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“I Want Ketchup on my Rice”: The Role of Child Agency on Arab Migrant Families Food and Foodways

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“I Want Ketchup on my Rice”: The Role of Child Agency on Arab Migrant Families Food and Foodways

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Anthropology with a concentration in Biocultural Medical Anthropology
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Keywords: Ecological Model of Food and Nutrition, Developmental Niche Theoretical Framework, Nutritional Anthropology, Vignettes, Free-listing, Focus Groups.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved father, Khuzaim Alkhuzaim, who passed away on November 13, 2017. He always supported me throughout the process of my education in the United States. I promised him I would make our family proud by achieving this academic goal, and I wish that he were still here today to see this milestone. His is gone but never forgotten.
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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research study examines changes in food and foodways (food habits) among Arab migrant families in a small community in Tampa, Florida. It also explores how those families’ children may play a role in the process of change. Within this community, I conducted my research study at a private school, where I recruited families with children between the ages of eight and seventeen. In applying the ecological model of food and nutrition and the developmental niche theoretical framework, this research draws on qualitative methods, including structured interviews with parents; focus group discussion with parents; a food survey; and children’s focus groups that included engaging activities such as vignettes (role playing), free-listing and sorting, and one-day food menus. I used MAXQDA 18 software for qualitative data analysis, and the results show that the main factors aiding in post-migration food and foodways changes are time constraints (lifestyle), ingredients, and availability and accessibility of permissible food (halal). Parent did not mention their children as a main factor; however, they perceive influence of their children. Feeding practices such as rewarding, restriction, forcing, and family meals were emerging themes, and children express their agency around those practices. Children developed their own agency regarding food because of their social and physical environments. Older children perceived their influence on their families’ food and foodways by introducing food items to their own families.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“I Want Ketchup on my Rice”

The story behind the quote I used for the title “I want ketchup on my rice” elucidates an unusual behavior I noticed in one of my children. I had seen funny eating habits emerge in my older son Dhari, who is a non-migrant resident of the United State. Dhari came to the United States when he was 3 years old. Back home in Kuwait, he was exposed to a fair amount of traditional and western food due to the globalization of food, with more emphasis on the former. However, that did not affect the way he ate food in Kuwait. He still enjoyed eating our traditional food. In Kuwait, our eating norm was having traditional food during the weekday and anticipating grab-n-go western food on the weekends.

Cooking a traditional dish like we did in Kuwait was not an easy task once we moved to the United States. It was not because of the accessibility or availability of certain food ingredients or meats, but how to deliver a satisfying traditional dish for our kids. Our traditional foods, which mainly consists of rice and chicken, beef, and vegetable stew, are time consuming to prepare and the recipes cannot be changed much. We tried to change the recipes, order food from some local ethnic restaurants, and use other feeding strategies, but they did not solve the problem, which was how to feed our son the traditional meals that we cooked.
With time, Dhari requested that ketchup be added on his stew and rice, which is a contradiction of what we eat with rice because we don’t use ketchup with rice. I never questioned how contradicting this eating behavior was; I just knew that eating rice and ketchup is not the norm in our culture. But, Dhari enjoys the sweet taste of ketchup with his food and started adding it to all this food. After we were residents in the United States for a couple of years, Dhari’s indulgence for eating traditional food dwindled, and he leaned more toward traditional American food. As parents, we have to find a middle ground where we can still enjoy eating our traditional food but at the same time cook whatever the kids will eat.

The story of my son’s changing eating habits exemplifies how children’s eating behavior may change over time due to many factors, such as personal, behavioral, familial, sociocultural, and even more distal factors. I am not presenting these factors at that moment. However, my intention in using this example is to question whether recent migrant families with native American born children confront the same issues as we did: do they face a wave of food and foodways changes post migration and how, if any, do their children play a role in that change? Children can be viewed as active social agents in society with rapidly changing personalities; thus, their active role in responding to food and foodways within their families and maybe their community cannot be overlooked. It is quite possible that children of migrant families in the United States have a direct influence on changing food consumption, preparation, and purchases within their families.
Statement of the problem

People face tremendous changes when migrating to a new country. The process of migration requires adapting to a new lifestyle often different from the culture in the migrants’ country of origin. Among the most significant changes are those in food and foodways. Kraut (1979) states that foodways have been “instrumental in maintaining ethnic distinctions among migrants to the United States and their descendants” (410). Food and foodways have been examined in various migrant populations and ethnic minority groups in the United States, such as Latinos and Asians, because they constitute a substantial portion of the total U.S. population. However, there is a paucity of literature concerned with food and foodways changes post migration, particularly within Arab American migrant families. With increasing numbers of U.S. Arab migrants in past decades and the absence of previous work on this ethnic minority, it is essential to analyze this population’s food and foodways changes following their migration to the United States.

In addition, it is necessary to analyze if migrant families’ children have a role in the process of the change and whether those children express food agency or not. Different studies have shown that children of migrant families influence the family’s food choices by bringing new ideas regarding food and food preferences, and they become part of the family decision-making regarding food and foodways (Patil Hadley, and Nahayo 2009; Jonsson, Hallberg, and Gustafsson 2002; Mellin-Olsen and Wandel 2005; Wilson and Renzaho 2014). However, methods utilized in those studies were limited to only parent perspectives while the children’s voices have been overlooked in the process of food and foodways changes among migrant populations. Part of the
analysis of child agency is investigating parental feeding beliefs and practices and how culture shapes those practices. It is important to assess those parental beliefs and practices about child feeding and their instantiation in practices at different physical and social settings because they primarily shape the child’s experiences with regard to food.

The availability of a sample population is limited in the United States due to the vague definition of what is considered an Arab American group. The Arab cohort comprises multiple countries in Asia and North Africa as well as various languages and religions. For this research, the aim is to select the umbrella term “Arab American migrant population” that shares one identity, namely Arabic-speaking migrant families.

Significance

This research study contributes to the anthropology of children and their role in the food and foodways changes of their families post migration, which has not been well understood, especially in the Arab American population. The methodology used to capture children's voices will add to the anthropological literature on childhood with an emphasis on how children express their independence toward food. Moreover, the research will advance theoretical understanding of the ecological model of food and nutrition. This study is essential to the ecological model because research on food and foodways changes among migrants focused on either the acculturation or dietary acculturation model and emphasizes that the acculturation model is best suited to study changes in migrant populations For example, several studies use single-measures, such as the length of residence, English proficiency, higher education, and higher income when examining dietary patterns among Asian migrants (Lesser, Gasevic, and Lear 2014; Liu, Berhane, and Tseng 2010; Lv and Cason 2004; Tseng, Wright, and
Fang 2015) and Hispanics and Latinos (Dave et al. 2009; Duffey et al. 2008; Lin, Bermudez, and Tucker 2003). However, because general and dietary acculturation have been criticized for being unidimensional and unidirectional (Himmelgreen et al. 2007, 2014; Weisberg-Shapior and Devine 2015), the acculturation concept does not fully capture dietary changes among migrant populations. Also, this study is essential to the developmental niche theoretical framework to understand the child food environment and their influences on their family food and foodways. Studies that implemented the developmental niche theoretical framework were about migrant parental practices and beliefs and play (Cote and Bornstein 2005; Parmar, Harkness, Super 2004), school success (Chao 2000), and health development (Moscardino, Nwuob, and Axia 2006).

To the best of my knowledge, no study has been conducted on parental practices and beliefs with regard to child feeding behaviors, which is the main element in this research. The data collected provides insight into how significant children are in food and foodways changes in the Arab American migrant population and can be compared with future research on different ethnic minorities in the United States. The data gathered in this study can be useful in other disciplines, such as sociology and public health. This research sheds light on food and foodways changes post migration, providing information on overall choices, preparation, and consumption of both traditional Arabic “ethnic” foods and Westernized food.

Finally, this study contributes to the term “Arab American,” which currently encompasses many distinct ethnic identities with different religions, nationalities, and geopolitical identities, making it rather challenging to be compared with other data.
Therefore, this study can provide an emic approach about how participants identify themselves and whether this identification is based on nationality, religious affiliation, or both. In addition, using “Arab American” affects the interpretation and comparability of the data with our resources. Thus, this research intends to use more specific, less inclusive terms such as Lebanese-American and Syrian-American.

The Research Study Aims and Methods

The study has two main inquiries that are more exploratory than assumptive in nature; they questions are:

1. How and why do Arab American families' food and foodways change after migration to the United States?
2. How does children's agency with regard to food play a role in the changing food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?

I extended these main research questions with the following sub-questions:

A. What are dominant factors aiding in the changes of food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?
B. How do such changes in food and foodways behavior affect migrant families?
C. What are some parental and community beliefs and practices regarding how to feed their children?
D. What determinants shape child agency in family food behaviors?
E. How do children express agency regarding food to influence food and foodways in Arab American families?
To engage with the children and their parents, I conducted a qualitative study at mainly one school site in Tampa, Florida. The school has a large migrant population of Arabs, which is part of a community in Tampa. The school founded in 2004 and serve education from Pre-K through 12\textsuperscript{th} grade. I also attended the school activities such as Cultural Day and Black History Day. Incorporating participant observation into the research study was necessary due to the nature of the study and building a trustworthy relationship with the children. In order to understand food and foodways change post migration, I conducted formal and informal interviews with parents with Arabic descent and their children. I worked with children between the ages of 8-17 in group interviews (focus group) to investigate child agency toward food. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, I utilized other methods, such as free-listing, during the children focus groups to capture foods commonly consumed among children and adolescents in this community. I also utilized vignettes (role-playing), a method to capture negotiation patterns between child and parents on food occasions. The data collecting and fieldwork were conducted right after the research study was approved on April 5, 2015, by the Intuitional Review Board (IRB) at University of South Florida under study number: Pro00029390.

The methods were used to address post migration food and foodways changes among Arab Americans through the ecological model of food and nutrition by Pelto and colleagues (2012). This model provides a holistic analysis of the complex factors that affect the food and nutrition of Arab American families under the influence of global forces. Also, methods were used to address questions mentioned previously through the developmental niche theoretical framework by Super and Harkness (1986). The
developmental niche also “attempts to describe this environment from the point of view of the child in order to understand processes of development and acquisition of culture” (Super and Harkness 1986, 552).

**Definitions**

- Foodways is anything that deals with eating, which involves consumption, acquisition, preparation, and who is at the table (De La Peña and Lawrance, 2011).

- The term migrant is used instead of immigrant in this research study “because it captures both the process of leaving a former place and that of arriving in a new place” (Castaneda 2010, 8).

- Arab American migrants in population in the research study refer to all families with parents whose first language is Arabic and who migrated to the United States for a minimum of one year.

- Children in this research study refers to all children between the ages of eight to seventeen years old (unless it’s been specified in the methods and results chapters by younger children 8-12 and older children 13-17).

**Arab American Umbrella Term**

The United States Census Bureau defines White as “[a] person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” (Census Bureau, under Race-About). In an interview, former Executive Director of the Arab American Institute (AAI) Helen Hatab Samhan commented on the white racial designation for
persons from the Middle East, noting that “populations from the Middle East are sufficiently distinguishable from the European-based white majority” In addition, “immigrants were confused by the present paradigm of racial options and their classification by governments as ‘white’”. Samhan asked for “sub-race ethnic-group identification that followed the model of Asian Americans or Hispanics Americans” (Kayyali 2013, 1309). Samhan supports her claim by indicating that Hispanic Americans share common geographic and linguistic roots, do not easily fit under the Black/White racial classification, and, like Asian/Pacific Islanders, are united by geographical region, representing several nationalities and languages (Kayyali 2013).

Different racial traits signify and affect the sense of belonging to the ‘white’ racial category among Arab Americans (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007). According to Ajrouch and Kusow (2007), ‘white’ identity is negotiable based on different ethnic traits among Middle Eastern/Arab people. Immigrant status, national origin, religious affiliation, and the acceptance or rejection of an Arab American pan-ethnic label are of the predominate traits that effect the assimilation to ‘white’. Ajrouch and Jamal (2007) showed that immigrants were ascribed an ethnic or racial identity upon arrival to the United States but that they have restructured or reconstructed this label to fit their national or religious profile or everyday needs. Although the umbrella term of Arab American suggests homogeneity, the authors found that those who embrace the White label or identity find potential emotional and social resources that lead to better opportunities and enrichment. On the other hand, those who do not embrace the pan-ethnic Arab American label express some association with the label even though the label might act as an obstruction to their mobility toward Whiteness. National origin also
differs among the participants in the study. Those who had a longer history of migration and have consequently gained economic and social success in the United States, such as Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, were less likely to perceive themselves as minorities compared with Iraqi and Yemeni participants. Muslims participants were more likely to claim an “Other” identity and not claim a White racial identity compared with Christians, “hinting that an Other identity may serve as a means of asserting one’s own cultural distinctiveness while simultaneously distancing oneself from the mainstream” (Ajrouch and Jamal 2007, 873).

A study conducted by Dallo, Ajrouch, and Al-Snih (2008) discerned profiles of Arab Americans by examining individuals who reported Arab/non-Arab vs. Arab-only ancestry using the 1980 and 2000 census data. Using demographic, socioeconomic, and acculturation indications, the study results showed that the pattern of Arab-only vs. Arab/non-Arab ancestry changed over time, which indicates heterogeneity and the complexity of the umbrella term Arab American (Dalio, Ajrouch, and Al-Snih 2008). Abdelhady (2014) identified three waves of Arab migrations and explained how the sociohistorical periods influenced and complicated Arabs’ identity and consequently their interaction with their host cultures. In addition, Samhan (2014) elucidated the complexity of the Arab American umbrella term by discussing religious diversity within the Muslim and Christian religions and how “differential social integration trends among Muslim and Christian immigrants” affected the identity development of this population. The target population for my research study is individuals who descended and migrated from one of the twenty-two Arab countries. In addition, the inclusion criteria included Muslim people.
**Organization of the Chapters**

Chapter two provides the literature background for this research study. It consists of eight intertwined sections. The first section provides a history of food studies in anthropology by presenting some scholars who contributed to food studies. The second section focuses on why we study food and foodways. The third section takes a different route and looks at childhood studies from an anthropological perspective. The fourth section answers the question of why we do research with children. Following childhood studies, we will present studies of children’s role in their families’ decision-making on food. The sixth section will discuss factors that shapes the child food environment. The seventh section includes information on parenting styles and feeding practices and how they pay an important role in shaping child food preferences. Finally, the last section of this chapter talks about halal food globalization.

Chapter three includes an overview of model and theoretical frameworks; the first is the ecological model of food and nutrition, and the second is the developmental niche. Both are used as a guiding framework for this research study. Chapter four outlines the methodology used to tackle the research questions. It consists of participant observation, qualitative interviews, focus groups with parents (mothers only) and children focus groups. This chapter also discusses my positionality as a researcher and my role within the community that impacted the way I participated in this community. Chapter four also provides details on the methods used with children and what are some the ethical consideration when conducting research with children.

The results are divided into three chapters; chapter five provides the results of food and foodways changes post migration. Chapter six gives an overview on parental
feeding practices and why there are important. Chapter seven provides results of the role of children in the food and foodways changes in their families. Chapter 8 interprets the findings in the context of an ecological model of food and nutrition and the developmental niche theoretical framework and provides the future work, limitations of the research study, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE BACKGROUNDS

Introduction

The literature offers an understanding of the food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families to the United States and the how children play a role on these changes. This literature background includes different studies on food, such as dietary changes among migrants, parenting feeding style and practices, and globalization of food. In addition, the background includes literature on the history of food studies, the anthropology of childhood, and child agency. The literature background is outlined in the following nine sections: 1) history of food studies in anthropology, 2) the reason to study food and foodways, 3) anthropology of childhood, 4) the reason to conduct research with children, 5) children’s role in family decision-making on food, 6) child food environments: factors, 7) parenting style and feeding practices, and 8) food and religion: globalization of ‘halal.’

History of Food Studies in Anthropology

A study of the history of food studies reveals that anthropologists were interested in examining food and human diets from several perspectives: 1) ecological and market availabilities of foods, 2) sociocultural classification of foods (edible or inedible, ranking preferred or less preferred) and rules of distribution, and 3) nutritional and medical
consequences of consumption and food, which include food sharing (Messer 1984). The anthropologist Margaret Mead was one of the pioneers in this field during World War II. Mead’s interest was in foodways (food habits); she committed to developing ways to prepare America for food rationing during anticipated wartimes. Also, her commitment to the Committee on Food Habits led to the publications of the Manual for the Study of Food Habits in 1945 and Food Habits Research: The Problems of 1960s (1964). Early British social anthropologists’ studies conducted in colonial African before World War II were interested to understand the interrelationship between food supplies, hunger, social organization, and changing cultures disrupted by British rule (Messer, 1984). A classic work by a British social anthropologist in Bemba by Audrey Richards (1939) concluded that food underproduction and undernutrition set in because of male had been drawn away from agricultural roles to mining due to British economical interested (Messer, 1984).

Although diversity exists within populations or groups in terms of food habits, the intent was to improve nutritional habits among Americans and citizens globally by applying scientific methods (Himmelgreen and Crooks, 2005). Marvin Harris, an American anthropologist, looked at certain food prohibitions across the globe and tried to explain them in terms of the ecological settings in which various people live, such as the prohibition of beef consumption among Asian Indians and taboos regarding pork consumption among Muslims and Jews. The explanation of Islamic taboo of pig consumption “represents an unassailably ‘correct’ ecological and economic decisions embodying thousands of years of collective wisdom and practical experience” (Harris,
2012: 71) and was intended to maintain an ecological balance in the local environment and/or for redistributing food (Mintz and Bu Bois, 2002).

The work of Claude Levi-Strauss and Mary Douglas reflected some of the major developments in anthropology regarding food following World War II. Levi-Strauss studied the relationship between the meaning of food and totems. He also examined the ways in which people organize themselves and how they ascribe social status. In other words, he looked at what people consume and what those foods mean in terms of social status or power—for example, which foods were associated with a high or low social status or the foods associated with a religion (Himmelgreen and Crooks 2005). Another important figure, Mary Douglas, a British anthropologist, examined the meaningfulness of food or social attitudes toward food. Douglas focused on meals and what food means at the table in many contexts. She found that food has symbolic importance that provides insight into individuals, families, and cultures. Douglas also looked at food in terms of religion, such as food restrictions and food taboos, and how food can be used to interpret religious conventions (Himmelgreen and Crooks, 2005).

Around 1980, a list of scholars observed a number of publications that brought food studies to center attention in anthropology (Klein and Watson 2016). Among those scholars was Sidney Mintz and his 1986 work Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History. Mintz provided a historical study of sugar production in the Caribbean to its transformation in England as well as the consumption of sugar as a luxurious food to everyday goods (Mintz 1986). Also, it has been argued the work of British social anthropologist Jack Goody (1982) established an anthropology of food (Klein 2014). Goody’s work on comparative sociology of Eurasia and sub-Saharan
culinary “explain why only some societies develop ‘high cuisines,’ and subsequently moves beyond this question to explore the development and diffusion of industrial foods through the world system” (Klein and Watson 2016, 3).

In the decade following the 1980s, food ethnographies expanded into different foci and ideas among anthropologists. For example, working on the global food system, Richard Wilk (2006) demonstrated that much of the local culinary of Belizean food could be understood through globalization, class differentiation, and colonialism (Wilk 2006). David Sutton studied how culinary defines senses, body, and memory (Sutton, 2001). Other anthropologists examined seasonal fluctuations in nutritional status and subsistence agriculture among women in highland Lesotho’s (Himmelgreen and Romero-Daza, 1994). Andrea Wiley looked at milk production and consumption as a single food commodity, exploring the factors that influenced milk consumption around the world (Wiley, 2016).

The Reason to Study Food and Foodways

According to Pelto et al., “nutritional anthropology is fundamentally concerned with understanding the interrelationships of biological and social forces in shaping human food use and the nutritional status of individuals and populations” (Pelto et al., 2012:1). The emergence of the nutritional anthropology field after several symposia and publications addresses local and global nutritional issues through “integration of the biocultural approach, evolutionary theory, and methods from cultural and physical anthropology and the nutritional sciences” (Himmelgreen and Crooks, 2005: 152).
A distinct line of research in nutritional anthropology is the study of food and food habits (i.e., foodways), which has developed as a fundamental feature of anthropology in the 21st century (Klein and Watson 2016). Simply, the term foodways is a combination of two words, ‘food’ and ‘way’ (Muhammad et al, 2016). Foodways developed in popular and scholarly literature to discuss anything that addresses eating, which involves consumption, acquisition, preparation, and who is at the table (De La Peña and Lawrance, 2011). Elaborately, foodways is defined as cultural and geographical differences in what is recognized as edible, mostly obviously due to: culturally specific food taboos; locally distinctive recipes, and ingredients; and variation in the ways food are organized into meal occasions, through local convention of order, combination and social participation. [Cloke, 2000: 274].

Thus, the study of food and foodways is not merely about the amount of caloric intake; rather, it provides a holistic understanding of food and foodways, from the personal to societal level and across cultures.

So, why do we eat what we eat? Food is more than what is ecologically available and culturally appropriate. Food habits develops to meet biological and nutritional needs as well. According to Dufour and colleagues, “food is rich with social and ideological meaning, food systems, reflect larger systems of thought, power, and control” (Dufour, Goodman, and Pelto, 2013, 131). “India’s Sacred Cow” by Marvin Harris is an example that explains why we eat what we eat from a materialist-ecological approach. Hindus’ prohibition of slaughtering and eating cows contributes more than nutritional needs. Cows contribute to the Hindu local economy by providing milk, plowing and hauling, and
using soil fertilizer. The sacred cow is not just an ignorant belief; it’s important to
maintaining Indian society (Harris 1978). Another example is the consumption of insects
by Takanoan Indians in Northwest Amazon. The Tukanoans often incorporate insects in
their diet to overcome the protein and fat deficiencies during seasonal availability of fish
(Dufour 1987).

We give more attention to foodways studies because they also provide a
symbolic explanation regarding why we eat what we eat. In the study of “The children
Cry for Bread: Hegemony and Transformation of Consumption,” (1989) Mary
Weismantel discusses the symbolic meaning of substitution of wheat bread for barley
gruel in morning meal among Zumbague, an indigenous parish of highland Ecuador.
The author expresses a symbolic relationship within Zumbague families and represents
an image of indigenous social history. Weismantel demonstrates how children ask for
the dry bread purchased from the local market, which is considered a luxurious food
item, instead of the home grown processed barley gruel. Beside the rejection of barley
gruel consumption by Zumbague’s children, the consumption of bread invokes an image
of conquest and economic exploitation as well as modern life and non-indigenous
culture (Weismantel 1989).

Foodways studies also elucidates social power behind food consumption,
preparation, and acquisitions. A study by Anne Allison, “Japanese Mothers and
Obentōs: The lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus,” discusses the relationships
between preparing lunch boxes – obentōs – prepared for nursery school children and
mothers’ role and social position within society (Allison, 1991). Obentōs are “highly
crafted elaborations of food: a multitude of miniature portions, artistically designed and precisely arranged, in a container that is sturdy and cute” (Allison, 1991, 180).

The author argues there is social pressure on mothers who prepare the obentōs. If the child rejects eating the food – or partially rejects the food, it reflects on how a mother’s role and social position are judged in the society. Therefore, obentōs is not just appealing, well-presented food in a child’s lunch-box; it’s a product of the women. The making of obentōs is a double-edged sword for women in Japan, where a woman is “ensconcing herself in the ritualization and subjectivity of being a mother in Japan” and “expresses, identifies and constitutes herself” (Allison, 1991, 186).

Understanding Food and Foodways among Migrant Populations

The act of preparing, cooking, and consuming certain foods has been associated with long-past memories (Weller and Turkon 2015). The inability to indulge those foods associated with memory and homeland is commonly associated with the loss of cultural and familial identity. In a study conducted on first and second generations Latino migrants in Ithaca, New York, Weller and Turkon (2015) sought to understand how food acts as an essential source for maintaining and negotiating identity. The consumption of heritage food was not only an act of nostalgia, but also a way to express Latino identity and seek cultural homogenization as a Latino in the United States. Sharing heritage foods with the community also is a way to assert Latino identity, not only for the community, but also for those with families with children. Several factors play a role in migrant identity formation, including “community demographics, parental and institutional support, knowledge of foodways, status ascribed to those foodways and the place of minority identities in the broader community” (Weller and Turkon, 2015, 71).
For others, food and foodways are venues to unify migrants during political conflict and war. Johnson (2016) focuses on how food and eating among Guineans in Lisbon, Portugal, contributes to understating the experience of displacement among Guineans. Also, Johnson reveals how different kinds of food and eating styles established boundaries and distinctions between homeland and host land as well as Muslims and non-Muslim Guineans in Lisbon. Though some distinction and boundaries exist among Guineans in Lisbon, the inability to taste food during the homeland war provide a united way of understanding displacement, feelings of loss, and the creation of community in Lisbon (Johnson, 2016).

For the descendants of Lebanese migrants in the United States, food-related practices are different. Rowe (2012) examines food and foodways practices of New Englanders of Lebanese descent. These migrant Lebanese consider themselves exclusively American. They engage and participate in American food events and rituals like Thanksgiving and prepare American food for their kids to bring to school. Yet, Rowe (2012) shows they also develop a means of transmitting and sharpening their native food in home-based food-related events and churches. Therefore, through food practices at home, these migrants express their Lebanese qualities and differentiate themselves from American culture. Rowe states the participants could keep their traditional food along with the American ones without conflict “as they assimilated into mainstream U.S. society, using them to construct a parallel Lebanese identify alongside their American identity into the second- and third-generations” (Rowe 2012).

Other related studies on foodways and migrant populations observe ethnic food items. For example, Senegalese migrants in Italy foster a sense of belonging to
Senegalese communing, linking to motherland, nourishing, and disabling the religious and ethnic differences in Italy by consuming the tie bou jenn, a simple dish made from rice, vegetables, and fish (Gasparetti, 2012). Studying relatively less-studied populations of South Asian migrant populations, Sen (2016) traces the trajectory of fish among Bangladeshi migrants from fish being harvested in Bangladesh to being readily-available in Chicago stores; the fish availability triggers cultural memories and reproduces forms of shopping practices among this migrant population (Sen, 2016).

In a similar study of ethnic food items, Durmelate (2015) examines six films by and about Maghrebi migrants in France and examines how couscous – an ethnic Moroccan dish of grains that is technically a pasta made from hard wheat, barley millet, or corn – became an essential signifier of ethnic identity, representing a changing relationship to the home and France. Couscous provides a complement to the historical archive on Migrabi’s foodways and “functions as transitional, transnational fragment of cultural practices that takes on new meanings” (Durmelat, 2015, 121).

**Anthropology of Childhood**

Anthropological research concerning children began in the 1920s under the names “anthropology of childhood” or “childhood studies” (LeVine 2008). It started with two projects, Margaret Mead’s (1928) work in Samoa and the South Pacific and the Six Cultures Study by John and Beatrice Whiting (1963) (Montgomery 2009). Those projects succeeded in bringing children from the margins of disciplines, including anthropology (Hirschfeld 2002). As a result of these types of studies, children have become recognized as social actors “rather than passive recipients of adult instruction
and influence” (Attard 2008, 24). Children, it is now argued, should not be seen as buckets filling up culture (Benthall 1992) or receptacles into which culture is poured (Hirschfeld 2002), but rather as competent social actors who can contribute “to our understanding of and theorizing about the social world” (James 2007, 262). By engaging children and young adults in their work, researchers seek to understand the world from their perspective.

In anthropology and other related fields, such as sociology and psychology, different groups of pioneering scholars started to provide empirical underpinnings for the emerging view of child agency (Oswell 2012). Some scholars contest that children bring a unique form of agency into being, rather than having it ascribed to them by adults (Attard 2008). According to Cassell (1993), agency “refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but their capability of doing those things in the first place” (quoted in Hess and Shandy 2008, 770). Hess and Shandy (2008) found that agency and decision-making are, sometimes, mistranslated in children:

Scholars have explored a typology of agency when considering children. This typology includes domains in which children are thought to or expected to have agency. There are also domains in which children's agency is overdetermined, or children are thought to express agency when they, in fact, do not. They also examine the ways in which children are given false agency, or when children are agents, when in fact those in more powerful positions (adults, state agencies) are really making the decisions. These decisions are often glossed as being "in the best interest" of the children, or of society at large. There are also domains
where children are actively denied agency or their agency is severely circumscribed as immature actors not fully capable of rational decision-making or action (Hess and Shandy 2008: 770-1).

While children are increasingly seen as having agency, they are still considered vulnerable. Bluebond-Langner and Korbin’s (2007) work on the challenges and opportunities in the anthropology of childhood demonstrates the coexistence concept of agency and vulnerability shapes and influences how research is conducted with children. The coexistence concept violates and affects anthropological ethical responsibilities to children and the field.

In addition, anthropology of childhood focuses on children as central participants in ethnographic fieldwork. Child-centered anthropology supports the idea that children's perspectives and knowledge need to be considered in research. Montgomery (2009) argues that anthropologists should reject the idea of children as hopeless, incomplete, and incompetent members of society because they are the best informants about their own lives. Bluebond-Langner’s study investigates terminally ill children at pediatric oncology clinics and examines the parents’ attitudes of their dying children. By talking to the ill children, the authors also explore how children conceal their awareness that they are dying from their parents and medical staff (Bluebond-Langner 1978; Montgomery 2009).

The Reason to Conduct Research with Children

According to Tisdall and colleagues (2009), conducting research with children and adolescents might open new possibilities for children, in particular, and society
generally. Doing research with children can question the ways that researchers had done or thought about doing research in different aspects of life. It also can raise issues that might not otherwise be considered and suggest options that would otherwise not have been apprehended. Incorporating children into research can ensure children’s voices are not only listened to, but also heard by other groups as well as ensure childrens’ interests and views are not forgotten. Children’s and adolescents’ contribution to research studies is a way of an “acknowledgment of human interdependence, rather than as a one-way process that reconstructs children as essentially dependent upon adults” (Tisdall, Davis, and Galladher, 2009: 5).

With regard to food and the application of child agency, the literature is limited to a small number of studies. For example, Bassett and colleagues (2007) focus on adolescents’ autonomy on healthy food choice and the ways their parents negotiate, monitor, and control their kids’ food choice autonomy. While the teens responded by complaining, ignoring, and refusing their parents' coaching and coercing strategies, the teens took responsibility and reflected on their behaviors based on their parents’ advice (Bassett, Chapman, and Beagaon 2007).

The other conflict is between the need for autonomy vs. family food values (Contento et al. 2006) and factors influencing adolescents’ food choices (Neumark-Sztainer, Story, Perry, and Casey 2000; Story, Neumark-Sztainer, and French 2002). The literature also focuses on other ways of expressing children and adolescents’ agency, such as actively engaging with food preparation (Larson et al. 2006; Van der Horst et al. 2014), dining out (McGuffin et al. 2014), and purchasing at the market (Dewey, Strode, and Rui 1984; Ebster, Wagner, and Neumueller 2009; O'Dougherty et
al. 2006; Nørgaard et al. 2007; Wingert et al. 2014).

Not only do children and adolescents express food autonomy and identity, but they may also contribute to familial dietary changes. In one study conducted on migrant Arabs in Canada, participants indicate that their children influence their food preparation techniques after immigration, and their lifestyle in Canada contributes to the cooking preparations and types of food purchased (El Hassan and Hekmat 2012). Patil, Hadley, and Nahayo (2009) studied the dietary and activity changes of Liberian and Somali migrants after they migrated to the United States. They hypothesize that “changes in adult migrant diets to child dietary preferences and assumes that children bring new ideas about foods into the home and that inclusion of these food items are negotiated through the caretaking process” (351). A study by Gray et al. (2005) indicates that Hispanics’ community representative in Mississippi identifies the influence of children’s food preferences as one of many factors that impact food choices.

