the English section, students have the option to choose between enrolling in the American System, if they have a second citizenship or a non-Lebanese one, and between studying the Lebanese Program. American System students are exempted from sitting for the official exams and instead, they graduate with a High School Diploma and may apply to university as freshmen students (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). All four branches or streams of studies in the Lebanese official program -General Sciences, Life Sciences, Sociology-Economics and Humanities- are offered at Grade 12, regardless of the number of students in each. The administration does not mind opening a branch for few students only, if they show high achievement and are passionate about the stream they choose (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). The main language of teaching at MIC varies depending on the section, whether the English or the French. Arabic is only used

in teaching Arabic language classes, geography, history and civics, in both sections. Math and Sciences are taught in English at all levels in the English section, and in French in the French section. All students, nevertheless, end up learning English and French regardless of the section they are enrolled in, as the other language is given as a mandatory second foreign language. Multilingualism is one of the main points of emphasis in the School as its website mentions, and accordingly, other foreign languages are offered also such as Spanish which is mandatory for all American System students (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

c. Civic Education at MIC

Civics classes are given to all students enrolled in the Lebanese Program as of Grade 6 and the books used are the ones assigned by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, “Al-Tarbiya Al-Wataniya Wal-Tanshi’a Al-Madaniyya” (National Education and Civil Upbringing) (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Textbooks are supplemented with online documents, visual aids, movies and maps (V. Bejjani, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Issues of national interest often arise in the classroom and the topics debated are usually related to the lesson of the day. Freedom of expression is upheld and encouraged in all classes (V. Bejjani, personal communication, December 3, 2013). According to the School’s Vice Principal, most students at MIC show little interest in civics classes as they perceive given lessons as unrealistic, and far from what actually takes place on the ground in the country (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

d. Holidays, Activities and Clubs at MIC

Montana International College tailors its yearly agenda to correspond with both the Lebanese and the French embassy's calendars. It closes its doors on all public holidays recognized in Lebanon, and for one entire week for All Saints Day, in correspondence with the French calendar. Additionally, the School closes for several days during its annual "Vacances de Neige" or Snow Holiday. As for the weekend, Saturdays and Sundays are MIC's weekly days off (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Several holidays are marked with celebrations throughout the School year such as Christmas, Independence Day, Halloween and Mothers' Day. As well, MIC offers a diversified range of special annual activities that take place inside the School's premises. Some of these have an educational purpose, such as the Language Days. Spread over several days, these events aim at celebrating and promoting languages used in the School through many activities that are open to parents, and usually welcome guests who come to share their affection towards the celebrated language. Others, meanwhile, are organized for leisure purposes such as SPRINTS, which is a popular event that takes place usually in May of each academic year. SPRINTS is a festival open for the public, and goes on for three days. It includes different activities such as a cultural village that celebrates the food, traditional clothing and the heritage of different nations, games, and a garage sale, amongst others. The annual parents' reception takes place at the beginning of the school year, and it is an event that aims at introducing students' guardians to the achievements of MIC, the School's plan for the year ahead, and it features occasional conferences on topics that are of significance to parents such as parental coaching. The School also hosts a career orientation program when many professionals in different fields are invited to share

with students their experiences (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). MIC seeks to transmit the values and the mission behind the School's establishment, such as secularism, tolerance and diversity, through its activities. Among these activities was Projection "Sayf 840," which is an adaptation of a famed Lebanese theatrical play that deals with religious coexistence. The play was presented with the participation of all students from grades 3 to 12, who prepared, organized and acted in it. It was presented live to the public, and a video of it was played several times later to public audiences (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). As for joint activities with other educational institutions, MIC students interact with their peers in different schools in sports tournaments, in their participation in the Model United Nations program at the Lebanese American University (LAU's MUN), in the Science Fair at the American University of Beirut's (AUB) and in "Adyan," a Non-Governmental Organization that aims at promoting dialogue and coexistence between different religious sects (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Most extra-curricular activities offered at MIC are of athletic nature. However, the School is currently in the process of inaugurating clubs that will be open to the public, and that serve kids of different tastes and hobbies. These clubs will be designed to respond to the School's vision of transforming the premises into an open campus, where students can hang out after classes, get involved in activities, use the available facilities or study at MIC (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). In addition, the School offers its Grade 10 students who would have passed the official Brevet exams a trip to a foreign country, covered by the MIC's founder Joseph Semaan (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). There is no debate club at MIC, but there are other opportunities for dialogue whether in classrooms or through

lectures and conferences hosted on campus. The topics of these lectures are usually related to lessons given, or to some issue that the School wants to shed light on such as bullying, anti-violence, or helping others, etc. Politics is not dealt with directly at MIC, but other topics may have a political flavor, such as topics on peacemaking, war and its effects, and religious coexistence. In view of the tense political atmosphere in the country, discussing politics in classes is off the limit, as MIC's VP explained. She assured the writer that a free exchange of opinion is allowed in class discussions, and added that MIC does not try to "shape" students' opinions (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Other services offered at MIC include school counseling and a students' council whose members are elected by the students. The School ensures that class delegates participate in regular meetings with teachers, administration members as well as with representatives of the parents to voice their demands and comments. This is intended to conform to the shared decision-making process and to the student-centered approaches promoted at the School (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

e. Religion at MIC

As said earlier, the presence of many Christian schools in Lebanon's al-Metn region was a motive that inspired Semaan to found MIC. As such, secularism is a main motto adopted by the School. This nonreligious identity is repeatedly emphasized on MIC's website and publications. The VP of the School explained that MIC's secular identity is reflected in many aspects in the School's policies, particularly in hiring. Students, professors and administrators are not allowed to wear, or to get accessorized with, anything that indicates their religious affiliation. As for headscarves, the School

has not yet had a case in which a veiled student wanted to join, but this issue was discussed and the decision was to allow veiled Muslim females to attend MIC (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). Religion is not an issue upon registration, and there is no field for religious sect in the School's application. Religious affiliation is also not a point of interest when hiring, as the applicants' qualifications are the criteria valued when assessing them. Nonetheless, teachers' belief in secularist values does matter in recruiting, especially for those applying to teach classes of civics and social studies, where topics of social and national importance are brought up. The school does not favor hiring someone who may take advantage of its tolerant policy to spread views that contradict the institution's values (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). However, despite its nonreligious character and its emphasis on secularism, it is noteworthy that 99.9% of MIC students, teachers and administrators are Christians, according to the interviewed VP. The VP, who is a Muslim, assured that this fact was not planned but happened by coincidence, given the region in which the School is located and whose residents are predominantly Christian. Another remark is that there were no religious classes given at any level at MIC before. However, the writer was told that many parents asked that their kids get proper and in depth Christian teachings before they receive their first communion. As a result, classes of Christian teachings began to be offered at the elementary level by a priest. These classes, however, remain optional and are offered only to students who express their interest in attending them (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

Among the many events that take place on campus, Christmas and Halloween are marked with celebrations. In fact, a joyful holiday spirit was noticeable during the researcher's visit to the School in December, as Christmas trees were erected and

ornaments symbolizing St. Barbara's day were also displayed in the buildings. The School is part of "Adyan," a non-governmental organization that stands for strengthening cooperation and interaction between people of different religious sects, to establish social cohesion, religious coexistence, stability and peace (Adyan Village, n.d.). MIC's partnership with "Adyan" opened the door for students to take part in activities, seminars and camps that are dedicated to raising awareness of religious diversity, and encouraging coexistence and cooperation among people of different sects (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

f. Civil Marriage at MIC

The topic of optional civil marriage was never discussed in a lecture or in a conference on campus, but it was tackled a few times inside classrooms. The School's VP said she encourages presenting all aspects of the issue in class through explaining its advantages and disadvantages. She also suggested inviting people to share their own personal experiences of civil marriage (M. Sammak, personal communication, December 3, 2013). The School's Social Studies teacher mentioned that when optional civil marriage was brought up in one of her classes, the majority of students expressed their support for it. She assured that she does not try to guide them, or influence their own attitudes towards the topic but said she only introduces the issue objectively by defining it, commenting on the legal conditions related to its application in Lebanon, and presenting the viewpoints of its supporters and opponents. Then, she said she gives students a chance to debate it using arguments. She said she avoids giving her own opinion on the topic in class, trying to remain as an objective element in the discussion (V. Bejjani, personal communication, December 3, 2013).

g. MIC Profile Overview

Though the MIC declares itself as secular, the facts of the case is that its religious orientation and composition came to resemble to a large extent the region where the School is located. This is partially seen in the fact that its students, administrators and teachers are predominantly Christians and there is barely any Muslim on campus. Also, Christian teaching is given at the School, albeit optional. As for discussing civil marriage, however, both the School's VP and the teacher of Social Studies assured that they present the topic objectively, and allow students to give their own ideas without any guidance or dictation.

