

BEHIND THE WHEEL: AN EXAMINATION OF  
TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN  
FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA  
SETTLING IN OREGON

by

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A THESIS

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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

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Women from the Middle East and North Africa Settling in Oregon

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Angela Joya

A growing number of individuals from the Middle East and North Africa are seeking refugee status or entering the immigration lottery to come to Oregon. This thesis examines the problems that women face when they emigrate from the Middle East and North Africa to the Portland area based on a lack of adequate public transportation and issues obtaining a driver's license. It considers the differences in services offered to groups based on their manner of arrival, issues with housing prices, transportation costs in Oregon, and the barrier of language. It additionally looks at how gender roles can become more rigid in times of conflict and infringe upon women's access to transportation. Finally, it frames the issue of Middle Eastern women accessing public transportation in Oregon in the context of international rights. This thesis incorporates academic research, interviews with women who have immigrated from the Middle East and North Africa to Oregon, and interviews with employees of social service networks and government offices in Oregon. It seeks to draw conclusions from this research that will allow the author to propose policy solutions for how the government can better empower women from the Middle East and North Africa in Oregon.

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شكرا جزيلاً أستاذة هنان، احب العربية بسببك.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

During the summer of 2015, I reached out to an organization that works with immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa who are living in Oregon and asked if they needed any volunteers. I was told that what they needed most was driving instructors. So I spent the summer teaching a number of women who had recently immigrated from the Middle East and North Africa to the Portland area how to drive. It was a rewarding, if occasionally nerve wracking, experience.

It was a privilege to not only help these women obtain their driver's licenses, but hear their stories and learn why that skill was so important to them. The women I taught were from a variety of economic backgrounds and ages. The reasons they were learning to drive were diverse as well. For one woman it was an economic necessity and she drove illegally with just a permit because both she and her husband needed to work to support their children; and she could not pass the written Oregon State Driver's License exam. Another woman was learning to drive because she wanted to re-enter the workforce and had to have a way to take her small daughter to childcare.

In spite of their diverse backgrounds, I found common threads throughout my conversations with these women. They had either never driven a car or had limited experience and could not practice driving with their husbands because they had children and their husbands were too busy working. If they were able to pass the driving portion of the exam, the written portion proved a daunting task because the Oregon State Driver's Manual contains language that is complicated and not commonly found in conversation. Public transportation was too slow and impractical to use with their families because they were usually settled in less expensive suburbs of Portland as

housing prices within the city increased dramatically. Until a small ministry organization connected me with them for driving lessons any other transportation resources were always either lacking or almost impossible for them to find.

This experience led me to the topic of this thesis. Through research and interviews this thesis examines issues that women from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) face with accessing public transit and earning a driver's license due to a lack of resources available to them when they immigrate to or receive refugee status in Oregon

### **Immigrants and Refugees in Oregon**

The United States has historically been a destination for immigrants and refugees seeking a more stable environment in which to find work and raise their families. In the past 40 years, Oregon has also been a growing haven for refugees. The Oregon Department of Human Services website testifies that “tens of thousands of refugees have resettled in Oregon since 1975.” According to the website, the average number of refugees entering Oregon has held steady at just over 1,000 a year since the early 2000's.<sup>1</sup> The Oregon State Department of Human Services lists Iraqis as one of the fastest growing groups of refugees in Oregon. This partially reflects an acceleration of the admittance process for Iraqi refugees in 2007 when they were considered especially vulnerable. In February of that year, the Bush Administration worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to resettle far more Iraqi refugees in the United States than in previous years.<sup>2</sup> Oregon has also seen growth

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Human Services Oregon This may not necessarily be the states capacity as in 1980 the state accepted 6, 213 refugees and in 1981 4,123.

<sup>2</sup> Swarms and Zoepf. 2007.

in communities of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa who enter the United States with a green card. The exact number of individuals is difficult to identify, because people of Middle Eastern descent are classified by the US Census Bureau as Non-Hispanic Whites. Department of Homeland Security records designate separate columns for people of Middle Eastern descent, but do not issue many recent or state specific statistics. However, regardless of the specific number of refugees and immigrants coming to Oregon from the MENA, all agencies and sources acknowledge the number is growing. Each wave of refugees and immigrants bring unique challenges and issues. The percentage of refugees arriving in Oregon who are from the Middle East is increasing each year. This new set of cultural challenges requires new research and adaptations of services to create situations in which refugees and immigrants from the MENA can be successful.

### **Oregon Effort toward Women's Empowerment**

For the past 50 years, Oregon has been working to provide equal access to education and employment for women. In 1964, the Oregon Commission for Women was established to examine women's equality. The agency is tasked with implementing policies and programs that benefit women. It does this by reporting to the Governor on the state of gender equality, connecting women with state agencies, and educating women on health, wellness, and financial literacy.<sup>3</sup>

The Office of Equity and Multicultural Services (OEMS) is an office of the Department of Human Services in Oregon created to ensure equality of employment and care for all genders and cultures. One tangible success for these agencies has been

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<sup>3</sup> Oregon Commission for Women.

that Oregon has had a positive recent record in strides towards gender equality in the workplace. Women own 43% of Oregon businesses,<sup>4</sup> nearly 10% higher than the 35% of businesses owned by women nationally.<sup>5</sup> However, in spite of these victories there is currently a deficit in resources that can be easily accessed by women who are immigrants and refugees from the Middle East, hindering them from equal opportunities for education and employment. The explanation cannot solely be that the resources are not being connected to individuals who need them.

One way to interpret why a disproportionate number of Arab women take years to enter the workforce is to examine the influence of rigid gender roles on their opportunities. In the societies many women come from, transportation is already a gendered issue. Attitudes about gender roles can become even more influential on a woman's life and opportunities when a family undergoes the stress of moving to a new country.

### **International Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins by affirming that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”<sup>6</sup> It is this foundation upon which all other human rights treaties, conventions, and covenants have been built. Subsequent treaties have evolved around questions that attempt to strengthen the protection of human rights, but the questions also illustrate how some individuals have been excluded from exercising their rights. All people are

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: Oregon. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau National. 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 1948.

given the right to inherent dignity, but what is necessary for that dignity? All members of the human family are given equal and inalienable rights, but what about women or children? How many extra accommodations is a government obliged to provide to ensure all individuals can access their rights? It is in answering these questions that lawyers and policy makers have arrived at increasingly specific provisions and definitions of what rights are, who has them, and who must protect them.

This thesis examines issues that women from the MENA face with accessing adequate transportation. The United States government considers driving a privilege, not a right. A privilege that can be taken away when an individual breaks the law, is too old, or too young. Yet, the inability to drive or easily access public transit can bar these women from pursuing higher education, entering the workforce, and attending medical or government related appointments.

### **Definitions of the Relevant Population**

I will be using the terms refugee and immigrant throughout this essay to describe the population involved in my research. The definitions of this essay are consistent with those offered by the United States Department of Homeland Security. The one exception is that whereas the Department of Homeland Security is moving toward referring to immigrants as Permanent Resident Aliens, I will retain the term immigrant for the sake of clarity. Refugees are defined by the US Department of Homeland Security as:

Any person who is outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on the alien's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. People with no nationality must

generally be outside their country of last habitual residence to qualify as a refugee. Refugees are subject to ceilings by geographic area set annually by the President in consultation with Congress and are eligible to adjust to lawful permanent resident status after one year of continuous presence in the United States.

The United States Department of Homeland Security defines an immigrant as:

Permanent Resident Alien - An alien admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident. Permanent residents are also commonly referred to as immigrants; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a)(15)). An illegal alien who entered the United States without inspection, for example, would be strictly defined as an immigrant under the INA but is not a permanent resident alien. Lawful permanent residents are legally accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States. They may be issued immigrant visas by the Department of State overseas or adjusted to permanent resident status by the Department of Homeland Security in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, I will be using the terms ‘Middle East and North Africa’ and ‘Middle East’ interchangeably. Primarily I will use the term Middle East throughout the paper and only use the full descriptor when I am differentiating between the regions or when extra emphasis is required.

Throughout this paper I will also use the terms state and nation synonymously and in lower case. When I refer to a state as a subset of the United States it will be capitalized and written as either the ‘State of Oregon’ and ‘State of Michigan’ or simply ‘Oregon’ and ‘Michigan’ to avoid confusion.

### **Outline of Paper**

The first chapter of this paper lays out background information for my topic, relevant definitions, research and interview methods, and the parameters of my research question. The second chapter outlines the situation of refugees and immigrants in

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Oregon and specific issues they encounter when they immigrate. It does this by detailing the process of immigrating, receiving asylum or receiving refugee status and the area that most refugees settle in Oregon. It concludes by explaining the role that language plays in the issues women face accessing transportation. The third chapter describes how gender roles and patriarchy have made the issue of transportation a central issue for women and are interacting with the issues that were discussed in the previous chapter. The fourth chapter establishes the broad framework of international laws relating to human rights, refugee and immigrant rights, and women's rights that are significant to my research questions and which suggest the state is obligated to assist these women with their issues in accessing transportation. Lastly, the fifth chapter contains proposals for a few solutions to the problems that women from the Middle East face in accessing public transit and obtaining a driver's license in Oregon.

