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'Not like those Lebs': intra-ethnic distinction and conditional citizenship in regional Australia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how Lebanese Muslims in the regional Australian city of Wollongong navigate conditional citizenship through intra-ethnic distinction. Drawing on 38 semi-structured interviews with participants spanning four generations of migrants from the southern Lebanese village of Marj el-Zhour, this study illustrates how they distinguish themselves from the stigma attached to Lebanese Muslims in Western Sydney. Building on the work of Bourdieu, Rosaldo, Derrida, and Fanon, the analysis develops a framework conceptualising four interrelated dimensions of conditional citizenship – social, cultural, discursive, and psychological – to examine how everyday practices of intra-ethnic distinction are mobilised across generations. Although regional settlement is promoted as a pathway to inclusion, participants described heightened cultural visibility, self-regulation, and feelings of exclusion. This study contributes to debates on cultural citizenship and everyday multiculturalism, highlighting how conditionality is negotiated not only between ethnic groups but also within them.

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Introduction

Muslim communities across Australia, Europe, and North America¹ have increasingly been framed through suspicion and securitisation, with full membership made conditional on continuous demonstrations of loyalty (Humphrey 2013, 2016). In Australia, Lebanese Muslims have been particularly stigmatised and marked as the most visible Muslim ethnic group (Abdel-Fattah 2016). Public debate has been shaped both by global narratives of Muslim threat and local portrayals of Lebanese communities in Western Sydney as criminal and deviant (Tabar, Noble, and Poyting 2018). Meanwhile, regional settlement is often promoted as a policy solution to urban clustering, but for minorities already stigmatised in national discourse it can amplify visibility and exclusion (Alexander, Rivera, and Wickes 2025). This paper examines that tension by analysing how Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong navigate conditional citizenship through intra-ethnic distinction within the politics of everyday multiculturalism in regional Australia.

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Since the 1970s Australian governments have oscillated between securitised and neo-liberal variants of multiculturalism, tolerating diversity only when tied to productivity and loyalty (Elder 2007; Humphrey 2013). Although multiculturalism is officially premised on unity in diversity, it operates within a persistent tension. On the one hand, multiculturalism promotes ideals of cultural egalitarianism and acceptance of difference (Arocena 2014, 57). On the other hand, it obscures the structural inequalities that shape access to resources in a nation-state (Turner 1993, 262–275). In a multicultural nation, the unequal distribution of resources and the social mobility available to those more easily able to acquire them – by resources I mean the economic, social, and cultural capital available in any given social field (Bourdieu 1986) – renders full citizenship harder to access for those outside the dominant culture of the nation-state. Historically, and in the politically conservative circles in contemporary Australia, this dominant culture has been perceived as Anglo-Celtic and as a derivative and extension of the dominant British imperial culture of yesteryear (Johnson 2002, 177–180). Everyday multiculturalism examines this tension in a multicultural nation by exploring how lived spaces of daily life are shaped by interaction, adaptation, conviviality, and sometimes avoidance (Wise and Velayutham 2009). Intra-ethnic distinction is one such strategy mobilised by minority communities to negotiate conditional citizenship within these everyday spaces of multicultural life (de Guzman and Garcia 2018; Mallet and Pinto-Coelho 2018; Vacca, Cañarte, and Vitale 2021).

Migration and settlement policies in Australia have been influenced by globalisation and changes in local, national, and international social, economic, and political environments. In recent years, Muslims living in the West have increasingly had their citizenship questioned on the grounds of security and the threat presented by international terrorism (Humphrey 2007, 2013). In Australia, Lebanese Muslim communities have been especially stigmatised in the national imaginary and marked as the most visible Muslim ethnic group in Australian society (Abdel-Fattah 2016). Today, 248,430 Australians report Lebanese ancestry, with 69 percent living in Sydney (ABS 2021). This concentration has resulted in most public and academic attention focusing on Lebanese Australians in Western Sydney, who have often been portrayed as marginalised, criminal, and culturally incompatible (Tabar, Noble, and Poynting 2018). Over time, this has led the categories of ‘Lebanese’ and ‘Muslim’ to become entangled in Australian public discourse, fusing ethnic, cultural, and religious difference into a symbol of failed multiculturalism.

Stigmatisation of Lebanese Muslims in Australia has occurred through successive waves of moral panic. In the 1980s, they were framed as welfare-dependent (Humphrey 1984); in the 1990s, as criminal (Collins et al. 2000); and by the 2000s, as linked to terrorism (Poynting et al. 2004). These narratives culminated in the 2005 Cronulla Race Riots, where over 5,000 mostly white men attacked those perceived as Middle Eastern in Sydney’s south. Text messages urging ‘Leb and Wog bashing day’ and ‘let’s kill these boys’ which incited the violence were broadcast by Australia’s highest-rated radio host, Alan Jones, and reprinted in Australia’s most-read newspapers (Poynting 2006). A decade later, then Immigration Minister Peter Dutton reignited this discourse, calling Lebanese Muslim migration a ‘mistake’ by citing terrorism charges against second- and third-generation Lebanese Australians, implicitly framing them as a failed migrant group unable to assimilate (McIlroy 2016). These dynamics intensified during

the COVID-19 pandemic, as Lebanese communities in Western Sydney were disproportionately impacted by communication failures, inadequate government support, and targeted misinformation, highlighting deeper patterns of racialised neglect and infrastructural inequality (Mamalipurath and Notley 2022). Such events not only shape public discourse but mark Lebanese Muslim Australians across generations as hypervisible and disposable.