2 - Fieldwork and Data Analysis

The field visit to Montana International College took place on December 3, 2013. 17 out of 25 students completed the questionnaire, after securing their parents' consent and expressing their assent. Although a secular School, the great majority of participants in the study were Christian; 11 of the 17 were males, five were females, and one chose not to disclose his/her sex.

a. Religious Background

i. Religious Make-Up

14 out of the 17 MIC students who took part in the study were Christian, constituting 82.4% of the total number of participants, two (11.8%) stated that they were atheist, although they were born to Christian families, and, one preferred not to disclose his/her religious affiliation. Only one student stated their religious sect, a Maronite, while their mother was an Orthodox Christian.

ii. Religious Atmosphere at Home

- Extent of religious commitment in the families

A majority of 11 students (64.7%) said they were raised in a moderately religious atmosphere. Four (23.5%) said that they came from a very religious family, and one student (5.9%) said he/she was raised by believers, but non-practicing parents, and another mentioned that he/she came from a totally secular family.

- Extent of religiosity's influence on lifestyle

Ten students (58.8%) said their religious background influenced their lifestyles to a moderate extent only, while four others (23.5%) expressed that their daily lives were influenced largely by religion. Meanwhile, three participants, or 17.6%, denied that religion had any influence on their lifestyles.

b. Civic Education at the School

At MIC, 13 (76.5%) of participating students said they have taken, or they are currently taking, a civics course at School. Among these, 11 (84.6%) acknowledged that these courses moderately helped them better understand issues related to civics, while the remaining two (15.4%) stated that civics classes had a larger role in this regard. Regarding whether they have become more law-abiding because of civics classes, students had differing opinions, as five (38.5%) said lessons played a large role in this regard, the same percentage said they played a moderate role while three (23.1%) denied any influence. A majority of 11 (84.6%) expressed that taking a civics classes helped them become more tolerant towards others to a moderate extent, whereas the remaining students stated that civics classes had a larger role in relation to them becoming more tolerant. As for patriotism, 12 students stated how classes influenced

them in this regard with 10, or 83.3%, saying that civics have increased their positive nationalist feelings moderately. Meanwhile, two or 16.7% said courses of civics played a greater role in developing their patriotism. Six students (46.2%) denied that civics had any influence on increasing their respect for their country's cabinet, while four (30.8%) said that they were largely inspired to show more admiration for their government, and three (23.1%) noted that civics courses influenced their opinions in this matter moderately.

c. Optional Civil Marriage Discussion at the School

The majority of 15 students participating in the study at MIC, or 88.2%, said optional civil marriage was discussed at their school. They were split regarding how the topic of optional civil marriage was tackled in class and how response to it were. Four (28.6%) said a lot of discussion took place, but that no conclusion was reached, while the same percentage (28.6%) pointed out that the majority of their classmates were against it. However, a similar number of students, three or 21.4% of participants, disagreed with their colleagues, saying that the majority of students were actually supportive of optional civil marriage. Two (14.3%) said discussion of the topic was quickly ended, while only one student (7.1%) remarked that their teacher dictated his/her own views on the issue.

Fifteen out of the 17 MIC participants answered the question on the influence of their teachers' attitude towards civil marriage on theirs. A majority of 10 (66.7%) said their attitudes towards optional civil marriage were not at all, or to a little extent only, influenced by the views of their teachers. Four (20%) said they were moderately

influenced by these opinions and one student, 6.7%, said he/she was largely influenced by his/her teachers' points of view.

Regarding their peers, 66.7% (or 10) of the 15 students who answered this question said they were not influenced at all, or influenced to a little extent, by their peers; three (20%) said they were largely influenced, and the remaining two (13.3%) stated that they were moderately influenced.

d. Students' Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

i. Authority Best to Govern Personal Affairs

A majority of 13 students (76.5%) considered that both religious authorities and civil courts should play a role in handling issues of personal affairs. The rest of their schoolmates were equally split over this issue, with two (11.8%) supporting civil courts, and two (11.8%) saying religious authorities must govern these matters exclusively.

ii. Students' Attitudes by Sex

Table 4.13: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Sex at MIC:

	Females	Males	Undisclosed Sex	Total
Support it to a large extent	3	3	-	6
Support it moderately	2	5	-	7
I do not support it at all	-	3	1	4
Total	5	11	1	17

Female participants in the study were all in favor of optional civil marriage with 60% saying they supported it to a large extent, and 40% expressing they backed it to a moderate extent. As for their male peers, 45.5% said they moderately supported the

issue while the remaining students were equally split between supporting it to a large extent, and rejecting it totally. From the results above, we can conclude that Grade 11 females at MIC were stronger supporters of civil marriage than their male counterparts. Regarding the attitudes of all MIC students, a majority (41.2%) said they encouraged optional civil marriage moderately; 35.3% supported it strongly, and a minority of four students, 23.5%, rejected the idea totally. After an overall evaluation of the obtained results, we can conclude that a majority of 76.5% students at MIC were supportive of optional civil marriage.

iii. Attitudes Depending on Religious Background

Table 4.14: Students' Views On Who Should Handle Personal Affairs By Religious Background at MIC:

	Christians	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed	Total
Religious authorities	1	-	1	2
Civil courts only	-	2	-	2
Both	13	-	-	13
Total	14	2	1	17

Table 4.15: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Religious

Background at MIC:

	Christians	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed	Total
Support it to a large extent	5	1	-	6
Support it moderately	6	1	-	7
I do not support it at all	3	-	1	4
Total	14	2	1	17

Most Christian students participating in the study, 42.9%, said they were in favor of optional civil marriage to a moderate extent; 35.7% said they supported the idea to a large extent, and a minority of 21.4% rejected it completely. One of the two students who declared themselves as atheists supported civil marriage to a large extent, while the other said that they were in favor of the issue to a moderate extent. As for the one student who did not disclose their religious sect, they rejected optional civil marriage totally.

Table 4.16: Students' Opinions On Marrying In A Civil Union By Religious Background at MIC:

	Christians	Others (atheists)	Undisclosed	Total
Yes	9	2	-	11
No	5	-	1	6
Total	14	2	1	17

Nine (64.3%) of participating Christian students would consider civil marriage as an option in the future, while five (35.7%) rejected the option. Both atheist students mentioned that they would consider tying the knot in a civil union in the future, while the one student whose religious affiliation was not declared ruled out the idea.

iv. Attitudes Based on Religious Atmosphere in Students' Families

All three students who mentioned that their lifestyles at home were not influenced by religion at all said they supported civil marriage moderately. As well, the three expressed that they might consider tying the knot in a civil union in the future. As for students who said that their lifestyles were influenced by their families' religious beliefs very much, two (50%) said they supported optional civil marriage moderately, one (25%) said he/she was a staunch supporter of this type of union, and the remaining student (25%) rejected the idea totally. As for whether they would marry in a civil union in the future, these four students were equally split in their answers, as two (50%) said this option was probable, and the two others (50%) ruled it out.

v. Attitudes Based on Class Atmosphere during Discussion

In this section, only the attitudes of students whose opinions were influenced during the class discussion by those of their teachers (five students), or by the opinions of their peers (five students), to a large or moderate extent were taken into consideration. Five students stated that their own attitudes towards optional civil marriage were influenced by those of their teachers to a moderate or to a large extent, and all of them said they want both civil courts and religious authorities to manage matters of personal affairs. Meanwhile, the opinions of these students were divided regarding their stances towards optional civil marriage, as three (60%) expressed that they were strong supporters of the idea; one (20%) said he/she supported it moderately, and another (20%) said he/she was totally against it. Four, or 80%, of these students said they would consider civil marriage as an option in their future, while one student only, 20%, said they would not. Similarly, five students were moderately or largely

influenced by their peers' standpoints towards optional civil marriage. Three (60%) said they encouraged that both civil courts and religious authorities take control of personal affairs. One (20%) said he/she wants religious authorities only to handle these matters, and the remaining student, 20%, was for civil courts alone in this regard. Regarding their attitudes towards optional civil marriage, three (60%) said they supported it moderately, one (20%) was strongly in favor of its adoption, and the remaining student (20%) rejected the idea completely. Also, four or 80% of these students announced that they would consider marrying in a civil union, while only one (20%) said he/she would not.

vi. Attitudes Depending on Field or Program of Study

Table 4.17: Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Field Of Study at MIC:

	American Program	Lebanese Program	Total
Support it to a large extent	3	3	6
Support it moderately	2	5	7
I do not support it at all	1	3	4
Total	6	11	17

It was mentioned before that MIC does offer a Humanities section at Grade 11. However, no students expressed interest in joining this stream in the academic year 2013-2014. Hence, Grade 11 had only one of the two themes in the Lebanese Program, which was the Sciences. Thus, the comparison here will be between the responses of those in the Sciences stream of the Lebanese Program and those enrolled in the American System.