Family mealtime studies often reveal conflict between parents and their children (Patico and Lzada, 2016). A study conducted by Paugh and Izquierdo (2009) analyzes the interaction between food and eating among five dual-earner middle-class families in Los Angeles. The authors video-taped natural occurrences during mealtime to capture the interactions between parents and their children. The study explores parent-child negotiation about “type and quantities of food, giving to children’s complaints about particular foods, engaging in bargaining for replacements foods, offering conditional promises that depict sweeter foods as reward for eating ‘healthy’ one…or even setting the context for a bargaining session by asking an open-ended question about what the child wants to eat” (Paugh and Izquierdo, 2009: 199). In this study, parents take control
over the mealtime and use their best practices to feed their children healthy food; however, some children still express agency in regards to what they want to ingest.

**Children’s Role in Family Decision-Making on Food**

Children play several roles in family decision-making with regard to food choice and food habits. Since the early 1990s, children’s role in influencing their family food purchasing/buying has increased steadily (Caruana and Vassallo 2003). Based on a review of the literature on food purchasing, children and parents are factors in food choices for the family. For example, gender, age, food preferences and taste, personality, type of product, color, and brand are the dominant factors for children in choosing food. Parents, on the other hand, tend to make food choices based on gender and socioeconomic status. Both the parents and children’s role in food choices are necessary components in understanding the child’s role in their families.

According to Liebeck (1994), parents spend differently when shopping with their children. Mothers spend 30 percent more than originally planned while fathers spend 70 percent more than budgeted when accompanied by their children (Caruana and Vassallo 2003). This report indicates gender differences regarding food purchasing with children. Moreover, working mothers feel guilty for not spending time with their children, which causes them to be more tolerant of their children’s misbehaviors and unhealthy food choices (Bahar and Alkibay 2010, 41). Bauer et al. (2012) show that full-time working mothers report “fewer family meals, less frequent encouragement of their adolescents’ healthful eating, lower fruit and vegetable intake, and less time spent on food preparation compared to part-time and not-employed mothers” (Bauer et al. 2012,
Therefore, a family’s socioeconomic status (SES) may not result in a decrease in food consumption among children as popularly assumed.

Despite the dominant notion, differences between low-income and high-income families might not hinder migrant children and adolescent food consumption. According to Hamilton and Catterall (2006):

It might be expected that children’s influence in poor families would be low given the very limited opportunities for discretionary spending and previous research that shows that children tend to exert more influence in higher-income families. Contrary to expectations, however, the study reported here shows that children in poor families exert considerable influence on family consumption to the extent that consumption is often organised around their needs. Importantly, the study also demonstrates the strength of love influence on consumption in poor families (1032).

This argument is confirmed by the concept of “economy of dignity” that Allison J. Pugh presents in her book Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture (2009). Pugh explains that children hold an economic dignity in which “children can claim, contest, and exchange the terms of their social belongings among themselves, or just what it would take to be able to participate among their peers” (Pugh 2009: 6). After explaining the concept, Pugh applies it to middle- and working-class families. The middle class practices what she calls “symbolic deprivation,” which expresses the values of good parenting by refusing to buy goods for their child. The working class practices “symbolic indulgence,” which involves “making sure (sometimes at considerable sacrifice) to buy particular goods or experiences for their children, those
items or events sure to have the most significant symbolic value for the children’s social world” (Pugh 2009, 10). It is pertinent to consider SES when considering the encounters between migrant groups of different income levels. In school and peer environments—where food (particularly snacks) are exchanged and contested between children and adolescents—parents attempt to fulfill their children’s needs despite their socioeconomic status.

With regards to the child component, a study conducted in four medical centers in Belgium shows that children with strong personalities make unhealthy food choices for the family (De Bourdenaudhuij and Van Oost 1998). At the store, children primarily request savory foods, milk and yogurt desserts, breakfast cereals, and convenience foods (Haselhoff, Faupel, and Holzmuler 2014). A parent-child co-shopping study reveals that children influence their parents to buy foods they prefer for themselves (O’Dougherty et al. 2006; Nørgaard et al. 2007).

Food preparation is also an important food habit that defines family decision-making. Van der Horest et al. (2014) examined the effect of children’s meal preparation at home (pasta, breaded chicken, cauliflower, and salad). The study shows that children who cook with their parents eat more chicken, salad, and consume less calories compared with those children for whom their parents cook (Van der Horst et al. 2014). Adolescents are more likely to be involved in food preparation or cooking if they are female, Asian, or their families eat together more frequently (Larson et al. 2006). Studies by Woodruff and Kirby (2013) and Fulkerson et al. (2008) indicate that families eat together more often when children are involved in the cooking and preparation of meals.
The role children and adolescents play in eating out is as important as their role in food preparation and food purchasing. Food consumption and preparation away from home in the United States has increased significantly and are higher in calories as well as fat, cholesterol, and sodium (Guthrie et al. 2002; Kant and Graubard 2004). Eating out—especially fast food—is very popular among adolescents (Paeratakul et al. 2003). In a survey conducted on seven-to-twelve-year-old students in a large metropolitan area in Minnesota, the frequency of fast food restaurant use is associated with a higher intake of soft drinks, cheeseburgers, French fries, and pizza as well as the reduced consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk (French et al. 2001). Based on the work of Nelson (1979) and Szybillo and Sosanie (1977), children of five and above influence decisions about restaurant types and particular restaurants.

McGuffin et al. (2014) indicate that parents and children contribute to food choices. Oftentimes, parents choose restaurants based on the children’s preferences to ensure they will eat what is ordered (McGuffin et al. 2014). This study shows that children have a role in deciding where the family will dine outside the home. In the study, children exert most of the control over the final decision on food, but the parents’ contribution to the decision vary with age, especially regarding younger children. The most significant factor is taste/food preference. One common factor is food neophobia, which both parents and children reported. Food neophobia is generally regarded as reluctance or avoidance of new foods (Dovey et al. 2008).
Child Food Environments: Factors

One of the main effects on children’s eating behavior is their parents’ feeding practices and perceptions about school lunches. According to Jaballas et al. (2011), parents’ perceptions about the quality of school meals revolve around a need to plan for healthier food menus and the incorporation of the parents. In a study by Himmelrich, Ribar, and Haldeman (2011), parents expressed the belief that school meals resemble fast food in terms of their poor quality. The poor quality of food, which is frequently over- or undercooked, and general hygiene are some of the main concerns parents have about school meals across ethnic groups (Rawlins et al. 2012). Beside the school meals, competitive food and beverages sold at the a la carte or in vending machines—as part of the fundraisers for school needs—are the biggest concerns for childhood obesity (DeBate, Bryant, and Zwald 2010).

With all the criticisms and doubts regarding school meals (O’Dougherty et al. 2006), the school food environment still affects children, especially migrant children who influence their families’ food consumption. For example, in Dharod et al. (2013) study on the lifestyle and food-related changes and challenges that refugee groups face upon resettlement, one of the main factors of dietary changes is how their children “helped them become familiar with American food such as hot dogs, burgers, bread, soda beverages, and breakfast cereals” (194). In the same study, participants indicate their children do not take food from home to school because they enjoy the school food, so the parents have to buy American food. In another study conducted on first-generation Latina migrant mothers regarding food experiences and the influence of dominant society on their children, participants indicate that school meals negatively influence
their children’s food preferences at home, so they have had to replace a lot of fresh, healthy meals they prepared in their native country (Greder, de Slowing, and Doudna 2012).

Children are becoming major consumers at younger ages, and media—television advertising particularly—is a powerful tool for shaping their food consumer habits (Kraak and Pelletier 1998; Ndiaye et al. 2013). Nestle (2007) found that children between the ages of two and eleven watch about 11 hours of television per week while children between the ages of eight and eighteen watch 22 hours per week. Nowadays, televisions programs and food advertising target children directly (Nestle 2007). The rise in television advertising directed at children has affected children’s—particularly young children’s—food choices, preferences, and demands:

Television commercials and prime-time programs have been identified as important influences on the types of food that children ask their parents to buy for them and the food they buy for themselves. Sweetened breakfast cereal, candy, desserts, low-nutrient beverages, and salty snack foods are the most commonly advertised products to children and are also the items most frequently requested of parents (Kraak and Pelletier 1998: 18).

Not only does television advertising influence children’s food choices, but it also affects family meal behavior. For example, Tovar et al. (2013) indicate that recent Latina migrants reported their children who ate more frequently in front of the television were present at fewer evening family meals. Also, Tovar et al. (2013) report the frequency of family meals is protective against child obesity in those migrant families.
Peers also are associated with factors that influence children food choices. Adolescents assign more importance to eating with peers than children (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). Based on a study involving Irish students between nine and eighteen, several adolescents indicated that frequently eating outside their home with peers is associated with making fewer healthy food choices (Fitzgerald et al. 2010). Fitzgerald et al. stated that adolescents have more nutritional autonomy and independence when eating outside the home or at school compared with children. In their research on Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, and Sudanese refugees in Melbourne, Australia, regarding differences in acculturation experiences between parents and adolescents, Wilson and Renzaho (2014) found the children of migrants preferred Australian food over traditional food because they wanted to fit in with their peers.

**Parenting Style and Feeding Practices**

Parenting style, feeding style, and feeding practices are used interchangeably but often have different meanings (Blissett, 2011). Parenting style is broad emotional parenting climate and is classified into four typologies that differ based on the two dimensions of warmth/responsiveness to child and demandingness/control the parents exhibit on the child (Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Baumrind, 1971)). Authoritarian parenting style is illustrated by low responsiveness and high demanding expectations. Authoritative parenting style is typified by high responsiveness and high demandingness. Indulgent-permissive parenting style is characterized by high responsiveness and low demandingness, and uninvolved/neglectful is typified by low responsiveness and low demandingness. Feeding styles usually refer to the first three
parenting styles but with feeding behaviors associated with them. Feeding practices are specific strategies used by parents to facilitate or limit the ingestion of foods, such as pressure to eat, restriction, rewards for consumptions, and monitoring child’s eating (Blissett, 2011).

Parents and families as children’s main caregivers play an essential role in constructing children’s experiences directly through a set of prenatal beliefs, practices, and behaviors and indirectly through interactions with family, community, and broader society (Penderi and Petrogiannis 2011). In regards to food, parents help shape their children’s behavior and food habits, especially in the first years of children’s development (Rozin 1996). Research on the impact of parental feeding styles on children examine different aspects, such as gender differences, racial/ethnic differences, and obesity risk (Anderson et al. 2005; Birch and Fisher 1998; Blissett 2006; Greder, de Slowing, and Doudna 2012; Hughes et al. 2005; O’ Dougherty, Story, and Lytle 2006; Sherry et al. 2004; Tovar et al. 2013; Tovar et al. 2015).

An interesting study that compares 20 Americans’ family dinners and 27 Italians’ family dinners reveals how parents have a different attitude toward food taste and its importance in shaping children’s food personality or preferences. Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo (1996) identified the following four themes about food during those dinner meals: 1) food as nutrition, 2) food as material good, 3) food as reward, and 4) food as pleasure. The American and Italian families address the four themes. However, the American families prioritized food as nutrition, food as reward, and food as material food above food as pleasure. The Italian families prioritized food as pleasure over the rest of the themes. The authors concluded that the Italian adults (parents) encourage children
to express their food taste as a part of shaping their personality towards food. The American adults treated the taste of children as basically distinct from adults (Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo, 1996).

Related studies on family’s mealtimes and child contestation and resistances of their parents’ dinner rules were revealed in a study by Grieshaber (1997). The study focuses on how six-year old children in four different Australian families contest and resist the parents’ food rules that revolve around preparation, consumption, and cleaning after meals. Mealtime rituals, such as food preparation, setting up the table, using table manners, and cleaning after meals, function as techniques of discipline in which children are normalized. Also, the study focuses on how gendered relationships are produced and constructed at an early age. The study depicts that young children’s resistance and contestations of adult power and rules are an integral part of interactions and practices in the family. Because of differences in positionality between the adult and child, it always open for child resistance and contestations for adult rules. The process of normalization based on the child’s gender was well established. Through the interaction and practices around mealtime, boys were positioned as “recipients of meals from an equal early age” while girls helped in food preparation, serving, and cleaning up after meals. (Grieshaber, 1997, 664).

Different studies show the variations in child feeding practices among minority groups. Loth et al. (2013) show that the use of controlling food-related parenting practices, such as restrictions or pressure to eat certain foods, is common among racial/ethnic minority groups and negatively impacts children’s current and future dietary intake. Corsini (2010) created a questionnaire to sample parental attitudes and
behaviors across seven constructs, which included allowing access to sweets and
snack foods and maintaining rigid parental feeding practices at home and social
occasions. The questionnaire also took children’s attraction to sweets and snack foods
into account (Corsini 2010). The data indicate that these constructs could potentially
influence immediate and future diet quality and food patterns, food preferences,
regulation of energy intake, and weight gain. Tovar et al. (2012) show that ethnic
minority parents who are responsive to their child’s food requests and refrain from
setting appropriate food boundaries are at risk of making their children obese (low
demandingness/high responsiveness).

With much of the emphasis in previous studies on parental feeding practices,
there is little emphasis in the literature on the roles parental beliefs and culture play in
influencing behaviors among Arab American migrant populations. Only a few studies
conceptualize that cultural influence is a main determinant in parental feeding practices.
Momin, Chung, and Olson (2014) conducted a study among Asian Indian migrant
mothers and found that cultural beliefs and religion play a prominent role in pressuring
children to eat traditional food because the participants perceived that Indian dishes are
healthy. In addition, the authors show that ethnic identity positively affect feeding
behaviors in regards to having a family meal. Burns (2010) indicates that Somali women
migrants in Australia were limited to halal 1takeaway restaurants and had to find other
outlets to maintain homeland dietary patterns. Another ethnographic study conducted by
Vallianatos and Raine (2008) shows that Arabic and South Asian migrant women in
Canada struggle to acquire halal meat as well as maintain their ethnic cuisine. Despite

1 Halal: meat that are being slaughtered in accordance to Islamic law.
the struggle of acquiring permissible food among migrants as indicated in the literature, it is necessary to reexamine the issue of availability and accessibility of permissible food in the manifestation of food globalization and how parental beliefs, practices, and customs are conveyed to children.

Food and Religion: Globalization of ‘Halal’

Globalization is a problematic concept that “conjures up images of cultural invasion and spread of standardized cultural forms” due to migration, tourism, international trade, and mass communication (Zubaida and Tapper, 1994: 41). The concept of globalization is also problematic given the multitude of partial, divergent, and contradictory claims around the concept of globalization (Robinson, 2007). Nonetheless, broad bodies of research exist on the concept of globalization; either 1) those studies or research focus on specific issues or problems related to globalization, or 2) those studies focus on theorizing the very nature of the process (Robinson, 2007). Our focus is to examine the latter type of globalization.

Inglis and Gimlin (2009) argue there is no singular or unequivocal globalization and it is more appropriate to refer to globalization as “globalizations of food” because globalizations are multifarious processes that “sometimes work together, and which sometimes are wholly contradictory” (4). Thus, applying the term globalization to food systems posits different meanings and different processes. First, globalization refers to an economic process of trade liberalization and tariff reduction, which consequently reduces the national barriers of the food commodity market because it is untaxed (Lang 1999). This economic process tends to increase globalization as nations participate in
the global food market to make food available to all people (Sobal 2001). Second, globalization refers to a political process that emphasizes the power differentials between countries. For example, underdeveloped countries sell raw food to industrialized countries, who sell it back to underdeveloped countries in the form of manufactured food products, resulting in unequal division of labor (Sobal 2001). Third, globalization refers to a cultural process where food values and autonomy overcome economic and political emphases. Those who examine the cultural process on globalization “express concern about the de-emphasis on, or even loss of, cultures when economic or political globalization processes are homogenized” (Sobal 2001, 185). The most apparent example of this phenomenon is the ubiquitous “burgerization” and fast food restaurants chains (Lang 1999). Burgerization is basically the spread of U.S. fast food restaurants (Lang 1999) and occurs alongside the increase uptake of local specialties and ethnic dishes (Smith et al. 2015).

Anderson (2005) argues that many foodways studies make sense if explained ecologically at the beginning. But other foodways, especially taboos and avoidances, require more explanation of the religious and ritual logic. For example, halal is foundational for Muslim foodways; it means permissible or lawful in Arabic (Gillette, 2016). The unlawful or prohibited food (Haram) included in the Muslim community’s holy book (Quran) are swine, four-footed animals, or birds that catch their prey with their mouths or talons, and respectively, by-products of those animals, improperly slaughtered animals, and alcoholic beverages. Meats of animals slaughtered by people other than Muslims, Jews, or Christians is prohibited. (Kittler, Sucher, and Nahikian-Nelms, 2012; Heine, 2004). The main reason ritually slaughtered animals are lawful is
because the slaughter causes the animal to shift or pass from a living to dead state whereas other forms of death, such as accidental, by another animal, by an illegitimate sacrificer, or by not respecting the ritual (e.g. suffocating, electroshocked). (Benkheira, 2000). Benkheira (2000) explains that the lawful way is not a cadaver whereas the previously mentioned unlawful ways, “by not having been submitted to the mediation of the rite, it bears the mark of death. It is similar to the dirty food that one throws in the trash because it is too disgusting to consume” (Benkheira, 2000, 227). This distinction is only to ensure the animal transformed into a lawful victim and not a cadaver, into a substance in the service of life rather than death (Benkheira, 2000).

Considering the concept of globalization and the halal food consumption practices among Muslims, the issue of halal food consumption – in a non-Muslim state - may not seem an issue after all. According to Gillette:

Muslims no longer rely solely on personal relations or local authorities, or on both to determine what is halal. Over the last decade, we find Muslim food scientists and engineers using advanced food-testing techniques to categorize food as permitted or prohibited; formal halal certification processes administered by governments and private organizations; organic, ecologically friendly and sustainable halal food movements; gourmet halal grocery stores, restaurants and food offerings; and an online world of belongs and websites on food, health and Islam. [Gillette, 2016: 49]

Isiaka Abiodun (2011) provides an overview of some factors that influenced the halal. Transmigration, salience of religious identity, globalization of production, growth of the Muslim population, and the diffusion of halal norm. Taken into account, those
factors, in addition to the diversity of Muslim populations, there are many debates over the differences regarding what or how Muslims eat (Gillette, 2016). In addition, Gillette (2016) argues that two main social factors affect Muslims not adhering to halal food. First is whether the Muslim community or population lives in a Muslim state; the second crucial factor is the relationship between the Muslim community and the local population. With globalization and the advancement of science technology, the term halal needs to be fully understood, especially for Muslim consumers. This understanding is very important because it satisfies their needs and gives them peace of mind (Ambali and Bakar, 2014).
CHAPTER THREE  
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS  

Rationalization

Migration to a new place often results in different social and economic confrontations, often reflected in food and foodways (Vallianatos and Taine 2008). Accessibility to certain foods may be limited by physical, political, economic, and sociocultural realities of the migrant’s new country (Weller and Turkon 2015). Anthropologists have commonly recognized people on the move, such as migrants, refugees, and the colonizers, as agents of food and foodways changes (Mintz and Dubios 2002). Migration usually acts as the turning point for many migrants in terms of changes in food behavior and food patterns (Terragni et al. 2014). When people of one ethnicity migrate to another place with different cultural norms, changes regarding food choices, dietary behavior and patterns, and health issues may be significant because of differences in physical and sociocultural environments (Kittler, Sucher, and Nahikian-Nelms 2012).

In regards to adopting new food among migrants, certain driving forces substantially affect dietary change, such as dietary acculturation (Holmboe-Ottesen 2012; Colby, Morrison, and Haldeman 2009; Himmelgreen et al. 2007; Himmelgreen et al. 2014; Satia-Abouta et al. 2002). According to Satia-Abouta et al., dietary acculturation is a “process that occurs when members of a migrating groups adopt the
eating patterns/food choices of their new environment” (2003, 74). The model of dietary acculturation posits relationships between socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural characteristics establish or predict changes in food related behaviors. Those behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs include purchase, storage, and preparation of food among the new migrants as individuals, households, or populations (Satia 2002; Satia et al. 2010).

The acculturation model has been utilized extensively as a model to understand dietary changes among migrant populations. For example, several studies use single-measures, such as the length of residence, English proficiency, higher education, and higher income when examining dietary patterns among Asian migrants (Lesser, Gasevic, and Lear 2014; Liu, Berhane, and Tseng 2010; Lv and Cason 2004; Tseng, Wright, and Fang 2015) and Hispanics and Latinos (Dave et al. 2009; Duffey et al. 2008; Lin, Bermudez, and Tucker 2003).

However, because general and dietary acculturation have been criticized for being unidimensional and unidirectional (Himmelgreen et al. 2007, 2014; Weisberg-Shapior and Devine 2015), the acculturation concept does not fully capture dietary changes among migrant populations. For example, Martinez (2013) demonstrates the extent of acculturation in capturing dietary changes among Latino migrants. Twenty-seven interviews with Latino participants indicated that prior to migrating to the United States, the subjects engaged in negative dietary practices consisting of a diet high in fat, low in fiber, high in processed food, and low on fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, urban and rural Latino migrants experienced similar negative food practices, with the only difference being whether food was obtained from restaurants (urban migrants) or street vendors (rural migrants). Latin Americans experienced a wave of
commodity globalization and technology that affected their consumption and procurement of food (Martinez 2013).

Another study conducted on 21 Hispanic migrants in Tampa, Florida, (Himmelgreen et al. 2007) demonstrates that 12 Colombian participants reported consumption of fast foods, such as pizza and hamburgers, on special occasions because they considered these foods to be high status. The increased consumption of such prototypical American food was due to its availability and affordability. Himmelgreen et al. found that although participants indicated their diet had changed since migrating to the United States, some of those foods also were consumed back home.

In addition, Himmelgreen (2005) conducted a study among 174 Puerto Rican women residing in Hartford, Connecticut, and found that dietary change did not necessarily begin with the migration to the host country, but rather might have happened prior to migration due to globalization. Sanjur et al. (1986) show that Puerto Rican families residing in the South Bronx, New York, and Puerto Rico have similar dietary practices that include overconsumption of sugar, carbonated beverages, and food with a high protein content. Factors that led to such dietary practices included redaction of agricultural land, an increase in imported food items and living expenses, and the influences of mainland American culture on Puerto Rican culture (Himmelgreen et al. 2005).

The conscientious researcher must investigate whether diet and foodways changes are related to physical or social environments, social organization, ideology, or technology. For example, the effect of globalization on ideology as a result of food
commoditization is seen in the “Coca-Colonization” of the Yucatan, where drinking a soft drink symbolizes a moment of leisure and pleasure (Leatherman and Goodman 2005). Moreover, dietary changes are associated with the economic changes tourism has brought to Monteverde and rural Costa Rica even though agriculture and technology sectors were important in the economic boom in Costa Rica (Himmelgreen et al. 2006).

The ecological model of food and nutrition has the potential to provide a comprehensive explanation of Arab migrant families’ diet and foodways pre- and post-migration. This model can help to explain some of the changes of food and foodways among Arab migrant families in light of food globalization. One must critically observe if such changes in food and foodways happened before migration to the new host area. This study seeks to examine children’s agency on their family’s diet and foodways among Arab migrant families. Also, because the nature of this research study is more exploratory than explanatory, it is appropriate to apply a theoretical framework. Models tend to use a mechanistic interpretation, assuming complex human behavior or phenomena can be understood through different, interrelated components. Therefore, a theoretical framework can properly address the child agency aspect of this research. For this study, I integrate the developmental niche theoretical framework to understand child agency.

**Drawbacks of Using a Model**

As mentioned, the nature of this research study is more exploratory than explanatory. Due to the paucity of research studies among Arab migrant families, there
are needs to investigate changes on food and foodways among this population. Models tend to have factors and variables with directional or multidirectional. The research does not propose a model of influence as far as directionality or variables but rather looks for explanations of diet and foodways behaviors. Different critiques on those models include the fact they cannot be used to "create a testable hypothesis to explain, predict, and ultimately control phenomena of interest" (Grzywacz and Fuqua 2000, 109). Another critique is regarding the comprehensiveness of those models, making the researcher consider as many factors as possible that play a role in certain behavior or phenomena. Finally, the three models tend to be more mechanistic interpretation in nature, assuming that a complex human behavior or phenomena can be understood through interrelated different components.

The Ecological Model of Food and Nutrition

Nutritional anthropology has focused on the “interrelationship between biological and social forces that shape human food use and the nutritional status of individuals and populations” (Pelto et al. 2012, 1-2). An important component of the ecological model of food and nutrition is global forces, which have proximal and distal effects on all other components of the model (Himmelgreen et al. 2014). This global force is represented as a cloud in Figure 3.1; it imposes a greater effect on the studied population than was seen in the model as first presented in 1980 (Pelto, Dufour, and Goodman 2012). According to Pelto et al. (2012), the global force component is related to such factors as food commodity prices, rural-to-urban migration, national trade
agreements, and food companies’ marketing synergistically to affect the physical and social environment, social organization, technology, and culture.

![Ecological Model of Food and Nutrition](image)

Figure 3.1: The ecological model of food and nutrition. *

*Source: Pelto, Dufour, and Goodman 2012.

This model is useful because of its bidirectional relationship among the different environments, which, depending on the position of the given environment, can affect the nutritional needs and status of certain populations, making the model more dynamic and interactive in nature. Thus, a modification in one sector can cause a change in another part of the model, which demonstrates interconnectedness (Pelto, Dufour, and Goodman 2012). Moreover, with the added global forces, the model and its biocultural perspective are “ideal theoretical frameworks for examining change in diet, diet quality, and energy balance among contemporary populations” (Himmelgreen et al. 2014, 77).
This research study aims to use the ecological model of food and nutrition to better understand and provide a holistic analysis of the complex factors that affect the food and nutrition of Arab American migrant families under the influence of global forces. Although the five components of the model affect diets and foodways in different societies, the relative importance of each component of the model varies from environment to environment (Pelto and Amar-Klemesu, 2015). Such factors include the sources from which Arab families acquire their food (physical and social environments) and encompass a wider domain of beliefs and ideas that affect the preparation, acquisition, and composition of food (cultural ideology). Tools used for the preparation, storage, and consumption of food are also important components to understanding this migrant population (technology). Social strata, ethnic identity, relationships between men and women, division of labor within families, linkage of people outside the family, and informal ways in which foods are exchanged are all parts of the social organization component.

**Developmental Niche Theoretical Framework**

Two important insights have been gained from cross-cultural research on children and families. First, such research examines regularities regarding how different aspects of culture work together as a system, such as how children are reared. The second insight is that although each child has his or her own sets of experiences and problems, they are “constructed around a common story of human development” (Super and Harkness 1993, 96). The concept of the developmental niche is not a theory, but rather a theoretical framework that combines the aforementioned insights to aid
understanding of how culture guides the process of child development. The

developmental niche also “attempts to describe this environment from the point of view
of the child in order to understand processes of development and acquisition of culture”
(Super and Harkness 1986, 552).

The framework is produced by three interacting systems that operate as a larger
macro-system in which each system operates conditionally with other features of the
culture (Super and Harkness 1986). As illustrated in Figure 3.2, the three subsystems
are: 1) settings—the physical and social settings in which a child lives; 2) customs,
which are culturally regulated customs of child care and rearing; and 3) caretakers,
including the psychology of the caregivers’ beliefs, goals, and feelings (Super and
Harkness 1986). Super and Harkness suggest that “three subsystems share the
common function of mediating the individual’s developmental experience within the
larger culture” (552).

Figure 3.2: Developmental niche theoretical framework. *

*Source: Super and Harkness (1986)
Framework Systems and Subsystems

Physical and social settings consist of objects and people around the child and include basic facts of social life, such as the kind of company the child keeps. Those settings determine likely risks and supports as well as kinds of social interactions (Super and Harkness 1999). A good example of the settings subsystem in the developmental niche is the extent of household work expected in Kokwet, a rural community in Kenya. Harkness and Super’s (1986) observations of children’s participation in household work include processing food, cooking and tending the fire, collecting firewood, bringing water, caring for animals, and taking care of siblings. Play and work activities differ significantly across age in the Kokwet community.

The relevance of this subsystem to the research study can be examined by looking at the dominant food activities and persons available in the children’s daily lives across different physical and social settings in Arabs/Arab American families. Formal schooling, which offers different physical and social settings from those at home, has a major effect on the types of social interaction experienced, which vary by children’s age and gender (Super and Harkness 1986). Moreover, children’s choice of friends at school has a major effect on their individual experiences.

Customs of child care and child rearing are those sequences of behavior commonly used in the community and integrated into the larger culture (Super and Harkness 1986). These behaviors are carried out with less conscious effort because they are parts of shared patterns, usually seeming to be “obvious” and “natural” activities that do not call for careful analysis or justification (Super and Harkness 1999; Harkness et al. 2013). These behaviors also seem to be the only reasonable solution to
certain problems (Harkness and Super 1994). Such customs include simple, everyday living routines such as feeding and eating behaviors and sleeping patterns as well as infrequent, complex, institutionalized mechanisms such as adolescent circumcisions. Super and Harkness (1986) state, “From the point of view of the researcher, customs of child care can be seen as behavioral strategies for dealing with children of particular ages, in the context of particular environmental constraints” (555). The relevance of this subsystem to the research study can be examined by looking at the culturally perceived dietary practices and foodways seen as natural and understanding the extent to which those cultural feeding practices may be influenced by macro-environments.

The third subsystem of the developmental niche is the psychology of the caretakers. Basically, this subsystem covers ethnotheories of child behavior and development that deal with “beliefs concerning the nature and needs of children, parental and community goals for rearing, and caretaker beliefs about effective rearing techniques” (Super and Harkness 1986, 556). The caretakers’ psychology organizes short- and long-term parental strategies and is constrained by the physical and social settings (first subsystem), customs or culture (second subsystem), available technology, and demands of the parents’ activities. The relevance of this subsystem to the research study can be found by examining the parental ethnotheories (e.g., beliefs, feelings, goals) with regard to diet and foodways in different physical and social settings as well as the extent to which such settings, cultural practices (customs), and macro-environments affect the parents’ ethnotheories about their children’s diet and foodways behaviors.
The larger macro-environments illustrate other dynamics of the developmental niche where the three subsystems—physical setting, customs (culture), and caretaker psychology—are influenced differently by the macro-environment (Super and Harkness 1986). For example, Super and Harkness suggest that the caretakers’ psychology might be influenced by national and local ideas about the nature of children’s needs. The economic and demographic changes of the household may directly or indirectly alter settings of children’s daily lives.

The Three Corollaries of the Developmental Niche

While I already have noted the three subsystems of the framework, three main corollaries of developmental niche can be advanced to strengthen the theoretical framework. Those three corollaries are:

1. The niche as a system: the three mentioned subsystems of the niche operate as one system with homeostatic mechanism, which consequently promotes a consonance among the settings, customs, and caretaker psychology (Super and Harkness, 1986). For example, social or physical settings are consistent with parental beliefs. However, some inconsistencies result from larger influences or limited resources. Thus, the bold, double-headed arrows seen in Figure 3.2 represent the relationships among the subsystem of the niche and can be a source of change (Super and Harkness, 1999).

2. Subsystem of the niche and external systems: each subsystem is embedded functionally with the others in a larger environment (Super and Harkness, 1999), as represented by arrows pointing out of each subsystem in Figure
3.2. In a formal sense, this framework is an ‘open system’ influenced by outside forces (Super and Harkness, 1986, 1999). For instance, the role of an individual within a migrant family may be influenced by a larger societal host culture.

3. Mutual adaptation: for each setting, customs, and the caretaker psychology is a continual process of mutual or reciprocal adaptation with the child. This process includes the child’s gender, age, temperament, active agency, child characteristics, and behaviors (Super and Harkness, 1999). As children ‘adapt’ to their environment, there is also a complementary environmental adaption, or accurately, a co-evolution (Super and Harkness, 1986). However, because the niche has the interconnectedness elements, there are constraints on the ability of niches to adapt. For example, parents on a certain daily schedule who value child autonomy and being independent could be problematic with a child who has irregular sleeping habits (Super and Harkness, 1986).