Although rooted in local histories, these dynamics echo global patterns in the governance of Muslims as security threats following 9/11. Humphrey (2013) described how these global discourses resulted in an environment of conditional multiculturalism in Australia, whereby the debate about Muslim difference in Australia and throughout the West shifted from a discussion about cultural compatibility to a politics of national loyalty. In this context, Muslim identity became a floating signifier of deviance, mobilised through what Humphrey (2004) terms ‘nomadic media events’; highly visible, decontextualised incidents that sustain Islamophobic sentiment. In this climate, Muslim citizenship is increasingly conditional on performances of loyalty, civility, and distance from perceived extremism, requiring Muslims to minimise visible markers of cultural or religious identity – i.e. become culturally invisible (Humphrey 2016). The 2017 ‘Muslim ban’ under U.S. President Donald Trump exemplified the codification of such narratives in state policy (Gökarıksel 2017). Then, in the United Kingdom in 2024, over 100 far-right and nationalist groups staged six days of race riots, drawing tens of thousands of participants targeting Muslim and migrant communities (Godshaw and Singleton 2025). Widely broadcast through international media, such events become globalised spectacles that reinforce the Muslim-as-threat narrative. These transnational dynamics shape how Muslimness is imagined, governed, and policed throughout the West, including in Australia. Mr Dutton went on to lead the Liberal Party of Australia (one of Australia’s two major parties) and launch a 2025 prime ministerial bid, warning that if the opposing government were elected, ‘it would include Muslim candidates from Western Sydney. It will be a disaster’ (Yosufzai 2024). In this paper, I focus on Lebanese Muslim migrants from the southern Lebanese village of Marj el-Zhour living in Wollongong. This group, though relatively small, offers a critical vantage point for understanding how global and national discourses coalesce in everyday localised experiences of conditional citizenship in regional settings.

A regional case study: Wollongong

Wollongong is a regional city approximately 70 kilometres south of Sydney. It is characterised by its coastal setting, working-class heritage, and long history of heavy industry and organised labour. The first migrants from the southern Lebanese village of Marj el-Zhour arrived in the late 1960s, drawn by Wollongong’s growing coal and steelworks industry. At the time, Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) had heavily invested in the region, and by the early 1970s 44% of the local workforce was employed in coal or steel manufacturing (Burrows 2012, 55). Between 1961 and 1975 one in four steelworkers in Wollongong was a migrant (Rittau 2001, 75). Its combination of industrial employment and affordable housing made it a key destination for post-World War Two migrants, shaping a diverse regional identity distinct from Sydney’s and Melbourne’s metropolitan multiculturalism (Eklund 2002).

According to the 2021 Census, Lebanese Muslims make up a small minority in the Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA), with 0.7 percent reporting Lebanese ancestry and 1.8 percent identifying as Muslim (ABS 2021). This contrasts sharply with the significantly more concentrated Lebanese and Muslim populations in the suburbs of Western Sydney LGAs such as Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland, where over one-third of residents claim Lebanese ancestry and more than one in five identify as Muslim (ABS 2021). It is precisely this demographic thinness that makes Wollongong a critical site for analysis. In contexts where community density is low and cultural institutions are sparse, minority populations must navigate the politics of everyday multiculturalism without the support of other migrants from culturally different communities (Forbes-Mewett, Hegarty, and Wickes 2021). Wollongong is not only smaller but also typifies regions where national identity and Anglo-Celtic ‘Australianness’ dominate (Abdel-Fattah 2016). Therefore, this article examines how Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong negotiate their conditional citizenship through intra-ethnic distinction. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to debates on citizenship, cultural visibility, and Muslim minority experiences in regional settings.

Theoretical framework: the four dimensions of conditional citizenship

This paper synthesises four theoretical perspectives to conceptualise the social, cultural, discursive, and psychological dimensions of conditional citizenship among Lebanese Muslims in Australia. I apply the sociological framework of Pierre Bourdieu to conceptualise the socialisation of migrants in the Australian national social space. I turn to the work of Renato Rosaldo to examine how migrant social distance is produced through a cultural lens to differentiate citizenship within this space. I then draw on Jacques Derrida and Frantz Fanon, using the concepts of *trace*, *sous rature* [under-erasure], and *imago* to illustrate how migrants both shape and are shaped by the resignification and internalisation of conditionality.

Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology highlights how individuals and groups both internalise external structures and (re)produce them within the confines of a socially and culturally constituted national social space (Bourdieu [[2012]] 2014, 22). The concept of *illusio* can be used to understand how nation-building projects guide the reproduction of this national social space – i.e. a national *illusio* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 116). *Illusio* captures how people invest in the ‘game’ of the national social space and the belief that its rewards are worth striving for and attainable if one plays by the rules (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 116). In Australia, this takes the form of a meritocratic national *illusio*, premised on the idea that success is open to all through hard work, education, and civic participation (Elder 2007). Yet this promise is uneven. While migrants may commit to the national *illusio*, their efforts are also evaluated through Anglo-Celtic norms that determine which habitus and forms of capital are recognised as legitimate in the nationalising fields of the national social space (Hage 1998).

Bourdieu ([1980] 1990) conceptualises habitus as the embodied dispositions through which people both reproduce and potentially reshape dominant norms. An individual’s habitus is constituted through the accumulation and enactment of capital – economic, cultural, social, and symbolic – which positions them within nationalising fields (Bourdieu 1987). Migrants often find themselves marginal in these social spaces because they

lack the forms of capital recognised as legitimate (Reed-Danahay 2017). In this sense, the ability to gain full citizenship depends not only on formal citizenship but on demonstrating commitment to the *national illusio* through the acquisition and performance of valued capital.

Citizenship has traditionally encompassed civic, social, and political rights (Marshall [[1950]] 1987), but in the context of globalisation and postcolonial migration, cultural citizenship is argued to be the primary vehicle for inclusion (Stevenson 2001). Rosaldo (1994, 403) defines cultural citizenship as ‘the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense’, describing how inclusion can often be predicated on conformity to dominant norms. Therefore, while the state classifies migrants through formal categories – from temporary visas to full citizenship – the national *illusio* imposes informal criteria that shape cultural citizenship (Beaman 2016). Renato Rosaldo (1994) offers a critical framework for understanding how migrant citizenship is structured through this cultural proximity to the dominant group in the national social space. He explains that ‘full citizenship and cultural visibility appear to be inversely related ... Full citizens lack culture, and those most culturally endowed lack full citizenship’ (Rosaldo 1994, 198). What this means for those not of the dominant culture is that their social mobility is linked to their cultural visibility, and this visibility is then used to evaluate their perceived fulfilment of the national *illusio*. In Australia, the nation-building project was historically conceived as White Australia, which meant the reproduction of a national *illusio* that preserved the dominance of Anglo-Celtic culture while ensuring the cultural visibility and therefore distance from full citizenship for those who were not Anglo-Celtic (Hage 2003). Rosaldo (1994, 200) explains this predicament by conceptualising the process of social hierarchies and social mobility as a social ladder: ‘although individuals or social groups may move upward or downward, the rungs of the social ladder remain unchanging’. That is, the social ladder determines a migrant’s visibility, and this visibility is used to constantly recategorise and reclassify them as fundamentally different, positioning them as socially distant from those in positions of knowledge and power within the national social space.