Half of the students in the American System were staunch supporters of optional civil marriage while 33.3% accepted it moderately. Only one student (16.7%) said they were completely against the idea. As for their peers enrolled in the Lebanese Program, five (45.5%) were moderately supportive, while the rest were divided equally between those who supported it strongly, and those who did not support it at all. Therefore, we can conclude that students in the American System at MIC were slightly more supportive of optional civil marriage than their peers in the Lebanese Program.

vii. Opinion on Marrying in a Civil Union, Depending on Support for Civil Marriage

Table 4.18: Students Who Support Optional Civil Marriage And Marrying In A Nonreligious Ceremony at MIC:

	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Largely	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Moderately	Total
Yes	5	6	11
No	1	1	2
Total	6	7	13

A majority of 83.3% of students who supported optional civil marriage to a large extent said this type of union was an option they might consider in their future. Similarly, 85.7% of moderate supporters agreed with them, stating they would consider a nonreligious marriage. In general, the majority of MIC students, 84.6%, would consider tying the knot in a civil union, whether they supported this type of marriage to a moderate or to a large extent.

e. Explaining Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

Three of the students who were supportive of optional civil marriage mentioned that this type of union protects women and grants them equal rights to those of men. Another three explained that civil marriage facilitates unions between a man and a woman of different religious faiths. One added that this type of marriage allows different variations, including unions between homosexuals. Three pupils cited the ability to acquire an “easy” divorce as a reason for supporting civil unions, and one said these unions were also “better” for dealing with issues related to inheritance. Two students said civil marriages were more just, and that’s why they supported this type of union. One student cited their atheist stance as a reason for their standpoint while another explained that their stance was influenced by their family’s support for civil marriages. This same student also added that adopting optional civil marriage was a tool for national development. Meanwhile, one student said he would support a civil union on condition that he marries in church first.

As for students opposed to civil marriage, one said his/her stance stems from the “easiness” of divorce in such marriages. Another agreed with his/her fellow colleague, explaining that in case a divorce took place between a working man and a stay-at-home mom, she will end up taking half of her ex’s fortune which the student considered to be unfair. One pupil said civil marriages were a “disgrace” to the church, adding also that they stopped talking to their formerly favorite aunt after she wed in a nonreligious ceremony. Another student cited their family’s background as a reason for not supporting the adoption of optional civil marriage, saying that they were raised in a religious atmosphere at home. Meanwhile, another of their classmates said that civil marriage was not sacred, and that it was “just a contract.”

f. Overview

Most students at Montana International College were supportive of optional civil marriage, and their numbers amounted to 76.5% of participants, a percentage that might be considered relatively low considering that they were educated in an institution that stands for secularism and the establishment of a civil state. Nevertheless, the percentage of students who would consider tying the knot in a nonreligious ceremony was remarkably high, 84.6%, in comparison with that at the other three schools. Females at MIC were more in favor of civil marriage than their male peers, of the latter 23.5% rejected the idea totally. Also, students enrolled in the American System were slightly more supportive of the issue than their schoolmates in the Lebanese Program. The great majority of students at MIC were Christians, including several who rejected civil unions, whereas their peers who said they were atheists were all in favor of civil marriage. Students' explanations of their stances included varied opinions and arguments, be it women's rights, divorce, interfaith marriages or even national development. This may be taken an indication that there is a good deal of understanding of the topic among MIC students.

D. Iman High School

1. School Profile

a. History, Mission and Values

Iman High School was established in the southern city of Sidon in 1973 by "Jamaiyat al-Markaz al-Thakafi al-Islami al-Khayri fi Saida," or the Association of the Charitable Islamic Cultural Center in Sidon. During a time when a growing wave of nationalist and communist ideologies were dominant in the region and expanding into

Sidon, the Association sought to “resist” these secular tendencies, and establish an educational institution that raises students on the teachings of Islam. From humble beginnings of a small house catering to a limited number of students, the School gradually grew to include around 1450 female and male students per year. At present, it is supervised by a Board of Directors formed of seven members of the Association (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). As an Islamic institution, IHS aims at raising successful Muslim students by merging academics and religion in its curriculum. The School’s motto is “The Koran and the Sunnah” - the teachings and practices of Prophet Mohammed, and its mission statement stipulates that IHS’ operations are grounded in Islamic laws (Iman High School, 2014). Nevertheless, the School is open to receiving students from different nationalities and from any religious background, although all of its students enrolled in the academic year 2013-2014 were Muslims. Most students are either Lebanese or Palestinians, while some of them carry another nationality such as Sri Lankan, Cuban, Danish, Swedish and British, amongst others (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). The School is also coeducational, which is contrary to general expectations, but it adopts a sex separation policy as of Grade 4, when boys and girls are educated in two separate buildings, and take their breaks on different playgrounds. They are nonetheless joined together in several campus activities and are taught by common teachers. The School’s principal explained that this segregation is based on an Islamic perspective and is adopted at Grade 4, because, as he said, these pre-teens start to develop physically, and feel the need to talk about the changes they are going through with their friends of the same sex, and to explore more and discuss those changes with their teachers or supervisors. He added that students are separated also because males and females need different

facilities, and to avoid any possible harassment (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

The headmaster declared that the School is a non-profit institution, and its fees vary between 2,275,000 and 4,000,000 LBP, depending on the grade level. These fees essentially compensate for unpaid fees of people who are not able to pay, such as orphans, those coming from poor families and also, of those with outstanding academic achievements. There are around 250 students who are exempted from fees every year at IHS. The School covers its expenses from the remaining money of students' tuitions and from donations (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

b. Academics at IHS

Iman High School offers a Lebanese Program that prepares students to sit for official Lebanese exams at grades 9 and 12. In their senior year, students can choose between going into Life Sciences, General Sciences or Sociology-Economics. The School does not have a Humanities stream due to the lack of demand, as the headmaster explained. He also added that the Sociology-Economics section is not offered always, and that its availability depends on the number of students interested in enrolling in it (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). English is the language used in teaching Sciences and Math at all levels, while Arabic is used in Arabic language classes, Geography, History, Civics, Sociology, Economics and Islamic Studies. IHS used to teach French as a second foreign language, but due to a heavy curriculum and the lack of time, French was cancelled (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

c. Civic Education at IHS

Civics classes are given to all students starting from Grade 1, and the books used are the same ones required by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which are “Al-Tarbiya Al-Wataniya Wal-Tanshi’a Al-Madaniyya” (National Education and Civil Upbringing). The civics teacher said she doesn’t cover the entire curriculum in each grade except to students who are going to sit for the official exams. She explained that she instead selects the lessons that pupils find relatable to their lives only, and others that are going to reappear in grades 9 and 12 when official exams are due. She justified this as a matter of necessity, so that students can finish the curriculum by the end of the school year. In addition to the books, the civics teacher refers to Islamic texts and sources to support lessons given in classes such as telling stories about Prophet Mohammed, and presenting multimedia sources gathered from religious television channels and YouTube. She sometimes uses newspaper articles especially when the lesson of the day tackles matters related to politics such as parliamentary elections, etc. (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014). Dialogue is frequent in civics classes and topics sometimes tackle an event that happened inside the classroom like commenting on someone’s behavior and relating it to lessons in ethics, or local and regional events that are also relatable to given lectures. Topics that appear frequently in classes are mainly those that relate to ethics, political conditions, and others that can be linked to current events taking place in the country or the region. According to the interviewed teacher, students are very attentive during discussions and they express their interests in their active participation as they regularly jump in to report their experiences and voice their opinions. The teacher remarked that referring to previous examples given in class is another indicator of their responsiveness (I. Akoum,

personal communication, January 9, 2014). As for lessons in the textbooks, the comments of the students often point out that what these lessons include is completely different from reality. The civics teacher said that she usually replies by saying that they, the students, are “the tools of change,” and that they have to use what they learn in class to improve the facts in reality in the county, through upholding the laws that are frequently violated (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

d. Holidays, Activities and Clubs at IHS

IHS takes Fridays, the holy day in Islam, and Sundays off for weekends, and it closes its doors on all Islamic holidays, but does not observe all public holidays declared by the government. It does observe Christmas, New Year, Independence Day, and Labor Day. Additionally, it closes for an entire week during its annual Spring Break, which usually falls at the beginning of April and coincides with Easter. The Armenian Christmas and St. Maroun’s Day are working days at IHS. The principal of the School explained that the Lebanese government obliges institutions to close only on two annual holidays: Independence Day and Labor Day, while they have the freedom to take the remaining holidays off or not. He added that the absence of any non-Muslim student or administrator in the School is another reason why the administration does not think that it is necessary to close on Christian holidays, and thus prefers to hold classes and try to finish covering the whole curriculum on time instead (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). It was by chance that when the writer visited the School, preparations were taking place to celebrate Prophet Mohammed’s birthday. Popular songs’ words were changed and substituted with Islamic slogans, accompanied with appropriate tunes and music, were played on campus. Teachers, administrators and

the principal were also actively engaged in checking on the list of activities to be planned on the last School day preceding the holiday. All events at IHS feature distribution of gifts, sharing of food, and dance and musical performances. They also all start with Koranic recitation (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). Other events that take place on campus include career guidance workshops for the students of the Secondary Section and seminars dealing with various issues. Lectures are frequently given on campus on a wide range of subjects, such as social problems like drug addiction, issues related to students' biological and psychological growth, especially during their early teen years, and as well, issues of national interest. The topic of optional civil marriage was presented in a lecture during the 2012-2013 academic year when a Muslim Sheikh was invited to speak about it. It should be remarked that topics are usually tackled from both an Islamic religious perspective, and from a scientific or a social one. In addition, many lectures presented at the School have a strictly Islamic emphasis, such as inviting a convert to Islam to share their experience (Iman High School, 2014).