**Integrating a Model and Theoretical Framework**

Using a single model or theoretical framework might not necessarily yield a good explanation of the change of food and foodways post migration. Nilsen (2015) supports the notion that combining multiple theoretical approaches may offer a more holistic understanding and explanation and may mask constraint assumptions. The ecological model of food and nutrition is a conceptual model that identifies the main factors affecting the food and nutrition of a population (Pelto, Dufour, and Goodman, 2012).
The developmental niche is a theoretical framework for "studying cultural regulation of the micro-environment of the child, and it attempts to describe this environment from the point view of the child in order to understand processes of development and acquisition of culture" (Super and Harkness, 1986, 552). Integration of this model and framework complements each other in a way that provides a better understanding of the phenomena, specifically the change of food and foodways among Arab migrant families.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research study was designed to understand changes in food and foodways among Arab American migrant families living in Tampa, Florida, in the United States. It also looks at children’s role in food and foodways changes post-migration in these families. This study utilized the ecological model of food and nutrition as a guiding model to understand these changes. Along with the ecological model, this research study used the developmental niche theoretical framework as guiding to understand parental feeding practices and child agency. The main research site is a local school in Tampa, Florida where the majority of students come from Arab migrant families. Prior to conducting the research study at the school, the researcher conducted a project for Nutritional Anthropology class at the same site in 2013, the main purpose of which was to assess parental knowledge and perception regarding school meals and parental feeding practices within the same community. The class project established a starting point for this research as well as building a connection with the community.

Research Questions

The study has two main inquiries, which are more exploratory than assumptive in nature:
1. How and why do Arab American families’ food and foodways change after migration to the United States?

2. How does children’s agency with regard to food play a role in the changing food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?

I extended these main research questions with the following sub-questions:

A. What are dominant factors aiding in the changes of food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?

B. How do such changes in food and foodways behavior affect migrant families?

C. What are some parental and community beliefs and practices regarding how to feed their children?

D. What determinants shape child agency in family food behaviors?

E. How do children express agency regarding food to influence food and foodways in Arab American families?

Positionality

Perhaps what concerned me the most about my positionality in this research study was being a male researcher. Thus, I am fully aware of the community with which I am engaging and about which I am conducting my research study. What does mean for me, as a male researcher, to critically examine food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families in Tampa? And how might my positionality influence my interactions with parents and their children in this community?
The first thing to consider about my positionality as a male researcher within this community may be its sociocultural aspect. This is perhaps particularly important when I am contacting and conducting interviews and focus groups with mothers. Another aspect of my positionality as a male researcher may be hierarchical one in the field, due the fact that I am working with children. When conducting research with children, “there is always possibility that a researcher’s gender and race are likely to have some impact upon their relationships with the children and thus the particular way in which the children choose to behave in their presence” (Connolly 2008, 186). My being a male researcher may hinder some of the study’s results, particularly when interacting with female students on site. Moreover, due the fact that children’s behaviors are unpredictable in a sense—and the broader issue of child protection (Tinson, 2009)—being a male researcher may be an issue of concern when working with children (Horton, 2001).

A second major aspect of my positionality is that I myself was born and raised in an Arab country. This may not sound like an ethical issue on a par with the one previously mentioned; however, there is a commonly held assumption that being related or close to the studied community or the culture may provide “easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly, be able to project a more thoughtful, authentic understanding of the culture under study” (Merriam et al., 2001). Being familiar with the culture under research study may also lead to accusations of being biased; the researcher might even become so curious as to ask offensive questions, as Merriam (2001) suggested.
As principal investigator for this research study, my role at the school could have a significant impact on the children’s interaction with the school and their perceptions of me. Before developing the idea to conduct research at the school site, I volunteered at the school at various times, in different roles each time. Initially, I served on the school’s election committee, working mostly with the school board and administration. My duties included: 1) contacting eligible nominees (mostly parents whose kids attend school) to see if they accept the nomination, 2) overseeing a “Meet the Candidates” event, 3) preparing ballots for mailing, and 4) counting and confirming the ballots or votes. At that time, my role was strictly with the school board and administration, and I had not interaction with children or parents. Thus, I became familiar with the school board and administration at the school, which helped me build a rapport with the school community.

A few years later, in 2017, I volunteered again at the school site right after getting approval for the research study from the institutional review board (IRB) at the University of South Florida (USF). At that time, I offered my help to the school principal and administration; I would volunteer at the school and at the same time act as principal investigator for the research. I was assigned to work with middle- and high-school male students. The school district has a policy of segregating of middle- and high-school students by gender in various school facilities, such as the cafeteria (at lunchtime only), playgrounds, masjid (praying area), and basketball and soccer fields. My role was to be responsible for middle- and high-school boys during recess periods. Every day, I walked into the main offices of the school and got a visitor tag with my name on it and walkie-talkie to communicate with school principal in case something happened to any
student—for instance, if someone got injured during recess. The school also has strict policies on behavioral issues such as inappropriate language and fighting. Any student caught violating these behavioral policies will be detained.

As I perform my volunteer work, my research study has not yet been disseminated even though it has been approved by the IRB. Among school administrators, my role is perceived simultaneously as a volunteer parent who wants to help the school and at the same time a researcher. To the students, I am an outsider with a visitor tag on his chest who looks after them every day. To some extent, my role has helped me to build a rapport with few of the students during recess as I interacted with them for non-research purposes. At the same time, I found it more difficult to build trust with other kids precisely because of my role in maintaining discipline at school. Thus, I was placed in a dilemma where I had some concern that my roles as volunteer and researcher might conflict.

**Research Design**

Data collection for this research study occurred between April 2017 and January 2018. The process consisted of semi-structured interviews with parents, focus groups with parents (only mothers), focus groups with children, twenty-four hours’ dietary recall, and participant observation. The children’s focus groups included additional interactive activities, such as vignettes (role playing), an “I am the boss” activity (crafting a food menu for the whole household), and free-listing and sorting activities. The initial plan entailed using photo elicitation methodology for younger children and vignettes for the older children. Photo elicitation, however, proved a poor tool for gathering data from this
population due to parents being less euthanistic among sending pictures. Vignettes were used with both the younger and older groups.

Data analysis employed qualitative coding conducted with MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2018 (Version 18.0.5). This software organizes and manages the data entered to efficiently target the data analysis. Data obtained from parents’ semi-structured interviews and focus groups and children’s focus groups were entered into MAXQDA 2018 for analysis. A thematic analysis was used to examine and interpret the data, looking for themes and patterns that help answer the research questions. For this research, I used the five-step method described by Kuckartz (2014):

1. Highlight important text passages: During the initial step of the analysis, the researcher carefully reads the text, marking interesting and revealing selections from the interviews and focus groups. It is also suggested to write memos and observation next to text section or passages.

2. Develop main thematic categories: The main topics of the research study were derived directly from the research questions and affected how data was collected. As rule, categories should be established based on the research question and hypothesis given, and should not be too broad.

3. First coding process: The researcher codes the data line-by-line and assigns text passages to categories. Passages that are irrelevant to the predetermined categories should remain uncoded. A single interview passage may be coded into multiple categories, which will result in overlap.
4. Creating subcategories: Within each category, select items with common characteristics that differentiate them from the main category. Formulate a definition for each new subcategories created.

5. Second coding process: Go through all data again and assign text to the newly created subcategories.

Sampling and Recruitment

The study was conducted at local school in Tampa, Florida which is pre-K–12 school. Most of the families whose children attend the school and make up the school community are migrants from various Arab countries. The eligibility requirements for the families participating in the study are that they must have migrated to the United States from an Arab country; Arabic must be first language in either parent; families must have lived at least one year in Tampa; and the family must include children of school age. There is no age limit for the parents as long as their children are between eight and seventeen years of age.

Prior to conducting the research study, I had scheduled a meeting with head of the school and the school principal to discuss the nature of research study and the best approaches to recruit parents and children to participate. Conducting the research study at the school site was contingent upon an initial agreement that the study would not be allowed to interfere with students’ academic progress, since the end of the academic year was approaching. Because the school has reached full capacity, the research study would be conducted off school property.
There were specific sampling strategies for this research study. The initial sampling approach was to send an email to all parents in the school database about the research. However, this approach was ruled out for a number of reasons:

- Not all families in the school database fit the sampling age criteria.
- Due to the nature of this research study, students should be informed directly and voluntarily participate in the research without pressure from either administrators or parents.

A few weeks after I started my volunteer work, a different recruiting approach was implemented. First, parents were informed ahead of time about the ongoing research study through the weekly newsletter. Second, an envelope was disseminated to every eligible student at the school. I worked with the school’s marketing and communication liaison to devise strategies for facilitating the research study, such as dispersing recruiting materials and following up with teachers and families who were interested in participating. For students aged eight to twelve, we sent home an envelope containing a printed brochure (see Appendix A) alongside the school welcoming letter (see Appendix B) and combined consent and parental permission forms. Students from thirteen to seventeen years of age received the same packaged materials, along with a child assent form to be signed by the student himself or herself. With the marketing and communication liaison, I developed a list of 225 children aged eight to twelve and 195 children thirteen and older who would be suitable participants in the study. At this stage of the researcher, there are 420 students that had met one of the eligibility criteria, which is the student age.
Because the younger age group children do not have a daily assembly, it was necessary to schedule a 5-minute class visit to each second- through sixth-grade classroom during what the school called Homeroom Time (see Appendix C for the recruitment script). The small homeroom visits only took place between 8:00–8:15 a.m. Homeroom visits were the best opportunity to introduce my research study to the children because they did not interfere with the class schedule or the learning progress. At the end of each homeroom visit, students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn the next step to take if they wanted to participate in the research. For older, the school principal gave me the opportunity to disseminate my research study and answer children’s questions after the assembly due to school busy assembly schedule. Each student was given an envelope by their teacher on the same day.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 12, 2017 (see Appendix D). After receiving the approval letter was received, I contact the school to schedule daily Homeroom Time visits and a one-time assembly speech. Interested families and children contacted me through my email, which was listed in the back of the brochure. The questions asked by students included: When is it due? If I will be 8 next month, can I still participate? Do I have to speak Arabic to participate? In my capacity as a school volunteer, I answered additional questions from older children (e.g., If my family are traveling in the summer, can I still be part of the research?).
Methodology

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation fieldwork is fundamental in anthropology. It involves getting close to people and building trust (Bernard 2011). The kind of information provided by this method allows researchers to correct potential biases in discourse between themselves and their informants (Medina 2004). It gives researchers an intellectual grasp of how things are organized and prioritized, legitimizes the presence of researchers during fieldwork, and provides researchers with cultural experiences that can be discussed with key informants and research participants (Schensul and LeCompte 2013).

Research with younger children (eight to eleven years of age) requires special attention, given the fact that such children tend to have short attention spans, are worried or anxious about being researched, and often provide information that the researcher does not need (e.g., private information; Tinson 2009). While one advantage of conducting participant observation with younger children is the ease of building trust and rapport (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010), younger children must understand the purpose of the research. Researchers must adopt a role that the children understand while trying to minimize the differences the research and the child (Fine and Sandstrom 1988). While this is done for ethical purposes, it is also done so that children can frame their responses to questions within the agreed-upon topic. Moreover, children at this age may ascribe an incorrect role to the researcher (e.g., teacher helper, note-taker) if they do not fully grasp the purpose of the research (Tinson 2009). However, finding a role within an adolescent group (specifically, an early adolescent group) may be more
difficult than working with younger children, who are less self-conscious while being observed. For early- and late-adolescent groups that are in a development period of building identity and autonomy, the perception that they are being watched may cause them to be uncomfortable (Tinson 2009).

**Parents**

**semi-structured interviews.** Semi-structured interviews provide greater consistency during data collection because they use a standardized set of topics and questions. Unstructured interviews would not be a good fit for this research project because of the study’s objectives, limitations on the parents’ time, and the research setting (Bernard 2011). Semi-structured interviews are open-ended but still focus on personal experiences and thoughts rather than on the participants’ general thoughts at a cultural level. Furthermore, they are not used to identify new domains—although new ones could emerge from the data—but to focus on areas already believed to be important to the study (Schensul and LeCompte 2013). Because this research study is more exploratory than explanatory, semi-structured interviews are “the best suited for exploring and delineating factors and subfactors and their association” (Schensul and LeCompte 2013, 175).

The semi-structured interviews with parents addressed three topics: (1) a discussion of food and foodways changes post-migration, and whether those changes are culturally and environmentally constructed; (2) a discussion of parental feeding practices and beliefs that shape their children’s microenvironment’ and (3) the child’s influence on or role in the family’s food and foodways changes. Questions of these
topics will be framed according to the ecological model of food and nutrition and the developmental niche.

**child dietary assessment (24-hr recall) and food context.** Food recall is a useful method for assessing average usual food intake at a larger population level. At the individual or household level, multiple twenty-four-hour recalls can be used to estimate the usual intake. Because the method relies on the memory of the participants, it is inappropriate for elderly or child participants. It is inexpensive, easy, and quick, with a low respondent burden (Gibson 2005). The purpose of using this method in this study is to assess the children’s food intake on multiple days. This method will be supplemented with food context data for the children. Food context data are basically additional information or detailed dietary behavior on each eating occasion for the children. This method has been used by Mak et al. (2012) to assess dietary behaviors and food consumption for children in different settings. Mak et al. (2012) found out that fruit and vegetables were consumed at school and daycares more than at home, as well as when eating at the table with the TV off.

For this study, parents were asked to record their children’s eating time, where the children were when they ate, with whom the children were eating, and their dietary behavior with regard to the meal, as shown in example at Table 4.1. Parents were asked to record multiple dietary assessments and food context data for two days, one weekday and one day during the weekend. This design might capture different food settings as well as different food items. A single twenty-four-hour food recall may omit certain foods consumed and lack of presentation of usual intake for a participant.
(Ulijaszek 2003). The food context method can help in identifying some occurrences of the agency and independence exercised by children through their association with food. A twenty-four-hour dietary recall helps in quantifying and constructing food items that children in Arab American families consume the most.

Table 4.1. Twenty-four-hour recall and food context example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day #</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Parents-Child Food interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Where? With whom? Who prepared? Table/No table?</td>
<td>What food items/dishes?</td>
<td>Description, discussion, and interaction occur before, during, and after each eating occasion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**focus group interviews.** Group interviews are interactive conversations that encourage participants to discuss and express their opinions and feelings with each other (Schensul and LeCompte 2013). And because food and foodways behaviors post-migration, parental feeding practices and beliefs, and children’s agency among Arab American migrants are not commonly discussed topics, focus groups may help develop those topics and make them more comprehensible for participants (Krueger 1994). The advantages of focus groups are that they encourage a great variety of communication from participants; help identify group norms; examine what information is censored or muted within the group; and highlight the respondents’ priorities and attitudes (Kitzinger 1994).

Notwithstanding the advantages of focus groups, this method has some limitations and should not be considered as a replacement of other data collection methods. Some of the disadvantages of this method lie in the researcher or the focus
group organizer. Too much control of the focus group discussion can stifle participant interaction, whereas too little control can lead to topics not being discussed in full, if ever (Michael and MacDonald 1995).

demographic survey and food survey. A short demographic survey on the Arab American migrants provided data on regarding basic demographic information and household social economic status. The survey included questions about yearly income, education level, working status, occupation, time lived in the United States, country of origin, proficiency in spoken and written English, year of immigration, reason for immigration, age, gender, number of children, number of people living in the household, contact information, and the best time to conduct the interview. Parents were also being asked to provide demographic data about the children, including age, grade in school, and gender.

Food surveys covered families’ food consumption, purchasing, and preparation habits, and will provided details of and the most commonly prepared and consumed ethnic or national dishes. Questions in the food survey mostly concern meal occasions (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner), the differences between foods consumed during weekdays and on the weekend and how type of food differs among family members. The survey also included questions about comparison between Arabic food and American or Western foods in terms of taste, price, nutrition, and convenience. The food survey inquired as to the type of restaurant family members frequently pick when they dine out. Lastly, the food survey included questions about the children’s favorite and least-favorite foods. Those surveys were distributed before conducting the semi-
structured interviews. Few sections of the food survey were obtained from Ray (2004) research on meals and memories in Bengali-American household.

**Children**

**ethical practices with children.** Children could still be seen as vulnerable group. This vulnerability can be “developmental (and as such is equally applicable to groups who may have learning difficulties), social (lack of awareness of what should be disclosed), power-related (children are typically expected to conform in a child-adult relationship), or comprehension of what is being expected of them” (Tinson, 2009, 16). However, any research study that involves children’s ideas, thought, or perspectives requires the consent or assent of the child participant in addition to that of their parent or guardian.

Typically, there are two types of agreement that may be obtained: informed consent or informed assent. Either consent or assent must be given and must be informed, and of course there are extra responsibilities for the researcher to consider if the participants are children. For instance, the child participant must understand both the long- and short-term implications of the study or research (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). The researcher must also consider the environment in which that consent or assent was given, since it might affect the child's participation in the discussion (Tinson, 2009). For example, if children and young people participate in research in their school setting, it becomes difficult for them to withdraw from the study due to the inscribed of differential power relation (David, Edwards, and Alldred 2001)
Working with children and adolescents raises the issue of power imbalance. Not only is there a disparity in size between the researcher and the child, there is also a disparity regarding their respective statuses within society. According to Matthews (2001), social and legal rules position children as less than adults, or as adults-in-the-making with few rights. However, Barker and Smith (2001) argue that the power relationship between adults and children as informants is usually presented in an overly simplistic fashion. Barker and Smith (2001) argue that “whilst children are experts of the day-to-day spaces of childhood,” adults’ lack of experience in such places means they are often the “novice” or “incompetent adult” (146).

Broadly, there are different well-defined ethical practices when working with children and adolescents that comprise informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality (Tinson 2009). Because children are rarely free to decide for themselves whether or not to participate in a study, they are positioned under the caregiver, who must give informed consent for their child’s participation (Lewis and Lindsay 2000). There are ethical considerations regarding the methods used in this research, such as photo elicitation. Besides the practical issues relating to use of photo elicitation interviews with children, there are ethical issues. Punch (2002) suggests that this method may pose an ethical issue for children who do not have the opportunity to experience photography again because of financial cost, leaving the child disappointed and the community potentially upset. Other ethical considerations are the uses of visual data (photographs) as they relate to anonymity and privacy. According to Tinson (2009), while it is easy to maintain a child’s pseudonym, photos make the child easily recognizable, especially when children are taking photographs of or inside their home.
Thus, photo elicitation was not utilized even I has previously suggested to apply photo elicitation for younger children.

Other ethical considerations in this study arise when discussing sensitive topics with children. Young and Barrett (2001) indicate that engaging in a “participatory research process can result in children trusting the researcher with morally sensitive information, which may result in problematic ethical choices” (134). Discussion of the consumption of permissible food may cause discomfort for the informants and embarrassment for the researcher. It may also cause the informant or participants to withdraw from the study.

**focus group (children)**

Focus groups or group interviews with children should be conducted after building rapport at school sites. This method provides more detailed insight into each child’s agency and family’s decision-making with regard to food. This also allows the children to interact with other children and offer the researcher an insight into the environment and context in which the participants socialize (Tinson 2009). One-on-one interviews with children may be less appropriate for younger children, who may be intimidated by an adult interviewee. In addition, “verbal questioning, as a restrictive menu of inquiry, favors adults’ superior language skills and in the process dilutes what children can express” (Clark 2004: 180). Focus groups for younger children are a useful method because when one child is talking about a certain topic, the other children have time to think about how to express their ideas or to seek clarification on the topic under discussion (Lewis 1992). However, researchers should pay full attention to gender, age,
and context when crafting focus groups. For example, topics that are more gendered may make participants disassociate or feel embarrassed and thus participate minimally (Tinson 2009). In addition, Darbyshire et al. (2005) conducted a focus group with school children in an art activities area away from a classroom, and that separation helped to create a less-formal context and more active discussion.

For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured approach was used during the focus groups with children. Semi-structured questions were constructed based on the information collected from the parents’ semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as well as food context data. In addition to the questions, free listing and vignettes were implemented at the beginning of the focus groups to get the child engaged with the discussions. Topics discussed included (1) child–parent interactions and negotiations with regard to food, (2) child food preferences, and (3) the child’s perception about parental practices with regard to food.

During the focus groups, three interactive activities were conducted: vignettes (or role playing), free listing, and one-day food menu. Below is a description of each focus group activity.

**vignettes.** Adolescents between twelve and seventeen years of age are generally more knowledgeable than younger children, so researchers can use scenarios or scenes (also known as vignettes) to provide them opportunities to express their views without openly providing information about themselves or their behaviors. According to Finch (1987), vignettes “are short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond” (105). They allow participants to gain confidence by drawing on concrete situations in the stories to
formulate more abstract ideas (Hazel 1995). A vignette can be employed as (1) an ice-breaker at the beginning of the interview, (2) a multi-method approach that can enhance existing data or generate new data that cannot be tapped by other methods, (3) a closing strategy for an interview, where it can broaden the focus from personal to more general issues, and (4) a means of comparing the perceptions of disparate groups (Barter and Renold 2000).

This technique has been used in many different qualitative studies, specifically ones that involve children and adolescents. In their study of public health issues, Jackson et al. (2015) employ the vignette method with children and adolescents while exploring the challenges, threats, and opportunities posed by the food industry in its prompting the consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages. Barter and Renold (2000) use vignettes in conjunction with semi-structured interviews to explore types of violence and to understand violence between young people in children’s homes. They asked children to respond to selected vignettes, regardless of whether or not those vignettes corresponded to a situation revealed during the semi-structured interviews. In this way, the authors tapped into sensitive topics such as sexual harassment or bullying that might not have been revealed in a standard interview.

Typically, children were asked to respond to vignettes or scenarios saying, “what they would do, or how they imagine a third person, generally a character in the story, would react to certain situations or occurrences” (Barter and Renold 2000, 1). The vignettes should be simple and easily understood by the participants. They should provide enough context for the adolescent to understand the story, and should be realistic and have eccentric characters (Barter and Renold 2000). Vignettes could be
presented in videotaped or written narrative form, and could cover topics related to family food and foodways as well as children’s agency. Vignettes for this study will be crafted using information collected during the parents’ semi-structured interviews and food context data.

*free listing.* According to Bernard (2011), “free listing is a deceptively simple, but powerful technique” (224). It is sampling that starts with asking a question like, “List all the X you can think of,” where X is something one usually eats or prepares during the weekend or a food brand that one usually buys. Another free listing method is semantic cuing, which can increase the recall of the respondent by 40%. Brewer et al. (2002) finds that questions posed using this approach might be: “Think of all the kinds of X that are like Y,” (nonspecific prompting), “What kinds of X are there that start with the letter A? With the letter B?”, and so on (alphabetic cuing; in Bernard 2011, 226).

Free listing is a powerful method for defining new culturally relevant domains and provides a powerful source of cognitive data in terms of frequencies (Weller and Romney 1988). In addition, participants conduct the test in an easy and natural way. However, free listing works best in a well-defined cultural domain where it is easy to create lists. In many cultural domains, people don’t have an easy way to make a list (Bernard 2011). Also, sometimes “it is difficult to find appropriate generic terms to start the listing process or lists may not be productive (lists are too sparse)” (Weller and Romney 1988, 11).

Free listing was used to determine the foods commonly consumed among children and adolescents as well as by adult Arab American migrants in this community. The free listing method is critical in this study, because the free list will reveal
information related to the child’s most-consumed foods. Also, this method can cast further light on children’s requested food items in this population. What are the food items most frequently consumed by children? How early, on average, does a food item get mentioned (relative order)?

“I am the boss”: food menu. This is engaging activity where children are asked to be the boss of their family for one day and create a food menu. The food menu highlights the frequency of traditional food vs. American or Western food items. Also, the purpose of this food menu is to assist children in answering the follow-up question: “Based on your food menu, do you think you have changed/influenced your parent’s food habits?”
CHAPTER FIVE
FOOD AND FOODWAYS CHANGES: PARENT’S PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the data collected on parents’ results. These data draw from focus groups with parents (N = 2, n = 8), semi-structured interviews with parents (n = 12), and the food survey (n = 3). The data collected in this chapter for this research study focus on two main research questions: 1) How and why do Arab American migrant families’ food and foodways change after migration to the United States? and 2) How does children’s agency with regard to food play a role in changing of food and foodways among their families? Chapters six and seven will examine feeding practices and results from children’s focus groups, respectively.

The semi-structured interview questions, focus group questions, and food survey can be found in Appendix E, F, and G.

In the first section of this chapter, I will present findings regarding pre-migration food and foodways among parents and the extent to which participants had exposure to any American or Western food before coming to the United States. The second section of the chapter will present an overview of the main factors that drive food and foodways changes within Arab migrant families. The last section will be discuss the factors shaping children’s food preferences and choices with regard to food (that is, children’s agency) and parent’s perceptions regarding their children’s agency.
Changes in Arab American migrant families’ food and foodways are largely determined through the ecological model of food and nutrition proposed by Jerome et al. (1980), which is used in nutritional anthropology. This model helps us understand those changes by looking at the intertwined components of the model, such as the physical, social, and cultural. In addition, the global force in the ecological model makes it a robust component in determining how food and foodways change for parents of Arab families post-migration.

The semi-structured interview questions were guided by the sub-questions of the research study. The aim of the semi-structured interviews with parents of Arab American migrant families is to understand 1) the dominant factors that driving changes in food and foodways among those families post-migration, 2) how migration to the United States might have impacted the parent’s food and foodways, and 3) whether the food preferences and agency of children in migrant Arab American families influences changes in the food and foodways of the family as a whole. Some interviews took place with both parents present, some with mothers only, and others with fathers only. Four of the participants brought their children with them during the interview. Even though my initial intention was to interview parents and children entirely separately, the children’s voices during their parents’ interviews became so relevant to the discussion that I had to include few of the parent-child interactions in the children findings in chapter eight.

Many traditional Arabic foods or dishes were mentioned among participants when they discussed their food habits changes post-migration, or food that triggers childhood memories and feelings of connection to families and friends in their countries of origin. The name of each dish or food mentioned will be transliterated to approximate
the correct pronunciation of the word. Description of the food or dish will be added in the footnote.

In Table 5.1, a list of codes created in the current research. All the codes were classified using the semi-structured interviews and parent focus groups. In the second-round process of coding, some of those codes were merged into a single category; “job constraints” and “time constraints,” for instance, were merged into a single code. Parents often discuss the time issues that arise from both parents working. The “quality of food” and “taste” codes were likewise merged into a single code. Participants always associate the taste of the food due to the type or quality of food as a factor of food and foodways changes.

Table 5.1: Categories and codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child agency</strong></td>
<td>Requesting</td>
<td>Factors of food and foodways changes is child requesting certain food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child Preferences</td>
<td>Factors of food and foodways changes is child preferences and food experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Parent-child negotiation around food at different settings (e.g., school, home)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child’s School</td>
<td>School environment as a factor shaping child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Peers as a factor shaping child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents as a factor shaping child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing</td>
<td>Food preparation or cooking, or help in preparation or cooking, as an indicator of child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>Child builds a habit of requesting certain food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community as a factor of shaping the child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>TV or media as a factor shaping child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dinning out</td>
<td>Child food experiences and factor shaping child agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Feeding Practices</strong></td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Using snacks as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Force vs. encourage</td>
<td>Using force or encouragement as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy/unhealthy</td>
<td>Strategies/tricks used to feed the child healthy food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Halal</td>
<td>Using cultural aspects as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preserve Culture</td>
<td>Cooking, preparing, and purchasing traditional or ethnic food as way to preserve the culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Meal</td>
<td>Using family meals as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use Utensils</td>
<td>Using utensils as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Using food as a reward as a part of child feeding practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1 (Continued): Categories and Codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Feeding Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Feeding Practices</td>
<td>Haram</td>
<td>Cultural feeding practices, discussing forbidden behaviors (e.g., wasting food)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kids full</td>
<td>Cultural feeding practices, child satiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Recipe</td>
<td>Using internet or other families as a source of new recipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quick</td>
<td>Preparing something does not require a lot of preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go Hungry</td>
<td>Strategies/trick used to have the children eat their food in a timely fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child’s Health</td>
<td>Use caution with certain food because of the child’s health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time Constraint</td>
<td>Time or job as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of Halal</td>
<td>Availability of halal food as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ingredients</td>
<td>Availability of ingredient as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Changes</td>
<td>No food or foodways changes post-migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price of Halal Food</td>
<td>Price of halal food as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooking Skills</td>
<td>Cooking skills as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Spouse as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment in General</td>
<td>Food environment in general as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors that aid in food and foodways changes</strong></td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Accessibility of halal food as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of food</td>
<td>Food quality or taste as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cravings</td>
<td>Child cravings as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Parental health as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Household income as a factor influencing food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Decision Making</td>
<td>Decision for purchased, prepared, and cooked food for children only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent Perceptions</td>
<td>Parents perceptions about food in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic Food</td>
<td>Ethnic or traditional food mainly prepared by Arab families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Overcoming the challenges of halal food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Food</td>
<td>Consumption, preparation, or purchasing of Western food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Food Changes</td>
<td>Example of social or cultural changes to food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Food Changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Consumption, preparation, and cooking of, and experiences with Western food in general (including American food) before migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food and Foodways</td>
<td>How food is consumed, cooked, prepared, and purchased in the family’s country of origin. The food settings (who is cooking, who is in the table, what is the food, food occasion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77
Table 5.1 (Continued): Categories and Codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>Food Decision Making</td>
<td>Decision for purchased, prepared, and cooked food for children only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Category</strong></td>
<td>Parent Perceptions</td>
<td>Parents perceptions about food in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic Food</td>
<td>Ethnic or traditional food mainly prepared by Arab families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Overcoming the challenges of halal food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Food</td>
<td>Consumption, preparation, or purchasing of Western food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-migration</strong></td>
<td>Cultural Food Changes</td>
<td>Example of social or cultural changes to food and foodways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Food Changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-migration</strong></td>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Consumption, preparation, and cooking of, and experiences with Western food in general (including American food) before migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food and Foodways</td>
<td>How food is consumed, cooked, prepared, and purchased in the family’s country of origin. The food settings (who is cooking, who is in the table, what is the food, food occasion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-migration Food**

To address RQ1 (i.e., how and why do Arab families’ food and foodways change after migration to the United States?), It is important to understand the food and foodways of their home countries. Participants were asked to visualize and describe a typical meal setting in their home country before their migration to the United States. This exercise also served to elucidate some of the social and cultural changes surrounding food in different environmental settings. Most participants placed emphasis on the typical dishes for different meal occasions such as breakfast, lunch, or dinner, and on the social-cultural aspects that revolves around food.
For example, an Egyptian woman, describe that a typical breakfast meal is “fūl”\(^2\) and falāfil\(^3\) with Arabic bread, baladi\(^4\) bread. Our breakfast is like most Mediterranean meals, with cheese, olives, vegetables like cucumber and tomatoes, and, of course, eggs. Sometimes the egg is baked with sausage, or with baṣṭurmah\(^5\).” By contrast, lunch for this participant and her family in Egypt had no set menu and changed all the time; but she vividly recalled something called ḥawāshi\(^6\), which is equivalent to an American burger, but stuffed in pita bread and baked in the oven.

For other Arab migrants, the type of meal is determined by the day of the week and the time of day the meal should be consumed. An Iraqi who migrated to the United States eight years ago with two daughters, said:

*Every Friday\(^7\)*, we have qaymar\(^8\) for breakfast. We have to wake up at 7:00 in the morning go to bakery store and get the kāḥ\(^9\); the Egyptians call it mushaltat\(^10\). Usually the bakery sells qaymar. Or sometimes we cook Tharīḍ bajillā\(^11\). Sometimes we get it from the local restaurant. Since it a heavy meal, we eat in the early morning so it can digest during the day.