A migrant’s cultural visibility engenders a condition in which the proverbial ‘goal posts’ required for social acceptance – the capital which enables one to enact a habitus capable of climbing the social ladder – are continually shifted. Jacques Derrida’s ([[1967]] 2001; [[1976]] 1994) concepts of *trace* and *sous rature* help illuminate how migrants remain stuck in their original social and cultural location as culturally visible and therefore distant from full citizenship. I examine how the trace of this social classification persists in a state of *sous rature*, causing continued reclassification and repositioning of migrants on the rungs of the social ladder. Derrida theorises that a trace of that which is signified stays within every subsequent reinterpretation. Namely, migrants may be placed in a position of reduced visibility and gain a level of exceptionalism for their cultural difference which enables them to climb the social ladder. Yet a trace of their initial classification always remains, positioning them as the culturally different migrant within the national social space. In this paper, I show how for Lebanese Muslims in Australia, this trace cements their discursive position as conditional citizens: under-erasure, never fully erased, and always subject to reclassification. As Derrida ([[1972]] 1981, 253) notes, signs operate within a ‘finite ensemble’ of substitutions; so too does cultural visibility serve as a sign continually reinscribed within the national

social space. The conditional citizen is therefore positioned as ambiguous, *a stranger*, whose commitment to the national *illusio* is never beyond question.

The *trace* operates within the nationalising fields to position citizens in relation to the forms of power and knowledge in the national social space. The habitus constituted within these fields is therefore reproduced bearing the trace. Exploring such processes of internalisation, Frantz Fanon ([1952] 2008, 42–43) used the concept *imago* to describe the way in which Black French men were shaped by their experiences of racial discrimination and prejudice in colonial France. I employ Fanon's ([1952] 2008, 139–141) conceptualisation of an *imago* – as a form of neurosis – to understand how individuals positioned in a national social space are classified and categorised in a process of individual auto-legitimation. Namely, citizens of a nation-state internalise classifications of belonging through an *imago* which defines the full citizen and conditional citizen. The former is the citizen of the dominant culture who is culturally invisible. Therefore, their *imago* reaffirms their rights as full citizens within the national social space. The latter is the ever culturally visible, the conditional citizen, who is both reminded of their position in the national social space by others, and through the internalisation of the *imago*, they also position themselves. In this way, the auto-legitimation of cultural classifications shapes the everyday social practices of citizens within the national social space.

These theoretical perspectives are brought together to construct a framework that captures the social, cultural, discursive, and psychological dimensions of conditional citizenship for Lebanese Muslim migrants in Australia. Bourdieu offers insight into how migrants navigate and are positioned in the national social space. Rosaldo adds the dimension of cultural citizenship, where visibility may undermine full inclusion. Derrida's notions of *trace* and *sous rature* allow us to examine how migrant identity remains marked by persistent otherness in national discourses of (un)belonging, while Fanon's *imago* highlights how these traces are internalised. These frameworks provide a critical lens on how these dynamics are transmitted across generations, sustaining a diasporic condition (Hage 2021), where conditional citizenship is negotiated not only individually but collectively through family memory and intergenerational narratives. Importantly, this theoretical framework does not position migrants as powerless victims, constantly reproducing the conditionality of their citizenship, but emphasises their agency in exercising intra-ethnic distinction to negotiate and reshape their position within the national social space.

Methods

Study design

This paper presents findings from one component of a larger project, *Abnaa'u Marj el-Zhour: Lebanese Migration and Citizenship in Wollongong*. This project consisted of 38 semi-structured biographical interviews with four generations of Lebanese Muslims, aged between 18 and 86, from the village of Marj el-Zhour living in Wollongong, Australia (Table 1). Grounded theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007) was used to enable data collection and analysis to proceed iteratively. Initial interview findings shaped subsequent interviews, and emerging themes shaped both the adaptation of methods and the analysis.

Table 1. Participant distribution by generation and gender.

Generation	Man	Woman	Total
First generation	4	9	13
Second generation	7	9	16
Third generation	3	4	7
Fourth generation	1	1	2
Total	15	23	38

Researcher positionality

All interviews were conducted by the author, who has a Lebanese Muslim background and was raised in Wollongong. While not from the Marj el-Zhour community, I was familiar with many participants through longstanding community ties. I also shared a distinctive Lebanese-English bilingualism, which enabled interviews to shift between languages and facilitated mutual understanding of hybrid words or phrases. This positioned me as both an insider and outsider: ‘familiar yet strange’ (Allen 2004). Participants frequently referenced this ambiguity, explaining that they could trust me both because I was Lebanese (‘you’re one of us’) and because I was not from their specific village (‘you wouldn’t know the politics’). This dual positioning allowed trust around sensitive personal memories and emotions, while still being able to ask critical questions.

Sample and recruitment

The Marj el-Zhour community in Australia comprises nine extended family groups living in Wollongong. Recruitment began with three participants I had known since childhood, who acted as ‘gatekeepers’ (Kawulic 2011), spreading word of the project through kin networks. This snowball sampling technique enabled recruitment of participants across all nine extended families, producing a diverse sample that spanned four generations (see Table 1).

Data collection

Interviews were conducted between January and August 2018 in participants’ homes, most often around the family dining table. While some were one-on-one interviews, many evolved into multi-generational focus groups, with up to seven family members present. The presence of multiple generations often sparked debate, particularly between first- and second-generation participants over the hardships of migration, or between second-, third-, and fourth-generation participants over questions of privilege and opportunity. While this dynamic occasionally limited disclosure of sensitive information, it more often enriched the data by capturing how conditionality was negotiated across generations.

Semi-structured interviews followed a life-history approach which encouraged participants to reflect on their past, present, and imagined futures. This method positioned participants as active agents in the research process, allowing them to narrate their lives on their own terms (Jesse 2019). Following the first three interviews, it became clear that participants frequently referenced significant local, national, and international political events that shaped their experiences. For example, the second-generation narrated schooling in the 1990s during moral panics about crime, and the third-generation

recalled being stereotyped as ‘terrorists’ in the 2000s. In response, I adapted the interview guide to include a non-fictional vignette-based approach (Sampson and Johannessen 2020), where I asked participants to reflect on real-life events previously identified by others in the community as significant – e.g. Cronulla Race Riots. These vignettes offered snapshots of lived experiences at different moments in time which could be analysed collectively and individually to understand how these events were experienced and remembered within the community.