IHS offers its students a diversified list of clubs that they can join, and these include sports clubs, such as basketball, football, table tennis, gymnastics and karate; the Robots Club for scholars interested in science and technology, Drawing and Handcrafts clubs, amongst others. A Recitation Club is also available for students to register in. The Farouq Scouts was established by the Charitable Islamic Cultural Center in Sidon and used to exclusively include members of IHS. However, interested students from other educational institutions are welcome to join the scouts nowadays (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). Joint activities with other schools are regular at Iman High School and are made possible thanks to its affiliation with the

Schools Network of Sidon and Neighboring Towns and the Network of Educational Institutions. The affiliation with these networks has opened the door for collaboration between the schools in the South, and other schools throughout Lebanon, through teaming students up in cultural activities, workshops, scientific competitions, joint fairs and sports tournaments. The School is also part of “Adyan,” like Montana International College, a non-governmental organization that aims at promoting dialogue and coexistence between different religious sects. This affiliation has given IHS students the opportunity to visit fellow scholars in other Lebanese schools, who also paid them the visit back (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). The civics teacher mentioned to the writer that IHS encourages tackling issues of national interest inside classrooms and that freedom of expression is encouraged and respected (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014). However, political issues are avoided and even matters of religious sensibilities, such as the differences between the practices of Sunnis and those of Shiites, are also overlooked to avoid the eruption of arguments and disputes (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

e. Religion at IHS

As stated earlier, IHS is an Islamic educational institution, established by an Islamic organization, and with a mission to raise students on the teachings of Islam. The School’s Islamic identity is expressed in many forms on campus; in its vision, curriculum, activities, and regulations. IHS’ mission statement declares that the School aims at raising a generation of productive and successful Muslims through combining academics and Islamic teachings in its curriculum. “The Koran and the Sunnah” is the School’s motto, and Islamic verses, sayings and references are repeatedly mentioned on

the School's website, on IHS' application forms and in its publications (Iman High School, 2014). Moreover, the achievements of Muslim scholars in different domains, teachings of Islam, and Islamic sayings are proudly displayed on campus whether in paintings on walls, in advertisements, or in posters and slogans in various buildings. As well, there are two prayer rooms available on campus, one for boys and another for girls. The School's Islamic identity is also reflected in the separation between male and female students as of Grade 4. Although an Islamic school, there are no restrictions on the admission of non-Muslim students at IHS, and children of all religious sects are, in principle, welcome to enroll. However, all students currently studying at the School are Muslims, and the headmaster recalled only one Christian to have ever been a student at IHS. In terms of religious sect, most students are Sunnis, and about 7% only are Shiites in the academic year 2013-2014 (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). Students' application form does include a field for specifying one's religious sect. It should also be noted that the online admission procedure features "Sunni" only as a religious sect option to be chosen (Iman High School, 2014). As well, teachers and administrators of all sects can work, in principle, at IHS, although all employees are currently Muslims. The majority of these are Sunnis, while 10% of the total number of professionals and administrators are Shiites (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

Female teachers must wear a headscarf, while administrators and educational supervisors are not obliged to do so. IHS principal explained that this rule was adopted because as an Islamic school, the institution's duty is to call for dressing modestly, and for wearing a veil. Teachers, who are communicating this message, are role models as the headmaster said, and hence, their looks should not contradict with what they preach.

Students, however, have the freedom to be veiled or not, noting that all employees and the majority of students the researcher met during her visit to the School wore a headscarf (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

Islamic Studies is a mandatory subject for all students at IHS, starting from a young age, and it is a major component of the curriculum as its grades can affect a student's overall average and academic advancement. Grades acquired in Islamic Studies are composed of two halves; one stands for averages taken on exams, and the other in the teacher's evaluation of students' behavior, such as acting in an appropriate manner and praying regularly. Remarkably, students take up to five classes of religious studies per week. Senior students, meanwhile, take only one Islamic Studies class per week, due to a demanding curriculum in their final year before the official exam. Classes are given by authorities in Islamic Studies, or people who specialized in that field and who do not have to be religious clerics (K. Kozbar, personal communication, January 9, 2014). Regarding holidays marked at IHS, the School does not close its doors on all public holidays, but observes instead only the main Christian ones like Christmas and the New Year, and ignores others such as St. Maroun's Day and the Armenian Christmas. On the other hand, it observes all Islamic holidays. The headmaster explained that the absence of any Christian student in the School gives it more freedom to choose what days to take days off, adding that there are numerous public holidays in Lebanon and that students are under pressure to cover the curriculum in total, hence, the need to be present more often in classes as often as possible. Nevertheless, the Prophets' birthday, the Adha and the Fitr holidays and the Islamic New Year are holidays that are given special attention as celebrations take place to mark them on campus over the course of several days. Islamic songs are played, gifts are given out and Koranic verses

are recited during these events. Also, all celebrations at IHS, whether religious or not, start with a Koranic recitation. It should also be noted that all relevant topics tackled at the School are handled from an Islamic perspective, and thus the point of view that is emphasized is the one conforming to Islam's teachings. Moreover, Islamic sources are used as references to support textbooks in civics classes (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

f. Civil Marriage at IHS

Optional civil marriage was the topic of discussion in one of IHS' seminars in the academic year 2012-2013. The lecture was given to all male and female students in Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 by Sheikh Mohammed Abu Zeid, who was delegated by the Islamic Court to introduce the topic at the School (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014). The seminar addressed the "grave dangers" of civil unions on society, and the "contradiction of its clauses with God's marriage rules," particularly in matters of inheritance and adoption, amongst others. The Sheikh explained to students that adopting civil marriage is not the real goal behind campaigns calling for it in Lebanon, and that the motive is to overthrow the personal affairs system in the country, which is "God given," and to replace it with one that is open for modification (Iman High School, 2014). The civic education teacher said that most students were convinced in the Sheikh's viewpoint regarding non-religious unions, and expressed their rejection of optional civil marriage. She added that the opinions of several pupils were affected by the level of religious commitment in their families, and that those who were raised by parents who were not very religious had differing views compared with their classmates (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014). The interviewed teacher stressed

that optional civil marriage, like all other topics, was presented from an Islamic point of view. She assured that students were allowed to voice their opinions freely on the matter without any restriction, adding that as freedom of expression is taught in textbooks, it must also be applied inside classrooms and on campus. She revealed that although she does not oblige students to adopt her own attitude, she reminds them however that they are Muslims, and hence they must seek “God’s blessings through applying religious laws.” She says she considers that her role and duty at an Islamic school is to guide children and young adults and explain different issues to them from an Islamic perspective (I. Akoum, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

g. IHS Profile Overview

Iman High School was established to promote Islamic values and to raise generations of students on religious teachings. Its slogan, mission statement, curriculum, rules, and activities were molded to serve this purpose. Even more, Islam is used as guidance in the approaches adopted by teachers, and as a main perspective in presenting various topics presented or discussed in School. IHS is open to receiving students and employees from different religious backgrounds, but throughout its history, almost everyone who has attended it was a Muslim, mainly a Sunni. Freedom of opinion and of expression is welcomed in the School, but IHS teachers do not deny that they try to convince students of their own stances, explaining that their mission is to guide students. As for civil marriage, the topic was given special attention at IHS, but it is noteworthy that the person who introduced and discussed it was a religious figure, also that the topic was presented as a problem that challenges Islamic values, and hence, it should be opposed to preserve religious teachings.