### **Methods and Interviews**

My thesis will contribute to the growing body of work examining refugee resettlement and success, and supplement a deficit in that research in Oregon. The project is unique because it looks at an under-studied and under-reported issue facing women from the MENA in Oregon. The goal of my research is to identify feasible proposals to assist women from the Middle East accessing public transportation and obtaining driver's licenses. The research on which I will base my policy proposals comes from three different sources. The first is relevant academic articles and public information provided by government agencies, the second is informational interviews with government officials and social service volunteers, and the third is information

from interviews I conducted with women who have emigrated from the Middle East, or have recently arrived as refugees in Oregon.

My project addresses a complex problem, and so I quickly found that the scope of my research needed to match this complexity. I consulted academic literature in a number of fields from linguistics and geography to sociology and international studies. My research question is highly specific, which made it difficult to find sources which directly address the issues I discuss. Instead, I used academic literature to characterize the situation of women immigrating from the MENA to the United States. From this portrait, I chose to examine the issue further through the discourses of human rights and gender roles in conflict or times of familial stress.

It is important to note that this project is not intended to give any type of in-depth analysis about culture or the specifics of all societal factors that challenge women attempting to obtain a driver's license and access mass transit in Oregon. In discussions of gender roles and patriarchy, I have avoided literature that is narrowly focused on patriarchy in Islam. I chose this parameter because the women I interviewed were not all Muslim and Islam is just as prevalent in Southeast Asia as it is in the Middle East. The issues I am discussing are not religious, but related to specific populations coming from a particular geographic region.

Originally informational interviews were not a significant part of my research. However, the information provided by the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles online and in paper form failed to answer questions I had about their services. Multiple calls to their information lines were fruitless, and so I visited their administrative office in Salem and was able to be connected with an administrator who could answer my

questions. I was also able to correspond with a volunteer for Catholic Charities in Portland, as well as a woman who runs a successful English as a Second Language (ESL) program through her church.

The interviews with women from the Middle East and North Africa who now live in Oregon were the most rewarding part of my research and contributed the valuable perspectives. I interviewed five immigrants from Egypt, one Asylee, from Syria and three refugees from Iraq who are living in the Portland area. All women interviewed were between the ages of 28 and 59. They were all married and had children or grandchildren ranging from ages 1-30. The women had all obtained a driver's license prior to the interviews, but over half of them had driven alone before receiving their license. The interviews were conducted by me and recorded to be later transcribed. The interviews were conducted primarily in English, but some Arabic was used when it was needed for clarity. For each interview I started with a few basic questions before letting them share their own experiences.

Although the interviews were invaluable, I approached analyzing them with two reservations. The first is that there are cultural and human tendencies which made the women alter their statements in order to not appear to complain about their situation. I attempted to work around this by asking them questions about their friends who were also immigrants and refugees and what issues they had. Even if the majority of women were hesitant to talk about their own challenges, they would openly share about the struggles other women had experienced. The second issue is that they are very grateful to be living in the United States, and specifically Oregon. While they may admit that public transit is not feasible for transportation to employment or shopping, they also

readily say that it is much safer than public transit they previously experienced. After all, as one interviewee put it, “The bus over there (Egypt) is scary you have to jump on when it’s going, you have to hang from the window or something.” Similarly, although one interviewee was afraid to drive on busy roads near her house, she was still happy she could now drive by herself as opposed to being afraid of the checkpoints around her previous home. Even if women will say that their lives are better now than they used to be, they deserve access to the same opportunities as other Oregon residents.

The women that I interviewed were welcoming, and happy to share their personal experiences with transportation. Parts of their stories will be used throughout this paper to illustrate the issues I am discussing. However, in order to protect their privacy I will not be referring to any of the women by name or mentioning specific details where it is not necessary for comprehension.

### **Limitations of Research**

As with any research into a specific issue, my research confronted a number of limitations. I was limited by a lack of information available in almost all the areas my question considered. Academic articles relating directly to this problem were sparse, which meant, as mentioned above, that it was necessary for me to draw together research from a number of fields. Also aforementioned, is the lack of statistics available from the U.S. Census Bureau about the number of Arab immigrants and refugees that have recently arrived in Oregon. These issues were augmented by the difficulty of obtaining information from the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles and Department of Human Services. After a couple months of trying, I have only recently received more comprehensive information. Now that I am aware of what is necessary to navigate the

bureaucracy I would further this research by spending more time pursuing the relevant government offices for information. Similar to this issue, in spite of a few leads on comparative case studies with other social service organizations, I never received information that was conclusively relevant to how this issue could be dealt with in Oregon. Another way that I would like to further this research is to conduct more interviews with women from the Middle East now living in Oregon. While I was satisfied with the number I conducted for the scope of this paper, they were enough to gain good information and see similarities, but not enough to be wholly conclusive.

All of these issues and limitation aside, I am satisfied with the conclusions I was able to reach considering the goals of an undergraduate thesis project. For a problem that has yet to be widely written upon, this research proved a helpful starting point for future examination.

## **Chapter 2: Situation of Refugees and Immigrants in Oregon**

The experience of women moving from the Middle East and North Africa to the United States and the services that they can access differ based on the process they used to gain residency in the United States. There are three methods that the women I interviewed used to enter the United States: seeking refugee status, seeking asylum, and getting a visa through the Diversity Visa process. The differing levels of State of Oregon support provided to these three groups can affect their success. However, all women emigrating from the Middle East to the Portland Metropolitan area are affected by soaring housing prices, impractical public transportation, and language barriers.

### **Section 1: The Process of Moving to the United States**

#### *Refugee Status*

The process of gaining refugee status in the United States takes a significant amount of time. The Department of State declares the process takes between 18 to 24 months from the time of referral to admission.<sup>8</sup> In order to apply to be a refugee an individual must be outside of the U.S., of special humanitarian concern to the U.S., meet the definition of refugee (See Background), and be admissible to the United States. Refugees go through three main steps before they arrive in the United States. The first step is a referral to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Next the individual will receive assistance filling out an application. Lastly, the individual will be interviewed abroad by a United States Citizenship and Immigration Services officer who will determine if they are eligible for resettlement.<sup>9</sup> However,

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Refugee Admissions FAQ.

<sup>9</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services.

being referred toUSRAP and even being approved by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services does not guarantee that an individual will be admitted to the United States. Figure 1 taken from the US Department of Homeland Security website shows that out of 203,321 Iraqis referred toUSRAP between fiscal years (FY) 2007 and 2013, only 84,902 were actually admitted to the United States.

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	*FY 2012	*FY 2013	*TOTAL
<b>Referrals to USRAP</b>	12,098	28,769	49,276	46,472	39,878	15,878	10,950	203,321
<b>USCIS Interviews</b>	4,437	23,862	29,096	27,277	26,831	20,073	11,094	142,670
<b>Approved by USCIS</b>	2,909	18,674	25,238	24,021	22,323	16,992	9,045	119,202
<b>Admitted to US</b>	1,608	13,823	18,838	18,016	9,388	12,163	11,066	84,902

Table 1: Iraqi refugees admitted from 2007-2008.

Table adapted from the US State Department.

Once families have been approved to come to the United States and selected for admittance, they receive a medical exam, cultural orientation, help with travel plans, and a loan for travel expenses. Refugees are eligible for work immediately upon arrival and must apply for a green card one year after reaching the United States.<sup>10</sup> When a refugee is scheduled to arrive in the State of Oregon, one of three voluntary

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<sup>10</sup>“Refugees.”

organizations (volags) --Catholic Charities, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and SOAR/Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon-- are contracted to do the initial resettlement.<sup>11</sup> The volags all perform services like picking up refugees from the airport, finding a place for them to live, and helping them furnish their house. The exact structure and services provided by voluntary organizations is unique to that group, but many provide individual sponsors, or case managers, who help the refugees adjust and navigate the resources available to them as well as daily life in the United States. Volags often have connections to employment programs, job coaching, ESL classes, and resources for children.<sup>12</sup> The initial volag resettlement process is for 90 days, but refugees are eligible for up to eight months of cash and medical assistance that is administered through the state. They are also able to take part in any assistance programs through the Department of Human Services that are for United States citizens, if they meet eligibility requirements.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Process of Being Granted Asylum*

The difference between someone seeking refugee status and someone seeking asylum is in the process. A refugee is someone who meets the criteria for refugee status and seeks a referral from outside of the United States. Asylum applies to people who can meet the criteria for refugee status, but are already in the United States or at a port of entry when they apply.<sup>14</sup>

The process of achieving refugee status in the United States is long. Therefore, some families choose to have the wife come to the U.S. first and apply for family

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>12</sup> Lutheran Community Services.

<sup>13</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services Refugee Program.

<sup>14</sup> "Refugee and Asylum."

reunification later. It is important to note that although asylum seekers come to the United States for the same reasons as refugees, they are not provided with the same support systems. This is because they usually arrive on tourist visas so they are not eligible for federal or state assistance until their asylum application has been granted, this combined with their initial inability to work leaves many women in a vulnerable position where they must personally seek out help navigating their situation.