Data analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and where necessary translated from Lebanese Arabic into English by the bilingual author. NVivo was used to manage the data, which was analysed thematically following a grounded approach (Liamputtong 2013). Initial coding organised transcripts chronologically as life histories and subsequent coding identified recurring concepts and experiences across families and generations. Vignettes served as anchor points, enabling comparison of how different generations narrated the same event. Themes were then refined in relation to four dimensions of conditional citizenship – discursive, psychological, social, and cultural – expressed through three interrelated themes: (1) the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim, which encompassed discursive stigma and its psychological internalisation; (2) the Lebanese ethnic field, describing the social dimension; and (3) embodied and linguistic capital, illustrating the cultural dimension. Thematic saturation was reached once narratives across participants converged, particularly around shared life-stage experiences (e.g. high school) and highly mediated external events (e.g. 9/11). This process constructed not only individual life-histories but also family narratives and intergenerational trajectories. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee, and all names used are pseudonyms.

Results

The Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim

Here I examine the discursive dimension of conditional citizenship, in which public stereotypes and media narratives continually marked young Lebanese Muslim men in Wollongong as criminal and threatening, regardless of their actions. Much of this stigmatisation was driven by events in Western Sydney involving Lebanese migrant communities who settled there in the 1970s and 1980s (Poynting et al. 2004). I describe how participants experienced this stigma first through the association of ‘Lebanese’ with crime in the 1990s, second through the association of all Muslims with terrorism in the 2000s, and third through the fusion of these prejudices into the discursive figure of the ‘Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim’,² imagined as dangerous, unassimilable, and sexually violent.

Kamal, a 43-year-old second-generation man, who attended high school in the late 1990s and early 2000s, recalled:

Everyone thought we were gangsters ... even the teachers treated us like criminals. If something got stolen ... the Leb boys were instantly blamed.

Although Kamal had never engaged in violence, he was regularly profiled. Over time, he and others began to perform the stereotype defensively:

We started acting like gangsters ... let them think we're something we're not if it makes them leave us alone.

He even fabricated ties to Sydney to project deterrence:

I'd say I had a cousin in Bankstown (Western Sydney suburb), I never had to do anything with them, but I never got into a fight.

While the 'gangster' image offered temporary protection, its meaning darkened following 9/11 and the gang rape trials involving the Skaf brothers, Lebanese Muslims from Western Sydney. The Lebanese Muslim man in Australian national discourse came to signify not only criminality but also terrorism and sexual predation (Grewal 2016). This process reflects what Ahmed (2004) describes as an *affective economy*, in which emotions such as fear and hatred circulate socially and attach themselves to particular figures. In this case, the 'Lebanese Muslim man' became a concentration of collective anxieties, his body transformed into a potential site of criminality, terrorism, and sexual threat. Writing in one of Australia's most-read newspapers during the early-2000s trials of the gang rapists, Miranda Devine (2002) justified the collective persecution of the Lebanese community:

Yes, it is unfair that the vast bulk of law-abiding Lebanese Muslim boys and men should be smeared by association. But their temporary discomfort may be necessary so that the powerful social tool of shame is applied to the families and communities that nurtured rapists, gave them succour, and brought them up with such a hatred of *Australia's dominant culture* and contempt for its women. (emphasis added)

It is important to note that Australia's *dominant* Anglo-Celtic culture is one positioned in direct opposition to Lebanese culture. This opposition exemplifies the cultural distance and permanent visibility attributed to those identified with the field of Lebanese ethnicity in Australia's national social space. All the men I spoke to about the Lebanese gang rape trials found it disturbing and became very animated when discussing the topic during interviews. They were aggrieved that they would be called rapists because of their ethnicity and strongly believed that the Skaf rape trials have had and continue to have a strong prejudicial effect on their lives.

Tareq, a 30-year-old second-generation man, who was in high school in the late 1990s and early 2000s, recalled how the discourse of the Lebanese gangster and rapist merged, creating an assumption about Lebanese boys:

'If you ran into a Leb, he was either going to jump you or rape you'.

Mustafa, a 33-year-old second-generation man, at high school in the early 2000s, described how this stereotype of Lebanese boys as sexual criminals led directly to his stigmatisation:

That Skaf stuff ruined us ... My friends had to vouch for me at parties. Like I was dangerous to be around girls.

To escape this scrutiny, some resorted to erasing visible markers of identity. Jamal a 35-year-old second-generation man, adopted an Anglo-Celtic name:

Around the Skaf stuff, we'd be at a party ... I would just call myself Jim. We'd say no, we're Wollongong Lebanese, we're completely different to the Sydney Lebanese, but the damage was done, they didn't want anything to do with us, we were still Lebos.

While Jamal explains that he anglicised his name to mask his Lebanese ethnicity, his experience also illustrates how the Lebanese Muslims growing up in Wollongong could not erase the *trace* of criminality and sexual violence attached to their Lebanese ethnicity. They were still 'Lebos',³ and the trace of their essentialised cultural difference endured as *sous rature*.

Hamid, a 34-year-old second-generation man, also in high school at the time, recalled how the discourse that associated Muslims with terrorists following the events of 9/11 compounded the racialisation he already experienced:

I always felt I had to prove I wasn't like that ... Then 9/11 happened and everyone was like, 'hey terrorist', even the teachers.

For some Lebanese Muslim men, these experiences of stigmatisation did not end in the classroom but left enduring imprints as a psychological dimension of their conditional citizenship. Fanon's concept of the *imago* is useful here to understand how the internalisation of a racialised figure structures self-perception. Fanon writes of a Black medical student who fantasises about leading white soldiers as retribution for being denied recognition:

'What he wants ... is for the other to be afraid ... to make the other feel the same trembling, the same humiliation. In short ... he wants to make the other afraid of him. In this way he would be avenged for the *imago* that had always obsessed him: the frightened, humiliated nigger trembling in front of the white master' (Fanon [[1952]] 2008, pp. 42-43).