2. Fieldwork and Data Analysis

For the fieldwork at Iman High School, the researcher visited the campus twice; the first time on December 12, 2013 to meet with female students, and the second on December 16, 2013 to meet the males. Males and females at IHS were placed in separated classrooms, located in two different buildings. The absence of a large number of male students on December 12, 2013 and their unavailability to complete the questionnaire was the reason that required a second visit to the school. Finally, 53 Grade 11 students at IHS secured their parents' consent, expressed their assent and participated in the study. These were 19 females, 33 males, and one student who did not disclose their sex.

a. Religious Background

i. Religious Make-Up

As stated earlier, all students currently at IHS are Muslims, but only 46 (86.8%) of participants stated that they were Muslims in the questionnaire, while the remaining seven (13.2%) did not disclose their religious sect. Among students who stated they were Muslims, 15 mentioned that they were Sunnis.

ii. Religious Atmosphere at Home

- Extent of religious commitment in the families

Fifty-two students answered this question, and one did not. Of these 52 students, 40 (76.9%) said they were brought up in a moderately religious atmosphere, while 10 (19.2%) stated that they came from a very religious background. Meanwhile, one student (1.9%) said they was raised by parents who were believers, but non-

practicing, and another pupil (1.9%) mentioned that they came from a secular home atmosphere.

- Extent of religiosity's influence on lifestyle

The majority of IHS participants, 32 (60.4%), said religion influenced their lifestyles to a moderate extent; 18 (34%) said religion had a strong influence on their lives, while the remaining three (5.7%) denied any such influence.

b. Civic Education at the School

82.4% of participating Grade 11 students said they have taken or they are currently taking a civics course at School. Among these, 63.4% said the courses have moderately helped them better understand issues related to civics, 29.3% said they helped them to a large extent, while only 7.3% said these classes were not helpful at all in this respect. The majority of 69.2% of respondents stated that courses of civics made them more law-abiding to a moderate extent. Meanwhile, 17.9% denied such a connection, and 12.8% said they were largely influenced by civics classes and hence have come to respect laws more. Regarding tolerance towards others, 62.2% of students said civics encouraged them moderately to accept others more, 35.1% said civics lessons encouraged them to a larger extent in this regard, while 2.7% only denied that classes in civics had any influence in this matter. As for feelings of nationalism, 63.9% said these classes encouraged them moderately to become more patriotic, 22.2% considered that the courses had larger positive influence in this respect, while the remaining 13.9% denied any link between civics courses and becoming more patriotic. 47.4% of IHS participants said courses in civics have influenced their stances towards the cabinet moderately, encouraging them to respect it more. Meanwhile, 28.9% said

lessons learnt in civics did not increase their respect for the government at all, and 23.7% of their schoolmates noted a major change in their attitudes towards the cabinet because of these civics classes.

c. Optional Civil Marriage Discussion at the School

Forty-eight 48 students (92.3%) of the 52 who answered this question said the topic of optional civil marriage was discussed at one point or another at their School, while the rest of their schoolmates stated that it was never discussed.

Students were divided over how was the topic handled by their teachers and classmates, as 15 (38.5%) said most students were against it; nine (23.1%) said it gathered a majority of supporters; seven (18%) said the topic was quickly ended; and five (12.8%) noted that the opinion on the issue was dictated by the teacher. Only three (7.7%) said no conclusion over optional civil marriage was reached in class.

Forty-five 45 students (93.8%) of those who said the topic was discussed at School answered this question, and among them, 30 (66.7%) expressed that they were influenced by their teacher's points of views on civil marriage to a moderate or to a large extent. Seven (15.6%) said they were slightly influenced, and eight (17.8%) denied any such influence.

As for the influence of their peers' attitudes towards optional civil marriage, 18 (40%) of the 45 students who answered this question said they were moderately swayed by them, while 16 others (35.6%) denied that these views had any influence on their own. Nine (20%) said they were influenced to a little extent, and only two students (4.4%) expressed that their classmates' opinions influenced them to a large extent.

d. Students' Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

i. Authority Best to Govern Personal Affairs

The majority of 36 students (72%) stated that only religious authorities should deal with issues related to personal affairs, while 12 others (24%) said these matters should be handled by both religious authorities and civil courts. Only two (4%) preferred that civil courts solely manage matters related to personal affairs. It should be noted that three students did not answer this question and hence, the opinion of 50 students only were taken into consideration in calculating the percentages above.

ii. Students' Attitudes by Sex

Table 4.19: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Sex at IHS:

	Females	Males	Undisclosed Sex	Total
Support it to a large extent	1	1	-	2
Support it moderately	3	5	-	8
I do not support it at all	15	27	1	43
Total	19	33	1	53

A majority of 15 female students at IHS (79%) said they were not in support of optional civil marriage at all. Three (15.8%) said they supported the issue moderately, and only one (5.3%) said she was a strong supporter of civil unions. Like their female peers, a majority of 27 IHS male students (81.8%) were not in favor of optional civil marriage at all. Five (15.2%) said they supported it moderately, and like their female schoolmates, only one student also (3%) said he endorsed it to a large extent. Hence, optional civil marriage was more acceptable among female students than among their

male schoolmates, but only to a slight extent. As for the attitudes of all Grade 11 students at IHS towards optional civil unions, a majority of 43 students (81.1%) said they were totally against the idea. Meanwhile, eight (15.1%) said they supported it moderately, and only two students (3.8%) expressed their large endorsement of the issue.

iii. Attitudes Depending on Religious Background

Table 4.20: Students' Views On Who Should Handle Personal Affairs By Religious Background at IHS:

	Muslims *	Undisclosed **	Total
Religious authorities	32	4	36
Civil courts only	1	1	2
Both	11	1	12
Total	44	6	50

*Two Muslim students did not answer this question.

**One student of those who did not disclose their religious sect did not answer this question.

Thirty-two (72.7%) of Muslim participants said they wanted religious authorities only to manage matters related to personal affairs. Eleven students (25%) said they were for both religious authorities and civil courts to take care of these issues, and one Muslim student (2.3%) said non-religious authorities only should take care of personal affairs. Among students who did not disclose their religious sect, four (66.7%) stated their support for religious authorities to take charge of issues related to personal affairs, while the remaining two students were equally divided on the issue with one

encouraging handling these matters by civil courts only, and the other backing both, religious and civil authorities, to take these matters into their hands.

Table 4.21: Students' Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Religious

Background at IHS:

	Muslims	Undisclosed	Total
Support it to a large extent	1	1	2
Support it moderately	8	-	8
I do not support it at all	37	6	43
Total	46	7	53

A majority of 37 out of 46 Muslim participants (80.4%) rejected the issue of optional civil marriage completely; eight (17.4%) said they supported it moderately, and only one student expressed his/her strong support. Six (85.7%) of students who did not reveal their religious affiliation rejected optional civil marriage completely, while only one (14.3%) said he/she supported it largely.

Table 4.22: Students' Opinions On Marrying In A Civil Union By Religious

Background at IHS:

	Muslims	Undisclosed	Total
Yes	4	3	7
No	42	4	46
Total	46	7	53

A huge majority of 42 of Muslim students (91.3%) ruled out marrying in a civil union in the future. The remaining four (8.7%) said they would consider nonreligious marriage as an option. Meanwhile, opinions of students who did not disclose their religious affiliation were very close, as four (57.1%) said they would not consider marrying in a civil union, and three (42.9%) stated they might think about it.

iv. Attitudes Based on Religious Atmosphere in Students' Families

Of the 18 students whose lifestyles were very much influenced by religion, 17 (94.4%) said they did not support optional civil marriage at all, while one student (5.6%) said he/she endorsed it moderately. Also, 17 students (94.4%) rejected considering tying the knot in a non-religious ceremony and one student only (5.6%) said he/she might think about it as an option in their future. Regarding students whose lifestyles at home were not at all influenced by religion, two (66.7%) said they were against optional civil marriage and one (33.3%) said he/she supported the issue moderately. All three students ruled out marrying in a civil union in the future.

v. Attitudes Based on Class Atmosphere during Discussion

In this section, only the attitudes of students whose opinions were largely or moderately influenced by those of their teachers (30) or of their peers (20) during the class discussion of optional civil marriage were taken into consideration. Of students whose opinions on optional civil marriage were largely or moderately influenced by those of their teachers, 86.2% perceived that only religious authorities should manage matters of personal affairs. 6.9% said only civil courts should deal with these issues, while another 6.9% supported that both religious and civil bodies handle matters of personal affairs. Moreover, the majority of 26 of these students (86.7%) said they did not support voluntary civil marriage at all, while three (10%) mentioned that they were moderate supporters of the issue. Only one student (3.3%) said they endorsed this cause to a large extent. As for marrying in a civil union in the future, 26 students (86.7%) ruled the idea out, while a minority of four (13.3%) said they might consider it.