In order to work in the United States, an individual must wait a period of at least 150 days after their asylum application was filed to apply for a work permit. Once an applicant has received asylum they do not need a permit to work. One year after receiving asylum an individual is eligible to apply for a green card to be granted permanent residency in the United States.<sup>15</sup> For these reasons, many families choose to separate sending the wife and children to the United States first while the husband remains employed in the country of origin. If she is granted asylum, the family petitions for the husband to join them. The Refugee/Asylee Relative petition, also commonly referred to as family unification, must be filed within two years of receiving asylum status and contain proof of status as a refugee, a clear picture of their spouse, a copy of a marriage certificate, and copies of divorce decrees or death certificates if either spouse has been previously married. If the spouse is not inside the United States already, they will be called to the closest US consulate to complete the process.<sup>16</sup>

### *Immigrant Process*

The Diversity Visa process, also known as the visa lottery, is used by many immigrant families from the Middle East and North Africa to move to the United States.

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<sup>15</sup> "Asylum."

<sup>16</sup> "Application Procedures: Getting Derivative Refugee or Asylum Status for Your Spouse."

The visas were originally created to encourage immigration from countries that have historically low rates of immigration to the United States. A limited number of visas are available each year. After an individual submits the paperwork for the visa, the Department of State randomly selects a number of applicants based on the number of visas available to each area and country.<sup>17</sup>

Once selected, there is further paperwork for applicants to fill out to ensure that they meet the qualifications for the visa program. This means proof of either a high school education or two years of experience in a job that the U.S. Department of Labor says qualifies, birth and marriage certificates, divorces, military, police, and prison records and any records relating to any time the individual appeared in court.<sup>18</sup> Once all these documents have been approved, an interview is scheduled with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate the applicant indicated they preferred. All family members listed on the application must attend the interview and have proof they have the required vaccinations for entry into the United States along with other supporting documents. If the visa is approved, it will be placed in the passport of the applicant and all qualifying family members and must be used within six months of issuance. Applicants selected also receive a sealed packet to present to Customs and Border Protection on entering the United States. Individuals are entering as lawful Permanent Residents of the United States and so are eligible to work and live permanently in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

With a green card an individual can also apply for a social security card, and get a state issued driver's license.<sup>20</sup> There are fewer social services available to immigrants

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<sup>17</sup> "The Diversity Visa Process."

<sup>18</sup> "The Diversity Visa Process."

<sup>19</sup> "The Diversity Visa Process."

<sup>20</sup> "After a Green Card is Granted."

than refugees and asylum seekers and some services are not available till they receive a social security card. This initial lack of social service support proved difficult for many women. One woman I spoke with struggled in the United States before her family could receive social security cards because two of her children are special needs. She had difficulty navigating the resources that were available to her family and the applications for social security cards that would give them access to additional support took a year and a half to arrive.

## **Section 2: Location and Transportation**

Immigrants and refugees prefer to settle in areas where they will be near a community that is from their country of origin, have easy access to employment, and be close to schools and places to shop. In Oregon these desires are increasingly secondary to financial concerns. Rising costs of housing have pushed refugee and immigrant communities out into the suburbs where public transportation proves to be less feasible.

For immigrants and refugees coming to the United States communities are vital networks of knowledge, support, and resources. In interviews conducted for this thesis, when immigrants were asked why they moved to a particular neighborhood the majority said that they did so because they knew other Egyptians who were in the area. In their survey, which examined why immigrants have settled in specific areas of Portland, S. W. Hardwick and J. E. Meacham noted that “migration streams and the settlement decisions of migrants are shaped by shared networks of ethnicity. These networks are held together by the glue of religious beliefs and membership in church congregations in pre-departure towns and cities.”<sup>21</sup> In interviews, refugees stated they had limited

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<sup>21</sup> Hardwick and Meacham. 2005. (pp.551)

choice where their initial housing was located, but agreed that their preference was to later move towards areas that had a community of the same nationality or ethnicity.

Rising housing costs have meant that communities with high concentrations of immigrants and refugees have been increasingly pushed out to the edges of the Portland Metropolitan area. In late 2016, Elliot Njus published an article in *Oregon Live* that used data taken by Standard & Poor's Case-Schiller home price index to show that in 2016 Portland housing prices consistently grew faster than any other area in the United States.<sup>22</sup> Oregonmetro.gov echoed this statement in the article "How much it costs to live here – and who pays. 7 things to know," released on the same day as the Oregonlive article. Oregonmetro reported that although the Portland economy has strongly rebounded from the recession of the early 2000's, it has seriously underbuilt houses. Inner-Portland has seen the highest increase in housing prices, but rent prices in the Portland metropolitan area have gone up by 63% since 2015.<sup>23</sup> For refugee families who are coming to the United States with little money, from a culture where a small family is three children, this market presents a daunting picture. Instead of settling in Portland proper, families tend to live in more affordable suburbs like Beaverton, Tigard, and Gresham. However, with affordability comes the suburban lifestyle that relies heavily on cars for accessing shopping, food banks, education, medical appointments, and recreation. They are also further from refugee services that are located in Portland.

When communities of refugees and immigrants settle in the outer areas of Portland they can have issues accessing transportation. In interviews, women discussed friends and acquaintances who had recently arrived in the United States and struggled to

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<sup>22</sup> Njus, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> "How much it costs to live here- and who pays. 7 things you should know." 2016.

attend medical and bureaucratic appointments because they lived far from the offices that were in Portland proper. Portland is known for its award winning public transit system, but outside of Portland proper it is less accessible for immigrants and refugees. The bus system is facing a budget crisis that has been building for a number of years.<sup>24</sup> The complex factors leading to this crisis are extraneous to the scope of this project, but it has led in recent years to an increase in Trimet bus costs (Table 2 Below).

	2 ½ Hour Ticket	1-Day Pass	7-Day Pass	14- Day Pass	30 Day/ 1-Month Pass
Adult	\$2.50	\$5	\$26	\$51	\$100
Honored Citizen (65+ or people with a disability)	\$1.25	\$2.50	\$7.50	\$14.50	\$28
Youth (7-17 or pursuing a GED)	\$1.25	\$2.50	\$7.50	\$14.50	\$28

Table 2: Trimet Schedule of Fare

Fare prices taken from the Trimet Website. 10 April 2017.

In 2011 *The Oregonian* reported that Trimet fares were steadily rising, a trend that has continued. The fare jumps reported in the article increased adult monthly fares to \$92 and a youth monthly pass to \$27. Passes which are now \$100 and \$28 respectively.<sup>25</sup> Trimet acknowledges the high costs of these passes and has instituted a “Fare Assistance Program” and “Fare Reduction Program” to assist low-income riders stating that they recognize “access to public transit is access to opportunity.”<sup>26</sup> Between the two programs \$1.5 million dollars are supposed to be given to organizations which

<sup>24</sup> Holywell. 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Rose. 2011.

<sup>26</sup> “Access Transit Low income Fares Programs Page.” 2017.

can then distribute the passes to clients. Organizations that qualify are 501(c)(3) nonprofit and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). If selected the beneficiaries are required to enter into an agreement that takes on the majority of administrative responsibilities and verify that their clients are indeed eligible for this type of assistance.

One such community organization is the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization in Portland. They give clients bus passes in order to attend ESL classes. This can be effective if the woman attending classes is single or has some form of childcare and is comfortable riding the bus alone, but for many women one of those factors is preventative. Additionally, a number of refugee women told me that the classes offered through IRCO do not go to a very high skill level. They have had friends, or have personally had to directly enroll in the ESL program at PCC to receive classes on their level, which means paying for childcare, bus passes, and navigating the bus system alone.

A similar problem arises with attempts to go to grocery stores or run other errands. While children under seven do not have to pay to ride Trimet, the cost for children over seven can add up quickly in large families, especially in suburban areas where most families count on cars for transportation and to maintain their lifestyle. The cost of youth passes may seem negligible, but the infrequency of service and complexity of taking buses from the suburbs of Portland means that a two hour transit pass is rarely adequate to complete errands or attend appointments. This means a full day pass is often necessary for outings. If a woman has any children that are over the age of seven she will also need to purchase passes for each of them if she is not travelling during school hours or her husband is working and cannot take care of them.

The long transit times and infrequency of service will also place constraints on her ability to get a job if it is necessary for her to be home before and after school to care for her children. The complexity of the bus routes was also cited by a social service volunteer as a reason that many women choose not to ride public transit, finding the numerous transfers intimidating.

The majority of the women I spoke to did not wear a hijab or in any way cover their hair, but a number of them said that they knew friends who were nervous riding public transit in their hijabs. Even in Portland, a notoriously liberal city, reports of discrimination against Muslims and Arabs have increased in recent years.<sup>27</sup> These reports can influence women who are already hesitant about using public transit because they are unfamiliar with their new city and the language spoken there. While Oregon Governor Kate Brown, the Mayor of Portland, and increasing numbers of citizens in Oregon have publically shown support for refugees<sup>28</sup> many women still feel unsafe travelling alone. The women I spoke with believed that these fears were largely ungrounded, one even suggested that in some parts of Portland it is becoming normal to see women in headscarves. Regardless of their confidence, fear remains an issue that stands in the way of a number of women from the Middle East accessing adequate transportation that could be solved by a driver's license.