This trembling figure echoes in the story of Bilaal, a 44-year-old second-generation man and now a successful entrepreneur. He recalled how, as a teenager in Wollongong, a teacher sneered, leaning over him with hands raised like prison bars:

That's how I'll see you behind bars in 20 years, he said to me.

At high school graduation, Bilaal was further mocked and awarded 'Terrorist of the Year', commemorated with a plastic toy gun he keeps.⁴ The object, he explained, is a reminder of what he was made to represent: the discursive figure of the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim who is violent, untrustworthy, and disposable. Years later, Bilaal explained how he fired a former Anglo foreman who had racially abused his father. He recounted the moment with quiet satisfaction, 'Pack up your things and go home ... My dad said you're sacked'. Bilal further explained that owning a luxury sports car meant that 'now when I drive around, those people will know it's me'.

There are many similarities between Bilaal's experiences of discrimination and the Black medical student in Fanon's narrative. One is reminded of the 'frightened, humiliated nigger trembling in front of the white master' when imagining Bilaal in a high school classroom with the teacher taunting him, or the humiliation of receiving such an award in front of his peers. Like Fanon's example, Bilaal's later success becomes a form of symbolic reversal, a demand for recognition laced with the desire to reverse the gaze. Yet this desire remains connected to the *imago*: the racialised trace of humiliation embodied in the toy gun and the luxury sports car that structures his need to prove

himself. On the one hand, this *imago* ignited an intense drive to fulfil the national *illusio* (i.e. work hard and succeed); on the other hand, its persistence reinforced the very positionality he was attempting to escape. It is a way in which the psychological dimension of his conditional citizenship persists through a process of auto-legitimation, whereby Bilaal is both reminded of his position in the national social space by others and, through the internalisation of the *imago*, continues to position himself.

Bilaal's account highlights how the *imago*, like Derrida's trace, persists as a marker of conditional citizenship: never fully erased, always subject to re-inscription. Mustafa, a 19-year-old third-generation man, explained how the discursive construction of Lebanese and Muslims was not unique and that he could not see how he or other Lebanese, Muslim, or people of Middle-Eastern background could ever overcome the indelible trace of their essentialised cultural difference in a Western nation, 'You'll always be different', he explained:

I'm a realist. Some things to me are black and white. My best friend, he'd look at me and say, 'at the end of the day, you have different names, you speak and dress different, you look different' ... He said, 'Look how Muslims are treated in Europe, you will be the terrorists always, there'll always be that difference you know'. So, it will always be there. I will never be accepted.

As a third-generation Australian, growing up more than two decades after earlier migrants, Mustafa's exclamation that he will 'never be accepted' reflects his awareness of the enduring trace of the discursive figure of the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim. It is the *trace* of this Other that Mustafa believes will prevent him from achieving cultural invisibility and therefore he concedes that he will remain a perpetually conditional member of Australian society. He also explains how having different markers of cultural capital in ethnic dress and speech, and embodied forms of symbolic capital in ethnic names and appearance, signify one's cultural visibility.

The accounts of young Lebanese Muslim men growing up in Wollongong highlight the inescapability of the discursive dimension of conditional citizenship, where their identities were continually marked by the discursive figure of the *Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim* and the enduring trace (*sous rature*) of criminality it carries. At the same time, their narratives illustrate a psychological dimension of conditionality: the internalisation of stigma, the negotiation of fear and shame, and the persistent need to prove distance from this figure. Second-generation men described how the stigma of criminality and terrorism defined their schooling in the 1990s and 2000s, while third-generation participants recalled being stereotyped as 'terrorists' and expressed their resignation at embodying the trace of indelible cultural difference more than two decades later. Together, these processes illustrate how Lebanese Muslims living in Wollongong remain entangled in a national imaginary that fuses ethnicity and religion with threat, gendered violence, and illegitimacy. In response, they sought to valorise their Lebanese identity by positioning themselves within an alternative social field – the Wollongong Lebanese ethnic field – defined precisely by its distinction from the discourse of the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim.

The Lebanese ethnic field and intra-ethnic distinction

The social dimension of conditional citizenship emerged as participants defined themselves against Western Sydney Lebanese through their socialisation and everyday

practices of intra-ethnic distinction. Participants used the Arabic term *trubur* (upbringing) to describe how one becomes Lebanese through socialisation, values, and everyday practice. For Lebanese migrants and their descendants in Wollongong, *trubur* captured a sense of embodied difference from Lebanese communities in Western Sydney, thereby positioning them in their own Lebanese ethnic field in the Australian national social space. Tabar (2010, 166–173) conceptualised an ethnic habitus to trace the (re)production and deployment of Lebaneseness in the field of White Australia. In the following section, I use the expression *trubur* to understand the heterogeneous identification with and enactment of an ethnic Lebanese habitus.

Living in a regional city with fewer Lebanese, participants described being ‘forced to mix’ with diverse groups as both a positive and negative experience, contrasting this with the perceived social enclosure of Western Sydney’s dense Lebanese communities. Hassan, a third-generation 27-year-old man, explained:

I had Australian people around me as a kid ... My *trubur* was different.

Mohamed, a fourth-generation 19-year-old man, echoed this experience:

There’s a massive divide ... just the way we were brought up, our *trubur*, it is different.

Participants also saw Wollongong’s diasporic network as more village-oriented and cohesive. Rajat, a third-generation 42-year-old woman noted:

We’re always with people from the village ... My cousins in Sydney don’t have that.

Fadia, a third-generation 38-year-old woman, reflected:

They’re not as laid-back but more traditional ... Here, we grew up with everybody. *Trubayna* [verb of *trubur*] differently.

These contrasts extended to schooling. Amani, a fourth-generation 19-year-old woman, recalled being the only Lebanese student in her primary school, while she said in Western Sydney, ‘the whole school is Lebanese’. Khaled, a 78-year-old first-generation man, observed:

My grandkids have friends from everywhere ... Not like my brothers in Greenacre, they only have Lebanese.

However, this regional openness came at a cost. Many felt hyper-visible and isolated in school settings. Omar, a 41-year-old second-generation man who was the only Lebanese at his high school in the late 1980s, explained:

No way they would treat us like this if there were other Lebs ... In Lakemba [Western Sydney suburb], if a teacher did that [used ethnic slurs], there would be riots.

Others echoed the experience of exclusion. Amira, a second-generation 33-year-old woman said:

We were marginalised here because we were low in numbers ... easy targets.

Yet, some framed this marginality as cultivating cultural adaptability. Fatima, a second-generation 31-year-old woman, saw it as a benefit:

Growing up with Australian, Macedonian, and Portuguese kids makes you think differently.

Alisar, a third-generation 21-year-old woman, added:

You're forced to mix.

Many described experiencing this everyday multiculturalism as shaping a more open, tolerant Lebanese identity. Fatima summed it up:

I think I'm more accepting, more aware of other people's cultures ... It's definitely a positive.

This distinctiveness was also moralised. Zouhair, a third-generation 24-year-old man who has lived in both regions, said:

What's the difference? Most of them guys are dickheads ... We were brought-up respecting everyone because we had to.

Although Zouhair criticises stereotypes, his framing paradoxically reproduces the discourse of the *Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim*, drawing on familiar tropes of ghettoisation and cultural isolation (Al-Natour 2015). Participants' continuous assertion that their *trubur* was 'different' signals not only the (from their perspective) more multicultural regional setting in which they grew up, but also an intra-ethnic distinction from the national discourse that marks Lebanese Muslims as criminal or insular. This distinction was narrated by first-generation grandparents and second-generation parents as a protective resource for their children, while later generations described it as an ordinary part of their upbringing. In both cases, difference was articulated through a habitus associated with the Lebanese ethnic field in Australia, defined in contrast to the imagined 'other' Lebanese of Western Sydney. This intra-ethnic distinction demonstrates the social dimension of conditional citizenship: it was negotiated not only in relation to the dominant Anglo-Celtic majority but also through positioning within Lebanese communities themselves. By marking their *trubur* as different, participants sought to reduce their cultural visibility and claim greater legitimacy. Yet, it is this same intra-ethnic distinction that reproduces the very hierarchies of visibility and exclusion that condition their social location in the Australian national social space. The next section shows how this social positioning is performed through cultural practices – dress, comportment, and speech – that convert distinction into embodied and linguistic capital.

Embodied and linguistic capital

The cultural dimension of conditional citizenship emerged most clearly through embodied and linguistic practices of intra-ethnic distinction. Participants sought to minimise their cultural visibility and proximity to the markers of full citizenship by distancing themselves from the discursive figure of the *Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim* which was geographically tied to Western Sydney Lebanese, who are predominantly from the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. By contrast, the Wollongong Lebanese, tracing their roots to a southern village, sought to valorise their own *trubur* by cultivating alternative forms of embodied cultural capital, positioning themselves within a different subfield of Lebanese ethnicity.

Tabar (2007) conceptualises the figure of the *Habiib* to describe the symbolic capital attached to a certain way of being Lebanese within the Lebanese ethnic field of Western

Sydney. Tabar (2007, 166) explains, ‘*Habiibs* were obsessed with ‘grabbing girls attention’, ‘hotted up cars’ and loud music, and have their own style of dress and a peculiar way of talking’. The Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong are aware of the figure of the *Habiib* and identify this particular way of doing Lebaneseness as behaving like a ‘*Lebo*’. Therefore, if *Habiib* is the noun used to identify the symbolic capital within the field of Lebanese ethnicity in Australia, *Lebo* is the verb used to describe the social actions and cultural practices of being a *Habiib*: i.e. how one *performs* their Lebaneseness. By distancing themselves from a *Lebo* habitus, the Lebanese in Wollongong seek to reposition themselves and other migrants who share their cultural and geographical location in a subfield of Lebanese ethnicity in Wollongong.

Mariam, a second-generation woman aged 42, articulated these contrasts through bodily comportment:

They’re brought up differently ... the way they talk, the way they carry themselves. You can tell. They walk around like Lebos. It’s just not the way we do it, and that’s why we’re so different. We’re *not like those Lebs*. We haven’t had any of those troubles here.

Mariam’s reference to ‘troubles’ invokes a shared understanding of *trubur*; the upbringing and social conditioning that shapes one’s habitus. Her assertion of difference reflects a perception that Lebanese in Wollongong, shaped by a regional form of everyday multiculturalism, have cultivated a more adaptive and respectable Lebanese identity. In contrast, to ‘walk like a Lebo’ is to embody a *trubur* formed within the Lebanese ethnic field of Western Sydney, and to carry its negative symbolic associations. As such, Mariam comes to see her own experiences free of the ‘troubles’ experienced by those who ‘walk like a Lebo’, as a validation for her detachment from the discursive field of where the *Lebo* habitus is constituted: the Lebanese ethnic field of Western Sydney.

Ibtisam, a 36-year-old second-generation woman, extended this distinction through objectified cultural capital – styles, brands, and grooming:

Our Wollongong guys won’t have the rat’s tail or the Nike gear ... if my brother walked out like that, my parents would say go cut it off.

When asked why, she replied:

Well, who’s going to take you seriously? You look like a thug ... one of those guys that screams at girls from cars, no respect.

Here, Ibtisam maps aesthetic markers of objectified cultural capital onto a broader moral discourse. For Ibtisam, the ‘*Lebo* look’ signifies deviance, disrespect, misogyny, and incivility. These traits are not neutral fashion choices, but culturally overdetermined signs of a problematic habitus. Her comments illustrate how Lebanese in Wollongong reproduce intra-ethnic distinction by discrediting particular modes of dress, speech, and comportment as incompatible with respectability and legitimate belonging. On the one hand, regional multiculturalism exposed Wollongong Lebanese to more diverse interactions, which participants framed as cultivating openness and tolerance. On the other hand, their differentiation from Western Sydney Lebanese often echoed assimilationist ideals of the ‘good migrant’, who is disciplined, respectable, and conforming to dominant Anglo-Australian norms.

Accents are markers of linguistic capital, embodied forms of cultural capital that render one's habitus intelligible within a social field (Bourdieu 1977). Among Lebanese Australians in Wollongong, both English and Arabic accents associated with the Western Sydney Lebanese habitus are perceived as negative symbolic capital, anthropomorphising the discursive figure of the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim. Amal, a 72-year-old first-generation woman, expressed confusion at the accents she heard from Australian-born Lebanese in Sydney:

Even the way they talk, they have this accent ... and I can't understand why. We sound different to them.

Salma, a 23-year-old third-generation woman, emphasised the disciplinary function of accent within her family:

If we talked like a typical Bankstown kid, you'd get slapped across the head. That's not how you speak English or Arabic.

Eman, a 67-year-old first-generation woman, echoed this view when describing her Western Sydney grandchildren:

They're born here but speak with a Tripolian accent. Ugly accents. I say, are you speaking English or Tripolian?

This rejection of both accented English and colloquial Arabic reflects a broader disidentification with Lebanese living in Western Sydney. While Cox and Palethorpe (2005, 2006) document the phonetic distinctiveness of Lebanese Australian English, they do not distinguish between regional variations. Tabar (2007), however, moves beyond such methodological essentialism that views all Lebanese in Australia through the experiences of those living in Western Sydney, and highlights how this accent can be understood as *Lebspeak*, culturally and locally constructed through dominant discourses that conflate it with criminality and deviance.

Rania, a 39-year-old second-generation woman who had moved to Western Sydney, was acutely aware of this stigma. She feared her children's exposure to *Lebspeak* would harm their futures:

If I hear my kids say something like that, I tell them stop. It makes you sound like you're not intelligent. You won't get a job. People won't respect you. That rough way of speaking, with the swearing ... it gives us a bad name.

For Rania, *Lebspeak* was not merely a way of speaking but a signifier of class, morality, and civic acceptance. These distinctions illustrate how Wollongong Lebanese differentiate themselves from the 'Lebo habitus'. Yet, even when individuals succeed in distancing themselves from these localised discourses, they encounter further hurdles in elite spaces, where linguistic mastery and perfect etiquette become the terms on which respectability and belonging are judged. The story of Ibrahim, a second-generation 29-year-old lawyer from Wollongong, illustrates how beyond experiences of everyday multiculturalism in regional Australia, the prestigious institutions of high society in Australia are also sites where Lebanese difference, on the basis of language and etiquette, is visible.

Bourdieu ([1984] 2010, 116) described how entry into high-status professions depends not only on education and qualifications but also on the accumulation of

social capital, honourability, and the cultural practices of ‘high society’. Ibrahim explained that the correct use of language was a site where he felt compelled to regulate himself:

Sometimes someone would use a word I didn’t know, so I’d go and research it. I’d make a conscious effort to use it properly. Even small things like saying ‘revert back’ – it’s common, but in a top law firm it sounds wrong. You don’t want to look like you don’t belong.

Although fluent in English, Ibrahim saw minor slips in grammar as evidence of his Lebanese and working-class background. His comments demonstrate how linguistic mastery functions as embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977, [[1984]] 2010). For Ibrahim, accent, idiom, and vocabulary became markers of cultural visibility that required constant self-policing.

Ibrahim also described feeling judged in elite dining contexts:

At home one fork was enough, food was shared. At work dinners, there are multiple knives and forks. I’d watch others and follow their lead or even Google menu items, so I didn’t make a mistake.

While dining etiquette was trivial for his Anglo-Australian peers, Ibrahim saw mistakes as proof he did not belong:

They know I have a Lebanese background. If I can’t even eat properly, how am I supposed to do anything? I’d look like I don’t belong there.

This illustrates how practices of taste and etiquette reproduce social distinction (Bourdieu [[1984]] 2010). For Ibrahim, they became another arena where his cultural distance from the dominant field was reinforced.

Despite these challenges, Ibrahim embraced the ethos of meritocracy contained in the Australian national *illusio*, expressing that he felt he had climbed the social ladder, and was hoping to pass on the cultural capital he had acquired:

I’ve climbed the ladder a bit. Maybe my kids will go higher. My grandfather couldn’t speak English, my parents built their life, now I’m in a top law firm. I’ll give my children better opportunities, so they’re not disadvantaged.

Ibrahim’s account speaks directly to Rosaldo’s (1994) metaphor of the social ladder, where individuals may climb but the rungs remain unchanging. His story illustrates how conditional citizenship operates not only in the working-class social, cultural, and discursive fields of the Australian national social space but also in the elite spaces of corporate law. Even with perfect fluency, educational credentials, and professional achievement, his cultural difference remained marked and required constant self-policing. This suggests that the conditionality of citizenship is not resolved by escaping the Lebo habitus but reappears in new forms as Lebanese Muslims seek entry into elite fields where the terms of the national *illusio* are more strictly defined by Anglo-Celtic cultural distinction. Eventually Ibrahim left Sydney for a prestigious firm in Dubai (United Arab Emirates). While he did not explicitly say why, his story suggests that even while he was at the door of high society, he was without a seat at the dinner table of the elite Anglo-Celtic dominated legal profession of Australia.

These accounts illustrate how Lebanese in Wollongong reproduce their intra-ethnic distinction by discrediting particular ways of speaking, dressing, and carrying oneself as

incompatible with respectability and legitimate belonging. Enacting an alternative Lebanese ethnic habitus that is framed as respectable precisely because it distances itself from the 'Lebo' habitus of Western Sydney becomes paramount to negotiate the experiences of everyday multiculturalism in regional Australia. These practices were both remembered and reproduced across generations: first-generation women critiqued their grandchildren's accents and comportment, while second- and third-generation participants described disciplining children, siblings, and peers for 'looking' or 'sounding' too Lebanese. In this way, embodied expectations of respectability were transmitted within families as a strategy to reduce cultural visibility and claim greater proximity to full citizenship. Yet, as Ibrahim's experience shows, even this cultivated respectability is fragile. In elite Australian institutions, cultural difference is never fully erased but remains under erasure (*sous rature*), requiring constant vigilance in language and comportment. Respectability may shift the terms of judgement, but it does not erase the trace of conditionality.

Conclusion

This paper examines how Lebanese Muslims from the village of Marj el-Zhour navigate conditional citizenship through intra-ethnic distinction, a strategy that both resists and reproduces hierarchies of visibility and cultural difference. The case of Wollongong illustrates how regional settlement produces a distinct ethnic field shaped by everyday multiculturalism and enduring traces of national exclusion. The discursive figure of the 'Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim' continues to mark Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong as criminal, deviant, and threatening. The trace and *imago* of this figure are internalised across generations as fear, vigilance, and the need to prove legitimacy through compensatory striving. Within this context, socialisation in Wollongong is shaped by practices of intra-ethnic distinction, with participants continuously positioning themselves as different from Western Sydney Lebanese Muslims to navigate the politics of everyday multiculturalism. These distinctions are expressed culturally through language, comportment, and aesthetics; markers of respectability that nonetheless remain conditional within the Anglo-Celtic dominated national social space. However, it is important to emphasise that Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong are not powerless victims of these dynamics. Through intra-ethnic distinction, participants actively challenge, resist, and harness the trace and *imago* of their conditional citizenship to reposition themselves within the national social space. The regenerative properties of habitus illustrate how individuals and families select and perform particular forms of capital, exercising agency in shaping how they are seen and how they see themselves. In this way, Lebanese Muslim migrants in Wollongong continuously shape and are shaped by the nationalising fields they inhabit, negotiating conditionality through both constraint and creativity.

Lebanese Muslims in Wollongong experience a cumulative, intergenerational conditionality that disrupts linear models of integration. Participants described how exclusions – schoolyard ridicule, media stereotyping, workplace bias – were not isolated incidents, but part of multiple dimensions of conditional citizenship. These exclusions were remembered not only as personal experiences but also as collective memory, shaping how families sought to avoid stigma collectively across generations through social and cultural differentiation. This reflects what Hage (2021) terms a 'diasporic condition', in which memory, history, and affect travel across generations. Rather than integrating

over time, participants internalised a sense of unbelonging (Zevnik and Russell 2025), inherited from generational struggles and reinforced by national discourse. These recursive dynamics challenge the assumption that time or exposure alone dissolves the essentialised cultural difference which marks migrants not from the dominant culture of the nation-state (Pauker et al. 2017); instead, the four dimensions of conditional citizenship coalesce and reinscribe Lebanese Muslims as ‘other’ across generations. These dynamics illustrate how regional multiculturalism simultaneously demands conformity and celebrates difference, leaving those outside the dominant culture perpetually visible and their citizenship conditional.

In low-density regional settings like Wollongong, national discourses celebrating Australia’s cultural diversity often fail to insulate visible minorities from this scrutiny. Lebanese Muslims here are hyper-visible and lack the protective buffer of ethnic density common in urban migrant hubs. This exposure compels youth to regulate their cultural presentation by suppressing accents, adopting Anglo-Celtic names, or distancing themselves from the wider Lebanese community (*trubur*) not just to assimilate, but to mitigate the burden of being cast as deviant. However, while such strategies may shift terms of judgement, they cannot erase cultural visibility or the distance from full citizenship. As Radford (2016) observed in rural South Australia, everyday multiculturalism in regional towns often obscures unequal power relations and fails to address deeper issues of exclusion. Similarly, Butler and Allen (2020) argue that regional multiculturalism can be performative, reinforcing whiteness through localised norms of ‘belonging’ while offering limited social support. By foregrounding intra-ethnic distinction in a low-density regional context, this study extends migration and ethnicity debates beyond the metropolitan focus. It shows how the politics of belonging are not only negotiated between ethnic majorities and minorities, but also within minority communities themselves; a dynamic with clear parallels in other ethnic minority diasporas across Europe and North America (Schiff 2021; Mallet and Pinto-Coelho 2018).

Schools and community institutions emerged as key sites where everyday multiculturalism and conditional citizenship were navigated. Meritocratic ideals often mask the reproduction of cultural hierarchies (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010), leaving youth to internalise narratives that frame their identities as deviant. Lam and Mansouri (2021) similarly argue that Muslim youth in Australia are routinely mis-interpellated into national imaginaries that demand hyper-civility and strategic self-policing under the guise of multicultural inclusion. Yet state-led responses have largely followed a top-down logic. Deradicalisation and Countering Violent Extremism initiatives such as Living Safe Together emphasise surveillance and behavioural management, deepening mistrust and reinforcing the very narratives that marginalise Muslim youth (Cherney et al. 2018). In contrast, bottom-up initiatives – such as the Lebanese Muslim Association’s transition support hubs – offer culturally grounded spaces for mentoring, peer support, and civic participation (LMA n.d.). These echo Freirean approaches to empowerment, fostering critical consciousness and cultural pride rather than compliance (Freire [[1970]] 2005). Yet such programs remain either confined to ethnically dense urban spaces⁵ or delivered as short, ad hoc interventions in rural towns, leaving culturally visible youth in regional areas with few avenues for sustained support.

This study contributes to scholarship on cultural citizenship, diaspora, and multiculturalism by demonstrating how conditionality is reproduced not only through state and

media discourses but also through intra-ethnic distinction. By tracing how social, cultural, discursive, and psychological dimensions of conditionality intersect, it extends existing debates that have tended to focus on metropolitan hubs or single dimensions of conditionality (Boese and Phillips 2024; Gilliam 2022). For future research, the case of Wollongong highlights the importance of examining migrant experiences outside metropolitan centres, where hyper-visibility and thin ethnic density shape inclusion (Bakshi et al. 2025). As dispersal policies increasingly target regional areas, recognising this multifaceted process of racialisation could help shift policies from behaviour-management and surveillance logics, towards place-sensitive anti-racism and bottom-up participatory capability-building (Boese 2024). Recognising the interplay between place, intra-ethnic distinction, and the reproduction of cultural visibility can sharpen comparative analyses of racialisation in settler-colonial and postcolonial societies. Future comparative research across regional sites and migrant communities could test whether these dynamics are unique to Lebanese Muslims in Australia or reflect broader patterns of racialisation and conditional citizenship.

Notes

1. Hereafter, 'the West' refers to countries in the regions of Australasia, Europe, and North America.
2. This usage differs from Savransky's (2013) theorisation of recalcitrant subjects as agents who resist processes of subjectification; rather, here it captures how stigma itself positioned Lebanese Muslims as already resistant to integration.
3. I explore the term 'Lebo' below, as a derogatory ethnic slur used to signal those connected with the Recalcitrant Lebanese Muslim
4. I attended high school in Wollongong during the late 1990s and early 2000s. I also received mock awards at my high school graduation. However, rather than reflecting the association of Muslims with terrorism in the early 1990s, my 'awards' reflected the dominant image of Lebanese criminalisation in the early 2000s. The awards were, 'Most Likely to be Involved in a Shootout' and 'Lebo of the Year'.
5. The author is not aware of any similar programmes for Lebanese youth in Wollongong.

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Author contributions

CRedit: **Fadi Baghdadi:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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