Regarding students whose attitudes towards this issue were moderately or largely influenced by their classmates' views, a 57.9% majority said only religious authorities should be in charge of personal affairs; 31.6% said both civil courts and religious authorities must deal with these issues and only 10.5% supported the control of solely civil courts over these matters. A majority of 14 (70%) expressed their total rejection of optional civil marriage; five (25%) said they moderately supported the issue and one (5%) said he/she encouraged it to a large extent. Asked whether they would consider marrying in a civil union in the future, 17 (85%) ruled the idea out, while the remaining three (15%) said they might think about it.

vi. Attitudes Depending on Field or Program of Study

Many of the 53 participants in this study did not mention their field of study, and hence, the results below were calculated based on the responses of 36 students.

Table 4.23: Attitudes Towards Optional Civil Marriage By Field Of Study at IHS:

	Humanities	Sciences	Total
Support it to a large extent	-	1	1
Support it moderately	2	3	5
I do not support it at all	5	25	30
Total	7	29	36

Five (71.4%) of Grade 11 students majoring in Humanities said they did not support optional civil marriage at all, while two (28.6%) said they endorsed it to a moderate extent. As for students enrolled in the Sciences, 25 (86.2%) said they did not encourage optional civil union at all, three (10.3%) said they backed it moderately, while one person (3.4%) expressed his/her strong support for nonreligious marriages. Hence, students in the Humanities section at IHS were slightly more open to optional civil marriage than their peers in the Sciences section.

vii. Opinion on Marrying in a Civil Union, Depending on Support for Civil Marriage

Table 4.24: Students Who Support Optional Civil Marriage And Marrying In A

Nonreligious Ceremony at IHS:

	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Largely	Students Who Support Civil Marriage Moderately	Total
Yes	2	1	3
No	-	7	7
Total	2	8	10

The two Grade 11 students who were strong supporters of optional civil marriage stated that they might consider marrying in a nonreligious ceremony. As for students who were moderate supporters of the issue, seven (87.5%) ruled out the idea, while only one (12.5%) said he/she might think about it as an option in the future. As for all IHS participants who are either moderate or strong supporters of optional civil marriage, 70% said they rejected the option of a civil union in the future, while the remaining 30% said they might consider it.

e. Explaining Attitudes towards Optional Civil Marriage

As the results above indicate, the majority of 43 students (81.1%) at IHS were strongly against the adoption of optional civil marriage in Lebanon. Most of them explained that their stances stemmed from their religion's "rejection" of this type of union, saying that it is "haram," undesirable, or wrong. One student considered that Islam ordered Muslims "not to get married in a civil union, have a conversation or even think about it." Another student said the Koran stated that only religious marriages are to be conducted. A third remarked that since it is a legislated law, civil marriage is subjected to changes unlike religious texts, and hence people should not go through

with it. Others pointed out to religion's superiority over issues related to personal affairs, noting that religious authorities are wiser than any other authority to deal with these matters. One student elaborated saying that "God knows better," and has accordingly gave rise to the necessary rules for a "happy marriage." Another slammed civil unions as an "excuse" to free a partner from his/her duties towards their spouse, while a third pupil explained that this type of union gives regard to only the issue of love in marriage, and ignores other matters such as inheritance. Two students denied that a civil union secures more rights for women. One of them said it "doesn't save females," while the second mentioned that Islam already states women's rights and that they (women) should not be looking for additional gains. Two students said that the issue was not important; one explained that there are more crucial matters facing Lebanon that need to be dealt with at the moment, while the other said that with the presence of religious laws, each person can rely on an "authority" for tying the knot, and hence, adopting civil marriages was not necessary. Meanwhile, two students warned that the adoption of nonreligious unions would have negative consequences on the Lebanese society, even destroying it. One of them went further to say civil unions opened the door for the "existence" of homosexuals in the West, noting that it must be avoided in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, among the few students who expressed their support for optional civil marriage, one said that he/she was against religious authorities taking matters of personal affairs into their own hands. Two students said people should be given the freedom to choose how to wed, since some are with religious marriages, while others are against them. One student stated that a civil union might be a better solution for Christians in Lebanon, as it facilitates the process of divorce.

f. Overview

As expected, a great majority of students at the Islamic IHS was totally against civil marriages. Students have expressed their rejection of this type of union strongly when explaining the reasons behind their stances, denying that nonreligious marriages might grant women equality with men, or considering that this is a marginal topic that should be overlooked. Yet, the majority of reasons given stressed on Islam's rejection of this type of union. Comparing the stances of female students to that of their male peers, it can be noted that females were slightly more open to the idea. Also, there was less rejection of voluntary nonreligious unions among students in the Humanities section than in the Sciences. But the clear opposition to nonreligious marriages was striking among the majority of IHS students.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

Comparing the profiles of the four schools that took part in the study, a main observation can be made regarding the great difference between them in several aspects. To begin with, BHS was established by a British missionary and CSC by a Catholic one, MIC by a businessman, and IHS by a local Islamic association. Also, the motive behind the establishment of each school was different. MIC for example was founded to provide a secular alternative for the dominant presence of Catholic schools in al-Metn region in Mount Lebanon. Contrarily, IHS was established to “resist” the expansion of a secular ideology in the southern city of Sidon, and to provide an Islamic education instead. And while CSC’s mission statement, activities, and academics aim at strengthening Christian faith and teachings, IHS strives to promote Islamic values. BHS and MIC, meanwhile, stress their non-religious identities in both schools’ mission statements and in regulations applied at both institutions. This difference in the missions is particularly apparent in the mottos adopted by each school, as IHS’ slogan is “The Koran and the Sunnah,” whereas BHS’ is “I Serve,” underscoring community service and social involvement. Also in academics, different programs of study are offered at each of the four schools, whether the Lebanese, the French, the British or the American. Even the foreign languages offered, or those used in teaching mathematics and sciences, differ between French or English at each of the schools under consideration. Islamic education is a major part of the academics at IHS, and courses in religion affect the progress of students. CSC offers Christian education and its Christian students are

required to attend a mass on a weekly basis, although these religious activities do not affect the final grades students receive at the end of the year. Meanwhile, no religious education of any kind is offered at BHS, and MIC has only recently introduced Christian education in response to parental pressure as mentioned earlier in this study, but these courses remain optional. The differences between one school's orientation and another are also noticeable in offered activities, as at CSC and IHS clubs of religious nature are found, unlike at MIC or at BHS. Moreover, a church is to be found at CSC and two prayer rooms at IHS. A Friends Meeting House can be found at BHS, although it is not used for religious services but for meetings only. At MIC, however, there are no halls or buildings that have a religious character or for a spiritual motive. Another remark that should be made is that all the schools in this study have the freedom to supplement textbooks with other material to elaborate on lessons, and each of these four schools' civics teachers revealed that they refer to different sources whether with a religious emphasis like at IHS, or with an environmental or political one. As well, the four schools adopt different approaches in dealing with issues of national concern, such as civil marriage, and this difference will be discussed later in this chapter.

This comparison between the profiles of the four schools accentuates the huge difference between private educational institutions in Lebanon, and the large margin of freedom they enjoy whether in their values and activities, academics, teaching methods or even in how they explain and approach issues of national concern.

Regarding students' attitudes towards civil marriage, exploring answers obtained in the questionnaires indicate that there is a pattern in the viewpoints of participating students at each of the four schools under consideration; opinions tended to be polar. The great majority was on either side; either supportive of civil marriage, or

not. At BHS, CSC and MIC, a majority of 89.5%, 79.1% and 76.5% respectively supported civil marriage, whereas at IHS, a majority of 81.1% were against it. Hence there was no doubt that in each school, there was a majority of similar opinions on the issue under investigation. Also, the viewpoints of participating students at three of the four schools under consideration (BHS, CSC, and MIC) were similar, while IHS stood out as the only educational institution whose pupils were mostly against nonreligious unions.

In this connection, it should be recalled that BHS and MIC were two nonreligious or secular schools, while IHS and CSC were religious, the first Islamic and the second Christian. Students at the second, the Christian CSC, had opinions similar to their peers at the BHS and MIC who were mostly supportive of civil marriage, while most students studying at the Islamic IHS were totally against it. Another point to be highlighted is that the percentage of students at the Christian CSC who expressed support for civil unions, 79.1%, was higher than that at the secular MIC, 76.5%. Comparing the viewpoints of all students enrolled in the two secular schools (19 at BHS +17 at MIC = 36) with those of their peers at the two religious schools (67 at CSC + 53 at IHS = 120), it is clearly seen that those of the first, i.e. the secular schools, were noticeably more supportive of civil marriage as 83.3% endorsed it (30 of 36), while 52.5% (63 of 120) at the second, i.e. at IHS and CSC, supported nonreligious unions.