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\(^2\) Traditional dish that eaten by Egyptian for breakfast and made from beans.

\(^3\) Made from chickpeas and fava beans, this deep-fried dish is very famous and originated in Egypt.

\(^4\) This is an Arabic bread that made from whole wheat.

\(^5\) Highly seasoned air-dried cured beef.

\(^6\) Traditional Egyptian dish which is like a burger.

\(^7\) Unlike in the States, Friday is an official holiday in Iraq.

\(^8\) A creamy dairy usually is eaten with something sweet, like honey or jam.

\(^9\) A very light bread.

\(^10\) An Egyptian light breads.

\(^11\) A heavy meal made from bread, beans, beef suet, and eggs.
This participant indicated that the main meals for his family and relatives are breakfast and lunch; for dinner it is not necessary to have the family all together, since most of the members go out in the evening.

Another an Iraqi migrant, mentioned that breakfast on and ordinary day does not consist of much. It usually “a jam and one or two kinds of cheese with and drink hot tea with milk.” A participant from Moroccan migrated to the States with two daughters had the same experience of the Iraqi participant. She is full-time student in a master’s degree program. She indicated that meals are different during the weekdays and weekends, with weekend meals being more elaborate:

Back in the day, cereals were not popular. So, we would either drink coffee or hot tea and bread with butter or cheese. My mom would do that. The weekend is different. The weekend is for a more elaborate breakfast, maybe with misamn. It’s like Indian paratha, but cooked the Moroccan way. Or my dad would go to the bakery and get fresh bread, misamn, or chocolate croissants. And if we had guests, we’d add light morning soup called semolina milk soup.

There is an important observation that is common among some of the migrants, which is the shared memory obtaining fresh bread—be it baladi bread, kāhī, or misamn—at a local bakery. Also, these migrant parents indicated that food there differed between the weekdays and the weekend, with weekend meals being more elaborate.

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12 This is a Moroccan bread, made with flour and semolina.
13 Semolina milk soup is very creamy soup that often prepared for breakfast or dinner meals.
For lunch and dinner, rice with any kind of meat is a typical food among many Arab migrant. A participant, who immigrated to the United States when she was young, mentioned that “rice and meat is an everyday meal, whether at lunch or dinner.” She is an Iraqi woman who migrated to the States with three daughters and her husband, mentioned “rice, biryānī 14, with bean stew or vegetable stew, for lunch or dinner.” The couple emphasize in Arabic, which I had to translate, “For the Iraqi people, if there is no meat, they don’t eat [laughing],” which indicates how important it is to have a meat at lunch or dinner. The type of meat is important, too. Other Iraqi participant mentioned that “It has to be lamb; we don’t eat goat or beef back home.” Other participant in the interview said about Iraqi food:

We eat mostly meat, and I don’t know why but it has to be meat. kabāb 15, biryānī, kubbah 16, Dolmah 17. We don’t eat biryānī at dinner, only lunch.

For lunch, it is more about rice. So it’s always rice is the main dish with something. For example, okra stew, potato soup, white bean stew, or tashriḥ 18.

For Moroccan people “lunch is mostly ṭājin 19. Either chicken or beef or lamb with vegetables, with salad on the side. That’s typical. That is the least thing, sometimes with homemade bread. If you are in a hurry, you can buy it from the bakery” said one Moroccan participant.

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14 An Indian dish that made from rice, vegetables or meat.
15 Iraqi, Iranian or Turkish food that made from ground beef. Seasoned differently according to the country.
16 Levantine area dish were its made from bulgur, ground beef, and onions.
17 This is grape leaves. It’s usually a cold dish but the Iraqi people made it hot and with dates molasses.
18 Soaked light bread topped with meat and vegetables.
19 Very famous Moroccan dish.
While some parents focus on the food types, other participant from Sudan mentioned “the food typically prepared by my mother. And we only eat three times a day. It usually in a fixed. So, we eat breakfast, lunch and dinner all prepared my mother.” What this participant meant with fixed is that food consumed at fixed time during the day. She also indicated the importance of her mother’s role in constructing their identity though food.

**Pre-migration Experience with Western Foods**

When participants were asked about the Western foods that they consumed, cooked, and purchased, there was variation in their personal exposure of Western food in their home countries. The experience of Western food habits back home was also identified as distinct from the same kind of food consumed in the United States. This is a key question regarding food and food habits changes that can occur even before migration to the host country. The familiarity, availability, and affordability of those Western foods to migrants can determine the extent of food and foodways changes.

For a Moroccan participant, the consumption of Western food was something that rarely happened because of the relative inaccessibility of Western food at the time. However, it remained very meaningful to her family. “We had McDonald’s. But it was not accessible. Back then, I used to live in Casablanca; the whole city had just one McDonald’s. It was not convenient to get very often. But it was a very big deal to go McDonald’s at that time, because it was not everywhere. Now, McDonald’s is everywhere in Morocco.”
housewife participant with two daughters, had a different take on the topic of exposure of Western food. Because she immigrated to the United States when she was young, she gave her answer based on what her father used to tell her about food and restaurants in Jordan:

They have more restaurants now that serve those kinds of food, so they can mimic it. So, I think if you ask about now vs. twenty years ago, it’s a big difference. Maybe twenty years ago you would have seen pasta and pizza, stuff like that, small stuff; but now you see a lot more. My husband’s family did prepare a lot of things like lasagna, béchamel sauces, and stuff like this. That is all Westernized food, and Chinese food.

When I asked the same participant why they would mimic food instead of going to eat at a restaurant, she said, “My husband’s family live in rural city and they are falahin,” which means farmers, so they rarely go out to eat at a restaurant in Jordan.

When participants were asked if they still consumed those Western foods, there was general agreement on the maintenance of consumption, preparation, and dining out in some US restaurants. Not only are the participants continuing the same food habits and choices; they appear to have agreed on the quality of those foods, too. For example, a Jordanian migrant with two children and his wife, settled in various Arab countries before becoming a US resident. He mentions that:

For me, when I go and eat, for example, Burger King, Burger King for me is one of my favorite restaurants, both overseas and here. But I found a change; there is a big difference. Like overseas in Dubai when I used to
eat, it is different from here. So, that is why I used to say, “You guys say it’s a franchise!” I mean it’s the same taste. But then I say no. The meat is different; because maybe the meat is [sourced] in a halal way, and they take specifications, like “We are going to serve it this way.”

He felt that the sandwiches have the same ingredients, but the meat is different. This idea of the food quality of Western food overseas compared with here in the States was also noted by the previous participant from Morocco and Iraq. For one participant, “We have tried pizza, and burgers, and some Italian food, and we think it tastes better [in Arab countries] than here. Chinese food, I have only tried here, never over there.” A participant commented on Chinese food by saying “Chinese food back home is the top. I was disappointed when I moved here. My husband took us to a Chinese restaurant; I felt it was American Chinese food.” A male participant from Iraq said that “I tried Italian food back home; I loved it. I have tried steak also. I tried KFC—all American food. But the taste is different; back home, it’s better.”

Factors of Food and Foodways Changes

To address RQ1A (i.e., what are dominant factors in the changes of food and foodways among Arab migrant families?), participants were asked their thoughts about the main factors that led to changes in their food and foodways after coming to the United States during the interviews and parent’s focus groups. In the focus group, parents were given a few minutes and asked to write down as much as they could about the factors that led to the changes. Those factors were shared and discussed with the group. Parents then where asked to identify the most important factors in their food and
foodways changes. There was some overlap between those factors, while some of those factors supplemented each other. For example, the idea of a child requesting a certain food or meal depends on the mother’s cooking skills and time constraint factors. Also, a big part the discussion deals with the parents’ thoughts on child agency and how it plays a role in their food and foodways.

**Food Environment: Ingredients**

“The food has changed because the availability of food itself; you don’t have everything back here”

—Subject from Sudan

According to the parents’ interviews and focus groups, finding the right ingredients to make their home food is never an easy task, even with the availability of Mediterranean stores and other local stores. For example, one male participant from Jordan said, “I have seen it in Walmart; they stared putting in Arabic food, and then they stopped. And Publix put it in, and then they stopped. We have to go to Arabic stores to get the food.” He adds that the taste of meals cooked at home is inferior, and that because the ingredients are different, “taste-wise, things have been going down [laughing]. Because we cannot find the ingredients that we look for. And even when the ingredients come, I think they come different; over there the ingredients are mostly fresh…but they’re different than back home.”

Other participants had associated the availability of ingredient with the physical environment. An Iraqi woman said in Arabic, which I had to translate “taste and ingredients. For example, the fish here is from the sea; the fish back home is from the
river. Even the river fish here is not the same. Our fish has more fat; here it’s dry. Also, the cheese! When I first came to the States, I suffered from not finding white cheese that is similar to the kind we have in Iraq.” In addition, the same participant mentioned that her favorite food is dolmah, a very famous dish in Iraq. She has to mitigate the issue of making this dish with a substitute ingredient. “For example, the ingredient selg 20. Here, you can’t find selg, which is the main ingredient for dolmah, we have to find something close to it and we found swiss chard; the taste is different, but it is the closest to it”.

Families emigrated from Iraq had noticed that American meat is different. One Iraqi participant noted: “Food back home is all organic—vegetables, fruits, no chemicals in your plantation, no hormones or things in meats. For example, the chicken here is huge! There is no a chicken that size back home.” Iraqi people incorporate a lot of meat in their diet, especially lamb, in order to make foods like kabab and shāwurmah. Other female Iraqi participant said: “The lamb is not the same lamb that we have back home. If you grill kebab over here [meaning the States], is not the same taste. And also, they have leeyah21 other there [referring to his homeland, Iraq]; here they do not have it. Therefore, it tastes completely different. Even shāwurmah is different. They make it here with beef; we make it with lamb.”

One Egyptian participant stated that the environment is the most significant factor in these food changes. “Our environment, the stores, what they sell, is different access then overseas. In Arabic countries, they have a souq22, which is an open market, fresh,

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20 A leafy vegetable used to make dolmah in Iraq.
21 This is the fatty part of the sheep that located on the tail.
22 Open Arabic market. Similar to flea market.
just like farmers’ markets. Here, the farmers’ markets are rare. Over there, they are common…here is just the opposite.” The participant continues, adding that she and her husband noticed a difference in their food:

   My husband has been here for fifteen years. He noticed a difference and I noticed a difference from my visit overseas after I immigrated here. The quality of food is different. There is less processing, more flavors in the food, more whole food. Here the food is more commercialized, more processed. There is not the same food. You try to find the equivalent of a food, and it matches—but sometimes it’s not quite the same.

   I asked the same Egyptian participant to give us an example of an example of Egyptian dish that is different here because of the environment. She replied

   As far as what we eat now, is the thing that we can find. For Egyptian food, the *mulūkhiyyah* 23 is frozen here. Over there you get it fresh. My mom brings the seeds, and we grow here in the yard. We still do this today, and cut the fresh *mulūkhiyyah*. The only difference is now she is using the food processor where she used to use a rocking chopper.

**Time Constraints (Lifestyle)**

“What have changed is the speed of life, got us more into the fast food”

   —A participant from Jordan

According to the parents, time constraints or “speed of life” seem to be a central issue and factor driving food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families.

23 Egyptian dish where a certain leafy vegetables cooked until it forms a think slimy soup or stew.
Parents uniformly discussed either the time it takes to prepare a fresh meal, lacking time to cook because of the job constraints of both parents. When I interviewed an parent from Egypt, for example, she told me her husband works in construction and sometimes requires him to work until late. I asked her, “How do time constraints affect your food preparation when you are actually a housewife? She replied:

[I am affected by the] schedules of my husband’s job, and homework and school for my son [her thirteen-year-old son]. So, yeah, it affects us sometimes. We eat as much as we can together most of the time, but sometimes it does not happen. My husband will be late and I don’t want [my son] to eat too close to his bedtime, so feed him before my husband gets home. I will eat with my husband. Sometimes my husband comes back late from work because he works at construction sites, so [his appetite is] changing. Sometimes he does not want a heavy meal. I make him a Turkish dish, like egg with vegetables, an omelet kind of thing.

During a parent focus group, a Moroccan participant concurs: “The time. Absolutely time. I used to be a housewife. I made everything fresh and from scratch. Nothing would stop me from doing it [meaning cooking food]. Maybe some ingredients! I can make some food, but I can’t make it with missing some ingredients.” I asked the parent about some of the hard-to-find ingredients. She said, “The only challenge I have is that there is no more time to make fresh food for the tājin. Also, now that I am a full-time graduate student, I don’t have time to make everything fresh. This is the ideal thing. But really, I cannot. We sometimes use leftovers [laughing]”
During a focus group, a participant from Jordan agreed with what the Moroccan parent said; however, she added that she has to put into consideration other things beside the time factor:

I am a full-time student, too. So, the types of food that I will make that day—it depends on the time I must cook. And I also have factor the health issue, because my son is more American than Arab when it comes to food and obesity; so even if it’s Arabic or traditional food like maqlūbah, for example, I won’t fry the vegetables, to make healthier. And we use Basmati rice instead of the Egyptian rice. So, I factor those two things along their carvings. For example, if my husband wants maqlūbah and my son wants shrimp pasta, shrimp pasta will take me ten or fifteen minutes, with maqlūbah will take a good solid hour. So, shrimp pasta it is! I just go with their carving around time.

One Jordanian participant identifies the main factor driving changes in food and foodways as “the speed of life.” Both of this participant and his wife are full-time teachers. “What has changed is that the speed of life got us more into the fast food. The food we get is ready-made; all we have to do is microwave it, and we are done. So, the thing of preparing it and spending the time for it—that’s gone now. This is a very big issue that we are facing here because of the speed of life.” He continued and added that the ready-made food comes from different cuisines “We have prepared Chinese food, and it already ready-made. You just have to mix it up. Same thing with Indian

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24 A Levant dish made from rice, vegetables and meat at the bottom of the pot and then flipped over and served.
food; we buy the sauces ready we just mix it. It’s not as fresh as eating at restaurant.
Some of the Arabic dish are ready-made nowadays, because of the speed of life.”

Availability and Price of Halal Food

“When I came to the United States, I was in small city in Texas called Midland-Odessa. There was no Arabic store, we were eating meat from the local store.”

—A participant from Egypt

I asked the participants during the semi-structured interviews: “The accessibility of permissible food (halal) can be changing, sometimes due to the cost and availability. How did you overcome this issue?” There are important differences in the food consumption of non-permissible food among Arab migrant families. Those differences circle around how each family or community defines what is permissible or halal food, and what it is not. Those differences were discussed not only during the parents’ individual interviews but also during the children’s focus groups. (The topic was not discussed during the parents’ focus groups, for fear that the sensitivity of the topic might elicit unpleasant discussion.)

When I asked one participant during the interview whether she thinks the challenge of finding halal food is affecting her family’s food and foodways, she answered:

I think it depends on where you live. We moved from New York to Tampa; there are a lot of Muslims here, a lot of stores, so you have opportunity. Like, some of my relatives live in distant places and they can’t get [halal foods]. So, it depends on where you surround yourself, number one.
Number two, I guess it depends on how you define halal. Like, are going after the red dyes and all of that? If you going to do that, we are not going to eat. You’re never going to eat anywhere, because what they are selling in the al-bilād\textsuperscript{25} is not going to be any different. So, I think if you just try to maintain clean meat and stay away from certain things—you know, gelatin. You have a lot of opportunities. And now Publix and other groceries store you have Kosher sections. A lot things are made with fish gelatin. I think if you are just vigilant, you have the opportunity to do it. If you are going crazy, then are not even going to breathe the air.

Clearly, this participant related the issue of halal to the availability of that food. She also thinks it is pointless to attempt to be extreme with sticking to permissible food; she advocates using simple precautions along with avoiding the purchase and consumption of foods containing gelatin. This is the not the only issue with her.

During the interview with another parent, a female participant from Sudan, who came from New Mexico to Tampa, talked about how they dealt with the issue of halal meat by sharing livestock with other families. She explained:

In beginning, it was challenging; it’s still challenging, because even if you find it, it is little bit pricey. They make it pricey because they know it is very difficult to find. So, we try overcoming time issue by doing it ourselves. For example, we stopped buying halal meat from the stores. We and a couple of other families and actually go to a place where they slaughter a sheep

\textsuperscript{25} Home country.
or a cow. So, this is what we do now. We have someone who does it for us, and we share the meat with certain families because it pricey. Also, if you increase the number of the kids in the family, you need more food and so you can’t go every weekend and buy food that is so expensive. This is difficult now.

An Iraqi female participant settled in Tampa in 2010 and has seen changes in the availability of permissible food in the city. “There was only one shop that sold halal food. Once you got inside, there was a long queue of people waiting to get meat. Now, it’s everywhere. In the beginning, it was hard, so I was getting nothing halal anyway. We would eat outside, fast food, but if we started cooking at home, we would try to find halal food.” The food experiences that this participant encountered are different from those of the others. Because she spends most of her time working, she had no choice but to eat whatever is available and easily accessible. That being said, she also cooks halal food at home for her family, which interesting given how she defines halal.

An Egyptian participant, who moved to Florida more than twenty years ago, talked about her experience with food environments and how it feels comfortable living in an Arabic environment in New York:

I used to live in New York City. Back then, we were the minority, and still probably are, but the minority has grown over the years. We have relocated a couple of times after that, and to a place like home, “alḥay al-‘arabi”\textsuperscript{26}. We lived closer to the culture, and schools, and a better environment. So, little more Arabic stores. My mom send me to a store

\textsuperscript{26} Areas, usually shopping areas, for Arabs.
within walking distance, Sultan Market. We lived closer to that because it was hard in New York; you had to take public transportation, just to get to the \textit{al\text{"{h}ay al-‘arab\text{"{i}}}}. Now, we find a mix of Arabic cultures. Here, more Jordanians, Egyptians, Moroccans. So, we find more of the taste of the Mediterranean Arabic food. More Arabic stores over the past twenty years. It starts growing; at first, it used to be just one store, the Sultan. Now, the community builds the business. It’s close to home. It feels more comfortable in terms of the food.

Aside from the availability and the accessibility of halal food, the price of halal food in markets and Arabic restaurants presents a challenge. During the interview, a participant said:

At the beginning it was, you know, to go and order a chop of meat, and it’s going to cost us this much. If you want to go to a halal place and get it, it’s going to be so high. But then we realize that there is a big difference, you know? The way the meat is being slaughtered makes a big difference on the type and taste. So that’s why we went back to it. Maybe because we are getting a lot of cow meat, then we used to eat like the goat and sheep meat. So, that way it makes a difference.

For this participant, undoubtedly the price has a major influence on his purchasing halal food. But he also factors in that this food tastes different, comparing it to what he and his family used to eat.
When I asked the participants how they overcome the issues of halal availability, accessibility, and price, three of the participants mentioned they had asked the al-shaykh\textsuperscript{27} to see what they should do. One Iraqi male participant replied:

When I came here, there was one shop that sold halal food. The meat was bad, but I had no choice; I bought chicken, lamb, and beef from this shop. I started to gradually cut out buying their meat because it was so bad, even it was halal. Then, I asked a friend of mine who is knowledgeable about this issue. I asked, “We pay a lot of money on halal food.” If we go to Michigan, the halal meat is cheap. So, what is the solution? He told me, I asked the al-shaykh and he said just say \textit{bismillāh}\textsuperscript{28} and eat the meat. Just make sure it’s not pork or anything like it. So, I switched to local meat. I begin to buy from Sam’s Club. Now, if I go out with my family, I eat everywhere I want. I eat burgers, I eat chicken, I don’t care.

For other male participant, it is more a matter of trust. He, too asked a al-shaykh, who told him the same thing: to say \textit{bismillāh} and eat, which is the best thing that he can do:

So halal food does differ. The way I specify halal, I prefer to go to an Arabic store and get it because I trust it is halal. I would trust it if there is a stamp saying it is halal. Sam’s Club has got it now, and Restaurant Depot. [So] we go and buy it based on the trust that it is says “halal.” The thing I am doing lately is [looking for] Kosher [products], because it is close to the

\textsuperscript{27} is equivalent to a priest, which has religious connotations.
\textsuperscript{28} Means ‘in the name of God’.
way we believe, and the way they slaughter things. If they told me, “This is Kosher,” I’ll buy it, because I can trust that it is the same as halal meat.

For an Iraqi female participant is bit different from the others in terms of defining halal food. When I asked her, “How did you overcome the issue of halal? Has it affected your food and food habits?” She answered:

We are very strict about halal food. We don’t say we buy it from Walmart or Publix and say *bismillāh*. It has to be *dhibīḥah*\(^{29}\). That’s why we don’t have much exposure [i.e., we don’t get out much]. We don’t have many options here in Tampa to eat out in restaurants. The good restaurants that serve halal food are very expensive. The children sometimes really crave for McDonald’s like the ones in the Middle East. We have no problem eating in the Middle East. Last summer, we went to California and we ate only Iraqi food [laughing]! I used to live in London. There is a difference between London and here. There, from store to the other store, there is a halal store.

for this participant, it is not the only one who is mentioned that restaurants serving halal food are very expensive. Other participant said during the interview that “the problem is that there are not many Arabic restaurants and they are all very expensive. That’s why my wife cooks everything halal at home; it’s cheaper.”

\(^{29}\) A ritual slaughter of all halal (permissible) animals.
Other Factors

Beside ingredients, time constraints, and availability and accessibility of halal food, there were other factors influencing food and foodways among Arab migrant families. What distinguish those factors from those previously mentioned is that these factors were the least mentioned among the participants. In addition, these factors are more specific and situational. For example, a participant, who works part-time and had a fourteen-year-old son and a twelve-year-old daughter, said “I can always make food, but my husband works overseas. So, it’s not practical to cook big meals; and no matters how small we want to make our meals, with all the mixes with our Arabic food, you can’t make small meals.” Beside the participant’s husband not being around, she added “I recently went on a strict diet for my health. So, I love our food, it is my number one food, but it’s not working for me anymore.”

Other participant thinks that her husband sometimes makes bad food choices which affect the children’s food eating behaviors. “My husband sometimes get Gatorades and apple juice, the Capri Sun juice, you know? And I don’t like it, but they like it. I keep telling him, ‘Please don’t buy it.’ But once its home [meaning the drink] it’s hard to convince the kid not to drink it. [Her daughter], at least she gets it on PE day; it’s a good reason.” She also mentioned: “I had to start to cook for us [meaning her family]. I never used to do that. It’s a big challenge [laughing] especially when I first moved to the States, but now I am doing okay [laughing].”

As for a Jordanian male participant, he deliberately discussed how food at the house is different from in his home country. “Things have changed for me. When I was back home, the way of food is different is based on the mom taste was.” Now he enjoys
food with which he had no experience before migrated to the United States. “For
example, I did not eat spinach. Now, I eat spinach. Also, broccoli; this is another thing
that we started eating. Fish, also is another thing. A recent thing is the salmon; my wife
cooked it in a good way and I like it. Sushi, I got into it here and I didn’t used to eat it
overseas. Mexican food got me into it because it is fast and quick.” I asked him to
describe a typical meal or staple for him: “For me, it has to be rice or spaghetti. If one of
those are on the table, I consider it a meal. It does change for me.”

One participant said the income is a factor that influences their food. “In a rare
situation, the income may influence our food, but very rare and the children will not
notice it.” The participant’s children ask for certain snacks for school or when they go
grocery shopping, but a few times those snacks requests have been rejected due to
financial reasons. Figure 5.1 shows all factors of food and foodways changes
mentioned among Arab families.
Figure 5.1: Map for all factors of food and foodways changes.

You can kill me and I won't put okra in my mouth. Okra (Bamya), I cook it once a year for my husband as "hey I am being nice for you" [laughing].

The food has changed because the availability of the food itself because you don't have everything back here.

For us like women who don't drive. For women who came first to the states, and don't drive. It's very difficult for me because I will cook whatever I have in house. Sometimes I don't have a choice.

I used to live in St. Pet we had no halal meat store.

What have changed is the speed of life got us more into the fast food.

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Child Agency

This section provides an overview of the qualitative data collected. These data include the information from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups with parents. The data collected for this section answer the question regarding the role of children in their families’ food and foodways changes post-migration. The aim is to develop a picture of 1) how the child’s agency with regard to food is being expressed, 2) the factors that shape the child’s agency with regard to food, and 3), the extent to which parents believe that children’s agency with regard to food has influenced their food and foodways after coming to the United States.

During the interviews and the focus groups, “child agency” definition was substituted with simpler phrases such as “child choice” or “child preferences,” instead of agency. This was very important especially for those participants were not fluent with English. “Child choice/preferences” was also easier to translate into Arabic than the definition of “agency.”

Methods of Child Agency Expressions

Parents were asked to talk about some of the ways their children express their preferences with regards to food. Those could be at different food occasions, e.g. breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or different food settings/locations, e.g. home, restaurants, grocery shopping, or a relative’s home.

One participant mentioned that her daughters asked her to make certain food that her grandmother cooked once when she visited them during the summer. “For example, lasagna, I have done it once before. My mom, when she comes back, she
makes it. They really like my mom’s food. If my daughter asks me now to make lasagna, I don’t know, tell me something easy to make [laughing].” The participant’s daughter was with her during the interview, and she heard her mother talking about lasagna. The participant doesn’t mind fulfilling her daughter’s request. But there are other factors that play in fulfilling that request.

Daughter: You have done it once and tasted so good.

Mother: It depends. If it’s easy food, the recipe is easy to follow, I have the ingredients and have the time, I can picture doing it. I don’t mind.

This participant was not the only one who brought her kids to the interview; an Egyptian participant was there with her thirteen-year-old son. I asked her to give me an example or recent incident of how her son expressed a choice or preference about his food. She replied: “He is very vocal about making his choice. So, does he request food? Yes, he does; he has favorites. He requests certain food. For example, he does appreciate the Arabic recipes, but he wants them in certain way. The other day my mom brought zucchini, and we encouraged him to eat some vegetables and not just meat. So, he likes it the Egyptian way with the sauces . . .” Her son interrupted his mom and said:

Son: No, mom, it was not zucchini. It was green beans, mom.

Mother: No, [son], it was zucchini.

Son: No, not zucchini, mom. Do you not know that?

Mother: Maybe you’re right.
Son: There is a special way that I like my green beans. I want drenched in tomato sauce with some like type of seasoning. I won’t eat it with just the seasoning, I wanted it drenched in tomato sauce.

When I asked a couple participant whether their children ask for certain foods that they have seen or eaten somewhere, the husband replied, “We never tried Western food back home, never. There is no Western food in our area. Maybe in Northern Iraq, but not Baghdad because I left fifteen years ago.” His wife added “Yes, I cook. I don’t feel that they cannot eat other food. Whatever they need to eat, I do it at home. Also, they prefer that, because they know it’s healthy.” Even though the couple never tried Western food when they lived in Iraq, they are still fulfilling their children’s request. I asked the couple what kind of things the children requested, the husband: “Sometimes they ask me to make barbecue in my house. So, I’ll do it, because we all eat together.” The wife said “They ask sometimes to eat at Chick–fil-A. We go because we all like it.”

Factors that Shape Child Agency

To address RQ2A (i.e., what determinates shape child agency in family food behaviors?), parents were asked follow-up questions about the factors that helped to shape their food choices or preferences. Many parents identify a link between those factors and their children’s food choices and preferences. This is especially true when it comes to school and peers. This was explained by one participant during the interview:

When they came here [referring to his children], the American food has conquered their brains, because of what are eating at school and what
they were eating at public school in the beginning. So, they are a lot into what the kids at public school eat. Coming here has changed my kids’ way of eating. For example, my son’s meals have become minimal. He got into more of mac-and-cheese, fish fingers. Everything is fast, and that’s what they like, I don’t know why. This the problem of coming over here. It changed us, too, because we have to eat what they want to eat.

The participant’s comments provide convincing evidence that school is huge factor that shapes his children’s agency with regard to food. Other participant also shows her frustration with the school food environment, which has not only affected her daughter, but other families at school:

Whatever she tried and liked, she would ask for. I mean, she has this love for hot dogs. We never have hot dogs at home or our culture. And the problem she has this love for hot dogs from school, because they serve it at school. It’s not only me. I wish I was only me! For me, school is the number one source for food culture. They have this fried chicken, for example; I don’t do fried chicken at home. I never, never made fried chicken. I don’t know even how to make fried chicken! Also, the pastries and juices, like Capri Sun. I never bought it, honestly. At school. The kids go to school with some snacks, for example chips, and she’s talking about chips. We never bought chips. She brings a lot of things home from outside. I wish I was the only one with this problem.
The participant also told a story about her daughter during the focus group, relating how peer pressure has a strong influence: “For [my daughter], if we want to make pizza at home with vegetables like green pepper, she removes the pepper, and eats the pizza. At school, a friend of hers brought green pepper, and she tried it, and she liked it. And now, she always asks for it. I think, probably it has to be spontaneous exposure, not like by forced exposure.” She mentioned that her daughter has started liking some foods that are not commonly consumed in her culture. She said, “They started liking the rice from school. It’s not a major Moroccan meal. Back home, we don’t eat rice that much, only very occasionally. Maybe with seafood. We use bread [instead]; we consume a lot of bread.”

One participant, who has the most religious restrictions regarding food, also brought her fourteen-year-old son and twelve-year-old daughter to the focus group discussion. She mentioned that the influences of others had a strong effect on children, especially her son:

My children are struggling sometimes. They really really want to eat the things their friends eat, but [cannot] because of the religious restriction. The thing is, it is easy for me to have my children buy or eat, for example, at Subway. At Subway, the only thing we allowed to eat is the tuna, and my son always used to eat tuna with cucumber; that’s it, no cheese, nothing. And I don’t know, maybe he saw a friend of his or something, but he wanted to try other vegetables with the tuna. Like some olives or vinegar for taste. Even things that he is not used to eating. But when he
sees other of his friends, he wanted to try [what they try]; he wants to copy them. Especially his friends—not his family members or relatives.

Other participant in the focus group agreed with this participant’s point of view (her remarks are translated): “I think one factor is the society of my daughters, their friends, and school. Sometimes, they [meaning her daughters] preferred to eat like their friends—for example, pizza. We don’t eat too much pizza at home. They like it because they used to eat outside. I have to go with they want because I cannot prevent it all the time.”

In the same focus group, one participant commented on other stories by arguing that peer pressure is not the only issue; the school food environment also plays a part: “So, it comes easier for us being exposed to other cultures, Moroccan, the Iraqi. I can’t imagine exposing my son at this tender age [to a culture] where it is normal to see food that he can’t eat, like bacon and sausage. What if he is tempted to try it? So, it is peer pressure, and the food environment.”

In addition to children’s requests for certain food spurred by the food environment at school and the influence of peers, parents mentioned also they have certain child food preferences, and that parents should sometimes modify recipes to make them more palatable for the kids. During parents’ focus groups, one participant explained that the way of cooking has affected her food: “I always cook with spices in my food. But because of my oldest son, I must make something bland for him.” In the same focus group, a male participant from Sudan agreed: “I enjoy eating our food, and it has a lot of spice. A lot of times my wife changes the cooking because she knows that if there are
spices the kids might not eat it. So, it becomes bland food that I don’t enjoy so much, so it really bothers me.” A participant gives the example of a famous Arabic dish: “As everyone said, for example maqlūbah, the children don’t like to eat mixed vegetables and the spices, they prefer the plain rice with stew. They just take the base of the stew without any vegetables or meat. I think they are as any other child; they prefer pizza, plain burgers, chicken nuggets.” These findings are less surprising if we consider that some children are picky about vegetables and the overwhelming tastes of spices.