### **Section 3: Language**

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is a challenging resource for women from the Middle East and North Africa. Women from the MENA attempting to get a driver's license from the DMV face a number of issues. The first is language. Even

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<sup>27</sup> Lawrence. 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Achen. 2016 and Ryan 2017

women who speak functional English cannot recognize some of the complicated language used on the written exam and in the driver's manual. The Oregon DMV manual and other educational materials are only offered in English and Spanish. The written driver's exam is now offered in Arabic, but has received numerous complaints about its accuracy.<sup>29</sup> The second challenge is the lack of information available to help prepare women for the exam and to take the written test. In the fall of 2016 the U.S. Department of Motor Vehicles changed the practice tests online nationwide. These tests are no longer free for anyone to access. In order to access practice exams and questions a practice test package must now be purchased. These packages range from \$9.99 to \$24.99 and each package covers either the permit test or the license exam.<sup>30</sup> Although the majority of women interviewed for this project claimed to have had few issues with the driver's manual or exam, they readily admitted that other women they know struggled with it.

### *Language Rights*

One of the primary obstacles that refugees face is an unfamiliar language. Although the United States has always been home to immigrants and refugees, as the world globalizes the issue of language rights has gained increasing attention.

Language rights, or linguistic justice, refers to how well a country accommodates multiple languages.<sup>31</sup> This accommodation can take the form of a constitutional obligation (as in the case of Canada), or how well a government can adapt

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with DMV Administrator.

<sup>30</sup> DMV.org.

<sup>31</sup> Xabier. 2010. (pp.104)

to the needs of a multi-lingual state.<sup>32</sup> Language rights are primarily referred to in relation to indigenous populations and immigrants and refugees. This paper is concerned primarily with the latter. Linguistic rights are not widely guaranteed by international human rights regimes like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>33</sup> but are seen to be implicit in laws that protect individuals against discrimination and give them freedom of expression and assembly.<sup>34</sup> Most nations also acknowledge the right to a translator in criminal or government proceedings. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights does acknowledge that “minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”<sup>35</sup> However, this says little about a minority’s interactions with the state, other than being left alone in their own communities.<sup>36</sup> It is only recently and on the national level that countries are acknowledging that immigrants have some basic linguistic rights to accommodation so that they can access resources for education, health care, and other basic social services. Although this has primarily been seen in courtrooms and schools, the definition of what services should be accommodated is continuing to expand.

In the book *Language and Power* a variety of authors examine how nature can award certain groups power in society and make other groups subordinate. They found that language is always stratified. This is mostly spoken about in a positive way in terms of the benefits for people who “speak well.” However this implicitly privileges some

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<sup>32</sup> Xabier. 2010. (pp.104)

<sup>33</sup> The significance and structure of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other Human Rights treaties are described in further detail in chapter 4.

<sup>34</sup> Xabier.2010. (pp.105)

<sup>35</sup> ICCPR.1996.

<sup>36</sup> Xabier. 2010. (pp.108)

individuals at the expense of the rest.<sup>37</sup> This can be seen on a national scale in the realm of politics where some candidates are favored over others purely because of the sound of their voices. It also affects society on a smaller scale where language speaking abilities can subconsciously be seen as a marker of intelligence, limit access of some individuals to resources, and cause a group to feel disenfranchised.<sup>38</sup> The scale of these issues has been documented across societies, from children being considered academically behind based solely on their English language ability<sup>39</sup> to an asylum seeker from Sierra Leone in Belgium who was denied entry because she could not fully express her case in English or French and was labelled as making “little effort” to communicate.<sup>40</sup> With the rise of awareness about language injustice the discourse around language rights has grown, along with efforts to better accommodate individuals who do not speak the dominant language of a region.

#### *Limited English Proficiency Accommodations*

The designation used in a number of U.S. federal agencies for non-English speaking minorities is Limited English Proficient (LEP). The U.S. federal government has passed a number of policy documents in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that LEP persons have equal access to federal and state resources.<sup>41</sup> However, there remains a continuing debate over which groups should be provided services due to agencies weighing the cost of translating materials against the number of individuals who will benefit.<sup>42</sup> The threshold set up by the United States

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<sup>37</sup> Kramarae. 2016. (pp.21)

<sup>38</sup> Kramarae. 2016. (pp.264)

<sup>39</sup> Valentine and Sporton Language. 2008. (pp.382)

<sup>40</sup> Maryns. 2005. (pp.310)

<sup>41</sup> Office of the Secretary DOT. 2015. (pp.74088)

<sup>42</sup> Office of the Secretary DOT. 2015. (pp.74090)

Department of Transportation is that if an LEP language group constitutes 5% of the population of a service area or 1,000 persons are likely to be affected translations of documents can be provided.<sup>43</sup>

Due to budgetary concerns the Oregon DMV is offering the minimum of languages. The Oregon driver's manual and other DMV materials used to be offered in Spanish, English, and Korean, but in the past year Korean has been discontinued (although it is still listed as available on the primary DMV subsidiary website).<sup>44</sup> The Oregon DMV identifies which languages need to be translated by the number of individuals who request materials in their language at DMVs in Oregon.

One flaw of this system is that if individuals already know that they must bring a translator or there are no materials in their language they will not request them. Additionally, although the written driver's test is now offered in Arabic as well as a number of other languages there has been extensive controversy over the translation. Knowledge of the limited helpfulness of this resource could also discourage individuals from attempting to take it in Arabic.<sup>45</sup> One woman I interviewed did not bring a translator, and said that although her English proficiency is low she still had to switch back and forth between Arabic and English on the written exam to understand the questions. It is only in the past year that the knowledge test changed and is now offered in a number of languages. When the DMV was updating the knowledge exam the contractor hired to run the electronic test used a translation service contractor to provide translations of the exams. As mentioned above there have been numerous complaints

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<sup>43</sup> Office of the Secretary DOT. 2015. (pp.74095)

<sup>44</sup> Interview with DMV Administrator.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with DMV Administrator.

about the wording of questions on the Arabic translation and so most LEP Arabic speakers still rely on translators.

The number of native Arabic speakers in Oregon is steadily growing, but finding translators can still be challenging. The way that spoken Arabic is divided into dialects means that even when a translator is provided understanding them can be difficult for some women. There are three different types of Arabic. The first is Classical Arabic which is the language of Pre-Islamic poetry and the Qur'an. The second type, Modern Standard Arabic, is the language of administration, literature, and what students are commonly taught in the United States. It is also the language used at universities in the Middle East. This means that women with a college education will understand and speak Modern Standard Arabic. The last type of Arabic is spoken Arabic.<sup>46</sup> Spoken Arabic is divided into numerous dialects which, one linguist wryly commented are "dialects and not languages, because they are mutually intelligible to each other. Mutually intelligible is a relative matter."<sup>47</sup> As one woman said in an interview, "A lot of the times for Egyptians they give you an Iraqi translator or a Syrian and it is very different if you are not familiar with their dialect. You almost don't understand what they're talking about ... because they're very different, almost like a different language." In addition to this, the DMV does not provide translators for individuals taking the exam. Different women mentioned in interviews, bringing a friend to translate for them, a translator being provided by a social service organization, or being required to find their own translator, usually at a high cost to the individual. The actual DMV has different websites in each state, but most individuals are referred for

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<sup>46</sup> Chejne. 1969. (pp.34)

<sup>47</sup> Bakalla. 1984. (pp.79)

information to the private DMV.org. This private website also lacks clear information. In Michigan and other states it lists whether an Arabic translator is available on the website, but for Oregon the website is vague on whether translators are provided and the process of using them.<sup>48</sup> The website is difficult to navigate to find any resources related to translators or manuals in other languages. The search bar only yields an incomplete list of languages and manuals that are offered nationally.<sup>49</sup>

To find information on translators or state specific manuals, it is necessary to look up individual resource pages by local DMV, or to call the individual DMV offices. In order to ascertain definitively whether translators are ever provided I had to call the Oregon State Headquarters for the DMV. The official I spoke with confirmed that translators are never provided and that the individual can hire a translator to bring or they can also have a family member or friend translate for them.

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<sup>48</sup> DMV.org

<sup>49</sup>Crumish.

## Chapter 3: Gender Roles

Up to this point many of the issues which have been discussed of language, housing, and other factors that prevent women from accessing transportation could affect both male and female immigrants and refugees coming from the Middle East and North Africa to Oregon. However, it remains a problem that is disproportionately affecting women. In order to understand why this is the case it is necessary to examine how familial perceptions of gender roles can shift from the country of origin to the host country. The situation is significantly influenced by the effect that conflict and stress have on gender norms.

### Perceptions of Gender Roles and Patriarchy

It is difficult to talk about issues of gender roles in society and women's empowerment without some discussion of patriarchy. Patriarchy is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "A form of social organization in which the father or oldest male is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the male line; government or rule by a man or men," and further explained to be "The predominance of men in positions of power and influence in society, with cultural values and norms favouring men. Freq. with pejorative connotation."<sup>50</sup> While this is a short definition given by a dictionary and not one provided by a scholar of gender studies or sociology, it is valuable for two reasons. The first is that it encapsulates the variety of situations that are encompassed under the umbrella term of patriarchy. It can relate to everything from individual families to whether women are allowed to hold positions in government and it can be upheld by cultural norms or legal codes. Rigid

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<sup>50</sup> Oxford English Dictionary.

gender norms that are often created in patriarchal societies place obligations on both men and women to behave certain ways for moral validation. This definition also includes the reference of patriarchy having negative connotations. Due to the expansive nature of the term patriarchy as defined by feminist scholars or the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the negative connotations that the term carries, I have chosen to frame the issues that women have specifically with accessing public transportation primarily in the dialogue of gender roles.

### **Gender Roles in Countries of Origin**

Examining the status of women in the Middle East is complicated by what Doris H. Gray termed “The West’s Obsession with Muslim Women.”<sup>51</sup> This obsession is seen in the early scholarly work about the Middle East that posits the West and Middle East as having “irreconcilable differences concerning the status and role of women. They view the Orient as propagating submission and conferring the status of second-class citizenship, and the Occident as offering liberties, freedom, and equal rights.”<sup>52</sup> The truth is far more complex, because neither region can be seen as the politically or socially homogenous groups they are suggested to be. For example, in Egypt women were given the right to vote in 1956,<sup>53</sup> whereas women in Switzerland could not vote until 1971.<sup>54</sup>

The issue is further obscured by the equation of the terms Arab and Muslim. Each country in the Middle East varies in whether it upholds a secular or religious government. Laws relating to women’s rights also vary dramatically by country, and

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<sup>51</sup> Gray. 2013. (pp.21)

<sup>52</sup> Gray.2013. (pp.22)

<sup>53</sup> Law 73 for 1956 on Exercising of Political Rights.

<sup>54</sup> “Swiss Grant Women Equal Marriage Rights.” 1985.

because only 1/3 of women who immigrate to the United States from the Middle East are Muslim,<sup>55</sup> the robust discourse of Islamic Feminism does not entirely apply.

The women I interviewed, who are representative of the largest nationalities of Arabs in Oregon, were from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Most women I interviewed did not claim to experience overt discrimination in their countries of origin. The majority of them had achieved degrees at least on the level of a Bachelors in their country of origin and were in many ways autonomous of familial oversight. Although they did not drive, most travelled to work or school independently before immigrating to Oregon. However, the definition of patriarchy does not depend on overt discrimination. It is often simply a favoring of men over women, or a rigid positioning that ascribes strong and specific gender roles to partners. This may not interfere with the aspirations of women in a society where they are used to navigating it, but can be detrimental when a family undergoes the stress of moving to a new country.

One of the main ways that women referenced having to work around gender roles in their countries of origin is transportation. Rigid gender roles are clearly present in transportation in many Middle Eastern societies. Public transit and the ability to obtain a driver's license are both gendered. A number of the immigrants from Egypt I interviewed described only using public transit when it was absolutely necessary. They depicted it as dangerous, even though there were often separate cars for men and women. In the women's countries of origin, it is legal for women to have a driver's license. However, none of the women had one they actively used prior to coming to the United States. They cited a number of reasons for this. The women from Egypt did not need to own a car prior to coming to the United States and were uncomfortable with the

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<sup>55</sup> Read. 2004. (pp.58)

hectic roads. The situation for women in Syria before the current unrest was in some ways similar to this. A social service volunteer related that she had become friends with two Syrian women and one day asked, “if women are allowed to drive in Syria. And they answered me with a resounding, yes of course!! So I asked them if they drive, and they both said no - we don't drive,” and the looks on their faces as they answered were shocked.

One of the issues that comes with attempting to directly relate the situation in these women’s countries of origin with their situation in the United States is they have all come to the United States fleeing some manner of political instability or unrest. This means that their lives will have been already disrupted by conflict before they left their countries of origin. This is shown in one Iraqi woman who actually had her driver’s license in Iraq, but only used it for identification; she infrequently drove in her apartment complex, but she was uncomfortable driving on the streets due to the checkpoints in her city. In spite of the gendered nature of transportation in the women’s countries of origin most of them claimed to still be able to access the opportunities for education and employment they desired. However, because none of the women I interviewed drove or relied on public transit prior to coming to the United States, it is challenging when they enter a new society and transit system in the United States. One that they do not know how to use or work with and face additional barriers of language and strained economic circumstances.

### **Gender Roles and the Stress of Mobility**

Regional and national tension give families impetus to immigrate. This makes attempting to determine the status of women in the three aforementioned nations

complicated due to the current political instability. Discriminatory gender roles often become more rigid within families and societies during times of stress, which can lead to women struggling to access the same opportunities they previously had. In her article “Gendering War and Peace: Militarized Masculinities in Northern Ireland” Fidelma Ashe noted that in spite of a feminist movement within Northern Ireland, the war and subsequent instability has remained dominated by men and ideas of masculine power.<sup>56</sup>

This phenomenon has also been studied by Inger Skjelasbaek who documented the growing acknowledgement of ties between warfare and sexual violence. In times of conflict, gender roles can become more rigid within a society. One side in a conflict will often attempt to psychologically attack the opposing side by assaulting women in order to humiliate the men for failing to protect ‘their’ women.<sup>57</sup> These fears played into the hesitancy of some women to travel alone in their country before moving to the United States. One woman said that she did not drive to work when she lived in Baghdad because there were “many checkpoints” where she would be questioned and “my husband and father afraid for me because I am a girl and because I need to put scarf and it’s not good.” It is important to note, as this interview highlights, that this issue can be complicated to interpret since occasionally the fears of women’s families that may limit their mobility can be well grounded when they are interacting with unstable situations. It is a self-feeding cycle. Women are targeted by opposing forces to humiliate their male relatives, and because women are being targeted men become more protective of them. This increased concern about women gives the ‘enemy’ even more reason to target them.

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<sup>56</sup> Ashe. 2012. (pp. 234)

<sup>57</sup> Skjelasbaek. 2001. (pp.218)

War is not the only type of conflict that can reinforce rigid gender roles. The stress on refugee and immigrant families of moving to a new country can also cause this phenomenon. A study of Iraqi refugees living in Syria shows the enormous stress placed on refugee families through the instance of domestic violence against women. Researchers found that among the 486 questionnaires analyzed 146 women (30%) reported experiences of domestic violence. The data also revealed that women who had experienced financial challenges since arriving in Syria and had at least one child in the household were significantly more likely to experience domestic violence. Specifically they found that “The odds of recent exposure to domestic violence for women in households that had borrowed money since arriving in Syria were 2.75 times greater (95% CI: 1.45–4.90) than for women in nonborrowing households. The odds of recent exposure to domestic violence were also 2.20 times greater (95% CI: 1.07–4.54) for women with at least one child in the household than for women with none.”<sup>58</sup>

The financial and emotional strain of having to move to a new culture puts significant stress on the families in a way that is not exclusive to men. For many women the strain to preserve the family can be seen in keeping silent in the face of abuse or discrimination. Significantly, a number of surveys that were not used in the data for the aforementioned study because the women were single, but were discussed at the conclusion of the study, showed that some single mothers self-reported abusing their children. This is again closely tied to the extreme amounts of stress and hardship they are exposed to as they try to settle in a new location.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Tappis. 2012. (pp.289)

<sup>59</sup> Tappis. 2012. (pp.294)

This stress does not always display itself in domestic violence, but often appears in other attempts to gain control over a life that seems to be chaos. In her speech for the Thirtieth Australian Family Therapy Conference in Sydney, Australia Kerrie Jones classified the different periods of strain placed on refugee families. Refugees can carry trauma from the conflict in their country of origin, the journey to their host country, and the numerous stresses of resettlement. This leads many men to feel anxiety about their role as the head of their family and their place in the new society. The need to protect their family from hostile forces in a new environment, which he may not understand, is exacerbated by the ability of children to adapt faster to new languages and cultures.<sup>60</sup> These fears and the sense of having no control over the circumstances of the family's new life can put strain on the father and lead to increased instances of domestic violence and restrictions in movement for the mother and children. In a situation where the father of a family feels that he is losing control he will often attempt to protect his family by reverting to strictly traditional gender roles that place women inflexibly in the home and his wife and children as totally subordinate to him in every decision.

### **Gender Roles as Seen in Interviews**

The women I interviewed did not express that their husband's actions were influenced by fears of their new environment, or a reluctance for them to interact with strangers. These sentiments did surface when I spoke to volunteers at a free ESL program and Catholic Community Services. They expressed that many men are concerned about their wives riding public transit or interacting with men alone. Sometimes this problem can be mitigated by giving women a book of passes so that

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<sup>60</sup> James. 2010. (pp. 280)

they can ride the bus together and don't need to interact with the driver, but usually it results in women just not using mass transit. Some of these fears are tied to men feeling like they need to protect their wives from this new environment. They do not want women to ride public transit alone because they do not speak English, but then there are few ways a woman can improve their English without having to go somewhere that is further than walking distance.

Explicitly, the women I talked to all received the support of their husbands in obtaining a driver's license and employment. However, the way that they described their situations implicitly showed that when they moved to Oregon, familial factors had prevented them from adequately accessing transportation.

Consistent with the findings of Jen'nan Ghazel Read in her survey on the workforce participation of female Arab immigrants, many of the women I interviewed were well-educated, sometimes with a degree, and English proficiency higher than their husbands. Still, without exception the husbands were the first to obtain employment and a driver's license after they arrived in the United States.<sup>61</sup> Most women suggested that their husbands viewed them working as a positive thing, and in some cases a financial necessity. However, it was not enough of a necessity that conditions were not applied - that they should only find employment after the children had left the house, or the women improved their English more, or they could drive and didn't need to use the bus. These were not spoken conditions in some families, but the father of the family was always the first to obtain employment, which meant that a number of issues that could affect either gender's mobility primarily affected the woman.

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<sup>61</sup> Read. 2004. (pp. 53)

One of these problems is children. If one parent is working, the other must take care of any non-school age children during the day and care for school age children outside of school hours. This can make it challenging for them to ride the bus, or attempt to practice driving. This makes it nearly impossible for a husband to teach his wife to drive because it will either involve leaving their children at home or having them in the car while they practice. Most of the women who had received a driver's license were only able to do so because they taught themselves to drive, had an American friend teach them to drive, or hired a driving instructor (something that is cost prohibitive for most families).

The immigrants and refugees I interviewed did not say that their husbands were concerned about them leaving their homes in the United States. Rather, they were affected by a role in their families that shifted even more prominently towards the traditional homemaker while their husband received priority in obtaining employment and easy mobility in the community.

## **Chapter 4: Rights and International Laws**

The issue of a group of minority women having difficulty accessing transportation is a matter of rights. Although it is a local issue, because it involves refugees and immigrants and not only citizens, it is necessary to situate the problem in the broader discourse of international rights. In this way, we can examine how principles of human rights, women's rights, immigrant rights and refugee rights apply to the situation of these women in Oregon.

### **International Human Rights**

The United Nations Charter is the first legally binding international agreement that acknowledges the significance of international human rights. The preamble to the charter declares its goal is “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”<sup>62</sup> While the charter does not define human rights, it acknowledges that they are a crucial force for preventing war and maintaining peace. This language in the United Nations Charter established the idea that the United Nations would not be an organization focused solely on preventing wars, but would be invested in humanitarian efforts as well.

Apart from the United Nations Charter, three documents stand out among the numerous other declarations, treaties, and covenants that contribute to the human rights regime: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural

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<sup>62</sup> Preamble to the UN Charter. 1945.

Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was ratified by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 as a common standard of fundamental human rights for the nations of the world to work toward.<sup>63</sup> While the UDHR is not legally binding, it is acknowledged as the framework used to develop subsequent legally binding treaties.

Two of the most significant documents relating to international human rights are the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Both covenants came into force in 1976, and within three years committees were set up to monitor compliance with both treaties.<sup>64</sup> The two covenants deal with different aspects of human rights and because of this have gained separate numbers of signatories and ascensions. (A state must sign and ratify a treaty for it to be fully binding. When a state has merely signed, it is expected to comply with the spirit of the treaty, but is not legally bound by its provisions until it is ratified -commonly referred to as soft law. All states who sign a treaty are signatories, and all states who ratify it are called members or parties.) This difference in character of the treaties embodies the debate over positive and negative rights. The ICESCR currently has 71 signatories and 165 parties.<sup>65</sup> It is concerned with positive rights (the freedom to do something). It declares that all individuals have a right to expect from the state assistance necessary to exercise their right to work and their rights to an adequate standard of living, among other rights.<sup>66</sup> The ICCPR

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<sup>63</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 1948.

<sup>64</sup> Alston. 1992. (pp. 473).

<sup>65</sup> ICESCR Status. 2017.

<sup>66</sup> ICESCR. 1966.

currently has 74 signatories and 169 parties to it.<sup>67</sup> It is primarily concerned with negative rights (freedom from something). These include the freedom of speech, protection from torture and slavery, equality before courts, freedom from religion persecution, and numerous similar rights. In spite of the debate over the political philosophy of positive and negative rights, the writers of the ICCPR acknowledge that it is a necessary compliment to the ICESCR and does not intend to supplant it. The introduction of the ICCPR states that “the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights.”<sup>68</sup> Although the United States is a member of the ICCPR, it is only a signatory of the ICESCR.

All treaties that the United States has ratified should be reflected in laws of the United States and treaties to which the United States is a signatory should be generally borne out in US law. These broader and more general treaties have created the framework for laws nationally and internationally relating to women’s rights and the rights of refugees and immigrants.

### **International Women’s Rights**

The issue of gender equality has been discussed since the founding of the United Nations. The Commission on the Status of Women was created by the UN General Assembly in 1946, soon after the founding of the United Nations. Its primary function was to research the status of women in the world and report to other organizations

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<sup>67</sup> ICCPR Status. 2017.

<sup>68</sup> ICCPR. 1966.

within the UN who could address the problems they found.<sup>69</sup> This was a step forward but, without significant autonomous power, strides made by the Commission were limited. This stagnation remained until the committee was asked to write a significant human rights document relating to gender discrimination. In 1979, when the United Nations accepted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>70</sup> it transformed women's rights from a feminist and suffragette issue into a prominent concern for liberalizing governments worldwide and a matter of human rights. CEDAW currently has 99 signatories and 189 parties. The United States is among a small number of nations including Palau and Somalia who have yet to ratify CEDAW.<sup>71</sup> Since the US has signed the Convention, but not ratified it, the document is soft law in the United States. CEDAW is important not only because it is the most comprehensive document related to women's rights, but also because it is legally binding and compliance is monitored. Articles 17-22 of the Convention establish a committee that will analyze reports sent by states once they have ratified CEDAW, regarding their progress in achieving the standard outlined in the document.<sup>72</sup> This accountability has proved flawed because CEDAW has little individual power. Some advocate that it should report its judgments on compliance directly to the General Assembly or another UN agency that has more direct power.

The number of issues addressed in the articles of CEDAW is extensive. The Convention defines discrimination against women and outlines state obligations, discussing issues ranging from protecting motherhood and combatting gender

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<sup>69</sup> Zwingel. 2016. (pp38)

<sup>70</sup> Status: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 2017.

<sup>71</sup> CEDAW. 1979.

<sup>72</sup> Alston. 1992. (pp.452)

stereotypes to guaranteeing fundamental political freedoms and equality in marriage.<sup>73</sup>

One remarkable shift in CEDAW from previous discussions of women's rights is

Article 5 which demands that state parties:

shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.<sup>74</sup>

Article 5 shows a change from simply requiring countries to remove discriminatory laws, to ensuring that customary practices do not bar women from any desired education or positions in society based on the belief that they are inferior. The suggestion that the duties of caring for children and seeing that they develop is the responsibility of both parents together is a radical idea for many nations adopting CEDAW. Like much of the Convention, the actual implementation of Article 5 has been mixed. Even though the admission is a large step forward the improvement of women's rights will require significant social change. The Commission that examines how well states are complying with the Convention has had to take a moderate approach when dealing with articles like Article 5 and Article 12 section 1, which guarantees women equal access to services necessary to achieve equality of health care including in the area of family planning,<sup>75</sup> because the interpretation of those terms varies broadly

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<sup>73</sup> CEDAW. 1979.

<sup>74</sup> CEDAW. 1979.

<sup>75</sup> Zwingel. 2016.

and frequently generates hostility from conservative societies. The CEDAW addresses this hostility implicitly by acknowledging that eliminating discrimination against women is not merely a matter of gender equality. The preamble to CEDAW says it is, “aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women.”<sup>76</sup> It is this statement that gives the most hope for change by suggesting that these are not issues that are isolated to women, but it is society as a whole which needs to change. In order to truly end discrimination, the ways that women and men interact in education and professions and the way that families are supported must first be transformed.

### **International Refugee and Immigrant Rights**

My thesis examines two separate groups of women in Oregon: immigrants and refugees. In many instances their situations overlap, but there are significant differences in the legal rights and services rendered to them by the government. In this section I will focus on the international legal structures that affect refugees and immigrants.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 with the mandate of protecting refugees and finding permanent solutions to the issues they face.<sup>77</sup> It does this by providing logistic and material support to accommodate large populations that are suddenly mobile, projects to repair infrastructure in areas with large numbers of displaced persons after cessation of a conflict, and operating in field offices close to crises and capitals where they can be close to the decision makers of a state. The organization now has 4,000 staff that work in 120 countries and it serves not merely refugees as defined under the 1951

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<sup>76</sup> CEDAW (Preamble). 1979.

<sup>77</sup> Hathaway. 2005. (pp.92)

Convention, but a number of other “persons of concern” as well.<sup>78</sup> This list includes, but is not limited to “persons fleeing conflict or serious disturbances of public order, returnees, stateless persons, and internally displaced persons.”<sup>79</sup>

While asylum seekers and refugees have been mentioned in a number of international treaties and covenants, their status and treatment was first codified in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This document defines a refugee as someone who, “Has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; is outside his or her country of origin; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.”<sup>80</sup> This definition was affirmed in the 1957 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which expanded upon and confirmed much of what was found in the Convention. Although according to the 1951 Convention a state is obliged to protect refugees, the decision of whether individuals are eligible to seek asylum in that state and the exact laws which apply to refugees and asylum seekers within the state’s borders are largely up to the individual government to define. States are required to cooperate with the UNHCR, inform the UN Secretary General about the laws and regulations that the government wishes to adopt to ensure the Convention will be applied, and guarantee that asylum seekers will be exempt from reciprocity (that is holding them responsible to the laws of their country of origin, since they do not have the protection of that country), but the UNHCR acknowledges that most national refugee policies are created internally.<sup>81</sup> Refugees are

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<sup>78</sup> Jastrom and Achiro. 2001. (pp.21)

<sup>79</sup> Jastrom and Achiro. 2001. (pp23)

<sup>80</sup> Jastrom and Achiro. 2001. (pp9)

<sup>81</sup> Jastrom and Achiro. 2001. (pp.11,16)

obligated to follow the laws of their host country. The host country is obligated to not exact any special responsibilities from refugees. If refugees are given parity to a nation's own citizens this implies that the refugees will be treated in compliance with the UNDHR, ICCPR, and ICESCR.

The status of immigrants in many countries is somewhat precarious, and can depend on their position as legal or illegal residents of that nation. Human rights are universally held principles and should apply to immigrants in the same way that they apply to citizens of a state. However, the principle of state sovereignty gives states remarkable freedom and authority to uphold their own laws and defend their borders as they deem appropriate. Much of the hesitancy to define international migration law further in terms of individuals has been from states that believe doing so will compromise their sovereignty.<sup>82</sup> This hesitancy is reflected in the somewhat modest support shown to the “Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.” This treaty, which strives to ensure the social and political rights of migrant workers, entered into force on July 1, 2003 and garnered 38 Signatories and 51 Parties. Noticeably absent are all five permanent members of the Security Council and most Western European states.<sup>83</sup> This means that most immigrants do not have specific protections under international law apart from treaties that relate to universal human rights. The exact rights given to immigrants is at the discretion of the individual states and so they must look to the laws of their host state.

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<sup>82</sup> “Protection of Migrants’ Rights and State Sovereignty.” 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Status: Convention for the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. 2017.

## **Implications of International Law**

There are no clauses in human rights instruments that guarantee men or women the right to drive. What the treaties do guarantee is access to a host of other rights to obtain employment, access education, and etc. The right to mobility and to access transportation is implicit in statements of these rights, because without it women have little hope of exercising them. One immigrant woman said in an interview that to her a license was a necessity, “because I needed to get around. I don’t like staying at home and practically there is no way to not have a license because it is very important if I want to go to work.” The bus system was not easily accessible from her home and so without a driver’s license she felt that she could not leave her house to work, take ESL classes, or even adequately grocery shop for her large family. Thus, she was unable to exercise the rights to employment and education guaranteed by international covenants.

In order to facilitate refugees and immigrants accessing certain rights guaranteed in the ICCPR, ICESCR, and CEDAW, a government may need to take measures beyond what is necessary for its citizens to access those rights. This disparity between citizens and immigrants or refugees has garnered far more attention in relation to traditionally political rights than social rights. This is because it is harder to ensure, as CEDAW requires, that a refugee woman will not be hindered by “marriage or maternity” in her right to work<sup>84</sup> than it is to guarantee her right to a fair trial. Refugee families are often from countries with gender roles that are more rigid than the United States. Even in families where both spouses were employed in their country of origin the stress of seeking asylum often means that gender roles become more rigid than before (See Chapter 3). The government must be sensitive to these shifts and to ways

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<sup>84</sup> CEDAW. 1979.(Article 11, Section 2)

that one portion of the population may need extra assistance in exercising their rights. In the context of this paper that means being sensitive to ways that transportation issues may be hindering female refugees' access to equal education, opportunities for employment, and other resources.

The situation of immigrants' access to rights is similar to that of refugees. Women who have immigrated legally to the U.S. should be able to enjoy the same rights as their counterparts within the United States. This is not always the case because women can remain uninformed of their rights. Simply because they have come to the United States through the immigration lottery and not by receiving refugee status does not mean that the government is excused of responsibility to assist them in achieving their rights. When the ICCPR in Article 2 requires that states respect and ensure the rights of the Covenant to all individuals within its territory regardless of "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" it is not favoring a national population over one that is naturalized. The Covenant grants that all individuals should be given those rights.

## **Chapter 5: Proposals**

Proposing solutions for a complicated problem such as the one discussed in this paper confronts a number of challenges. The first is that they must be generally feasible. There are ideal case scenarios for most problems, but these are usually not immediately achievable. Issues of finance and politics frequently stand in the way of what may seem to be the most straightforward solutions. A proposal must also be in appropriate scale. It would be irrational for me to demand that the U.S. Department of Transportation restructure all of its education or language policies. Instead, in this circumstance I should advocate for them to augment existing resources and services. Finally, it needs to target the population that I am addressing: women from the Middle East and North Africa who have immigrated to Oregon. This is a challenge because many solutions that the women I interviewed recommended assist both men and women. In order to account for this, some of the proposals I suggest will benefit both men and women and some will target issues that I have found that relate to women specifically.

### **Proposal 1: Education**

A woman came to the United States with her children on a tourist visa to seek asylum, while her husband remained in the Middle East to work and support them as they settled. She had never driven a car before or really paid attention to how cars work. Initially she used Uber to get around, but that quickly became too expensive so she started to take buses. She found that buses were also impractical in a suburban area. One day she rode the bus to a car dealership and bought a brand new car without test driving it, allowing her to purchase it without presenting a driver's license. She got in the car and didn't know how to turn it on. Someone from the dealership helped her to

turn it on and she drove off the lot and home. She had no driver's license, permit, or practical experience. Each day her children would want to go somewhere new that was a little further away and she would challenge herself to learn to drive on new roads. Eventually, a few weeks after her asylum application was approved, she obtained her driver's license. However, it would have been detrimental for her application had she been arrested driving without a license or insurance.

The woman described above was vaguely familiar with the laws of the United States, but was not aware of the severe consequences of violating driving laws. This story is actually not as unique as one would expect among refugee and immigrant women from the Middle East. Due to economic necessity or a lack of awareness, a number of women that I have heard about through interviews with Arab women and social service employees, and while volunteering as a driving instructor have either driven without a license or had friends or clients who have. One way to combat this issue is to improve the way that information is disseminated to these refugees and immigrants. I propose that this could be done through a competitive grant offered to University Arabic programs to translate pertinent DMV materials into Arabic.

Each year the Oregon Department of Transportation offers a number of grants through four main programs: Statewide Transportation Program, ConnectOregon, Transportation and Growth Management, and Statewide Planning and Research.<sup>85</sup> Although this grant would be outside the normal projects which are awarded grants, it could fit under the category of Transportation and Growth Management (TGM). The target areas of TGM grants are currently land use and transportation. However, the goals of the program are to support "community efforts to expand transportation choices

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<sup>85</sup> "Transportation Development - Planning Transportation Funding Programs."

for people ... TGM works in partnership with local governments to create vibrant, livable places in which people can walk, bike, take transit or drive where they want to go.”<sup>86</sup> Since there are no grants related specifically to education materials it would not be unreasonable to place the grant I am proposing under this category. It is attempting to provide better access to a variety of transportation methods for a number of groups in the community.

The grant would be competitive in nature and offered to Universities in Oregon with Arabic programs. Four-hundred level students be given the opportunity to translate a number of materials into Arabic. The materials translated would not be the Oregon Driver’s Manual, but rather other supporting documents and pamphlets that would give instructions about using public transit, the process of obtaining a driver’s license, Oregon laws about car insurance and car seats, and other relevant topics. All materials would have English and Arabic printed side-by-side and be translated into Modern Standard Arabic, as this is the type of Arabic taught at Universities. They would be distributed at the Oregon DMV field offices, as well as, with volags that are contracted by the Department of Human Services, and other relevant groups that work with immigrants and refugees in Oregon.

One issue that may be encountered in implementing this proposal is that universities teach students primarily Modern Standard Arabic, not a dialect. This could present problems for women who are not familiar with MSA and are more comfortable reading in their own dialect. However, one of the advantages of placing an Arabic and English text side-by-side is that individuals will be able to use the English as reference for any unfamiliar words in the Arabic text and when reading both side by side they will

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<sup>86</sup> “Transportation Development - Planning Transportation Funding Programs.”

become familiar with important English vocabulary relating to driving that they might not otherwise be familiar with.

This proposal would benefit immigrants and refugees, Oregon students studying Arabic, and the communities that those groups are a part of. The legal and practical information will be invaluable for immigrants and refugees who are trying to navigate a new transportation system. It would keep them from inadvertently breaking laws and endangering their status, and empower them by making it easier for them to access public transportation and obtain driver's licenses. It would benefit students by giving them a way to augment 400-level Arabic classes with a course that would require studying a set of very practical vocabulary words and an amount of research that will benefit them in further studies and professional pursuits. Additionally, as the refugee crisis in Syria deepens many students in Oregon have felt an increased interest in helping refugees in a tangible way.<sup>87</sup> Finally, it would help the communities that would be safer as a result of better education for everyone getting behind the wheel of a car. Communities would also have more resources to extend to and assist their immigrant and refugee neighbors.

### **Proposal 2: Community Networks**

One woman wanted to be clear that she thought women who come to Portland from the Middle East have it much easier than she did when she came with her family a number of years ago. To her, this is because the number of other families from her country of origin in Portland has grown so much. The community is beginning to be able to provide internal support for itself through groups like the Iraqi Society of

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<sup>87</sup>Alkhadher. 2015 , Oregon Live. 2012.

Oregon and women are starting to be resources for one another. Developments in technology have also assisted this. Groups on messaging apps like Viber or Whatsapp help women as they adjust to life in Oregon. There is one group chat that has at least sixty women on it, some who speak English and some who are only able to speak Arabic still. They are able to ask each other questions about Halal stores, how to use the buses to get to a doctor's appointment, or even just to sell and trade furniture amongst themselves. The woman contrasted these new developments to when she arrived, before there were even smart phones to help translate her questions in grocery stores.

In a project that has focused a great deal on the resources provided to immigrants and refugees it is important to note the vital role that community based organizations can play. This is true whether it is churches that offer ESL classes or community groups based on cultural values or national origin. These organizations are invaluable resources for women and yet, only one woman I interviewed mentioned them and she had not even personally made use of them. Confusing websites and a lack of clarity surrounding services was an issue that I found throughout my research. There needs to be a clearer way of linking female immigrants and refugees in Oregon to resources that are available to them to help them with transportation.

My first proposal called for disseminating information related to driving and transportation services in Oregon to individuals. While this proposal in some ways has a similar goal, it focuses more broadly on connecting women with agencies and community groups that are there to assist them. Most voluntary organizations do not have a large budget for Public Relations (PR) work. While PR may not seem like the logical way for the State of Oregon to spend money to help refugees, trying to connect

women with services that are already available from non-profits would prove less expensive than creating a new organization or commission to investigate the problem.

Many PR firms have recently expanded to include branches outside of marketing and public relations. The firms' work includes in depth research, facilitation of public discussions and surveys, and otherwise reaching out to the public in whatever way possible to get them involved in a project.<sup>88</sup> This type of specific analysis could be invaluable for a non-profit working with refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers that is having trouble reaching segments of that population.

There are clear ways that information can be disseminated through the state for refugee women, but female asylum seekers and immigrants can be harder to reach. Hiring a PR firm even for just a few months could help State and non-profit service providers discover how to better reach women from the Middle East and North Africa and educate them about their options for support in obtaining a driver's license or using public transit.

One flaw of this proposal is that it is only working with existing resources. That can be seen as a benefit since there are existing resources that women are not aware of. However, after the research and interviews I have used to examine this topic it is clear there are gaps in the services available to women that can assist them in using public transit that this proposal would not address.

This proposal would directly benefit refugee and immigrant women. One of the most striking things that a women said in an interview for this project was that to her getting a driver's license was a necessity, because she liked to leave her house. If women feel trapped in their homes and unable to navigate transportation in their new

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<sup>88</sup> One example of this type of PR firm is Seattle based PRR.

community they are likely unaware of the resources that are already available to them. The proposal will also benefit the State of Oregon by being less expensive long term than trying to set up a new committee to deal with issues that women are facing accessing transportation.

### **Proposal 3: Driving Lessons**

A woman was very thankful that she had received refugee status in the United States, but found that although it was safer to live here, many things about her personal life were harder. In her country of origin, her husband had run a small business and she had worked in a lab. She had obtained an advanced science degree at a university while living at her parent's house and when she was married had moved in with her husband's family. This allowed her to work while her female in-laws took care of the house and even took care of her baby when she had one. Her family was nervous about her driving through checkpoints alone, so a male family member would drive her to and from work every day. When she arrived in the United States, this all changed. She was pregnant with twins and no longer had as much support for caring for her children, in addition to this she had to learn to cook and take care of her own house. Her husband got a job working at a store and a license to drive back and forth, but she struggled at first to get out. She had three children under five and so to ride the bus even to the grocery store was impractical. She was wholly overwhelmed by her new life.

When families come from the Middle East and North Africa to the United States the first priority is to obtain employment. If there are any children, the wife will usually end up at home taking care of them. This makes it difficult for her to learn to drive because she would have learn with her husband and children in the car at a time when

he is not working. It can also be financially and practically difficult for her to use public transportation with her children. These factors combine to create a wide disparity in the resources that men and women can access. One way to combat these issues is to provide women with an opportunity to take driving lessons at no cost.

The specifics of how a community organization offering driving lessons should be run would be up to the group that puts it on, but classes should have a few common features. Before the class begins, volunteers will either coordinate rides for women in their own vehicles or ride public transit with them to the site of the classes. Volunteers will be divided into two groups. One group will provide childcare at the facility the classes are being run out of, so that while the women are learning to drive they do not have their children in the car and also do not have to worry about finding and potentially paying someone to watch them. This will remove one of the logistical challenges that was constantly mentioned in interviews. The other group of volunteers will alternately teach lessons on traffic laws and driving regulations to prepare women for the license test, or will give women driving lessons.

If possible, the driving instructors would be mostly women as a number of the individuals interviewed mentioned that they feel more intimidated when they practice driving with men. As many driving instructors and classroom volunteers as possible will have some familiarity with the Arabic language. This is not necessary for all volunteers, but will allow for the students who are most unfamiliar with English to have extra assistance if necessary.

As with any community program that is run largely by volunteers the actual appearance of the workshops will change based on the individuals involved and the

resources that they bring. Ideally, the community group running the workshop would be able to hire or obtain volunteer services from a professional driving instructor, but that is not necessary for its success. Many women simply need time behind the wheel to gain confidence or an opportunity to drive at all. Regardless of who is teaching the actual driving lessons, this proposal will also involve the charity group that is participating obtaining careful legal counsel on liability forms and the proper insurance for the vehicles that are being used.

One of the biggest challenges this proposal is that it is logistically complicated. Because it is volunteer run the effectiveness of the program could fluctuate based on the logistical capabilities of the organization that is putting it on. Additionally, although I have touched on a possible way to make insurance work, the issue of accident liability is one that makes many individuals hesitant to teach driving lessons or let their car be used to instruct new drivers.

One of the benefits of this proposal is that it will provide ways to work around issues that bar female immigrants and refugees specifically from obtaining a driver's license. It will also benefit the Oregon DMV as local offices will not need to facilitate written and driving tests for as many women who fail them multiple times because they have not been able to prepare adequately for them. It is also another excellent way to foster relationships between refugee and immigrant communities. In teaching women to drive community volunteers will become invested in their success. These relationships will help the women integrate into Oregon society better and will allow volunteers to interact with a part of their community that may otherwise seem foreign to them.

## **Glossary of Acronyms**

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

DMV- Department of Motor Vehicles

ESL-English Second Language

FY-Fiscal Year

ICCPR-International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

INA-Immigrant and Nationality Act

LEP-Limited English Proficient

MENA- Middle East and North Africa

OEMS-Office of Equity and Multicultural Services

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Rights

UN- United Nations

UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

US-United States

USCIS –United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

USRAP-United States Refugee Admissions Program

Volags-Voluntary Organizations

## Interview Questions

### *General:*

1. -Where are you from?
2. -How long have you been in the US?
3. -Why did you move to the US?
4. -Why did you move to this area specifically?
5. -Do you have kids? (How many?) How old were they when you came to the US?

### *Driving:*

6. -Do you have a driver's license?
7. -Did you have a license prior to coming to the US?
8. -How long were you in the US before you got your driver's license?
9. -Do you use public transit/ have you relied on it at any point to get around?
10. -Did you use public transit before coming to the US?
11. -Have you ever driven without a license?
12. -Was it hard to go about your daily life before you got a car?
13. Did you work before coming to the US?
14. Do you work now?
15. -How did your family feel about you needing to work? Was it challenging?
16. -How does your family feel about your driving?
17. -Do they think you're a good driver?
18. -Do you know people whose families responded differently to the challenge of getting a driver's license?
19. -How did you feel about getting a driver's license?

20. -Is driving stressful?
21. -How did you practice driving?
22. -Did you practice with a friend or family member?
23. -How did you study for the permit/ license test?
24. -Did you have a hard time using the driver's manual/ was it confusing?
25. -Is there anything that would have made the transition to driving and using public transit easier for you?

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