The study also attempted to explore whether the attitudes of students at the same school differ depending on their religious sects. At Brummana High School, both Muslim students and the two pupils who did not disclose their religious affiliation supported optional civil marriage. Also, the only Druze student at the school was a staunch supporter of it. Meanwhile among Christian students, 14.3% were totally

against civil marriage. It can be concluded therefore that there was more rejection of optional civil unions among Christian students than among Muslim, Druze, and among others of their schoolmates who did not reveal their sects. At CSC, both Druze students strongly supported nonreligious unions, similarly in the case of the two students who said they were atheists. As well, the only student who did not disclose his/her religious sect was a supporter of this type of marriage. Meanwhile among Christian students, 80.4% expressed that they endorsed voluntary civil marriage, while 19.6% said they were against the idea. Among Muslim students at CSC, 68.8% were in favor of civil marriage while 31.3% were not. It can be concluded that while Druze, atheists, and students who did not disclose their religious sect were all in favor of civil marriage, the responses of their Christian and Muslim schoolmates differed, with more approval of this type of union among Christians than among their Muslim peers. Both atheist students at MIC supported civil marriage. Among their Christian schoolmates, 78.6% said they supported it and 21.4% rejected it completely. Meanwhile, the only student who did not reveal their religious sect said they was totally against nonreligious ceremonies. Thus, while all atheist students at MIC were in favor of civil marriage, there were several among their Christian schoolmates who rejected it. As for IHS, the majority of students were Muslims, while seven chose not to disclose their religious sect. Among Muslim students there, only 19.6% supported civil marriage, while a majority of 80.4% said they were against it. As well, a majority of 85.7% of students whose religious sect was not revealed rejected this type of union completely, whereas only 14.3% said they supported it. We can conclude that there were more supporters of optional civil marriage among Muslim students at IHS than among these schoolmates who did not indicate their religious sect.

Regarding whether attitudes towards civil marriage differ between students enrolled in the Humanities stream, and those enrolled in the Sciences, results obtained at Brummana High School showed that 80% of students in the Humanities were supportive of this type of union, while all students in the Sciences, 100%, supported nonreligious unions. Hence at BHS, students in Sciences were more supportive of civil unions than their schoolmates in Humanities. At CSC, 82.3% of those in Humanities and 77.5% of their schoolmates in Sciences supported civil marriage, whether to a large or to a moderate extent. Thus, students in Humanities at CSC were more in favor of civil marriage than their peers in the Sciences. At IHS, 28.6% of students in Humanities and 13.7% of their schoolmates in Sciences were supportive of nonreligious unions. Therefore, students in Humanities at IHS were also more supportive of optional civil marriage than those in Sciences. At MIC, the comparison was between students enrolled in the American System and those in the Lebanese Program who were all in the Sciences stream. 83.3% of American System students and 72.8% of Lebanese Program students supported civil marriage. Hence, the support for nonreligious unions is slightly higher among American System students than among their Lebanese Program peers. In all four schools, 34 students said they were enrolled in Humanities while the majority, 98, were in Sciences. Among students in Humanities, 70.6% supported civil marriage, whether to a large or to a moderate extent, and 29.4% rejected the idea completely. Meanwhile, 60.2% of the 98 students in Sciences expressed their support for voluntary nonreligious unions, and 39.8% said they were against it. Therefore, it can be concluded that there were more supporters of optional civil marriage among students in Humanities than among their peers in Sciences.

Taking the sex of respondents into consideration, 90% of male participants at BHS said they supported optional civil marriage. Among their female peers, 85.8% expressed their large or moderate support for civil unions. Hence at BHS, the support of civil marriage was slightly higher among males than among females. At CSC, the reverse was the case, and by a large percentage, where 88.1% of female students supported civil marriage as against 62.5% of males. At MIC, all female participants were in favor of optional civil marriage, whether to a moderate or to a large extent, as compared to 72.8% for males. Hence, also at MIC, females were more supportive of voluntary civil unions. 79% of female and 81.8% of male students at IHS said they were totally against nonreligious unions. As such, females and males enrolled at IHS have similar attitudes towards optional civil marriage with females slightly more open to the issue. In total, 73 of participating students at all four schools indicated that they were females and 79 said they were males. Among females, 71.2% said they supported optional civil unions whereas among their male peers, the division was almost equal between 50.6% against and 49.4% in favor of this kind of union. Thus, we can conclude that in general, there is more support of optional civil marriage among female students participating in the study than among males.

Contrary to the author's expectations, results obtained in comparing students' answers show that their attitudes towards civil marriage did not depend exclusively on the type of school they were enrolled in, whether secular or religious. The majority of students at three of the four schools under study supported civil unions, and one of these three was a religious institution. Moreover, the support for civil marriage was higher among students of one of the religious schools than among their peers in one of the secular schools. Hence, a main conclusion of this study is that there was no clear link

between the type of school the students go to and their attitudes towards major issues of interest, civil marriage in this case.

However, despite these results, we cannot deny that the schools presented and discussed the topic of civil marriage differently, depending on their type. Teachers at both secular schools said they presented civil marriage, or would present it, objectively, by sharing the arguments raised by both its supporters and opponents, and by moderating students' free exchange of opinion. On the other hand, the civics teacher at the Christian CSC declared that he would stress the disadvantages of civil unions, the difficulties couples would face when they wed in a nonreligious ceremony, and highlight society's rejection of this type of marriage. On the other hand, the civics teacher at the Islamic IHS declared that in addition to presenting the arguments raised by society against civil marriage, she would approach the topic from an Islamic perspective and remind her students that they are Muslims, and hence should abide by religious laws in such matters. In addition to teachers' opinions, schools expose their students to the views of notable people from outside who are invited to speak to students on topics such as civil marriage. IHS invited a Sheikh to present the issue of civil marriage from an Islamic perspective, and he clearly adopted a stance of rejection to nonreligious unions, warning students of the dangers it brings to the family and society. Results obtained on students' opinions showed that a great majority of students at IHS (81.1%) were totally against civil unions.

While empirical results based on field research may not have drawn a direct link between the type of educational institution and attitudes towards the issue under consideration, we can still maintain that the general climate of the school and activities carried there did have an influence on some pupils' orientations.

Schools are clearly not alone in influencing students' attitudes and views; other factors such as family, political party, media, religious institutions, and peers do play a part (Frayha, 2002). Parents, in particular, have a significant role in influencing their kids' attitudes whether directly or indirectly, and when there is a conflict between what the schools teach and what children learn at home, home seems to be the winner (Hamade, 2001). However, schooling remains a strong factor as students spend a considerable amount of time at school for varied periods that can extend to 15 years when their beliefs are being developed (Frayha, 2002). Accordingly, schools can play a large role in shaping attitudes relating to citizenship, including attitudes regarding personal affairs such as civil marriage, or they can limit their activities to transmitting information so that students can pass exams (Frayha).

In Lebanon, many believe that schools, and education in general, have fallen short of uniting students' understanding of national issues, and in forming values inclined towards tolerance and coexistence (Frayha). Education in Lebanon seems to have strengthened sectarian divisions, giving sects a more powerful presence that overshadowed that of the state (Al-Habbal, 2011). In this regard, Bashshur (1988) concludes that the educational system in Lebanon:

... has been subservient to other forces, which have lead Lebanese society to where it is now: fractured and fragmented or, as some are beginning to say, disintegrated beyond hope of repair. Education did not stand in the way of these forces – it could not. It gave them expression, articulated them, promoted them and planted them deep in the consciousness of its recipients (p.42).

The laissez-faire approach adopted in the educational sector drives many to question the wisdom of this policy when it comes to issues of national unity. On the one hand, this laissez-faire policy safeguarded freedoms and allowed communities' to preserve and promote their identities, but on the other, the policies deprived education

from a sense of a united purpose, and of cohesion and national unity (Shahine Saleeby, 1987). As the majority of Lebanese students are enrolled in the schools of a diversified and largely sectarian private sector, some activists accused the state of abandoning its children, and handing them over to religious authorities (Alwah, 2011). Many called for focusing on reforming the public sector, which can promote a more homogeneous education. Kamal Jumblat, a Minister of Education in 1961, was among those political leaders who, early enough, had stressed the importance of the unity of the people, and the role that public education can play in this regard (Bashshur, 1978). Meanwhile, some civil society organizations tried to create platforms in which students of different backgrounds would meet and discuss shared values or causes, such as “Adyan” and MUN, which were both mentioned in Chapter IV. The belief was that these initiatives, which bring together pupils of different regions and different religious backgrounds, would make students value the similarities among them, instead of holding onto the perception of others as “strangers.” But the question remains on whether these initiatives are successful in bridging the gap between the different Lebanese communities. Perhaps, future research papers should take these examples as a focus, and study the extent to which they create harmony between the attitudes of students towards the same topic, such as civil marriage. Future studies can also focus on teaching methods applied in different private schools through personal interviews with educators as well as observation of teaching practices in class, to explore how same issues are discussed and treated in classrooms. Moreover, other dissertations can compare the attitudes of both parents and students towards the same topic, civil marriage for example, in an attempt to determine whether children’s opinions would be more

influenced by those of their families, or by the type of school and the teaching methods applied there.