During the parents’ focus groups, participants were given “child food experiences” as a probe to facilitate the discussion of factors that shape children’s agency about food. A participant said “I know that one Moroccan dish, she does not like it. She tried it once and probably overate it, like she ate a lot of it that make her sick. Not to the point of vomiting, but she remembers this dish, so she said, ‘I don’t like this anymore. Please don’t make it.’” Unlike this participant’s daughter, who developed an unpleasant association with traditional food, a participant illustrates how her son likes traditional food—particularly his grandmother’s cooking. “He does appreciate food. He does remember Grandma’s cooking, so he wants Grandma’s recipe. Not mine; mine is different, because I’ll cook a more healthy American version of steaming with herbs. He likes that, too, but sometimes he favors the traditional. Originally, he used to love the steamed vegetables. Now he is turning more to the traditional. He is coming back again. He is missing it.” She also notes how the community has an influence on her child’s food experience:
One of the big things that brings us back to our culture and away from American food is Ramadan\textsuperscript{30}. Ramadan is very special time for us, no just religiously but also—even though it is not the primary reason—for the food gathering as well. So, most of the time we gather in the masjid\textsuperscript{31}, but years ago they had certain theme nights for ifta\textsuperscript{32}. Like, they have the Egyptian nights, or Palestinian nights. So, at Egyptian night, we get all the dishes, each Egyptian cooks a special favorite ethnic dish, like kushari\textsuperscript{33}; someone else will make mulūkhiyyah; someone else makes the fata with lamb and rice, someone else béchamel. [My son], who has not eaten or grown up overseas, like his parents and grandparents, he will get to taste a lot of our favorite food. So, he will develop his own favorite food.

Since this participant’s son was with his mother during the interview, I asked him “What is your favorite food?” He replied: “One of the food that mom said is béchamel. Now, that’s one of my favorite dishes. It’s really good. It’s like, pretty much sauce with meat, and pasta, layers with sauces over it and red sauce. It’s so good. Another one is fata. It’s hard to chew, but really good. I tried it at my friend’s house.” Based on those two different stories, we can infer that a child’s food experiences can develop his or her autonomy regarding food, which the child can then request or refuse at a later time.

\textsuperscript{30} A holy fasting month.
\textsuperscript{31} A worship place similar to a church.
\textsuperscript{32} A meal where someone breaks his or her fasting.
\textsuperscript{33} An Egyptian dish that made from rice, macaroni, lentils, and topped with fried onions, tomato sauce, and garlic dressing.
Few of the participants articulated that parents are the main factors that shape child food experiences and agency. A participant, for example, said: “I think the family, because that is what they used to set around. When they go to their cousin’s house and their aunts, uncles, and they sit and it’s always the same food around. It’s us that are main factor really.” The same participant further justifies her statement by talking about the degree of food choice she gives to her children. “There is not much during school time, because they are not home and I am really cooking whatever I can to get done; but on the weekend or during the summer, I will ask them what they want. Or like when we went we go grocery shopping, I’ll say to them, “What do you think? Should we do *maqlûbah* his weekend, or lamb chops?”

A male participant originally from Iraq states that parents build the child’s food habits:

My kids have a habit for asking things. Each time they see something they ask me for it. Now, my older daughter, when she asks for something that she has seen on TV, with friends, or at school—she really wants this thing. By the end of the day, you must sacrifice and bring it to them. You don’t want your kids to be missing something. Sometimes, you want to bring to the kids something new even if you [already] have it at home, but this has different flavor or kind, or brand.

A Jordanian female participant thinks that children will build their food habits based on the example of their parents, either good or bad habits. “I honestly, I have noticed my kids love everything I eat because I taught them from a young age. And I am obsessed with vegetables. That’s my personality. Even with like pizza, if get the veggie
lover’s pizza, I have to have Buffalo sauce on it. And both of my kids are obsessed with Buffalo sauce. So, I think they grab onto our habits of eating. The good and the bad.”

A participant from Sudan illustrated in detail multiple factors that led to her children no longer eating their traditional food:

In this country, I am a working mother. It depends; if I am housewife, maybe it will be different. I have known friends of mine, and they are housewives, and their kids eat better with traditional food than my kids, because I work and my kids go to school and go to after school too. And so at school, they don’t like to carry food from home which looks different than their peers at school and after school. So, they want to have to eat chicken nuggets and all Western food. And when they come home, they don’t come until late, so the only meal that we really eat together is dinner. And the influence of the school and peers is more than the influence of the house. They tend to change when we go back home for vacation. We went to Saudi for a month, they start eating that food, like kabsah 34, tamīs 35. But here, it is difficult.

Parent’s Perceptions of Child Agency

As discussed above, most of the predominant factors mentioned by the participants were things like time constraints, job commitment, the availability and accessibly of halal food, food environment (ingredients), and other less predominant factors. Remarkably, none of the parents that I had interviewed or who attended a focus

34 A traditional dish originated from Saudi Arabia where made from rice and either chicken or lamb.
35 An Afghani bread that usually thicker than pita bread.
group mentioned that their children were one of the factors of food and foodways changes post migration. However, when parents were asked if their children had influenced their own food and foodways or food habits by any way, they addressed how their children played a role in their changes, and justified it by giving examples or stories.

A couple from Jordan, talked about how Burger King, the American fast food franchise, influenced their foodways. The father spoke up first: “I will tell you one thing about how they affected my food habits. The kids’ favorite food is Burger King. They ask us at least once a week to get it. It’s easy on the wallet and accessible; so, I said, ‘Why not?’ I usually don’t say no to them.” The father does not seem to be bothered by his kids asking him to eat at Burger King, since it is accessible and can afford it. On the other hand, the mother seems to be bothered at the way this it has affected her own food habits: “I don’t like Burger King because is not dhībiḥah. But I’ll eat it, so that’s one big way my children have affected me. If it were my choice, I would not bother eating it. But because my kids got used to it now, we will eat it. But see, other people think it’s fine to eat because it depends on how you define halal.” The mother had to consider all the factors of the children’s food preferences and following religious teaching while the father looked at it from economic and accessibility perspectives.

A male participant and his wife from Jordan are both full-time teachers. The father says that the idea of children influencing their food and foodways is really a discussion about the role of mother in the home: “We have to go with what they want. If mom is home, then they’re going to eat what the mom is cooking. Regardless what you make at home, it’s going to be healthy. You have to have someone at home, because
cooking requires time, it requires preparation.” He elaborates by comparing the social roles of mothers in the United States and “back home”:

Let’s go back. In our home countries, the mom is there. It’s very rare that the mom is working. We are brought up like this. So, the mom is always cooking. But now the mom and dad are both working. You have to be fair. The mom cannot go working and then come back home cooking. In my situation, we are both working and going back home at the same time. So, the mom does not have time. The mom has to find something that’s really fast to cook, and most of the meal takes thirty to forty-five minutes to cook. And while you are hungry, you start snacking here and there, and you realize you are full before the meal is ready. So that’s why people go into ready-made food or a restaurant. So, for us the easy solution is pizza.

Other participant believes that his children have not influenced his food, but rather his foodways. When I asked if he thought his children had influenced his food or foodways, he said: “They affected me in one way. Before, back home, we would eat lunch at 2:00 pm. Now, our lunch is 5:00 or 5:30 sometimes, because my daughter finishes school at 4:30. But they don’t affect the way of my food.” I asked him if his food habits would be any different if he and his family were back home: “Yes, because our culture back home is different, going to your question. Sometimes here, my wife does not even ask what I want for lunch. For me, I told her, whatever you are cooking, I don’t have problem.” He also noted that many time, they must cook two different meals. “We are cooking two different meals so many times, because my daughters, for example,
don’t like fish. On the day we are eating fish, my wife cooks something else because they don’t like to eat it."

A participant agreed that cooking now is different. “I used to think about him [my husband] before the kids. But now, if I think of him first then I need to open a restaurant [laughing]. I would love to please everybody, but sometimes we can’t. He is like me; we eat everything. As long as the kids are eating the food, everyone is happy.” In addition, she mentioned that she tried to cook whatever their children would like to eat; sometimes she, too, would cook two different meals, but this happened only rarely.

Another participant stated that her food and food habits changed because her menus now revolve around her son:

Our menus revolve around him. I try to cook what he eats, because he is the picky eater in the family. I was raised to try food whether I liked it or not. So, I would eat a lot of different Egyptian food, like kusharī and mulūkhiyyah. And I introduced those things to him. So, he will have his favorites. I cook his favorites more often than other things, but I try do something new so, we don’t get bored with the same food.

She also mentioned that her husband, who works in construction, will eat whatever is on the table. She also believes that having only one child influences the situation; Her son has even more say over the menus because there is not another child that has an option for food choices.

Another participant also mentioned: “I cook what they like. For myself, I would eat more healthy food, although I love the food I cook. They don’t want to eat what we want
them to eat. They always, usually, want what they want.” She also agreed that her children influenced her food because her children do not like to eat traditional food. “My children have a great influence on my food habits in the household; I don’t cook our traditional food unless I have guests or it’s a family gathering, especially since my husband works overseas. So, I just can’t cook our food—it’s time-consuming, my children don’t like it, and it usually has to be in large quantities.” She also mentioned that she is following a strict diet because of her health and what she eats is totally different from what her children eat. Even though traditional food is number one for her, she stated that is not working for her anymore.

One participant also believes that her children influence her food and foodways by making her modify the recipes for both traditional and Western food:

Of course, my children influenced my food and foodways, because I care for them a lot. So, I have to be flexible about what they want and what parents want. Sometimes, they like a dish if it is traditional or Western, not with the same taste or spices as we do as their parents. So I have to find other options by cooking different meals, and for me, generally, I like to cook and to try new food recipes and taste different [cuisines] as far as I could make it in a halal, healthy way. Then I encourage my family to try it. If they like it, then we add something new to our menu. And the same thing holds for them: If they like food from anywhere, I would be happy to learn the way and methods for them.
A participant believes that the age of her children matters a lot with regard to the food she is serving:

It did not change when the kids were younger. But when they grew up, I would say what changed is the type of food that I am serving. They go out with their friends, and I have to mimic what they have tried outside, and they ask if can make it for them. Having friends from different countries has an effect on that. At the end, I want to make food that I am sure my kid wanted to eat. Why should I make something they don’t like to eat, or are not happy with? Mom likes to make kids happy. So, the saying, “The way to the happies in your spouse is their stomach”? It’s the same thing for the kids [laughing]!

One participant said:

My wife mainly cooked traditional Middle Eastern dishes. However, as my kids grew up in the American culture and were exposed to the different cuisines, it influenced the way that my wife cooked. Her traditional dishes and recipes did not change: What did change was the variety in what she cooked. Instead of only cooking Middle Eastern food, she started also cooking food from different cultures, such as Asian, Italian, and Spanish cuisine. My wife started to introduce meals from these different cultures into her cooking. Although she started introducing different types of dishes, the majority of meals were still traditional Middle Eastern dishes. That was her expertise. Whenever we had company over, my wife would
stick to what she was most comfortable with by cooking Middle Eastern food. Another effect that we had on my wife’s cooking is that she began to cook less and less over time, and instead we would go out to eat more and more. The reason for this is that my kids did not always want to eat traditional cooking and my wife did not always enjoy cooking other things.

Other parent, such as a participant from Sudan, perceive that her children have influenced their food significantly to the point that she eats whatever she is cooking for them:

The simple example of how they affect my food, is that when I am working, I pack my lunch in the morning, and I choose whatever they want. I’ll have the same lunch that I packed for my kids! Another example: When we eat out, we choose the restaurant they will eat at, because we cannot go to an Arabic restaurant where they might not eat at all. If you go to an Arabic restaurant, they would not eat the kabab and kuftah kabab and other stuff. So, it is affecting me a lot. It’s really switching our decisions mainly while they’re growing up, like after nine years. More of the shopping stuff is chosen by them than us, now.

Figure 5.2 illustrates all the determinate factors that shape child agency with regard to food.

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36 Kuftah kabab, or kofta. The recipe of Kuftah differs from country to another but mainly consists of meat.
I mean are struggling sometime, they really really want to eat something their friends eat but because of the religious restriction. I mean thing is that it is easy for me to have my children buy or eat for example if you go to subway, the only thing we allowed to eat is the tuna and my son always used to eat tuna with cucumber and that's it, not cheese nothing.

I have changed one of my children from Public school to private school, Islamic school. His eating changed a lot. He wanted to eat biryani which something did not do before. But because of his peers are actually from Pakistan and India and they bring Biryani to school a lot.

In the house, I will give them choices and they have to choose, so I mean I am not doing really an extra, going out of my way to do it, but always I give them a second option of food to choose from.

I enjoy eating our food and it has a lot of spice. So, a lot of times my wife changes the cooking because she knows that if there are spices the kids might not eat it. So, it becomes bland food that I don’t enjoy it much, so it really bothers me.

But sometimes I ask her to make meat balls. One time she made omelet. If I am baking a cake she would help mixing. If I ask her to set the table, she will do it. Cleaning up the table.

He wanted as stew. He does appreciate food, he does remember gramma's cooking, so he wants gramma receipt. Not mine, Mine is different. Cause I'll cook more healthy american

For me is rare to do something that they don’t like, for example. I must be ready for meal they like, sweet they like, the way they like it, but when I put in on the table, it's not only the main dish, I put additional ones. I ask them to try it, if they like, ok if not they will say Mama "we don't want to make you sad, but don't make it again”.

By the way this a habit. My kids have a habit for asking things, each time they see something they ask me for it. Now, my older daughter, when she asks for something that she seen on TV with friends at school, she really wanted this thing. By the end of the day, you must sacrifice and bring it to them, you don't want your kids to be missing something.

The influence of the society outside is very different than home. Back home, you have everything around you, your family, and you have the society, and everybody is helping you. But here, is totally opposite.

Figure 5.2: Map of key determinate factors of child agency.
CHAPTER SIX
FEEDING PRACTICES

Introduction

This chapter aims to address RQ1C (i.e., what are some parental and community beliefs and practices regarding how to feed their children?). During the interviews or focus groups, parents recounted a few negotiation dialogues between themselves and their children during on past occasions. Those negotiation dialogues will be considered alongside a discussion of feeding practices and beliefs. Feeding practices and beliefs are important for understanding the extent to which the child expresses his or her food choices and preferences towards food and how, in turn, this may affect the family food and foodways.

Decision Making Regarding Food

Only during focus groups with parents, participants were asked what guides their decisions when they purchase or cook food for their children. Parents were given a few minutes to jot down any factors that were important to them; those answers then were discussed as group. The overarching theme is that parents tended to satisfy their children’s food preferences by providing food that parents are certain the children will eat—even though the parents sometimes don’t agree with their children’s food choices and preferences. For example, a participant wrote: “I look for natural food, fruits and
vegetables. I stay away from processed food.” His wife agreed: “We don’t buy too much processed food, and we look for nutrition, well-being, feels good and healthy, and enjoyment. We love food, and we don’t like to eat out a lot because we both work.” At the same time the husband mentioned that “The kids are used to eating cereal, even though we know it’s not good for them, we still buy it because of their food habits.” The wife supported her husband: “Yes, we still buy it, and find the best cereal that we can find.” Parents like those couple make their food decisions based on what their children prefer; but they give their children the full freedom of cereal choices.

In a different focus group, parents also tended to accommodate their children’s preferences, with or without restrictions. A participant stated “For my kids, they don’t consider I am going shopping unless there are fruits and vegetables. It must have everything, from nectarines, to grapes, to bananas, and vegetables. The most important ones are the broccoli, lettuces, and the khiyar. The khiyar for them is like snack. So, what guides me is to get them what they like.” By contrast, a participant’s children look for more chips and cookies to be their top priority choice: “As for my children, they don’t consider me going shopping, unless I have types of biscuits, chips, and all these snacks with my shopping. Otherwise, they would say, ‘Mama, you have not bought anything’ [laughing].” As for another participant, her food decision-making is guided by her children’s preferences and choice, but with some guidance: “For me, what guides my decision is what they like—but with my guidance. If they go by only what they like, my shopping cart will be full. Lately, I don’t have time because I am full-time student, So I

37 Cucumber.
don’t shop anymore, so the dad shops. And he gets whatever the kids want. Sometimes I get it at house and I throw it away [laughing]."

Other things that guides parents to buy or cook food for their children are more directed toward the parent’s priorities and benefits. For example, a male participant from Sudan stated that he always looks for food and meals that are less of a headache for him and his wife as parents. “[We] look for food that is easy to prepare. We both work a lot of hours. Also, we buy in bulk so we don’t have to go back to store again. The third factors are we look for the kid’s favorite choice. We try to accommodate that as well.” In the same focus group, only one parent mentioned that “the first thing is cost effective, but then we always look for dhībīḥah food.” Interestingly, that looking for dhībīḥah food or halal food is not a cost-effective method. During the focus group, one of the parents argued that finding dhībīḥah is not a cost-effective method, and parents are aware of that.

**Feeding Practices**

The discussion of parent’s perceptions of their children’s agency regarding food starts with an open question about their opinion as to whether it easy to force their children to eat whatever food the parents cook and serve at home or buy at grocery stores and restaurants. When parents attempted to answer the questions, they usually tell or discuss strategies or tricks that they used to feed their child or children.

A participant disagreed with the statement, and associated it with the children’s eating habits: “When you get the children too used to something, they will [eat it]. But in my situation, my kids will eat mac and cheese every single day. So, whenever they
don’t like something—‘Oh, I’ll have mac and cheese.’ Now, we feel sorry because they are not eating, so we have to do it. I can agree with it; you can tell them, ‘This is what I have,’ and they will eat it. But they won’t always go with you.” He gave an example by saying that when his wife cooks rice, peas, and carrots, the children will eat it but after taking out the peas and carrots. Sometimes the kids won’t eat anything at mealtime; but by the end of the day they eventually get hungry enough to eat the offered meal. He revealed his frustration with children’s choices and preferences with food: “This is the problem that we have in the States. They teach them the wrong stuff. I understand that they want them to have their own character, they want to have their agency—but also you have to give them guidelines.”

A participant’s answer to the research question depends on the child’s age. “My younger kid, eventually she will get hungry and she will eat what you put [on the table]; she won’t be happy about it, but she will eat it. She will pick around until she finds something she can eat on it. The older one will not. She will literally starve until she gets a stomachache. She will not put anything in her mouth that she does not like.” She mentioned that her nine-year-old daughter has very distinctive eating behaviors; her food must be visually appealing and should be presented on the plate in a certain way.

Other participant thinks is never easy to make your children accept the food you put before them. It’s challenging, and she use tricks to feed her children because she does not like to pressure them to eat something. “I use tricks. If I want to push them to eat something, they have to be very hungry. Sometimes, I hide all the snacks [we have in the house]. Everything should be hidden so they will have enough appetite to
approach whatever I am serving them. But it’s challenging, because they sometimes sneak around.”

**Family Meals**

I asked parents during the interviews about their culturally shared beliefs and practices about feeding their child or children. Family meals was one the first themes that emerged. Typically, parents talked about the way family meals are now and wondered how and why it changed. One participant, for example, talked about family meals that have changed because of her husband’s job commitments. “My husband’s job does not allow me to [have a family meal]. But at least once or twice a week, we have to have a family meal with the relatives.” She continues and talk about how family meals were more frequent when her family lived in New York than they are in Tampa. “In New York, we used to go a lot to everybody’s houses and have a family meal. I don’t know why that was [so different from] here. We were going more with the kids in New York; the kids now are in a lot of in different activities and at friends’ houses. Here, you have to drive everywhere, so it takes more time.” For other parents, the set-up of meal occasions, whether breakfast, lunch, or dinner, is also important. A participant mentioned “We bring this big dish ‘iṣniyyat al-akīl, and we put the rug down and eat around it on the floor. We eat least eat one meal together and we sit on the floor, especially in the morning.” Another participant stated that the family stopped eating together because of her being a full-time student and her husband’s job. One participant compared how family meals are different in Iraq compared to now: “In Iraq, we all eat

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38 Big dish where all the family set together and eat around it.
together. Here, no. The kids eat and I eat after work. Sometimes we don’t eat together, except on the weekend.” Other parents, echoing other participants, described how family meals are difficult to practice due to time constraints and work commitments.

A participant contrasted her food experiences with family meals with when she migrated to the States:

I visited Egypt a couple times, and what I remember first is there is a lot of family involved with eating. The family gathers—and not just the immediate family, but the full family. So, that’s the thing about the eating, you do it as a family. It’s a family event, you don’t eat alone like you do here. We would not only sit together at the table, but prepare the food together. Everybody takes part. It’s mostly the mother but my mom trained me to know that we help; the older helps the younger. So, it’s also a learning experience.

For this participant, family meals are about more than preparing food and eating together at the table. Family meal events give the family an opportunity to see relatives we may not often see. For her, family meals involve elaborate preparation, with the whole family preparing food. Also, it promotes a learning experiences for the children with the help by the older family members. Apparently, family meals for this participant are less practiced here due to her husband’s work commitments.

Other participant also discussed how family meals as difficult to practice here in Tampa, compared to when she was in Morocco:
Back home we have three meals, it’s the minimum, three meals plus two to three collations, like around eight or ten a.m., and after you come from school. Probably most families eat four to five times a day. Here, it is hard to do this. Maybe we eat breakfast together and dinner together; there is no way we eat lunch together. Maybe a snack. Even during the weekend. Back home, some will take care of the kids and someone is cooking. Here I have to do everything. So, we go with easy things, you know. We make homemade food very occasionally, unless my mother is visiting or something. We sometimes use the leftovers. The thing is I started to do something that they like, it’s not about me anymore. I eat anything. But I have to cook something that the children would eat. This very challenging with them, honestly. Their favorite meal is couscous, so I try to make it at least once a week.

Apparel, this participant is aware of factors or situation that make family meals difficult. Back home in Morocco, a typical meal consisted of home-cooked food, whereas here in the States home-cooked food is made only occasionally because Moroccan food requires more time for preparation and cooking. In addition, she aware that back home the whole family is involved in family meals, whether they are watching the kids or helping with food preparation. Since that family meal provides an opportunity for the child to consume traditional food, she is trying to satisfy her kids’ food request or choices by preparing their favorite Moroccan food even it required more time. Other participant also emphasizes that throwing away food is not acceptable by saying:
The worst for me is to see my kids leave food on their dishes. I always tell them there are so many kids and families out there that don’t have food to eat or shelter. Of course, we try our best with our kids, and it is not necessary to see them doing what we have taught or told them. For example, you tell them not to fill their dishes with food; take what you need. But you know kids, they leave food on their dishes and they throw away the other food.

For some parents, family meals provide an opportunity to teach and talk to their children about food cultural norms. It is also an opportunity to monitor how much the child is eating and wasting.

Like other parents, one participant believes that everything depends on the psychology of the mom and the stubbornness of the child. He said:

It depends on the mood [laughing]. If mom is in the mood to make more food, she will make it. If not, we have to eat the food that we have. The options that they have—“Okay, I will eat chips.” Then the mom says, “You are not going to eat chips, you are going to eat the food.” It depends how stubborn that kid can be and how stubborn the mom can be. Kids, in the end, will always realize that they have to go back and eat a little bit. The negotiation will be always like, “You give me this, I’ll eat little bit of this, but you have to let me do this.” Every kid has a disadvantage; my son’s is soccer. Mom will say, “You know what, if you don’t eat this, you are not going to play soccer.” It is sort of threatening [laughing].
For this participant, he mentioned that you can control what the kids eat, but at the same time he would like for children to have their own choices. Also, he stated that threatening to take away some of his son’s soccer time is an effective method to force his kids to eat.

A parent believes that family meals are important, but because of busy and differing schedule among family members, the family rarely gets together at the table. One participant, whose husband is a physician, said: “My husband is trying his best during the weekend, at least one of the days, but it does not work every week. Sometimes he ate already at the hospital. So, what he does is he waits for the kids to come home and we all sit all together at the table.” She said that her kids love Ramadan, because inevitably, the kids are sure that they will have family meals every day for a whole month.

**Forcing vs. Encouraging Feeding Behaviors**

Other themes that emerged during interviews or focus groups is the split between attempting to force children to eat or encouraging them to do so. During a focus group, a participant said, “My daughter and my second son, they don’t like vegetables. They don’t even eat ethnic foods, but what we try to do is we give them small portions and tell them you are going to finish them. No one will leave the table until you finish your food. So, they will force themselves to finish it.” Obviously, he verbally expresses some forceful feeding behavior to convince their daughter and son eat their vegetables or traditional food, even their children express their unwillingness. As a strategy used to
force the children to eat, he tells his kids to not leave the table unless they finish their meal or vegetables.

By contrast, a participant believes that children need to be given some choice with the food they want:

I think it is important to take their opinion—to ask what the kids want. It’s going to be difficult for the family because kids change their mind fast. For example, today your son or daughter asked for a burger, and once you make it, he or she will say, “Oh, I changed my mind. I want something else.” I think you should ask what they want, but at the same time you should not force them to eat what you cook for them. I think forcing the kids what you serve without asking them will destroy their personality in my opinion. But parents should be careful to what extent they give them the choice.

This participant expressing respect for his children’s choices can create the desirable personality outcomes as he mentioned. At the same time, he believes that parents should place limits on the child’s agency over food, because it might create undesirable outcomes such as waste or discarded food.

Other also believes it’s important to give their children choice. During the interview, a participant mentioned a dialogue between herself and her nine-year-old daughter, over the lunch table:

Daughter: Mom, I am not hungry [as the mother said her daughter did not like the food at the table so she pretended that she is not hungry].
Mother replied: This is what we have.

Two hours later, her daughter still had not eaten.

Daughter: Mom, I am hungry. What can I eat?

Mother: We still have the same food.

Daughter: But Mom, I want something different.

Mother: Let’s go to the kitchen and see what we have.

This participant mentioned that “I will offer her different food, or we can create up something, or a sandwich, and let her try it. I have to give them choices; I cannot force them to eat something they don’t like.” Another participant also advocated not forcing the child to eat but rather encouraging:

Sometimes the child has a taste of that and will go along with the ethnic/traditional or cultural foods, and sometimes it’s not their cup of tea. It’s not their favorite. So, we encourage to try but in our family, we don’t force. There is a little give and take. So, try it, at least try, you don’t like it there is no obligation; you don’t have to eat it but at least try it. But if that’s the only thing on table, you are going to want to eat because you don’t have much of choice. There is not anybody who’s going to get up and do a special order like in a restaurant. So, it’s not forced, but it’s encouraged.

This participant also mentioned that she, personally, was a picky eater. Thus, she understands what it means to be forced, and because of that she did not want to force her kids.
A participant specifically commented on the desirable nutritional outcomes of forcing the child to eat some of a certain food: “There is some sickness inside of us women; we think that our kids are not full unless they have eaten rice or bread [laughing]. You know, something has to have either rice or bread. I don’t care what you put on it, you have to eat it. You are not full yet.” Her feeding strategy is to ensure that the child eats sufficient food that he or she won’t be hungry again in a short time.

While every parent has a different perspective on forcing vs. encouraging their children to eat their food, one participant believes that forcing is more a cultural norm:

The forcing is definitely cultural because I have seen it. I have seen my parents doing the same thing to me. For example, my dad forced me to eat seafood and lobster and all this stuff, and I started doing the same thing with my kids. I have my two-year-old son going to daycare with sushi as his lunch, and his teacher has never seen a two-year-old love sushi. But I know that is my influence on him, having him try that kind of stuff.

Other participant mentioned that she, too, experiences being forced to eat by her parents, and does not like to do the same to her kids. Rather, she uses food exposure, letting her children try new foods to see if they like it or not: “I have young kids, so I have to expose them to, for example, hariarah 39.”

Other topics that emerged during the focus group is whether getting kids to like their food is easier with boys or girls. Below is a discussion among the parents during the focus group. The discussion started when one parent talked about her frustration

39 Moroccan soup that is made for special occasions.
with trying to make her kids try new food (neophobia), and her need to come up with new feeding strategies:

Parent A: I don’t remember my son trying anything new; I mean, he has to know exactly what the ingredients are. Even sweets—for example, if you have truffle, which is very obvious, he may eat all the parts of it separately, but he does not eat as a truffle. So, my children will not accept trying new things. A few years ago, I used to try. I would be confident because I know the taste was similar to mine. When I was confident that they would like this thing, I would make it. Then, I gave up. I try new strategies and sometimes it worked.

Parent B: I feel boys are different than girls. I have three girls and I see the girls are easier to handle.

Layla: I have both, I think it’s totally not about gender.

Parent C: I think is just depends on your son’s personality.

Parent D: I think it is age-wise rather than gender. If they know it [referring to food], you know what to cook. But if you have young kids, you are still confused. Does he like this, or that? It is not gender, it is more age wise. The older the get, the mature they are, and they know what they want, and you know what they like, too.
**Rewarding vs. Restriction Using Snacks**

Using snacks as a reward was another emerging category during interviews and focus groups. During the interview with one parent and her son, I asked her about other feeding strategies besides encouraging your child to eat:

When he was younger, probably he does not remember that much, up to five or six, we stopped doing that. Because we wanted him to eat just because it was the regular staple want he had to eat. There were times like if you do this, we will get a cake or doughnut, like his favorite treat. Once a while. And if you eat that, you can eat a snack after. If you eat your main meal you can get rewards. Of course, rewarding with finishing his meal.

Her son was present during the interview, so he commented on his mother’s feeding strategies: “But sometimes that’s how they tricked me! They made me fill up with the meal, then I didn’t have any room for the snack.” His mother justifies her actions: “That’s true. It’s not a trick, honestly, he just carried away with the meal and he wanted to eat more without us telling him, so he made the choice on his own.” Clearly this participant promised her son the reward of a snack for finishing his meal, and it was an effective method to get him to finish the regular main dish. At the same time, she had stopped using the method—probably due to the fact her son might only agree to eating a healthy meal if rewarded with a snack afterward.

There was some overlap between few of the parents use of rewards and feeding practices. One parent said:
We always try encouraging ways. Like, “If you eat this, I will give you that,”
But that was just in the beginning. Usually kids after they start eating, most
families have difficulties feeding their child. Because kids always active,
they don’t want to eat. Most of my friend’s kids, they like eat pizza. Pizza
is just cheese and bread. It’s okay to feed them once a week. For
example, my daughter, she always refuses food, until now, she does not
eat meat or chicken. Now, she will eat the burger with some conditions
that there is not beefy smell. Even eggs.

Other parent, by contrast, is promising his daughter that food rewards will be
taken away if she does not finish her food. He explains:

My daughter, for example—if she does want to eat, I say, “I told you, you
are not going to have your favorite snack (because we give a snack during
the school days) until your finish your food.” Because she is worried about
her snack, she will finish her food. That’s the first step. The second step, I
show her a lot of video of people who are vitamin X deficit, because she
has a vitamin X deficit, I told her, “Look, you might get sick because of
that! I am worried about your health; I am not worried about myself—I am
eating healthy.” She said, “Even though I don’t like it, I am going to eat.”
Also, with the protein, we always discuss it and talk about how important
proteins are.
This parent only offers his daughter’s favorite snacks when certain food is eaten. He also provides an opportunity to model healthy eating behavior by using himself as model.

One couple have not illustrated a way for using rewards as a feeding practice with their children, but the father believes that snacks play an important role in their children’s lives:

Going back to the snack question, it does play a big role in our kid’s life. Because when they come home from school, first the school has a dedicated snack time, so the kids are used to it. So, when they come back from school, there are still a couple of hours between lunch and dinner. So, they had lunch at school and that is the time when they snack. So, there is another session of snacking. And then after dinner, usually.

The mother believes that snacks are something that she is not used to: “Snacks are not in our culture. If you go back, I think the difference between my culture and American culture, in terms of food, is that the American culture is very snack-based.”

While the couple believe that snacks are not part of their culture, a participant was strict about bringing snacks home:

I actually made a rule at the house; snacks are not allowed to come home. They can eat the snack outside, but in the house, they are not allowed to bring snacks because my husband owns convenience stores. So, can you image what would happen if they let them or him bring snacks home? Sometimes, he sneaks the kids out to get Starbucks, or sometimes he
says, “I am going to pick up something from the mahal\textsuperscript{40}” and they he takes them and go the mahal.

Not all the parents agree that reward or restriction feeding practices would work for their children. A participant, for example, said: “It does not work anymore. They prefer to stay hungry than to eat traditional food.” I asked her if her kids are old enough to make their own food, thinking that her children might have the ability to eat more independently. “No, I have a different and complicated situation,” she said. “I am, as a mother, was born and raised in Saudi Arabia and my husband was born and raised in Sudan. So, we did not have much background to talk about; and we eat different food. So, we tried to raise the kids to eat the Saudi food and Sudan food does not work with them.”

**Other Feeding Practices**

At focus groups, parents were asked about other feeding practices exclusive to their cultures. Another overarching theme is the use of hand when eating traditional food. One parent, for example, associated the use of hand with a child’s satiation. She argued that “My kids always want to use forks and we yell at them to use their hand [laughing]. It’s logical to use the hand because it goes back to the bread. Because if they are eating eggs with the fork, they are not going to eat the bread, and ten minutes later, they are going to be hungry.” At the same time, she believes that eating with hand is not as desirable as among her family and relatives anymore: “I mean Like eating mansaf\textsuperscript{41} with your hand has kind of twiddled, like I go to my relative’s house and

\textsuperscript{40} Mahal: convenience store.

\textsuperscript{41} A very famous Jordanian dish that consist of rice, meat and buttery base liquid that poured on the top.
pretty much they are eating with a spoon.” From this we can extrapolate that some of the feeding practicing is fading away in the host culture.

Other parent believes that his kids—and his wife—are influencing the way he eats his food: “I like to use my hand. But I feel like it is just me using my hand at home. Everyone [else] at home uses a spoon or fork. I think they’re changing me; I don’t have an influence on them.” A participant, by contrast, never used his hand, even with traditional Jordanian food like mansaf. “I never used my hand [laughing]. I tried it once because I was in Dubai. My wife is from Jordan, they eat the mansaf with their hand, I tried but I could not.” He added, “I eat rice with a fork. My son saw me, and he is now doing the same thing.”

Some unexpected practice themes emerged during the analysis of the feeding practices data. Those themes focused more on the cultural and social aspect of child feeding. For example, a couple mentioned that they had to remind their kids at the dinner table about saying “bismillāh” and eating with the right hand only. I had to translate what he stated about how he constantly remind his daughters that “If something is left over [meaning the food], keep it in the fridge and don’t throw it away; this is haram”. For Arab parents, those family meals also provide an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate essential cultural practices such as praying before eating and eating on the floor as mentioned in the family meal section.

During the interview of two participants, they both talked about a matter that is very important in their particular culture. Both mentioned that children should be taught to serve from the closest serving plate, always using the right hand. I asked one of them

42 Means forbidden in Arabic.
about the cultural importance of this practice. She said, “It is the sunnah\textsuperscript{43}.” Despite the fact that those behaviors might be simple for children, parents believe those practices are important to help promote and maintain Arab identity in their children.

**Feeding Practices and Cultural Identity**

Parents were asked why they thought these feeding practices—such as family meals, encouraging, and rewarding—are important enough to instantiate at home, especially when coupled with serving and cooking traditional food. Parents reasoned that employing these feeding practices accompanied with traditional food encouraged children to maintain their cultural identity—and to lesser extent, their health. One participant explained that providing certain staple food for their children is important in one respect, even if it is not altogether healthy:

> I think it’s extremely important. But at the same time, it is not healthy. I don’t think it is healthy to have so much rice and bread. So now we are trying to cook basmati or jasmine rice instead of regular rice. We try to modify our food a little bit—but always we go back where we come from. But we try to not eat that way [all the time], especially with the number of diabetics in the family. But at the same time, you have time retain their cultural identity.

During an interview, one parent explicitly stated that they encourage their children to consume those foods during family meals and different setting. The parent

\textsuperscript{43} Religious practice of prophet Muhammad.
explained that they “Don’t want them to lose it. Because their kids [referring to their future grandchildren] will disappear. We need to keep them within our culture and religion. Because if they go back to any Arab country, they won’t get lost.” How could your child get lost?” I asked. A parent replied (as I translate here): “We always tell our daughters if they get married, their children won’t lose the food.” Clearly, the couple had a vision that to maintain culture in our family,

During a focus group, two parents discussed the reason behind continuing the feeding their children traditional foods:

Parent A: I am the first generation here, so I kept my background beliefs and practices. That’s all I know. I want to keep the tradition. I don’t want to lose it and fade away.

While parent A was talking Parent B interrupted

Parent B: And it’s healthy because if we go out, the food is not healthy.

Parent A: [agreeing] Yes, of course.

Parent B: My daughter now believes that if they are eating out, they are not eating healthy food. I change the food [referring to food cooked at home], so it’s not all the time the same food. But, every fifteen, twenty days the meals will be repeated. But the daily food, we switch the type of meat and cook a different type of soup.

Other parents believe that it does not matter if the food that we buy, cook, and serve to our children is traditional food: “The only thing that is really important is to make
sure that they eat a balanced diet. So, it has to be like going with our religious beliefs, so it has to be halal, it has to be healthy. It does not really matter anything else more.”

In a focus group, while parents discussing how feeding practices such as family meals are an opportunity to consume home-cooked Arabic food and encourage children to eat healthy food, a participant argued that its necessary to explain to the children why they are not allowed to eat pork and pork derivatives, such as gelatin, from scientific perspectives and without bringing the religious perspective into it: “I always tell parents—don’t tell them it’s our religion, otherwise they will never listen to you. They will do whatever they wanted to do. But when you tell them I always tell my kids that there is a scientific reason behind it. So, having the children accept that the fact that haram is an unacceptable thing to protect you from hurt—it’s a useful method to have, so they’re not even thinking of trying the alcohol or pork.” This participant is discussing this matter with other parents since the only parent how is strict about eating only halal food.

Figure 6.1 illustrates some examples of feeding practices mentioned by the Arab families.
we always try to persuasion ways. Like "if you eat this, I will give you that", But that was just in the beginning.

my daughter and my second son hey don’t like vegetables. They don’t eat ethnic foods, but what we give them is we give them small portion, and tell them we going to finish them. no one we leave the table until you finish your food. So, they will force themselves to finish it.

it does play a big role in our kid’s life. Because when they come home from school, first the school has a dedicated a snack time, so the kids used to it. So, when they come back from school, there is still couple hours between that and dinner.

They check everything before they put in the cart. They don’t get upset up about it. If there is a candy and it has Khanzeer in it they know I cannot eat this, and its ok. They know that is something not for them. Don’t mind watch other kids eat it.

For example, she said "i am not hungry because she does like it". After 2 hours mom i am hungry "what can i eat" we still have the same food.

So, i would look at his plate and say "Ok, how about you put less rice so can eat a dessert after" "Sometime, how about we balance our food, like he wanted a third slice of pizza, I told him no, can we take a fruit instead?" So with him, is how many calories is he consuming.

my kids use their hands. Coccus is hard. We use spone

Figure 6.1: Map of all feeding practices and frequencies.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CHILDREN’S VOICE

Introduction

This chapter aims to address RQ2B (i.e., How do children express agency regarding food to influence food and foodways in Arab migrant families). In the previous chapters we read report of Arab families’ food and food habits changing after migration to the United States. Families reported different factors leading to these changes. Parents, particularly mothers, apply certain feeding practices to everyday food activities. The settings of those food activities vary from home, dining out in a restaurant, grocery shopping, and even school meals or snacks. This chapter focuses more on the children’s viewpoint of their food environment, rather than that of their parents and families. It is through the developmental niche theoretical framework that we attempt to understand the food environment from the children’s viewpoint and across different physical and social settings. We can use the same framework to examine the children’s agency as an actor in changing food and food habits changes in the family.

During one of the parent interviews conducted in meeting room at Temple Terrae Public Library, an Egyptian female participant arrived to the interview meeting with her thirteen years old son. A number of the parents, especially mothers, had to bring their children with them. This unanticipated incident led to more interesting finding, due the fact that the researcher was able to observe parent–child interaction and listen
to non-hypothetical conversations between a child and their parent. Before the interview started, I obtained consent from the parent of the thirteen-year-old participant and explained in detail the nature of the research study.

After the interview was ended, the parent wanted to add something that how the community’s food activities help in shaping her son’s food and food habits, particularly with regard to traditional food. I asked her to agree to record what she wanted to say, even though the interview time was over. Without hesitation, she said yes. While she was talking about the community food events and was about to end, I looked at her son and asked him:

Me: [child’s name], what it’s your favorite food or meal?
Child: I love Chick-fil-A. I like their waffle fries, and chicken bites, and McDonald’s, I like the chicken nuggets with fries, and Burger King; I get chicken nuggets with their fries. And KFC now. I get the chicken with mashed potato and—

Parent: [interrupting] And I can tell you how this started. We went on vacation, and there were no Arabic restaurants, there are no dhibīḥah, halal restaurant, so we have to eat what is halal for us to eat as the people of the book. So, we eat what’s available to us. At the time, when he was younger, where he ate more. Now, there are many dhibīḥah restaurant. We look for dhibīḥah food.

The parent then continued talking about how the community influence the food environment.
Parent: So, that being said, the influence of the community starts to grow, then we had more access to traditional dishes—

Child: [interrupting] —and then, the hardest thing is when it all gets torn away from me. I can’t eat any of it anymore, and I got so mad because I cannot eat any of it and that’s—

Parent: [interrupting] —but we focus more on dhībīḥah. We don’t make him eat it only, but we eat it predominantly when you go to school. We make exceptions. We encourage him to eat dhībīḥah first. He understands our preferences, he learned now.

Child: It is?

Parent: Yes, because when there is not dhībīḥah that is what we eat. We go to Publix sometimes and eat Publix fried chicken....

Child: Yeah, we do that all the time. Publix rotisserie chicken, Publix fried chicken, Publix steak.

I was able to capture child’s voice and the child-parent tension around food choices only because I asked him. Clearly, the child’s favorite foods are based on individual experiences. He asserts to his food choice and preference and frustration about how he can’t eat those food items anymore. However, those foods that the child is not enjoying anymore are regulated by larger cultural and physical systems—that is, the consumption and availability of halal or dhībīḥah food. In addition to that, there is also the parents’ beliefs and feeding practices, where the parents make exceptions and become a little more flexible with their feeding practices. I believe also that the child’s
mother tried to bestow a cultural lesson on her son, where she tried to exhibit what is means to be an Arab migrant in the United States.

**Focus Groups with Children**

**Locations**

Finding a friendly location was a key task in conducting focus groups with children. Locations such as school, where children are subordinate to adults, are not suitable. It is best to find a neutral location, such as public meeting places; but at the same time most of these locations are controlled by adults (Krueger and Casey, 2015). Thus, the focus groups were conducted in different locations of the Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative. Although my first intention was to conduct these group discussions at rental party room located at West Meadows Community Club, demand for the party room by the community members, especially during the weekend, was simply too high. Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative facilitates meeting rooms and conference rooms for those qualified to book their meeting or conference room for no cost (unless food and snacks are provided). Depending on the availability, meeting and conference rooms are accompanied with whiteboard or projection system. Those meeting rooms have glass windows and which gives the room more affable atmosphere for the children and the parents as well (see Figure 7.1).

Food (pizza, water, juice boxes, and snacks) were provided for the children to have anytime during the discussion. This created a more comfortable, enjoyable, and at the same informal atmosphere for both the researcher and the kids.
Getting Permission

Before conducting the focus groups, I had to introduce myself and explain the purpose of the group discussion. As one of the primary purposes of this research study is to capture children’s voices, it was critical to restate the children’s understanding of the research study obligations and rights. Children were given some instructions and guidelines, such as: 1) the focus group is a safe space where we can talk about this topic, 2) respect the person who is speaking, 3) taken the children’s assent that this discussion will be recorded, and 4) answer one at a time, since this will help us to record your answers more clearly (see script in Appendix H)
Focus Group Question Route

The focus groups were conducted during summer and fall of 2017, and early in spring 2018. All the focus groups were conducted at the end of the parents’ interviews and parent focus groups. Sixteen children participated in the discussion all together. First, children were asked to introduce themselves and answer an introductory question, such as what their favorite restaurants or food. Children were asked if there are certain foods they requested their parents to buy or cook ahead of time. The children were asked to free list top five favorite food that they enjoyed eating at home or at a restaurant. Those food list were shared with the other children. The purpose of this question is see how children articulate why we eat differently. Children also were asked about the last time they requested their parents to cook or buy a special food for themselves. One of the most engaging activities in the focus groups was the vignettes. Two children were asked to volunteer to participant in a role-playing scenario involving food. The scenario is always between a parent and a child at different settings like home, grocery shopping, or at a restaurant. Children were given the choice to select any of those three food settings and come up with a typical dialogue between the child and their parents. Each scenario revolved around a child’s agency with regard to food and how children may make decision about their food in different food settings. Other children voluntarily asked if they could take other vignettes. Children were given a hypothetical situation where they were responsible for coming up with a food menu for one day: What would be on that menu? Children were asked a follow-up question: How do they think their parents would react to the food menu? Finally, children were asked if they think they have influenced their parent’s food by any means. Since this
fundamental query may prove difficult for younger children to understand, the query was formulated into a hypothetical story where children were asked to think if a similar story had happened to them. (See Appendix H for question route)

Focus Group Sample

The second objective was to group the children according to similar age, with one group of eight- to twelve-year-old and one twelve and older. However, since the two oldest children to participate in the focus group were only a sixteen-year-old boy and a fourteen-year-old girl, the participants were mixed together. Although this may impose some lack of participation during the discussion by younger children, questions were asked in simpler form to ease the understanding of all children. In addition, younger children who participated in role-playing vignettes were assigned with older children in order to elicit more thoughtful dialogue. Table 7.1 presents focus group discussion.

Table 7.1: Children focus groups sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>characteristics</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Tampa Regional Library</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 boys 3 girls</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Temple Terrace Public Library</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 boys 1 girls</td>
<td>34 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New Tampa Regional Library</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4 boys 2 girls</td>
<td>49 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main question of this research study is to understand what role, if any, children may play in changing their parents' food and foodways post-migration by
looking at typical negotiation dialogues in the vignettes, food lists, and menu that the participants were asked to create.

**Findings from the Children Focus Groups**

**Children’s Favorite Food**

At the beginning of each focus group, each child wrote his or her name (or a pseudonym) on a name tag sticker. Displaying the participants' names made it easier for other participants to recall and comment on each other. As an ice-breaker, each child introduced him- or herself and answered: What is their favorite food or restaurant? The first engagement activity was to free list and sort based on color codes. Although the children were in a group, each child was asked to work independently to list his or her top five favorite foods or dishes and sort them into color-coded categories. (see free list and sorting in Figure 7.2). Table 7.2 shows a rubric that illustrates how a child should sort food items that they picked. I provided a rubric and sets of colors for each child and explained in detail how coding should be done. The purpose of this question is to identify the most common foods that children prefer over others. In addition, the purpose of incorporating this question was to identify the frequency with which the children chose American/Western or traditional food items as their favorites.
Figure 7.2: Free-list and sorting according to color codes.

Table 7.2: Color code rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Color Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food that your parents usually cook at home</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Yellow" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for dishes that you think it represents your family</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Yellow" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food you usually like to eat when you go to a restaurant</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Red" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food you think that you can prepare/cook or help in preparing/cooking</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Blue" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food that you request your parents to cook or buy ahead of time for you.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Black" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answers varied among participants from American or Western and traditional food. Some of the first picked American or Western foods were chicken nuggets, chicken alfredo pasta, fish sticks, pizza, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, sushi,
Chinese food, nachos, and steak. Traditional food or staple food such as couscous, mulūkhiyyah, dolma. rice with labnah, kabāb, shāwurmah, kusharī, okra stew, macaroni béchamel, rice with nuts and raisins and mansaf. Other food items were either fruits and vegetables or sweets, such as apples, candy, ice-cream cake, bell peppers, cookies, dark chocolate, funnel cake, strawberries, bananas, oranges, carrots, and broccoli. Children also mentioned food that are vague or hard to classify into a food types, such as “fish” and “chicken”. Among the fifteen children participants, pizza was picked at all top five ranks. Every participant had mentioned at least one traditional food item or staple food and one Western/American food items. Traditional food items were picked more frequently at the top three favorite food. Only two children had mentioned more than one food item in rank 3, 4, and 5. Data from free list food items recorded by the children (n=14) at the focus groups (N=3) were all combined and presented at Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Top 5 food items and the frequency of those food.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Food Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>pizza (3)*, dolma (2), Sushi, chicken, steak with rice, chicken rice, Nutella crepe, nachos, kabāb, alfredo pasta, couscous, mulūkhiyyah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pizza (2), alfredo pasta (2), dolma (2), chicken and rice (2), kusharī, maqlūbah, rice with bāmyā, mac and cheese, cappuccino, kabāb, oranges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>chicken shāwurmah (2), Macaroni béchamel, dark chocolate, apple and banana, kusharī, pizza, chicken fil a, dolma, spaghetti, funnel cake, Bell pepper, chicken nuggets, carrots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>pizza (2), Rice with nuts and raisins, broccoli, corn and bell pepper, Chik-fil-A, Chinese food, sushi, mansaf, fish, rice with labnah or meat, strawberries, shāwurmah, mac and cheese, and steak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>pizza (4), Potatoes and eggs with mushroom, chicken noodle soup, mac &amp; cheese, macaroni béchamel, onion soup, candy, ice cream cake, chicken, bananas, cookies, and broccoli.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(#) indicate the frequency of food item.
Participants were asked to code the best five favorite foods by coloring them. Each participant was given a table listing categories and corresponding color codes in addition to five colors. Table 7.2 shows the color code that children must use for coding.

When children were asked to sort food items into dishes that usually your parents might cook/eat at home, most of the foods mentioned by the children were traditional foods, with *dolmah* being the most frequently mentioned (some of the children mentioned grape leaves or *warah anab*, which are the same as dolmah). Surprisingly, pizza was the single most frequently mentioned food to be cooked or prepared at home. There is a possibility that children may be referring to frozen pizza prepared at home.

When children were asked to sort food items based on food or dishes that represent your family, most referred to mostly Arabic dishes/meals, while a few children referred to Western/American food as food that represented their family. Food items that are cooked/prepared at home was similar, to some extent to food that children think represents their family, with a difference being the presence of fruits and vegetables in the latter category.

When children were asked to sort food items based on being food they ate in restaurants, the resulting food items were all Western/American food items with pizza (n = 10) being the first food eaten at a restaurant, in addition to fruits, vegetables, and sweets. One student asked if drive-through would counts as an example of food items eaten at restaurant. Data in the parents’ interviews show similar results, where Arab family rarely dine-in at an Arabic restaurant.

When children were asked to sort food items based on food that they can prepare/cook or help in preparing/cooking, one child asked if “is using the microwave
counts for food that I do by myself.” Results show that food that required cooking skills, such as pasta and spaghetti, were mostly mentioned by older children, while food items such as fruits and sweets were mentioned by younger children.

As for food requested ahead of time, the results showed that children request both American/Western food as well as Arabic food, with slightly more emphasis on American/Western food. Pizza, alfredo pasta, and sushi were the top three most requested American/Western foods; dolmah, mulūkhiyyah, and kusharī are the top requested Arabic food items. Data from free list and sorting recorded by the children (n=14) at the focus groups (N=3) were all combined and presented at Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Food items sorted according to color codes and food groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Codes</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>F &amp;V; Sweets</th>
<th>Other foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food that your parents usually cook at home.</td>
<td>pizza (5)*, mac and cheese (2), alfredo pasta (2), popcorn, nachos, French onion soup, spaghetti, chicken nuggets.</td>
<td>dolmah (5), kusharî (2), shāwurmah (2), kabāb, rice with labnah or meat, maqlūbah, couscous, macaroni béchamel, mansaf mulūkhiyyah, and rice with nuts and raisins</td>
<td>apple (2), bananas (2), oranges, broccoli, carrots, candy, cookies, ice cream cake, strawberries.</td>
<td>Chicken (2), chicken and rice, and fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for dishes that you think it represents your family.</td>
<td>mac and cheese, alfredo pasta (2), nachos, onion soup.</td>
<td>dolmah (4), shawurmah (3), kusharî (2), kabbab (2), macaroni béchamel, rice with bāmyā, maqlūbah, and mansaf, and rice with nuts and raisins</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Chicken (2), chicken and rice, and fish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.4 (Continued): Food items sorted according to color codes and food groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Codes</th>
<th>Food Categories</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>F &amp;V; Sweets</th>
<th>Other foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food you usually like to eat when you go to a restaurant.</td>
<td>Pizza (10), alfredo pasta (2), sushi (2), spaghetti, steak (2), chicken noodle soup, chick fil a, Chinese food, and nachos,</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>broccoli (2), bell pepper (2), funnel cake, cappuccino, cookies, dark chocolate, and ice cream cake.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food you think that you can prepare/cook or help in preparing/cooking.</td>
<td>pizza (10), mac and cheese (4), nachos, popcorn, broccoli, chicken noodle soup, alfredo pasta, chicken nuggets.</td>
<td>shāwurmah (3), dolmah (2), and kabāb,</td>
<td>apple (2), banana (2), bell pepper (2), corn, Nutella crepe, cookies, strawberries, and carrots.</td>
<td>chicken and rice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food that you request your parents to cook or buy ahead of time for you.</td>
<td>pizza (6), sushi (3), alfredo pasta (3), chicken (2), chicken nuggets, chicken noodle soup, mac and cheese, potatoes and eggs with mushroom, steak with rice, onion soup, nachos, and Chinese food.</td>
<td>dolmah (3), mulūkhiyyah (2), kushari (2), shāwurmah, mansaf, rice with labnah\textsuperscript{44} or meat, couscous, macaroni béchamel, rice with bāmyā, and rice with nuts and raisins.</td>
<td>bell peppers (2), ice-cream cake, cookies, funnel cake, and corn.</td>
<td>chicken and rice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{44} This is similar to Greek yogurt but has slightly sour than Greek yogurt.
“Why Do We Eat Differently?”

While everyone shared their five favorite food items or dishes, participants were asked why most of us had different food items or dishes that we liked. The children’s responses included “Because we are from different places,” “We are not related,” “Everyone has different taste buds,” and “Of our culture.” The older children provided more elaborate answers. A thirteen-year-old boy said, “I guess because I grew up with these foods, so I kind of stuck with them,” and a twelve-year-old girl said “I think it because we have different friend groups. So, that’s can have an impact on what we eat.” An eleven-year-old girl said “I think because of our tradition. I mean when my parents moved to America, my grandma taught my mom how to cook, and it came down like that.” In the same focus group, a thirteen-year-old girl commented, saying, “Also for a country. We eat food that you don’t eat. It’s like this thing we eat for breakfast. I don’t know if you eat it, but it’s like egg with debs tamer⁴⁵." A sixteen-year-old boy said:

Different ethnicities, like in every different region each country has its own preferred food, like the people there enjoy certain foods more than other countries do. So, even the geography has to do something with the food because maybe some animals are more dominant in that region than other. So, people in that region will mainly eat from that animal because that’s what is available.

The developmental niche comprises both physical and social settings that the child experiences and has the most powerful influence on the child’s development.

⁴⁵ This is a molasses but made from dates.
Looking at some of the participant answers, it’s clear that the physical and social settings in which these children live shapes their food experiences by determining how, where, and with whom the child spends their day. For example, as one child mentioned, that friends have impact of what we eat. Thus, formal schooling has a significant effect on the children because it determines the makeup of their daily friend circles, and thus the social interaction the child experience at school differs from one child to another and depends on the age and gender of the child. In addition, children perceive that their families, traditions, and culture exert a major effect on their food environment. They are able to articulate their own ideas of why we are different by stating that they came from a particular family, background, and culture—and even indicating that they experienced eating different food than others, as one of the children giving an example of egg with *debs tamer*. One of the children’s explanations of why we are different in terms of food addressed not only the immediate family food environment and experiences, but sources further back—other relatives, such as grandparents, as source of food or family recipe, and country.

**Role Playing (Vignettes)**

The focus groups included an interactive activity to portray a typical negotiation dialogue between the children and their parents. The purpose of this interactive activity is to substantiate data collected on parents-child interactions that parents wrote along with their twenty-four-hour dietary recall. The ways children interact with their parents demonstrate some of the child’s agency with regard to food. Also, vignettes can relatively mimic parenting style (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and
neglectful) when it comes to feeding children. Results for the vignettes can be compared with parent’s results in a typical negotiation dialogue.

During each children’s focus group, two children volunteered for each vignette. There were two scenarios for this interactive activity. The volunteers would pick one of the scenarios and improvise the dialogue. The scenarios are as follows:

1. One of you is going to be the parent and the other one is the kid. You just came back from school and you are hungry (so it could lunch or dinner time for you). Your parent is calling you to come eat. On the dinner table, the lunch or dinner was something that you are either unfamiliar with or that you don’t like. What would be the conversation between you and your parent?

2. You are going with your either of parents to grocery shopping. You saw any food item that you would like to buy for yourself to eat at home or to bring to school. Tell us what is the food item what you would like to buy, and what would the dialogue between you and your parent?

Vignette #1—lunch time—home: between eleven-year-old girl (mom) and thirteen-ear-old boy (the child).

Mom: [name of child], it’s dinner time. We are having dolmah.

Child: But I don’t like dolmah.

Mom: Well, you have to eat it because we don’t anything else.

Child: But I don’t want to.
Mom: Then, have something else, like fruit.

Child: Okay! I’ll have some fruit.

I asked the child if he would ask his mom to make something else instead of eating dolmah. He answered, “She probably would make something else, but I’ll find something. If she asks me beforehand, what do you want for dinner? I tell her whatever I want.”

The second vignette was between two actual sisters in a focus group (thirteen- and nine-year-old sisters).

Vignette # 2: Cereal aisle —Walmart

Child: Mam, can I have Krave?

Mom: No, you are going to be fat.

Child: But we always have Krave.

Mom: Really!!

Child: Okay well, can I have Cocoa Pebbles then?

Mom: Yeah, sure [with attitude].

The sisters continued their discussion; one of them said, “We eat it for breakfast every day.” Then the other sister replied, “We will finish it in five days, except the weekends, we eat different food [then].” On the weekend, the sisters usually had their traditional breakfast, eggs with debs tamer.

Vignette # 3: Dinner time—home
Mom: [child’s name], honey, come eat. I made today chicken with green peppers.

Child: No thank you! [with attitude].

Mom: Why? I made it really good this time. You’re gonna like it.

Child: No, I’ll puke on the table if I eat it.

Mom: You don’t have to eat it, but you can go to bed hungry.

Child: Okay, no problem.

I asked the participant that playing the child role, “Why wouldn’t you eat the food or even try it?” She answered, “I’d rather go to bed hungry than have something bad.”

Vignette # 4: Lunch time —Home

Mom: I made the best food in the world! Come and eat.

Child: What is this, mama?

Mom: It’s bulgur46 (or bulgur).

Child: Is there anything else?

Mom: No dear, I’ve been cooking it since the morning.

Child: Thank you so much, mama, but this is a lot of carbs.

Mom: But carbs is good for you.

Child: No, it is going to make me fat. But I will make something for myself. Is that okay?

Mom: No no, no, this is going to make you strong, what are you saying?

46 A cereal made from whole wheat and constantly cooked in Middle Eastern countries.
Child: No, I'll make something.

I asked the kid what he is going to get for himself, he said “Maybe I'll make rice and chicken.”

While the adults in those vignettes were impersonated by children, a few of the parents (n = 5) who participated in the research study provided a parents-child food interaction (food context) and 24-hrs food recalls. The food context data were supposed to be used and triangulated with the vignettes data to create a better picture of variations of everyday parent–child negotiations about food. Although the combination of twenty-four-hour food recall and food context was the main method for this research study, data were limited to only five participants, which assigned certain constraints on the analysis of quantifying and constructing food items that are consumed primarily by children. In addition to limited participation, there were inconsistencies in how those recalls were recorded. Two recalls were completed by parents and three by children (see Figure 7.2).

Two of 24-hr recall and food contexts, which were recorded by parents, were incorporated with the analysis. One parent, a housewife, said “As soon as [my child] gets into the car, the first question they ask is what I cooked. They eat as soon as they get home. [Child’s name] doesn’t argue with traditional meal. [Child’s name] will most likely eat salad only without any chicken.” Another parent, who is half-time employee, mentioned “while in the car, we discuss what happened during the day and discuss what is for lunch, giving them three or four options, and they choose what they want.” Another
parent-child interaction was mentioned by her nine-year-old daughter in her twenty-four-hour dietary recall. Figure 7.3 showed her twenty-four-hour recall.

Children’s Food Requests

As part of children focus groups, participants were asked to think back the last time you asked either of your parents to cook/buy for you a certain food item. Children should recall this food item and whether their request was fulfilled. Due to the exploratory nature of this research study, children were asked to discuss any type of
food, without specification for either Western/American or traditional food. A ten-year-old said, "I asked my mom for pancakes for breakfast. I thought we were going to IHOP when I asked her but, she made them at home." A nine-year-old girl who started loving green pepper because of her friends at school said "I asked my mom for green pepper, and I ate all." One of the sisters (nine years old) in the focus group said, "I asked my mother for pancakes, but she did not do it." Her older sister (fourteen years old) replied, "That’s because she already made the food." One thirteen-year-old girl said (I had to translate from Arabic): “I was craving for teemman ahamar and fish. She already has the teemman, but she had to buy the fish.” One interesting ten-year-old boy, who is concerned about his health and influenced by his coach, said, “Each time I request food and eat a lot of stuff, the next day I run like for two miles.” A thirteen-year-old girl asked her mom for make maftool, but her mother did not make it. I asked her why, and she replied, “Because it takes forever to make it.” When another ten-year-old girl asked her mom to make malfoof, her mom said “she [already] made it; we ate it, but that was like a month ago.” A twelve-year-old boy said that “Two days ago I asked my mom if she can make a dish call lesan asfour, and she made it. I love it.”

“I am the Boss”: One-Day Family Menu

In this engaging activity, children were asked to imagine being the boss of their family for one day, and to come up with food menu. The script was as follows: “You are

47 This is a rice, but it is a red in color and slightly sweet because Iraqi people cook it with molasses made from dates.
48 This is a Palestinian dish where it’s made from bulgur.
49 Some stuffed vegetables, usually zucchini, cabbage, or onions, with rice and ground meat.
50 It’s a soup translated as the bird’s tongue where pasta, like orzo pasta, cooked with potatoes, carrots, and fine grounded chicken.
the boss today! What would be on your food menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? The purpose of “I am the boss” was to determine if children would create the menu based on frequency of family traditional dishes/meals vs. Western dish/meals, or a combination of both. More importantly, the food menu activity was designed to help the children visually look at what they had created and answer a follow-up question: “Based on your food menu, do you think you have changed your parent’s food?” Children were not given any probes or directions on how to create the menu. Appendix I shows an example of food menu done by one the children. Table 7.5 shows the common food picked by the children for the food menu activity. Food were divided by typical traditional meal/dish, Western food, fruits and vegetables or other.

Table 7.5: Common food items picked by children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Occasion</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>F &amp; V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td><em>Arabic gebna</em> 51 Arabic bread, <em>fühl</em> (3)*, <em>labnah</em> (3), Hummus <em>falāfil</em> <em>Makdous</em> 52,</td>
<td>Eggs with hash, Potatoes with eggs (3), turkey bacon (3), eggs (2), pancake (2), hash browns, waffles, Oatmeal with milk.</td>
<td>orange juice (2), milk (2), toast</td>
<td>Cucumber (2), tomato (2),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>hummus sandwich, <em>teemman</em> and stew, <em>dolmāh</em> macaroni with <em>béchamel</em> (2)</td>
<td>Brisket, Chicken strips (with ketchup), fresh fries, mac and cheese, Chinese food (order), Pancakes, waffles, chipotle (order), turkey sandwich, burger, fries, Grill steak, tuna sandwich, pizza.</td>
<td>Rice and Chicken, salad (2), dark chocolate,</td>
<td>Corn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(#) shows the frequency of food item.*

---

51 Translated to cheese. Arabic cheese are mostly white and very salty.
52 This is an tangy eggplants stuffed with nuts, red pepper and garlic. It is part of Levantine area food.
Table 7.5 (Continued): Common food items picked by children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Occasion</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>F &amp; V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td><em>Maftool (2)</em> <em>mulūkhiyyah (2)</em>, <em>maqlūbah</em>, <em>kusharī Teemman</em> and stew</td>
<td>Nacho, Pizza, and leftover from lunch, sushi, fried rice, egg rolls, crab Rangoon. Chicken salad (2), Steak with fries, garlic bread Chinese food (order) Chipotle.</td>
<td>chicken, eggs, cream cheese.</td>
<td>Peas, carrots,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(#) shows the frequency of food item.*

The children’s construction of the food menu shows a very interesting pattern. All participants show bicultural eating patterns where children “incorporate the host environment eating patterns into their diet while maintaining some traditional dietary practices” (Satia-Abu-Tob, 2003, 76) at other meals or occasions. This indicates that children’s food desires for their traditional food still exists. That being said, there were more American/Western food times mentioned at lunch and dinner compared with traditional food. A possibility for this might be associated with the amount of traditional food exposure vs. American or Western food exposure. Parents’ findings suggested that they rarely dine in at an Arabic restaurant due to the prices and quality of food. Also, some parents mentioned that they choose their dining out based on their children’s favorite restaurants, to make sure that they will eat something. Some of the food items mentioned at the food menu were items that I personally consumed during my participant observations at the school site, such as tuna sandwich, macaroni and cheese, pizza, nachos, chicken strips, and *maqlūbah*. In one focus group, only one child asked if they should think of the family when creating the food menu.
This is in accordance with the some of the findings from the literature. It has been suggested that the exposure of ethnic produce was correlated with consumed of overall fruits and vegetables and negatively correlated with fast food restaurants exposure among Latino children (Chen et al. 2015). In a study among Latina immigrants and their children, it shows that assimilated or bicultural children consumed fewer daily severing of vegetables and more sugary beverages, fat, and frequent away-home food (Soto et al. 2017). Other study conducted on 25 Chinese American children shows that acculturated children prefer and consume non-Asian diet. In the same study, Children mentioned that they consume non-Asian food for breakfast and lunch (while at school), and Asian food for dinner (Diep, et al. 2017).

**Food Changes: Child Perspectives**

Child participants were asked if they believe they had influenced their parent’s food. This question was asked right after the food menu activity. Some of the children—particularly participants between the ages of eight and ten years old—found it difficult to understand the question. Thus, the question was formulated into a hypothetical story where children were asked to think if a similar story that had happened to them:

I know someone whose parents came to America from a different county.

But he was born here in America. When he grew up and went to elementary school, he started liking other types of food that his parents were not familiar with, or that were not common in their home country. So, he then started requesting his parents purchase and cook those foods.

Has anyone felt something similar in their family?
A fourteen-year-old boy said “I think we have introduced her to more food but she [referring to his mother] has not, like, changed in a sense. Like, she still eats Arabic food, even if we don’t eat or like it. For example, if there is a family gathering or people coming over, we always make Arabic food.” The child demonstrates understanding that his family still maintains their foodways and foods by incorporating their traditional foods when someone is visiting. At the same time, he also believes that just the introduction of new foodstuff may pose changes in foodways.

A thirteen-year-old girl explained that “Before we came to America, we did not eat pizza. When we came, we started eating pizza in a restaurant, and later my mom started cooking it at home for us. It was better than the ones we bought. We even also started eating vegetable pizza at home.” Here, this child had demonstrated an understanding how incorporating new foodstuffs, such cooking pizza at home, represents a change in food in her family.

An eleven-year-old boy said “My mom sometimes make stuff for me or for the family that maybe I won’t like. So, she makes something else on the side so I can eat it.” As the findings from the interviews, parents (n = 3) mentioned employing this foodway, just to make sure that their kids eat something.

A sixteen-year-old boy said that “Because overseas, I won’t say that she will be eating like burgers and pizza compared to here, we have pizza a good amount of time. In Egypt, we would order fries, a sandwich, and humus, tahini. Or even Chinese food, I would not think Egyptians or Jordanians would have a lot of Chinese food. But yes, I think her diet changed here.” Clearly the sixteen-year-old boy display thoughtful ideas of how his mother had consumed some American or Western foodstuffs even in her home.
country. But the frequency of consuming or preparing those foods had changed because of the children’s requests or desire for the host country’s food.

One twelve-year-old boy had not looked at the changes in food but rather in food habits that his parents may have experienced. He believes that his mother would not be happy about his one-day family food menu: “My mom would think this is too much. She is like a leftover person, so she is like, ‘We make something small for breakfast, and a big lunch that we eat for lunch, and dinner, and tomorrow’.”
CHAPTER EIGHT
DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research study used qualitative data to investigate changes in Arab migrant families’ food and foodways, and the role children play in these changes. The study adds to the literature on food studies on migrant populations in the United States. It also contributes to the literature on child agency with regard to food. This study focused the following research questions:

1. How and why do Arab American families’ food and foodways change after migration to the United States?
2. How does children’s agency with regard to food play a role in the changing food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?

I extended these main research questions with the following sub-questions:

A. What are dominant factors aiding in the changes of food and foodways among Arab American migrant families?
B. How do such changes in food and foodways behavior affect migrant families?
C. What are some parental and community beliefs and practices regarding how to feed their children?
D. What determinants shape child agency in family food behaviors?
E. How do children express agency regarding food to influence food and foodways in Arab American families?

**Main Findings**

The general picture emerging is that Arab migrant families have experienced different aspects of change. The results of this research study show that there are intertwined factors that affect the food and foodways (food habits) of Arab migrants after their migration to the United States. The most significant factors shared among most Arab families included difficulty finding ingredients, availability and accessibility of halal food, and lifestyle (time constraints). Economic or financial factors were rarely mentioned among participants. Surprisingly, parents did not mention children as a factor when asked about how their food and foodways have changed. However, most parents did admit that their children played a role in their family food and foodways changes. The extent of changes to food and foodways, however, varies from one family to another—from a significant change, such as cooking two different meals or not consuming or cooking traditional food, to something less significant, such as modification of a traditional recipe to incorporate locally available ingredients.

The existing literature on child feeding practices of Arab migrant families is limited. This research study results show that Arab migrant families reported family meals as one emerging feeding behavior, although the behavior was not always practiced owing to multiple factors, such as different job schedules. Other feeding practices were rewarding, restriction, forcing, and encouraging children’s eating
behaviors. Parents believe that using those feeding practices is important to maintaining their cultural identity and passing it to their children.

Children participated in the research study shows a bicultural eating pattern where they consume both host food and traditional food with more emphasis on the American food. Children have requested food based on their preferences and familiarity. Based on their perspectives, few of the older children believe that they had influences their parents’ food and foodways.

According to parent focus groups and interviews, there is some evidence that Arab migrant families face food and foodways changes post-migration. But the degree of the changes is not a focus in this research study. Those changes will be discussed through ecological model of food and nutrition while findings from children focus groups will be looked at through the developmental niche theoretical framework.

Some of the main findings overlap with past studies of other migrant groups in the United States, and few findings were unique to this research study. Factors involved in the change of food and foodways were personal. For example, Arab migrant families indicated that time constraints and the pace of life have affected their food and food habits, which is consistent with other studies conducted on Arab mothers in Lubbock, Texas (Tami et al. 2012), Latino mother-and-child pairs in North Carolina (Colby et al. 2009), African refugees (Patil et al. 2008), and Asian Indians (Venkatesh and Weatherspoon 2018). Other factors that are external to the migrant families are the availability and accessibility of certain foods and ingredients (Colby et al. 2009; Burns 2010; Mares 2012; Venkatesh and Weatherspoon 2018). It would appear that those two most significant factors, which are time constraints and accessibility/availability of food,
affect food habits by causing people to prepare and consume traditional food less often, to consume fast food, and to have fewer family meals. A unique finding of this research study revolves around halal food. Participants indicated that halal food was difficult to obtain, especially when they first arrived in a community with a small Muslim population. The price of halal food discouraged participants from purchasing halal meat from ethnic grocery stores.

**Pre-migration Food Environment**

Part of the discussion of post-migration changes to food and foodways entails exploring pre-migration food and foodways among these Arab migrant families. The general picture emerging from the analysis of food behaviors pre-migration vs. post-migration is that families had indeed experienced food changes; the level of change, however, varies among these Arab families, and depends heavily on the extent to which given foods were consumed and foodways practiced in the country of origin.

The majority of the food items consumed in the country of origin were considered typical dishes and represent residents’ food identity. Some of the foods that were part of Egyptian migrant families’ traditions, for example, *fül*, *falāfil*, *aish baladi*, *fino* bread, egg with *bastūrmah*, *kusharī*, and *ḥawāshī*. Moroccan dishes and ingredients included semolina with milk, *misam*, *tājin*, *piaa*, *sifa*, and couscous. Some of the Iraqi foods were *kabab*, *qaymar*, *tashrīb*, *kubbah*, *tharīd bājillā*, and *simach masqūf* and vegetables were *fāṣūlya*, *lūbyā*, and *selg*. The only very well-known Jordanian dish was *mansaf*. Saudi Arabian dishes included *kabsah* and *tamīs*, even though there were no Saudi participants in this study. Other shared ethnic food among participants were items such
as macaroni béchamel, shāwurmah, mushaltat, biryani, kuftah, maqlūbah, waraq ‘inab, kabāb, and fattah. Only one respondent mentioned shared vegetables (bāmya). Moving from their country of origin to the United States has not influenced the consumption of these ethnic foods. However, participants mentioned that the extent to which they cooked and consumed those foods was to a lesser degree than before. This finding is less surprising if we consider factors influencing families' food and foodways.

Based on the findings from this exploratory study, it appears that most families had exposure to Western food pre-migration. Our findings about the exposure of Western or American food pre-migration are consistent with previous results showing that food changes do not necessarily begin with migration to the host country but rather might have happened earlier in homeland country (Himmelgreen, 2005; Himmelgreen et al., 2007) due to the globalization of food. Families (n = 9) had indicated the consumption of those Western food such as Italian food (pizza, spaghetti, lasagna), Chinese food in general, burgers (e.g., McDonald’s, Burger King), and fried chicken (KFC). One reason for the exposure of Western food may be related to the fact that all of participants (n = 9) implied that the quality and taste of these Westerns foods is much better at franchise locations in their home countries than in the United States. A few of the parents reasoned that the better quality of Western food in their countries of origin was due to the freshness of the ingredients; others mentioned that is due the meat quality.
The Social Environment and Social Organization of Food and Foodways Changes

One of the ecological model of food and nutrition is the social environment. The social environment and social organization have a major influence on Arab migrant families, especially to eating together as a family (commensality), family social support, roles and responsibilities for each family members.

Women's Employment

At the approximate level of the social environment, we find mothers are the central food decision-maker of a household (Messer, 1984). Within the research study sample, six participants out of nineteen argued that a mother's (or wife's) responsibilities and role taken outside their house can alter the family’s food habits. Interestingly, two male participants identified working mothers as one of the main reasons for food and foodways changes (i.e., not eating traditional food consistently), while female participants indicate that time constraints (e.g., commitment to a job or full-time education) primarily influenced the type of food cooked or prepared (e.g., cooking with frozen ingredients rather than fresh) This is similar to another study conducted with eighteen Latino adults who indicated they were spending less time preparing food at home (Himmelgreen, Romero-Daza, Cooper, and Martinez, 2007). A few of the female participants found it difficult to cook healthy meals at home due to their busy schedules, and depended on fast food (e.g., pizza and ready-made frozen food). This is consistent with previous research on other migrant populations (Dubowitz et. At., 2006; Sussner et. al., 2008).
Family Meals

The concept of eating together (commensality) as a family was something that Arab migrant parents have experienced less since immigrating and starting families. According to Sobal and Nelson (2003), the fast-paced lifestyle in post-industrial societies hinders commensal eating and leads to social isolation. While it has been suggested that Arab women constructed their identities within the family through food work and providing meals (Vallianatos and Raine, 2000), mothers’ work outside the home and family meals were discussed simultaneously among parents. For example, parents reported that feeding practices such as family meals only rarely occurred, and that they felt something missing in their social lives due to of the work schedules of both parents or the different school schedules of the children. These findings are less surprising if we consider that those who self-identified as housewives reported having family meals, and consuming and preparing traditional foods, more frequently than other families. This behavior has been reported by research on Somalian migrant women in Sweden where women survive through family meals and where home cooking represents a way to celebrate religious meetings and festivities (Jonsson, Hallberg, and Gustafsson, 2002). Also, previous research on Latino migrant populations shows that family meals were identified as a factor of diet quality (Himmelgreen et al., 2005).

The number of meals consumed per day as a family was one of the emerging themes when parents discussed feeding practices. The finding that the number of meals consumed per day as a family pre-migration was higher than post-migration is not surprising. This is due to multiple factors (e.g., both parents working; children
consuming two meals at school) that influence family meal practices among Arab migrant families.

Parents asserted the importance of feeding practices such as family meals, identifying them as a way to preserve their cultural identity. Links between the importance of having family meals among migrant populations and transmission of family food practices to other generations have been established elsewhere in the literature (Trofholz et al. 2018; Larson et al., 2009).

Social Support

According to the interviews, some of the parents’ food experiences post-migration reflected a lack of relative or social support. A recent study supports that a lack of social support in Latino-majority neighborhoods in NYC made it difficult for residents to prepare home-cooked meals (Weisberg-Shapiro and Bevine, 2015). While it seems that social support may play a role in shaping food habits, results show that only a few women participants discussed this matter. For instance, four women indicated that social support (e.g., mother, mother-in-law, sisters) is available on demand in their home countries (e.g., watching the kids while cooking or help in cooking) and reported experiencing a lack of social support while resident here in the United States. Findings further show that social support is defined differently by the participants, as either instrumental (e.g., tangible assistance) or informational, such as guidance—but does not encompass emotional support (Thornton et al., 2006). One parent indicated that social support comes from having the family prepare and cook together as a learning experience for the younger women and girls. Another argued that
she was looking for support because she had minimal cooking skills and knowledge about cooking traditional food. Two more women participants indicated that they were looking for help with watching their kids while cooking.

The Cultural Environment of Food and Foodways Changes

Halal Food

Another important component of the ecological model of food and nutrition is culture (idea system). “Culturally safe food” has to be halal-slaughtered meat to avoid cultural taboos and follow religious practices (Jonsson, Hallberg, and Gustafsson, 2002). Our semi-structured interviews findings showed most of the participants (n = 17) agreed on the definition of halal food. The analysis of interviews showed that Arab migrant families define halal or permissible food as either 1) everything except pork and pork derivatives, or 2) only properly slaughtered meat is permissible food, with more participants in accordance with the first definition. This was reflected in the literature on Arab migrant families in Canada where participants varied in their religious dietary guidelines (El Hassan and Hekmat, 2012). Our results showed that parents who favor the first definition took their actions based on advisory opinions from knowledgeable individuals in the community. Not surprising, most of the parents, who are less strict in how they define halal food, were able to purchase and consume meat from stores other than ethnic stores. Interestingly, those parents also mentioned that they still buy meats from local ethnic stores, but in lesser amounts, and primarily for certain types of ethnic meals that required specific cuts of meat.

53 Halal food purchase, consumption, and challenges were not discussed during the focus groups since the topic might elicit unpleasant debate among the participants.
Another factor contributing to this decision-making was the high prices of the meat for sale in local ethnic stores. Parents who are stricter with halal food, by contrast, indicated that they show less interest in dining out and cook almost every meal at home because of the halal issue. Part of the reason for discussion of this topic was to find out if food and foodways influenced the purchasing and consumption of halal food among Arab migrant families. Most families demonstrate a halal vs. non-halal switching pattern post-migration; the purchasing and consumption of only halal food declined due to the price factor. It has been suggested that the consumption of halal food depends on the level of religiously. According to Bonne et. al (2007):

Consumers who consider themselves less as being a Muslim, believe that their consumption decision is a matter of personal conviction, while consumers with a higher Muslim identity are more prone to take the opinion of other important persons and institutions into account (in addition to their feeling of control). More (versus less) “religious” consumers are more sensitive to the norms and rules prescribed by their religion, while less (versus more) “religious” consumers make more “egocentric” (i.e. considering one’s own opinion instead of other one’s opinions) consumption decisions.

There are several reasons for the findings on halal food consumption. It is possible that due to the subject’s sensitivity and the participants’ religious affiliation (Bonne et al. 2007), they may not have accurately reported their actual consumption of halal food. Another factor is the social desirability effect, where participants choose to report their best behaviors (Bernard 2011) and tend overreport consumption of halal
food. The researcher’s position and familiarity with the topic also might have influenced some of the results.

**Men’s Contributions to Food and Foodways**

One of the interesting emerging themes among a few families was the discussion of the husband’s role in food. A study of Arabic women migrants to Canada revealed that their husbands had actually been more involved in food planning and food choices back home in their country of origin (Vallianantos and Raine, 2008). However, due to the lifestyle changes and the increased speed of life in a Western country, those men became less involved with daily food choices and planning, and simply ate whatever their wives prepared and cooked. The notion that the kitchen is the wife’s domain, and that men should not interfere with kitchen activities beyond telling their food desires, was less practiced, especially among these Arab migrants to Canada. This fits with the results of this study. One man mentioned that his wife had introduced him to new food items that he had not eaten before (e.g., salmon, broccoli, sweet potatoes). A wife indicated that her husband helped a lot with cooking and totally understood that the situation (i.e., both parents working outside the home) is different from the model lifestyle in their home country. That being said, some men (n = 4) indicated that they eat whatever the wife cooks at home with some exceptions (e.g., in case the wife made certain food items such as chicken nuggets or macaroni and cheese).
The Physical Environment of Food and Foodways Changes

Challenges of Providing Halal Food

The physical environment is another component of the ecological model of food and nutrition. The availability of and accessibility of permissible food was of major importance to Arab migrant families. One major conversational thread among parents concerned the challenges of finding those culturally safe foods, especially when they first arrived in the United States. Four of the families indicated that they had to move from the city where they initially settled (e.g., Birmingham, Alabama; Midland-Odessa, Texas) to other cities that are more culturally welcoming in terms of community, school, and availability of Arabic restaurants and stores, such as Tampa. Halal food was not only difficult to acquire, but pricey. A few families (n = 3) mentioned that they overcame this challenge by finding alternative sources; rather than buying from stores, they would obtain meat by themselves by purchasing a whole animal—usually a goat or a lamb—in partnership with one or more families, contracting with a local slaughterhouse to process the carcass, and splitting the portions. A few families (n = 2) indicated they saved money by buying less meat from local stores or buying in bulk (e.g., Restaurant Depot). Most families (n = 10) indicated that they buy from local store (e.g., Publix, Walmart). It is unclear whether these availability issues were a direct influence on the type or frequency of traditional cooking practiced among Arab families. However, there was a clear influence of the foodways relating to obtaining halal food.
**Ingredients**

Parents not only had difficulty finding and accessing religiously significant foodstuffs like halal meat, but also other culturally significant food ingredients. Foods that were difficult to acquire were certain vegetables (e.g., *mulūkhiyyah* and *selg*). Three migrant families, particularly from Egypt (n = 3), had to find *mulūkhiyyah* frozen. One Iraqi family had substitute Swiss chard for *selg* in order to make their favorite ethnic dish (*sabzi* stew 54). Surprisingly, all of the Arab migrant families, particularly those from Iraq (n = 3), mentioned that American lamb tastes different from lamb procured in their home countries. Parents attributed the different taste to the higher fat content of lamb raised in the United States. Iraqi parents indicated that some dishes (e.g., *kabāb* or *sabzi* stew) taste different from how they did back home. Those ingredients required to make certain ethnic dishes are important for maintaining the food-based cultural identity demonstrated by making those important dishes.

**Parents’ Perspectives on Children’s Agency**

For the purpose of this study, children are conceptualized as social actors “rather than passive recipients of adult’s instruction and influence” (Attard 2008, 24). A major goal of this research study is to understand child’s food choices and preferences about food and identify how these may play a role in food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families; the study also seeks to understand what shapes children’s agency from their parent’s perspectives. Based on the overall results, it seems that there is a relationship between a child’s food choices and preferences and families’ food and

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54 This is an Iranian dish consists of cooked leafy vegetables, red beans and meat.
foodways changes, even though it was not first mentioned as main factor to this change. There are few possibilities that led to this observation. When I asked the question “Do you think your children have influenced your food and food habits?”, participants might answer the question to what behaviors and thought will make them look good, that’s a social desirability effect (Bernard, 2011). The social desirability effect which is influenced by the way the interviewer asked the question (Bernard, 2011). If the question where asked differently (i.e., to what extent your children have influenced your food and food habits; what ways do children shape or influence family’s food and food habits?), the response might produce different outcomes. There is another possibility that led to this result, which focuses more on the parents. Parents may assume that they have a complete control on their children’s food choices, which they didn’t realize until the question was asked. I believe those the possibilities why parents did not mention children as one of the factors when they were asked about what have led to food and food habits changes post migration.

I observed that during the discussion of child agency, parents perceived that children contributed to their family’s decision-making about food. Parents may have modified their food habits to satisfy their children’s food choices, preferences, and needs. According to Stockley and Levy (2007), the discussion of children’s food choices and preferences should be assessed in the context of parenting style (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful), particularly the authoritative vs. authoritarian style, since the outcome is a bidirectional interaction between the child and the parent. Authoritative parents are restrictive and likely “accepting [of] children’s need for psychological autonomy” (Steinberg 2001, 1). Mikeska et al. (2017) mentioned that
authoritative parents are likely “to balance children’s rights and responsibilities” (247) and thus children are expected to act maturely and follow the family rules but parents allow a certain degree of autonomy. In contrast, authoritarian parents are firm or restrictive and likely to control children and discourage verbal interactions with their children (Mikeska et al. 2017; Carlson and Grossbart 1988).

Holsten et al. (2012) found that children influence food choices at home by requesting food based on their preferences. These requests further affected parents’ food preparation and purchasing decisions. While children exert agency with regard to food, parents shape their children’s food environment by deciding what is available and accessible at home. Lucas-Thompson et al. (2017) found that parents who are strict with their children make healthier food choices when grocery shopping. A study by Kasparin et al. (2017) found that children between the ages of five and eight were engaged in decision-making while dining out but were not expected to be given complete agency. Warren et al. (2008) showed that adolescents have more control over decision-making with regard to food at home, school, and restaurants than younger children.

**Factors Shaping Children’s Agency**

The school environment is recognized to have an influence on children’s eating behaviors (Kubik et al., 2003). According to Wechsler et al. (2001), children spend a significant time at school, and consume up to a third of their daily required caloric intake there (Crooks 2003). All parents in the sample perceived that the school environment (and the peers with whom a child interacts) is the number one source of shaping a
child’s agency regarding food. Parents indicated that school meals had influenced their children’s food choices toward food such as hot dogs, chicken fingers, macaroni and cheese, and pizza (even though the school’s cafeteria alternated between those food and other meals; see Appendix J for some meals provided by the school).

Few of the parents (n = 3) indicated that their children wanted to assimilate with their friends outside of the school environment by eating like them. Other parents (n = 2) indicated that their children started asking for food from ethnic groups outside their own (e.g., biryānī). During one interview, parents (n = 2) indicated that they had one child born and raised in a different country and the second child born and raised in the United States. These parents stated that their first child has a taste for traditional food, and struggled with eating school meals at the beginning. As in previous studies, the result of this analysis confirms that parents indicate that their children favor the similar foods severed as school (Bahar and Alkibay 2010).

The school environment is also a source of snacks, even though snacking occurs more frequently at home than at school (Crooks, 2003). Snacks contribute energy and nutrients to children (Wang et al., 2016); their nutrient value varies in terms of the child’s age and the type of snack (e.g., sweet, salty, or healthy) (Pac et al., 2017). Studies also reveal the influence of peers on snacking and its social and symbolic meanings, particularly with the youngest adolescents (Kümpel Norgaard et al., 2013). Parents (n = 4) perceived that snacks play a major role in their children’s eating habits. Parents explained the reason behind this behavior is that because schools have dedicated time for snacking. Also, parents mentioned that what guides their food decision-making is children’s requests for their favorite snacks. Other working mothers (n = 2) explained
that there is a long span of time between school lunch and dinner; thus, a snack represents a quick solution to lessen a child's hunger before dinner. One parent indicated that she hides the snacks once her kids arrive from school as a strategy to encourage them to eat and finish a home-cooked dinner. Another parent mentioned that snacks are not allowed to be brought in from outside. Surprisingly, our findings suggest that parents (n = 3) indicated that snacking behavior is not part of their culture or food habits. However, parents (n = 4) still incorporate snacks as a part of their feeding practices—as a rewarding for a child finishing his or her food, for instance. This indicates how notions at the societal level influence the beliefs or feeding practices of caretakers (e.g., parents or guardians), which is a main component of the developmental niche.

Parents also perceived a relationship between a child's food experience and the child's agency with regard to food. A major influence on children's food experience is parents or close family members; parents try to shape the children's food eating habits, and this may be observed in the broader context of children's acculturation to the adult world (Lupton, 1996). This seemed relevant for this research study. Families (n = 4) argued that children's food experiences first come from parents. One specifically argued that parents shape a child's food experiences at a certain age, but then lose control as the child gets older and builds and independent personality and food choices. Other parents (n = 3) indicated that their children develop a taste for certain foods they had tried in family social gathering or while visiting a friend's house. This is particularly true if we look at the developmental niche where the niche develops in response to the changes that the child confronts due to outer influences.
Parents also influence the degree of food choices, particularly in context of health (e.g., healthy vs. not healthy), and “children as competent decision-makers, may not always choose to follow their parent’s choice but instead find ways to negotiate their own aims, needs, and wishes for food choices” (Roberts, 2006, 63). Discussions between a parent and their children of healthy vs. unhealthy foods were reported seven times during the discussion of feeding practices topic—for example, encouraging a child to eat home-cooked food or preparing a meal at home instead of buying it from a restaurant, or, especially, telling the child to finish part of their meal (e.g., vegetables or the protein) for health reasons.

One of the focus group discussions compared the effects of gender and age on food preference and choices. Few studies have used age and gender as predictors of children’s food preference and choice. In an interesting study conducted on 222 French adolescents between the ages of ten and twenty, children reported that their food preferences changed and they started to appreciate some the foods they did not like when they were younger (Ton Nu et al. 1996). The reason for this change is the "growing autonomy of children, their opportunities to eat outside of their family and their desire to enter the adult world" (258). Another study of children and young adults indicated that taste is a more powerful determinant of food choices than age (Nguyen et al. 2015). A study conducted with a large sample of children in London (n=1291) aged four to sixteen showed children are willing to try more foods as they get older. Other studies indicated that children’s food preferences are based on gender. For example, some studies indicated that boys eat fewer fruits and vegetables than girls (Bere et al.
2008; Caine-Bish and Scheule 2009) and prefer more fatty and sugary food, processed meat products, and meat than girls (Cooke and Wardle 2005).

**Children’s Role in Food and Foodways Changes**

One of the trends to identity food and foodways changes is examining child agency with regard to requesting certain food items to be purchased or cooked. These food items are sometimes unfamiliar to the parents, or are not consumed—even if purchased or cooked—by their family and relatives. Those finding are consistence with the literature (Patil, Hadley, and Nahayo, 2009). Parents also indicated the constant requesting of certain food item to be purchased or cooked at home. Based on the findings, parents perceived that they had to prioritize their children’s needs before their own when at home, either by making two different meals (n = 3), making adjustments to an ethnic recipe to make it more Americanized (n = 3), asking other parents for a recipe (n = 2), looking up a new requested food online for (n = 1), or cooking to suit the children’s preferences instead of those of the head of household (n = 3). When it comes to selecting a restaurant, parents usually decide to eat in a restaurant that their children would like (n = 6) as shown in the literature (McGuffin et al. 2014), even if the restaurant is not dhibīḥah. Also, when it comes to food decision-making, parents (n = 3) make decisions based on children’s request for certain food items, which are mostly snacks such as chips, cereals, and fruits and vegetables. By contrast, parents make decisions for their children’s food based on whether the food is healthy (e.g., less processed; organic), culturally safe (e.g., no alcohol, pork or pork derivatives, dhibīḥah), and preferred by the children.
Based on the overall findings of this research study, most parents justify prioritizing their children in terms of food based on two main aspects: 1) the previously mentioned factors that influenced Arab families’ food and foodways, and 2) acknowledgment of children’s agency with regard to food. Further, some actions were justified by the parents’ being flexible regarding their own food desires vs. those of their children. Parents might also justify their decisions to cook or purchase what the children like to eat because this how parents demonstrate affection to their children. A feeling of guilt is another justification for one of the parent’s behavior. One parent explained a feeling of guilt over bringing the children to the United States rather than raising them in the parent’s homeland; for this reason, that parent tends to give the children what they want and sacrifice what the parents would prefer to eat. Another parent mentioned that they don’t want their children to be missing out on something, and that parents need to sacrifice to give their children what they want, as previously explained in the “symbolic indulgence” concept formulated by Pugh (2008). That being said, the same parent argues that parents need to be careful of the extent to which we give children choices about food.

It is important to report the context in which those families lived. The experiences of Arab migrant families with regard to food and foodways changes are not uniform. Although these Arab migrant families share a large community where they have access to ethnic/Arabic stores, there are still some differences. For example, we have highlighted that the challenges of obtaining permissible food (e.g., halal meat) articulated by Arab migrant families depends to some extent on how individual Arab families define “halal.” To the other extent, the findings show that most of the challenges
depend on the availability, accessibility (i.e., physical environment), and cost of the meat. In addition, most the parents had mentioned that their children exhibit some food choices and preference and had influenced their food and foodways to some extent. The degree of change, however, is beyond the scope of this research study.

**Children’s Focus Groups Results**

Children data will be interpreted in the context of the developmental niche theoretical framework. The physical and social settings of everyday child’s life—how, where, and with whom the children spend their time and interact (Harkness and Super, 1994)—provide tangible identification of the food consumed (prepared to some extent) by children at any age. Children were able to articulately answer questions regarding their favorite foods and sort those foods they mentioned according to predetermined categories. Using the results of the focus groups and the free listing and sorting activities, we were able to explore the children’s food environments from the child’s point of view. For example, consider how most children can provide a coherent understanding of what items are considered family/culturally significant foods (e.g., traditional food), and what items are not (e.g., Western or American food), while a few children were not able to draw a distinction between the two categories. A possible interpretation of this finding is that parents of those few children frequently consumed or prepared Western foods at home to the extent that it created an idea that those foods represent the child’s family or culture. Also, some of the children were capable of explaining “why we eat differently” by illustrating how their social environment (e.g., parents, families, and peers at school) has influences on building their food favorites.
Thus, the influence of the social and physical setting—which is one component of the developmental niche framework—is extremely powerful in shaping the children’s food environment.

Reciprocally, children were able to express their agency with regard to food by requesting both American/Western food and traditional food almost equally, as the free listing and sorting activity shows. When children were asked to recall the last time that they requested a specific food, few children were able to recall the food they requested. Most of the children who were able recalled that they had requested traditional food (e.g., *lesan alsafour*, *malfood*, *mftool*, and *temman ahmar* with fish). One possible explanation for why children requested more traditional food ahead of time is because those children understood that traditional food required more preparation time—as one of the children explained. Also, results obtained in the free listing and sort activities showed that children express some agency by preparing or helping to prepare food in their households. This may suggest the extent to which Arab families’ children are engaged with the food and food habits at their home. In addition, it also can suggest the parental judgments and decisions about whether a given child can handle kitchen tasks, which are justified by the psychology of the caretaker.

The purpose of the role-playing or vignettes in the children’s focus groups was to mimic a dialogue between parents and their children in daily life during food occasions; however, there are multiple factors that play into the account when analyzing those scenarios. For example, the child’s characteristics, such as age, play a significant role in children’s food experiences, food choices, and preferences. In the first vignette, the child was a thirteen-year-old boy who made a choice to not eat traditional food and
instead pick something else. Another important component is the parental practices and beliefs that shape food choices that parents make for their children in relation to child’s needs and settings. The results from the typical negotiation dialogue between parents and children, and resulting vignettes show particularly interesting patterns. One very common feeding practices that the parents discussed during the semi-structured interview is the negotiation dialogue between “Eat this food or go hungry,” as seen in the third vignette. This indicates that parents display an authoritarian parenting style, where the parents in this sample exercise high demand on their kids and show low response to the child’s needs. There is still some doubt as to whether parents aggressively assert food choices for their children and whether those food choices are consumed by their children.

Findings from the “I am the Boss” food menu activity show an interesting pattern. It has been suggested that children of migrant families bring new ideas about food (Patil, Hadley, and Nahayo, 2009) and actively assert their desire for foods of the host culture (Vallianatos and Raine, 2008). Contrary to our expectations, the children sampled asserted their belonging to their cultural identify through the traditional food choices and preferences presented in the food menu. At the same time, they incorporated some American or Western food items (e.g., turkey bacon, pancakes, waffles, chicken strips, pizza, sushi, Chinese food, etc.) alongside the traditional food that their families prepared at home.

Finally, the general picture emerging from the analysis is that children’s perceptions of food and foodways changes in their families display interesting conclusions. The children themselves had been asked about their roles. However, older
children show a greater understanding of what it means to influence their parents’ food and food habits than younger children (e.g., eight to ten years of age). Older children reported that they have introduced new foodstuffs to their parents, and also reported their parents prepared or cooked nontraditional food. Older children mentioned that even though that their parents still eat their typical Arabic foods, there some changes in their foodways (e.g., cooking two different meals). Results obtained by the child focus groups are consistent with those of the parent interviews.

As for the younger children, there are few possibilities as to why there are not responding to the question. Younger children may not fully comprehend the question, even when framed in the hypothetical story. It is also possible that younger children—some of whom have been born and raised in the United States—were unable to distinguish between the host food and traditional food provided by their families, relatives, or community. For the same reason, they may be unfamiliar with the foodways their parents practiced in their countries of origin.

The Developmental Niche Limitations

The main purpose of the developmental niche theoretical framework is to understand culture by examining its role in the construction of children’s experiences during development and examining their outcomes (Worthman 2010). More recent scholars in anthropology of childhood have looked at children as having active agency rather than as passive recipients of adult instruction, influence, and culture, as previous scholars did. The transmission and acquisition of a culture requires interaction between the child and the caretaker (Zarger 2002). However, according to Valsiner (1988):
The prevailing tendency in anthropological accounts of culture transmission has been to view it as a unidirectional “transmission” from the “experts” (adult carriers of culture) to the “novices” (children). The latter are usually viewed as passive (or at least obedient) recipients of whatever (cultural “traits”!) is being “transmitted.” [The] adoption of the unidirectional perspective in conceptualizing culture transmission process creates a theoretical impasse for anthropology. (9)

In the developmental niche framework, the focus is the parental ethnotheory and psychology of the caretaker ignoring the child’s role in the that child’s own development, which creates one of the weaknesses of the model. Based on the results of this research study, where children are seen to set their food choices and preferences through negotiation with caretaker or guardians, this psychology does not fit well with the framework. In addition, the driving force behind the food and food habit changes among Arab migrant families is the collaborative process between the parents and the child, which is not well understood in the framework.

Worthman (2010) proposed a redrawn of the developmental niche that was based on the explications in Super and Harkness (1986) and Harkness and Super (1994) (see Figure 8.1). Center to the developmental niche are the child’s dispositions, including temperament and behaviors, and active agency, which affect the process of development. The child is viewed as an active social agent who shapes an inhabited microenvironment. Thus, “the interface between the child and the developmental niche produces individual experiences and constitutes the micro-environment for the child” (Worthman 2010, 551). Super and Harkness (1986) recognized that children and their
environments accommodate each other. Child development is shaped by environment, dictating the degree to which children must adapt to their cultural and familial requirements. Reciprocally, the family and caretaker must respond to children’s characteristics, temperament, and needs. Children change rapidly; the developmental niche includes homeostatic components that develop in response to changing behaviors (Worthman 2010). The double-headed arrows pointing out from the child in the new updated framework show a dynamic interaction between the child and the component of the developmental niche.

![Figure 8.1: Redrawn of the developmental niche.](image)

*Source: Worthman (2010).*
Study Limitations

This research study has several limitations to consider; specifically, in terms of three major characteristics of my positionality. First, I am a male researcher, originally from Kuwait, who has worked as a volunteer at the school site. My positionality as a male researcher within this particular community hindered my ability to recruit some parents, resulting in a smaller study sample than I had planned. This community has a unique set of sociocultural norms, where segregation of both genders is apparent in classrooms, the cafeteria, at community meetings, at recess time, and during morning student assemblies. Communicating with the opposite gender (whether parents or students) was limited to school- or community-related work. Thus, I had some difficulty contacting parents (especially mothers) to conduct interviews or focus groups. Also worth mentioning is that my positionality as a researcher from an Arab country as well as the exploratory nature of this research study may have affected some of the data I collected. Being familiar with this community may require an etic rather than an emic approach in order to not compromise the validity of the research (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Although I discussed my role as a volunteer at the school in chapter four, it is important to note that I faced an ethical dilemma where I had to perform my work responsibilities as the school principal instructed and build rapport with some of the children during recess time. This eventually limited my ability to recruit some of the students, especially from the high school.

Developing a suitable methodology is essential for this type of research. Other methodological limitations must be considered in this research study in addition to positionality. My initial plan was to conduct children’s focus groups that were age-
appropriate with regard to overcoming the issues of understanding questions and the younger children's fear of participating in the presence of older children. However, because of limited sample size and because few families have children that fall in the two children category (e.g., younger and older), the children were placed together in group regardless of age. More importantly, a few of the families had children in the two different age groups, which placed a burden on the parents to be present for focus groups for each child. To overcome the issue of face-to-face interviews with parents (mothers), a more culturally acceptably approach would be to conduct a phone interview instead. It is also recommended to abate the burden on families by limiting the research methods to children's focus groups and phone interviews with parents. Although the methods used to understand food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families were sound; however, our findings are not generalizable to other settings.

**Research Study Implications**

Results from this research study have some important implications from which public health could benefit. There is a need to increase Arab migrant families’ awareness about the health issues related to changes in diet. Several Arab migrant population research studies have found greater acculturation obesity associated with cardiovascular diseases (Al-Dahir et al. 2013; Dallo and Borrell 2006) and hypertension (Dallo and James 2000). While most of the Arab migrant families in the research study cited time as an impediment to preparing and consuming their ethnic foods, those foods should be encouraged. This could be done by educating people about faster ways to prepare and consume healthy traditional food to prevent from choosing unhealthy fast
food (Blanchet et al. 2018) in addition to incorporating healthy Western foods (Diep et. al. 2015). This could enable families to enjoy more meals together without impinging on time constraints. Furthermore, public health practitioners need to understand Arab family dynamics. Based on the limitations of the model presented in this research study, it necessary to include both the children and parents to have a full picture of the food and foodways changes among families’ post-migration.

Results from this research study can also provide direction for research on Arab children and adolescents. Public health practitioners and researchers in various scientific disciplines (e.g., nutrition, sociology) should focus not only on parents but also on children. According to Dietz and Gortmaker (2001), schools are a place to learn about nutrition and suitable diets, both through teaching and application of those nutrition lessons in school meals (Crooks 2003). Thus, it is useful to use interventions aimed at educating children about different ethnic food at school. There are few schools in the United States that incorporate ethnic dishes in cafeteria menus, according to the School Nutrition Association. For example, the Highlines and Seattle school district in Washington launched a project in September 2005 that offers meals that reflect student cultural diversity. One of the main goals is to introduce and expose students to other cultural food, such as Hispanic, Thai, Filipino, Somalian, and African American food, which represents the student diversity in the district (Pratt-Heavner 2012).

Finally, the contribution of this research study expands on the developmental niche theoretical framework because it’s limited on the perspective and rigid to understand the child and parent interaction.
**Future Work**

As my research showed, Arab migrant families face food and foodways changes because of different factors such as lifestyle, availability of ingredients, availability and accessibility of halal food. The research study used a qualitative approach method to assess the change. For future work, I created a quantitative survey to be used in conjunction with the qualitative methods (see Appendix K). The survey consists of questions that can be answered using a five-point Likert scale to assess a) the extent of factors in influencing food and food habits post-migration, b) the extent of factors that shape children agency, and c) the role of children in influencing families’ food and food habits. I also plan to engage more in the parents’ activities by attending the parent-teacher association (PTA) on a monthly basis. The PTA at the school consists of parents who voluntarily work to help the school with fundraising, organizing events, and providing constructive communication between parents and the school administration.

**Conclusion**

This exploratory study aimed to better understand food and foodways changes among Arab migrant families in the United States. It also aimed to understand how children’s agency may contribute to post-migration changes in food and foodways. Different factors affected food and foodways among Arab migrant families, such as finding ingredients; lifestyle; and the availability, accessibility, and price of halal food. Although at first parents did not indicate that their children were a factor in changes in their food and food habits, they came to recognize their children’s influence on families’ food and foodways as they prioritized their children’s food requests, preferences,
palatability, and decision-making with regard to dining out and grocery shopping. Thus, the extent of food and foodways changes varies among families. Parental feeding practices (i.e., forcing vs. encouraging, using snacks as a reward, and restriction) were seen as a way to construct cultural identity regarding food, and children exhibited agency around those feeding practices. The context in which the children live and where the school is within the community plays a significant role in their food experience and in shaping their agency toward food. Children show bicultural eating pattern through consuming both the American or Western foods and traditional food, and it is only through assertion of requesting Western or American food items that they recognize their influence on their families’ food and foodways. Only older children believed that they have influenced their families’ food foodways by introducing certain food items, requesting unfamiliar food, and the consumption of those food items by the parents.


Punch, Samantha. 2002. “Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults?” *Childhood* 9, no. 3: 321–41.


Weisberg-Shapiro, Pamela, and Carol M. Devine. 2015. “‘Because We Missed the Way That We Eat at the Middle of the Day’: Dietary Acculturation and Food Routines among Dominican Women.” *Appetite* 95: 293–302.


Weller, Daniel Lowell, and David Turkon. 2015. “Contextualizing the Immigrant Experience: The Role of Food and Foodways in Identity Maintenance and


APPENDICES
What is the Purpose of This Research Study?

The purpose of this research study will be to understand changes in diet and foodways* among Arab families in the Tampa area. I want to identify the main factors that aid in changes to eating habits and foodways. Also, I am eager to find out the role that children of Arab families play in those changes to foods and foodways. I hope to learn how children express their independence toward food and meals that people serve at home, school, and restaurants. Also, we want to know what influence the children foods choices.

What is the Nature of this Research Study?

This is a voluntary research study. Your participation is entirely your decision and you may withdraw and terminate your participation at any time during this study with no consequences. You will not be penalized and your child’s academic progress at school will not be affected if you choose not to participate.

Is My Family Eligible to Participate?

If you meet the following criteria, you are eligible to participate in the study:

1) You live in Tampa or the surrounding area.
2) Your family has lived in the United States for at least one year.
3) Either parent’s first language is Arabic.
4) You have at least one child between 8-17 years old and speaks English (Arabic is not required).

Why Have I Been Asked to Participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are part of a great Arab community here in Tampa and your insights to the research study is very important. Your children, who attend school here in Tampa, have insights that are essential to the research study as well.

What is the Role of Children in this Research Study?

I hope to learn how children express their independence toward food and meals that people serve at home, school, and restaurants. Also, we want to know what influence the children foods choices.

What is In It for Me?

Families and children will be compensated for their time and effort in participating in the research study and attending interviews and focus groups*. Families will be compensated with a $25 gift card from Publix per visit. Each child will be compensated from their participation with a $10 gift card from either Best Buy or Toys ’R’ Us.

How Long Does it Take?

The expected duration of the family interview is 45-60 minutes. Focus groups should take no more than 75 minutes. Children will be asked to participate in the research by taking photographs and participating in a fun, interactive focus group discussion with schoolmates.

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* Foodways is the study of food among people who share a common culture. It includes food consumption, preparation, and acquisition. Foodways also focuses on cultural origin, history, taste, and nutrition.

* What is a focus group? It is a group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion about a specific topic.
How Do We Get Started?

After you and your child read and understand the consent form that I have attached along with this brochure, please contact me via phone or email. I am happy to assist if you have some questions, concerns, or need more clarification on anything related to the research study.

After you and your child agree to participate, the consent and assent forms need to be signed and returned to Faisal Alkhuzaim, the study researcher. We will then set up a meeting for the interview. Couple months after the interview, we will schedule our second meeting for the focus group and the child focus group.

About Me

My name is Faisal Alkhuzaim, and I am a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I have been interested in food and nutrition during my education in the United States. I graduated with a BS in Biology from Wright State University, Dayton, OH in 2004, and earned an MA in Anthropology from Indiana University – Bloomington, IN in 2012. I lived in the United States since 1998. So, I understand how to hold onto our food identity while being in the States.

Contact Me

Phone: 812-360-3780
Email: falkhuza1m@mail.usf.edu

About the Study

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) in April 6th, 2017 under the study number: Pro00029390.
Appendix B: Recruitment Script

Hi! My name is Faisal and I am college student from University of South Florida. So, I am a student like you. I sit in the classroom and listen to my teachers and learn from them. But today, I want to learn from you. I want to know what do like to eat, and what food that eat at different place, like home, school, and with your friends. To learn from you, we are going to set together as a group and do some activities with your friends and answer those questions. If later you decided to leave the study or the group, you are free to do so. This is not mandatory. You know what mandatory means?

If you are between the age of 8-12 you can join the group. Not only can be in the group, but also will get gift cards from different stores when you join the group. But, before you agree to be in the group, there is three important easy step that you need to follow to be part of the study:

1) I will give this envelope. Take it home with you and give it your parents.
2) Make sure that either one of your parents sign the paper.
3) Once your parents read and signed the paper, give it back to your teacher and she will give it back to me.

Remember, only those bring back the permission paper will participant in the study.

Thank you,
Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

April 5, 2017

Faisal Alkhuzaim
Anthropology
Department of Anthropology
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, SOC 107
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00029390
Title: "I WANT KETCHUP ON MY RICE": THE ROLE OF CHILD AGENCY ON ARAB AMERICAN MIGRANT FAMILIES' FOOD AND FOODWAYS

Study Approval Period: 4/5/2017 to 4/5/2018

Dear Mr. Alkhuzaim:

On 4/5/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Protocol

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Child Written Assent.pdf
Combined Consent and Parental Permission.pdf
Child Verbal Assent

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved. The Child Verbal Assent is not a stamped form.
Appendix D: Semi-structured Interviews

A. Pre and post migration food and foodways:

1. Describe your typical meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner) setting in home country?
2. How did your food and foodways change after coming to the US?
3. If your food and foodways have changed, what are most significant factors that had
4. The accessibility of permissible food (halal) can be challenging sometimes due to the cost and availability. How did you overcome this issue?
5. Before you and your family migrated to the US, did you and your family consumed, prepared, or purchased any Western food that you are eating now? If yes, describe the food setting and behaviors.
6. Beside Western food, what are some ethnic foods/dishes you used to eat in your home country? Do you still prepare/consume those foods? Give me an example.

B. Parental Ethnotheories:

1. What are some culturally shared practices in your family when it comes to feeding your child(ren)?
2. Why or why not do you think those culturally shared beliefs and practices are important to your child (ren)?
3. Do think that coming to the US has impacted your feeding practices and beliefs when it comes to feeding your child? How?

C. Children Role:

1. What is your opinion on this: Nowadays, it easy to pressure my children to eat whatever I serve/buy to them?
2. Do you think that your child(ren) has/have expressed some agency with regard to food? How?
3. What factors do you think shape his or her agency with regard to food?
4. Among those factors, what is the most significant factor that shape the child agency? And why?
5. What is a typical negotiation dialogue between you and your child when it comes to food? Give an example at:
6. To what extent you think that your child(ren) had influenced your food and foodways?
Appendix E: Parents Focus Group Questions

Post migration food changes

Engagement Questions:
- What is your favorite traditional meal from your country?
- How do you feel about not eating the same meal here in the US?

Exploration Questions:
- What are some of food and food habits that had changed since migrated to US?
  - How significant is the problem?
  - How you feel about it?
- “Food being an important instrument in maintaining the cultural identity of their families”. Think back over the past years or since you have migrated and tell me what are the things that you have done to maintain and protect this cultural identity with regard to food?
  - Have you struggled in maintaining this identity?
- What are some of the factor(s) that has/have influenced your food and foodways since you migrate to the United States? Write them down and then will talk about them.

Exit Question:
- Is there anything else you would like to say about food foodways changes after migration to US?

Feeding Practices

Engagement Questions:
- What you child favorite food?
- What do you do when you notice that your child does not eat his/her food?

Exploration Questions:
- When you decide to purchase/cook food for your child, what guides your decision? Take a piece of paper and jot down as much as you can the things that are important to you when you purchase/cook food to your child?
- What are some of those factors are practices are embodied in your culture when it comes to feeding your child?
- How those culturally shared beliefs and practices are demonstrated at home or any different settings (restaurants, relative house, school)?
  - Give me an example

Exit Question:
- Is there anything else you would like to say about shared practices with regard to feeding your child(ren)?
Appendix F: Food Survey

Food Survey Questionnaire

Dear Parents,

My name is Faisal Alkuzaaim and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of South Florida (USF). This food survey questionnaire is part of my work toward a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology here at USF. It will be sent to different Arab families here in Tampa. Taking this food survey questionnaire will help me in collecting data from my dissertation. So, I appreciate your time and effort to be part of my research study.

Most of what I want to know and understand circles around the following questions: what do Arab eat in the United States? How is Arabic food, preparation, cooking, and consumption changes from what it was from country of origin? What factors that led to those changes? How families adjust to those changes, and how important are they to Arab families?

There are 6 small sections in this survey. This questionnaire may take about 30-45 minutes to complete. The questionnaire can be answered by either an adult- Dad or Mom- in the household. However, I would appreciate if it was taken by the primary adult female of the house. For some questions, you may write the traditional food/meals/dishes in Arabic instead of English. If you have more than one child, please be specific on which child eat/like what food or dish. Once you are done with the survey, save it somewhere in your computer and resend it using the same email.

If you find a question difficult to answer, please contact me through my email at: falkhuzaaim@mail.usf.edu

Sincerely,
Researcher: Faisal Alkuzaaim
Section 1: Questions in this section are mainly about what typical meals in your household during weekdays and weekends are when you were in your home country

**Breakfast**
Before you came to the United States, what is typical breakfast in your household during the weekday and weekend in your home country?

Weekday:

Weekend:

**Lunch**
Before you came to the United States, what is typical lunch in your household during the weekday and weekend in your home country?

Weekday:

Weekend:

**Dinner**
Before you came to the United States, what is typical dinner in your household during the weekday and weekend in your home country?

Weekday:

Weekend:

Looking at the food or food habits you mentioned above when you were in your home country, what are the differences in those food and food habits now? For example, eating at different time, eating different food/drink, eating more/less with family or friends, children eat different food, eating more/less fruits, vegetables, or meat, etc.
Section 2: Groceries shopping

Who shops for groceries (you, spouse, you with children, spouse with children)?

How often is it necessary to do the groceries (every day, once every few days, once a week, etc.)?

What kind of things you buy at the stores? Please check the box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Arabic Store</th>
<th>Walmart</th>
<th>Publix</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary (milk, butter, milk, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils (hard or liquid oils)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains (pasta, rice, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In past years, the availability of halal food can be challenging sometimes due to the cost, accessibility, or other reasons. How did you overcome this issue when you came to the US?

What guide your decision when you buy, cook, prepare food? List as many factors as you like?
Section 3: Arabic food vs. American Food

Do you like certain American food? Yes ☐, No, ☐
If Yes, what are some of the American food that you like?

How often to make/cook/buy American food per week for you and your family?

What do you think are the main differences between American food and Arabic cooking?

What are the typical foods that come to your mind when you think about American food?

What are the typical foods that come to your mind when you think about Arabic food?

What do you think is more healthy: Arabic food or American food? Why?

What do you think is more convenient to make: Arabic food or American food? Why?
Section 4: Dinning out

How often does your family eat out?

How often do you buy takeout food for the family?

What are the non-Arabic food that you enjoy eating or/and cooking? (e.g. Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, Italian, names as many as you want)

Section 5: Children. This Section is mainly about what your children like or dislike with regard to food (if you have more than one child, please be specific on what each child’s food)

List some of the Arabic food that you are familiar with cooking.

Which of those Arabic foods above your children request to eat (you can write them in Arabic)?

Which of those Arabic foods that our children do not like to eat but you still make them for the family (you can write them in Arabic)?

Can you explain why, do you think that it is important to feed our children traditional food?
Section 6: Parents

What is the most important meal of the day for you? Explain.

List some of the food that you have continued eating since you came to the US.

List new foods since you have come to the US.

List some of foods you have not eaten anymore since you came to the US because they are not available or you cannot cook them (you can write them in Arabic).

End of Food Survey…
Appendix G: Child Focus Group Guidelines

Good morning. My name is Faisal Alkhuzaim, and I am a college student from the University of South Florida. I want to thank you for coming to talk about the food that you like and dislike. I also hope to learn how you would react to certain foods around your parents. This study is part of my homework for my school, so I really appreciate your help in being part of my education.

This focus group is a safe space where we can talk about this topic. I welcome all your responses, and we’d like to ask everyone to respect the person who is speaking. Here, there is not right or wrong answers.

I want you to know that this will be recorded, but nobody will listen to this recording except me. Is everyone okay if I record this session? Please answer one at a time, since this will help me to record your answers more clearly.

Your responses will not be repeated outside of this room. We encourage everyone to speak freely and share their thoughts. Please use those tag names and write your name. This will help us remember your names. If you prefer not to use your real name, you can use a different one.

In case you have to go the bathroom, please step out and then quickly return to our fun discussion. We don’t want you to miss any of our activities.

There are some drinks and snacks. Feel free to get something to eat or drink at any time during the discussion.

Ok. Do you any questions before we start?

Let’s begin!
## Appendix H: Focus Group Question Route

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Question</td>
<td>Before we begin the focus group questions, first I’d like you all to introduce yourselves and tell me what your favorite food or restaurant is.</td>
<td>1–2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Question 2</td>
<td>What kind of foods do you like? Everyone take a marker and write them down on this sheet that I gave you. Those foods could be anything from a meal, like pizza, <em>mansaf</em>, or <em>harira</em>, to a single item, like a banana. Let’s talk what you have wrote down.</td>
<td>10–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 1</td>
<td>If we look at everyone food list, we eat different food. What do you think are some of the reasons why we eat differently?</td>
<td>1–2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 2</td>
<td>Can you think of other reasons of why we eat differently? Probe: Does family tradition have anything to do with our preferences?</td>
<td>1–2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Question 2.1</td>
<td>Let’s look one of the vignettes that I brought with me today. I want two volunteers to participate in a role-playing scenario. One of you should be the parent and the other one should be yourself. Vignette #1 Setting: dinner table With whom: all household (family) members Occasion: dinnertime Food: something you dislike You don’t like the food. What is a possible conversation between you and your parents? What would you say to them? What would your parents say? Would anyone else would have the same conversation or not? If not, what would the conversation be like?</td>
<td>5–7 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Engaging Question 2.2 | Let’s look at another vignette. I want two more volunteers to participate in a role-playing scenario. One of you should be the parent and the other one should be yourself.  
Vignette #2  
Setting: grocery shopping  
With whom: one parent (either mom or dad)  
Occasion: buying some groceries for the family.  
Food: food for yourself  
You want to buy a food item (it does not matter what type of food; it could be anything) for yourself. Describe how you would ask your parent to buy this food for you.  
Would anyone else would have the same conversation or not? If not, what would the conversation be like? | 4-6 minutes |
| Key Question 3 | Now I want to you to think back to the last time your parents decided for you what to eat. What was the food? Where was the food eaten, and with whom? Did you like the food? If you did not like the food, what did you say to your parents? | 2–4 minutes |
| Engaging Question 3 | Let’s say your family gives you a task to do. You’re in charge of making a one-day menu for your whole family. What would be in that menu?  
How would your family react to the menu? What are some of the reasons that you picked this food/meal over other food/meals?  
Do you think your family would like it? Why? | 10–13 minutes |
| Key Question 4 | Looking at his food menu, do you think that you have changed your parents normally eats back home? | 3-5 minutes |
| Ending Question | Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything else you wanted to add to our discussion? Do you think we have missed any important topics? | 3–4 minutes |

Total 40-60 minutes
Appendix I: Food Menu Example

Today, I am The BOSS

What’s for Breakfast
"Baba's Special" (Potatoes with eggs"
Greens with Tomatoes
Arabic bread
Turkey bacon

What’s for Lunch
Corn
Macaroni Bashamal
Brisket

What’s for dinner?
Sushi
Fried Rice
Egg rolls
Crabmeat

Name: [Redacted]
Age: 12
## Appendix J: Examples of the School Food Cafeteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beef chunks stew with peas, corn, and carrots. Plain yogurt, rice, and Salad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken alfredo with rice and peas. With salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish sticks with mac and cheese. Salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground beef with corn and peas. Plain Yogurt, rice and salad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloppy Joe sandwich, with Red beans and Salad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef salad, with cheddar cheese, corn, and chips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken tenders, corn, kidney beans Salad, and Mash potato.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix K: Quantitative Survey**

Question 1: I believe that I **ALWAYS** response and/or satisfy my child request about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>At great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anything in general.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>food that he/she wants to eat for lunch or dinner at home</td>
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<tr>
<td>food that he/she wants to eat when dining-out as a family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>food for the next day’s lunch or dinner</td>
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<td>food or snack to buy from the store</td>
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<tr>
<td>preparing lunch box for school</td>
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<tr>
<td>food to eat at school as a snack</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food to eat at home as a snack</td>
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<tr>
<td>making different food than what everyone is eating for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>making special meal just for him/her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>making something similar to what they eat at fast food restaurants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>eating something like their friend at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>cooking traditional food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>cooking American food</td>
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<tr>
<td>requesting something that they have seen on TV commercials.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q2: I believe that I **ALWAYS** demand my child to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>At great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finish his/her food</td>
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<tr>
<td>help me setting up the dinner table</td>
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<tr>
<td>help me preparing the food</td>
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<tr>
<td>help me in cooking the meal</td>
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<td>pray before eating “say besmellah”</td>
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<tr>
<td>not let any food left in his/her plate</td>
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<tr>
<td>not eat snacks without my knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>help me cleaning up the dish/table</td>
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<tr>
<td>make something for himself/herself if they did not like the food I made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>serve himself/herself whatever food at the table</td>
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<tr>
<td>finish his/her food before asking for more.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to food, what are other situations that you ask/demand (or not) your child to do it?
Q3: To what extent the following factors have impacted your food and food habits after migrations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>financial/economic reasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>number of children</td>
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<tr>
<td>spouse food requests</td>
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<tr>
<td>preparing food as family</td>
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<td>job commitments</td>
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<tr>
<td>child food request</td>
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<tr>
<td>child’s role in food cooking and preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>family meals (eating together)</td>
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<tr>
<td>preparing/cooking food as family</td>
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<tr>
<td>spouse’s role in food cooking and preparing</td>
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<tr>
<td>price of Arabic restaurants</td>
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<tr>
<td>price of Arabic Grocery stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>availability of the ingredients</td>
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<tr>
<td>availability of halal food <em>(diblihab only)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>accessibility of fresh food and meat</td>
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<tr>
<td>accessibly of traditional grocery stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>not familiar with the host food (USA)</td>
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<td>the quality of food in general</td>
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<tr>
<td>the quality of meat <em>(diblihab or not)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>my child food preferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>my spouse food preferences</td>
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<td>my spouse health status</td>
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<tr>
<td>my child health status</td>
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<tr>
<td>taste and quality of Arabic restaurants</td>
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<td>religious gathering (Ramadan, ‘Eid, etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>community gathering</td>
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<tr>
<td>eating not <em>diblihab</em> food</td>
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<tr>
<td>child request of unfamiliar food</td>
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<td>life style (time constrains)</td>
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<td>Factor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>the number of Arabic stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>English fluency</td>
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<tr>
<td>length in the United States (long)</td>
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<td>cooking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>eats whatever the child wants</td>
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<tr>
<td>cook whatever the child wants without asking the head of house (spouse) first.</td>
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<tr>
<td>not cooking from scratch</td>
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</table>

What other factors have impacted your food and foodways after migration that was not mentioned above?
Q4: To what extent you believe that … has shaped your child's choices/preferences regarding food?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>At great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
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<tr>
<td>parent’s food restriction</td>
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<tr>
<td>relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.)</td>
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<td>number of children (family size)</td>
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<td>rank of your child among siblings</td>
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<td>age</td>
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<tr>
<td>gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>your culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>community</td>
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<td>child’s school environment</td>
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<td>child’s peers and friends</td>
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<td>media or TV</td>
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<tr>
<td>host culture (USA)</td>
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</table>

Please add anything you would like to share regarding about other factors that you think had shaped your child's choices/preference regarding food.
Q5: I believe that child’s choices/preference with regard to food…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>At great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is a privilege in my culture</td>
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<td>is a skill</td>
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<td>varies based on culture</td>
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<td>varies based on gender</td>
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<td>varies based on age</td>
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<td>varies based on family values</td>
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<tr>
<td>varies based on family social-economic status</td>
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<td>essential for child development</td>
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<tr>
<td>can be constructed/built through child’s food experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>can be constructed/built through the child’s family interactions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>can be constructed/built through school and education</td>
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<td>can be constructed/built through society interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>can be constructed/built through your own culture</td>
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Additional Comments:
Q6: I believe that my child has…

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>At great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>changed the way I eat after I came to the US.</td>
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<tr>
<td>changed the kinds of food that I normally eat in my home country</td>
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<tr>
<td>changed the kinds of food that I normally cook/eat in my home country</td>
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<td>changed the way I cook food in general</td>
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<tr>
<td>changed some of my food because I had to modify the recipe for him/her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduced me to cook or eat new food that I am not familiar with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>changed the priority of whom should I cook for comparing to back home country</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduced me to cook or eat new food that I am not normally cook or eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>requested me to cook new food that he/she have tasted at school</td>
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<tr>
<td>requested me to cook new food that he/she have tasted at relative house</td>
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<tr>
<td>requested me to cook new food that he/she have seen on TV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>requested me to cook new food that he/she have tasted at friend’s house.</td>
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Additional Comments:
Q7: I am aware that my food and food habits have NOT changed since coming to the US because of

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strong Community connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>my child school activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>my culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>my religion</td>
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<td>my cooking skills</td>
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<td>being strict of eating only traditional food</td>
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<tr>
<td>being strict of eating only halal food ($dhibiḥab$ only)</td>
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<td>being flexible of eating not $dhibiḥab$</td>
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<tr>
<td>my child food request (child’s choices/preference)</td>
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<tr>
<td>familiarity with the host food (USA) before migration</td>
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<td>consumption of host food before migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>cooking of host food before migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>attending community events</td>
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</table>

Please add anything you would like to share regarding other factors that you think had helped you in not changing your food and foodways post migration.