Pluralistic and heterogeneous Lebanon has always been vulnerable to internal conflicts, whether between Maronites and Druze in the 19th century, Christians and Muslims in 1958, and in 1975 when a 15-year long civil war erupted (Frayha, 2003). Surely, schooling cannot take the blame alone, but considering the role that it can play in raising generations that have unified outlooks, it is about time education is given enough support to promote national unity. Future research papers could go deeper in the study of relationship between schooling and its influence on social cohesion.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Interviews

1. Chadi Nakhle, Dean of Students at Brummana High School, interview by author, 31 October, 2013, Brummana, Lebanon.
2. George Ghanem, school principal at Collège du Sacré-Coeur, interview by author, 28 November, 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
3. Iman Akoum, civics teacher at Iman High School, interview by author, 9 January, 2014, Sidon, Lebanon.
4. Kamel Kozbar, school principal at Iman High School, interview by author, 9 January, 2014, Sidon, Lebanon.
5. Manal Sammak, Vice Principal at Montana International College, interview by author, 3 December 2013, Deek al-Mehdi, Lebanon.
6. Michel Koborsi, civics teacher at Collège du Sacré-Coeur, interview by author, 8 November, 2013, Beirut, Lebanon.
7. Mona Sarkis, civics teacher at Brummana High School, interview by author, 31 October, 2013, Brummana, Lebanon.
8. Victoria Bejjani, Social Studies teacher at Montana International College, interview by author, 3 December 2013, Deek al-Mehdi, Lebanon.
9. Walid El Khoury, school principal at Brummana High School, interview by author, 31 October, 2013, Brummana, Lebanon.

Appendix B: Questions of Interviews with Schools' Principals

1. Why was it established? When and by whom?
2. Does the school have a written mission?
3. What tuition fees do you charge?
4. Is your school mixed or does it cater to boys only or girls only?
5. Do you have information on the religious make-up of students? If yes, what is it approximately?
6. Do you have information on teachers' religious make-up at your school? If yes, what is it approximately?
7. Which academic system do you follow at the school?
8. What diplomas does your school prepare the students for?
9. In case you do offer the Lebanese Baccalaureate, which fields of specialization do you have?
10. What is your main language of teaching in the school?
11. What language (s) do you use in teaching math and sciences:
 - At elementary level?
 - At brevet & baccalaureate levels?
12. In what subjects do you use Arabic and at what level?
13. What are your weekend days?
14. In addition to official holidays, do you have other days during which the school closes? If yes, what are they?
15. What occasions do you celebrate at your school? And how do you celebrate them?
16. Do you have religion classes in your curriculum? If yes: what religions do you cover and to which grades are they given? Are these classes mandatory or optional? Who gives these classes?
17. Is civics as a subject taught in your school? Is it a requirement? At what grades?

18. What are the titles of the textbooks used in teaching civics? At what grades?
19. To what extent you think your students are interested in civics?
20. What extra-curricular activities are offered at your school
21. Do you have joint activities with other schools? If yes, what activities and with which schools?
22. Do you encourage discussing issues of national importance in the classroom?
23. In case the topic of optional civil marriage came up in the classroom, how do you deal with it?
24. To what extent do you coordinate with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education? And in which regards do you follow its guidelines?
25. What is your general view on the importance of what schools in Lebanon do in relation to citizenship?

Appendix C: Questions of Interviews with Teachers of Civics

1. What textbooks do you use? In what grades? Do you like the textbooks? Do you supplement them with other material?
2. How often do you have activities or debates in your classes? What kinds of debates take place? Can you give examples please?
3. Do you find students interested in the subjects discussed? Why yes or why not?
4. What topics appear most often in discussions in the classroom?
5. Do you think students find what they study in books applies to life in Lebanon?
6. In case the topic of optional civil marriage came up in class, how do you deal with it? Do you find most students are inclined to: Agree with it? Disagree with it? Why do you think they have this attitude towards optional civil marriage?
7. What is your view on adopting optional civil marriage in Lebanon?

Appendix D: Questionnaire

General Information:

Age: _____ Field of Studies: Humanities / Sciences / Other If other, please specify: _____

Sex: ___ F / M _____ Religious sect: _____ Mother's religious sect: _____

Father's level of education: _____ Mother's level of education: _____

• **Father's occupation:**

Job title: _____

At present, your father is: Working / Not working / Retired

Sector: Public / Private / Works with an international organization

Job type: Executive or managerial / Professional / Administrative work / Sales work / Operational job / Military specific job

Employment type: Runs own large-scale business / Runs own medium or small-scale business / Employee / Free-lancer

Can you please provide a short description of the nature of you father's job? (Duties, location, employees under his supervision)

• **Mother's occupation:**

Job title: _____ At present, your mother is: Working / Not working / Retired

Sector: Public / Private / Works with an international organization

Job type: Executive or managerial / Professional / Administrative work / Sales work / Operational job / Military specific jobs

Employment type: Runs own large-scale business / Runs own medium or small-scale business / Employee / Free-lancer

Can you please provide a short description of the nature of you mother's job? (Duties, location, employees under her supervision)

How many years have you been in your current school? _____

Kindly, answer the following questions by circling the option that is closest to your response:

1. Are you involved in any extra-curricular activity?

<p>• In school?</p> <p>Yes No</p>	<p>• Outside school?</p> <p>Yes No</p>
<p>In case your answer to the previous question was “yes”, please select the type of activities you are involved in school: (you may select more than one type):</p> <p>Religious clubs or activities</p> <p>Academic activities</p> <p>Artistic and cultural activities</p> <p>Social activities (Ex: Volunteer work, involved with NGOs...)</p> <p>Sports clubs or activities</p> <p>Scout</p> <p>Other types of activities: _____</p>	<p>In case your answer to the previous question was “yes”, please select the type of activities you are involved in outside the school: (you may select more than one type)</p> <p>Religious clubs or activities</p> <p>Academic activities</p> <p>Artistic and cultural activities</p> <p>Social activities (Ex: Volunteer work, involved with NGOs...)</p> <p>Sports clubs or activities</p> <p>Scout</p> <p>Other types of activities: _____</p>

2. How do you describe the religious atmosphere in your family?
- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Very religious | Moderately religious | Believers but not-practicing | Not religious / Secular |
|----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
3. To what extent you think your family's life style is affected by religion?
- | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Very much | Moderately | Not at all |
|-----------|------------|------------|
4. Have you taken before or are you currently taking a course in civics in school?
- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
5. In case your answer to the previous question was "yes", to what extent you think that course has helped you to:
- | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| • Understand civic issues better | Very much | Moderately | Not at all |
| • Become a more law abiding citizen | Very much | Moderately | Not at all |
| • Become more tolerant towards others | Very much | Moderately | Not at all |
| • Become more patriotic | Very much | Moderately | Not at all |
| • Become more respectful of the government | Very much | Moderately | Not at all |

Please explain the reasons for your answers to the previous question:

6. Was optional civil marriage ever discussed in class in your school?

Yes No Very few times

7. In case your answer to the previous question was “yes” or “very few times”, please describe what happened:

- A. The topic was quickly ended
- B. The view on optional civil marriage was dictated by the teacher
- C. A free exchange of opinion among students was allowed and the majority were for it
- D. A free exchange of opinion among students was allowed and the majority were against it
- E. A lot of discussion took place but no conclusion was reached

8. Keeping in mind your answer to the previous question, to what extent was your own opinion affected by:

- The teacher's point of view: To a large extent To a moderate extent To a little extent Not affected at all
- Other students in class: To a large extent To a moderate extent To a little extent Not affected at all

9. Do you follow the news about civil marriage in Lebanon?

Yes , a lot Not at all Sometimes, a little bit

In few lines, can you give a brief summary of your own views on optional civil marriage?

10. Which authority you believe should be in charge of handling personal affairs, like marriage, in Lebanon?

Religious authorities Civil courts only Both

Please explain your answer:

11. To what extent do you find yourself in support of optional civil marriage?

Support it to a large extent Support it moderately I do not support it at all

Please explain your previous answer:

12. Would you consider marrying in a civil union in the future?

Yes No

Please explain your answer:
