THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE FOOD CHOICE PROCESS AND DIETARY PRACTICES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Angela Mable Odoms was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 20, 1968. She grew up on the southeast side of the city with her mother and father, a sister, and a host of extended family. After graduating high school, Angela left Chicago to attend college at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) where she received a Bachelor's degree in foods and nutrition. Her experience with cancer research at UIUC led her to pursue a graduate degree in nutritional biochemistry at Cornell University.

At Cornell, Angela became more aware of the social and behavioral factors of that influence nutritional status and health. Hence, after spending a year and a half in the graduate program in nutritional biochemistry, she changed her focus to community nutrition. For her Master's project she used a naturalistic paradigm to examine the factors that impact food related risks. After the data was collected for her Master's project, Angela moved to Rochester, N.Y. to work on a study with Dr. Carol Devine, Associate professor in the Division of Nutritional Sciences, exploring dietary beliefs of three generations of African-American women.

In 1995, while in Rochester, she took the position as outreach coordinator for the Congregation Healthy Heart Action Partnership, a church-based heart disease prevention project administered by the Monroe County Health Department. This project stimulated her interest in the relationship between religion and health and led her to pursue her dissertation study on the dietary practices of African-American Muslim women.

Angela currently lives in Chicago and works as a research specialist in the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She plans to continue working in the area of community nutrition.

To my ancestors, my family, and my friends

Thank you for the presence of your inspiration and support

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

African Americans' experience excess morbidity and mortality from a number of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and various types of cancers (NCHS, 1996). Although the exact causes of these conditions are difficult to determine, studies suggest that high chronic disease rates in African Americans are linked to certain ethnic dietary patterns (Kumanyika, 1993). Several interventions targeting African Americans have encouraged dietary change for primary and secondary disease prevention. (Agurs et al, 1997; Domel et al., 1992). Intervention programs that have shown positive results encouraging healthy eating behaviors in African American populations illustrate that nutrition education can reduce risk factors associated with chronic disease (Kumanyika, 1997).

Nevertheless, nutrition interventions focused on African Americans have shown little success. The December 1995 issue of the Journal of Nutrition Education was dedicated to a comprehensive review of literature on the effectiveness of nutrition education and its implications for nutrition policy, programs, and research (Contento et al., 1995). Based on their findings, authors indicated that special attention needs to be paid to African Americans and other ethnic groups who have disproportionate levels of risk factors for disease but for whom standard nutrition programs have had a limited effect. To improve nutrition education, it was recommended that more research be conducted to understand the "motivations, concerns, and meanings that food has for different populations." Similarly, Helman (1990) maintained that

before dietary beliefs and practices can be modified it is important to first understand the way each culture views and classifies its food. Thus, to design and implement appropriate nutrition education programs for African Americans, nutrition researchers must attempt to identify and understand how cultural values guide food selection, as well as the contexts in which decisions about food are made.

Religion has historically played a major social and political role in the African American community (Wilmore, 1986). While the ability of religion to improve health status has been demonstrated in a number of populations, studies in this area have focused on African-American elders in particular (Ellison and Levin, 1998). Although a major emphasis of this research has been the association between religion, mental health and general well-being, evidence suggests that religion can improve physical health status by recommending dietary, alcohol consumption, and smoking behaviors that reduce the risk to chronic disease (Levin and Vanderpool, 1989; Jarvis and Northcott, 1987). Examining the role of religion in dietary practices may provide insight into how aspects of culture can positively influence food choice.

The current study was undertaken to explore the relationship between religious culture and food choice in a religious subgroup of African Americans. Using a constructivist approach, this study employed grounded theory methodology to gain a clearer understanding of the role of Islam in the food choice process and dietary practices of African American Muslim Women.

Over the course of two years, in-depth interviews concerning Islamic dietary practices and beliefs were conducted with 22 African-American Muslim women residing in Upstate New York. Numerous observations and informal conversations were also conducted with members from the larger Islamic community to determine the environmental context in which the women's food decisions were made.

This document presents a discussion of the methodology and major findings related to the research study. Within Chapter Two, doctrine describing the recommendations and requirements of Sunni Muslims are discussed. Chapter Three presents a review of the relevant literature and theory related to African American dietary practices, Islam, religion and food choice. A description of the research approach and methodology is presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five describes the results of the study, specifically emergent themes and categories and a theoretical framework concerning food choice and eating practices of the women in the study. In Chapter Six, the main findings are discussed in the context of the literature. Lastly, implications and future research directions are presented in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER TWO:
BACKGROUND
SUNNI ISLAM BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

This chapter describes recommended and required practices in Islam. Although African American Muslims have a unique history (See Appendix A), just as all Sunni Muslims, they follow the Koran (the revelations received by Mohammed), the Sunnah (the actions and sayings of Mohammed), and the Islamic Shariah (the law of Islam).

2.1. General Islamic Beliefs

The religion of Islam is based on a series of revelations received by the Prophet Mohammed who was born in Mecca, Arabia in 570 A.D (Burke, 1996). According to Islamic tradition, the archangel Gabriel appeared instructing Mohammed that he was to be a messenger of the one true God (Allah). First occurring in 610 AD, these revelations continued for over two decades. Collected after Mohammed's death, the revelations were combined in the Koran, the Sacred book of Islam (Dawood, 1993).

Although in the Western Hemisphere, Islam has historically been refereed to as Mohammedanism, Mohammed's message is reported to be synonymous with other prophets in the Semitic tradition, including Moses and Jesus (Dawood, 1993). Mohammed is seen as neither messiah nor savior but as the prophet to whom God made his final revelation.

Similar to Judaism and Christianity, Islam represents life through concepts of God, creation, revelation, law, and judgment. Burke (1996, p. 5) indicates that religions of Semitic origin share several fundamental concepts:

> There is a single divine being, personal in nature, which has created the world as a reality distinct from himself. Religion begins not with man's need, but with a revelation from this God, who gives the law. [The law] must govern men's relations with God and with one another; A law in which justice occupies an especially prominent place. Men will be judged by God on their obedience to this Law

Although the Semitic religions share a common philosophy, Muslims believe that the Koran was revealed because Jews' and Christians' distorted God's original teachings. Islam accuses these earlier religions of disobeying God's commandments, corrupting the scriptures, establishing sects, and deviating from "pure" monotheism (Dawood, 1993). As a result, Muslims indicate that Mohammed received revelations to guide people back to the true path of God.

The Koran is not the only basis for Islamic belief. Although Mohammed is not viewed as divine, for Muslims his life represents the highest example of moral behavior. Thus, reports of Mohammed's life, known as the Sunnah, are also used for religious guidance. The Sunnah, translated literally as "a traveled path", are described extensively and authenticated in narratives called hadith. Produced in the third century of the Islamic era, ahadith (plural for hadith) are named after the scholars who collected them. Although various ahadith exists, Muslim scholars consider six collections to be the most authentic: Sahih al Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Daud, Jami'al Tirmaidhi, Sunan al Nasa', and Sunan Ibn Majah. Each hadith consists of two parts; isnad, the line of authorities through whom the Sunnah has been translated, and the matn, the prophetic tradition (Lang, 1995).

Both the Koran and Sunnah were used to derive the Shari'ah, comprehensive Islamic law. The Shari'ah provides guidance for all aspects of Muslim life, including marriage, family, finances, and government. As described by Yusuf Al Qaradawi (1990, p.6) in "The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam":

> [The Islamic Shari'ah] aims to simplify and ease the business of day to day living. Its principles are designed to protect man from evil and to benefit him in all aspects of his life...they are designed to benefit everyone in the community-the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled, the men and the women-as well as to benefit the whole of humanity throughout out the earth in various countries and climes, with its multitude of grouping, and in every period of time throughout succeeding generations.

2.1.1. Articles of Faith and Five Pillars of Islam

In Islam, any form of polytheism is explicitly rejected including the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Ascribing partners to God is viewed as an insult to God's absolute supremacy. The oneness of God, is the first of six fundamental Islamic beliefs called the Articles of Faith (Burke, 1996; Khattab, 1993):

1. Belief in the oneness of Allah
2. Belief in all of the prophets
3. Belief in the Angels
4. Belief in the revealed books/scriptures.
5. Belief in the resurrection and the last judgment
6. Belief in divine ordinance or predestination

In addition to the six basic beliefs, Muslim are required to adhere to five religious practices called the five pillars of Islam (Burke, 1996; Khattab, 1993):

1) Profession of Faith (Shahadah): To become Muslim, each believer is required to bear witness that "there is no God but Allah; and Mohammed is his last messenger".

2) Prayer (Salat): All Muslims are obligated to performed ritual or formal prayer five prescribed times per day: at dawn, midday, midafternoon, sunset, and evening. Although the mosque is the preferred location for prayer, prayers can be perform in any clean place (indoors or outdoors). On Friday, the sacred day in Islam, Muslim men are required to perform afternoon congregational prayer at the mosque.

3) Charity (Zakat): Muslims are required to provide for those in need by paying a special tax at the end of each year called Zakat. The rate is 2.5% of yearly earnings and is paid to and distributed by the mosque attended.

4) Fasting (Sawn): Muslims who are physically able are required to fast one month out of the year. The fast occurs during the month Ramadan and includes refraining from food, drink, and sex from sunrise to sunset. However, there is no

limitation is placed on these things after sunset. At the end of the month of fasting, Muslims observe the one of two Islamic holidays or feast days, 'Eid al Fitr. Celebrations commonly consist of large citywide congregational prayers where gifts are given.

5) Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj): Every Muslim is required to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the site of pre-Islamic worship of Allah. Only Muslims are allowed to enter into the city. The pilgrimage is performed for four days during the twelfth month of the Islamic year. At the end of the Hajj, Muslims throughout the world celebrate the completion of the pilgrimage with a day of feasting, Eid al Azha (festival of sacrifice).

2.2. Dietary Requirements and Recommendations

According to the Koran, all behaviors that are considered lawful by God are termed halal whereas practices that are prohibited are referred to as haram. Islam has a number of basic principles that guide the differences between halal and haram dietary behaviors (Table 3.1) (Al-Qaradawi, 1990; Uddin, 1994).

In general, Islamic dietary laws specify foods and dietary practices that are prohibited or proscribed in Islam. The Koran explicitly indicates that certain foods are strictly forbidden. For example, chapter 6, surah 145 in the Koran indicates:

> I find not in the message received by me by inspiration any meat forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat of it, unless it be dead meat, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine, for it is

> an abomination, -or what is impious, (meat) on which a name has been invoked other than God's.

As illustrated in this surah, meat is a major focus of Islamic food prohibitions. Muslims are restricted from eating dead animals, blood, swine, and meat on which a name other than God has been invoked. Other dietary doctrine in the Koran and Sunnah focus on recommendations regarding alcohol, marine or sea animals, and appropriate ways of eating.

2.2.1. Meat of Dead Animals (Carrion)

In Islam, meat of animals or fowl, which experience death without being slaughtered, is considered unlawful. This includes animals that die by strangulation, a blow, a fall, being gored, or wild beasts (Sakr, 1993). Islamic scholars describe several reasons for this prohibition. First, it is believed that dead animals may have died of disease. Thus, eating the flesh of dead animals could have a harmful effect on health. Second, the acts of Muslims are supposed to be guided by intentions. Thus, he/she should not gain benefits from an act that is not intentional; as is the case when the animal is found dead and not slaughtered (Al-Qaradawi, 1990). Third, based on this prohibition people are encouraged to be kind to animals and protect them from harm (Sakr, 1993).

2.2.2. Blood

The consumption of flowing blood is also forbidden in Islam. It is reported that drinking blood can be injurious to health because blood has the potential to carry disease (Sakr, 1993).

2.2.3. Pork (Swine) and Pork Products

The prohibition of pork is explicitly stated in both the Koran and

Table 2.1 List of Principles that guide halal and haram dietary behavior.

1. Foods are considered to be halal unless specified in the Koran or Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed.

2. To make lawful and to prohibit is the right of Allah alone. Thus man can not make what is haram, halal or what is halal, haram.

3. Practices that are on the borderline between halal and haram should be avoided

4. For everything that is haram, there is a better substitute that is halal.

5. Forbidding halal and allowing haram is similar to associating partners with Allah as the pagans.

6. Things are prohibited because they are impure and harmful.

7. Whatever leads up to haram is also haram.

8. Falsely representing haram as halal is prohibited.

9. Good intentions do not make things that are haram acceptable.

10. What is haram is haram for everybody, including non-Muslims

11. In cases of constraint, haram is permissible within certain limits

Sunnah and has been widely discussed among both Islamic and non-Islamic scholars (Harris, 1985). The pork prohibition is based on perceptions of the pig being "unclean", "filthy", "diseased", and "dirty". It is reported that these characteristics make pork injurious to health (Sakr, 1993). For example, Muslims justify the pork prohibition using scientific findings that pigs carry harmful parasites such as trichinosis (Harris, 1985). Because of its nature, it is believed that eating the pig causes humans to take on animal-like characteristics and have a reduced sense of indecency and shame (Al-Qaradawi, 1990).

2.2.4. Animals Slaughter in a Name Other than Allah

In Islam, animals must be slaughtered in a prescribed manner. This way of slaughtering is conducted to take the animal's life in the quickest and least painful way possible. The process involves slitting the front neck from vein to vein and draining the blood completely before the head is removed. In addition to being considered halal, meat that has been properly slaughtered is referred to as "zabiha". Muslims recite God's name over the animal during slaughtering to seek permission from God. In the time of Mohammed, mentioning the name of God during slaughtering differentiated Muslims from Arab polytheists who would invoke the names of idols when sacrificing animals (Al-Qaradawi, 1990). The Koran gives special consideration to Christians and Jews who are referred to as "people of the book". Muslims are allowed to eat meat that has been slaughtered by Christians and Jews as long as long as a name other than God's (e.g. Jesus) has not been mentioned over the animal during slaughtering (Uddin, 1994).

2.2.5. Alcohol

The prohibition of alcohol is described in detail in the Sunnah. It is indicated that alcohol is not only unlawful to drink but also to distribute and sell. For example, in the Sunnah, Mohammed's companion reported that he said:

> God's curse falls on ten groups of people who deal with alcohol. The one who distills it, the one for who it has been distilled, the one who drinks it, the one who transports it, the one to whom it has been brought, the one who serves it, the one who sells it, the one who utilizes the money from it, the one who buys it and the one who buys it for someone else (Sakr, 1993, p. 48).

Alcohol is believe to be forbidden in Islam because it causes destructive behaviors, inhibits ability to remember God, interferes with performing daily prayers, and makes believers similar to the unbelievers (Sakr, 1993). Although many Islamic scholars report that alcohol is clearly prohibited, it is allowed by some Islamic schools of thought (i.e. Hanafi) based on beliefs that it is actually intoxication not alcohol that is forbidden (Raham, 1987).

2.2.6. Marine or Sea Animals

The Koran and the Sunnah report that all marine animals are halal whether they are found living or dead. According to the Sunnah, Mohammed indicated that "the water is pure and clean, and the dead seafood is halal." (Sakr, 1993).

2.2.7. Recommended Eating and Dietary Behaviors

Mohammed's dining practices are extensively described in the Sunnah. Although not mandatory, Muslims are encouraged to emulate the behavior of Mohammed. According to the Sunnah, Mohammed never ate at a "dining table" but took his meals on a "leather dining sheet" (Sahih Bukhari, Book 65

Vol 7). Mohammed's followers also reported that he instructed believers to eat and drink with their right hand and not to eat until satisfied. For example, overeating is viewed as being greedy like unbelievers:

> A man used to eat much, but when he embraced Islam, he started eating less. That was mentioned to the Prophet who then said, "A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with little food) and a Kafir (disbeliever) eats in seven intestines (eats much) (Sahih Bukhari, Book 65, vol 7).

CHAPTER THREE:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Within this chapter a review of the relevant literature will be presented. The first section of this chapter includes a description of the general food choice literature and studies focused on food choice of African Americans and Muslims. The chapter concludes with a description of the relevant research concerning the relationship between religion, diet, and health.

3.1. General Food Choice Literature

Food choice has been shown to have major implications for nutritional status and health (Axelson, 1986). Factors that guide eating behaviors of individuals and groups have been explored in a variety of disciplines including sociology, psychology, nutrition, economics, and anthropology.

Early studies by researcher Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1943, 1951) provided a foundation for current studies of food choice. Lewin proposed that the reasons "why people eat what they eat" can be found in how food comes to the table (Mcintosh and Zey, 1989). According to Lewin's "channel theory", food comes to the table through channels such as the grocery store and the refrigerator. The "gatekeeper" selects the channels and the foods that travel through them. Based on Lewin's studies, he identified the gatekeeper as the housewife. In his view, the housewife is viewed as controlling most channels with the exception of possibly the gardening channel and children are believed to only influence food decisions by rejecting or accepting the food put before them (Sanjur, 1982). The psychological forces that influence the movement of food may be different from channel to channel (Sanjur, 1982). Lewin identified four frames

of reference that gatekeepers use in choosing food: taste, health, social status, and cost.

Although Lewin's research has been viewed as significant to the study of food-choice, his gatekeeper concept was later criticized. Other researchers indicated that though women are commonly responsible for food purchasing, preparation, and storage in the family, responsibility is not necessarily equivalent to control. Husbands have been shown to have authority over foodways due to control over financial resources, through conflicts resulting from dissatisfaction with wife's food behavior, and through wife's desire to please and meet caretaking role (Mcintosh and Zey, 1989; Devine and Olson, 1992).

Subsequently, several approaches describing food behaviors emerged largely from the field of anthropology. Structuralist approaches, particularly those of Levi-Strauss (1966), Douglas (1972,1984), and Barthes (1961) proclaimed that a variety of human food habits can be attributed to differences in culture (Murcott, 1988). Meanings associated with food and eating are perceived to be based on their symbolic significance. Whereas the nutritional value of food may be similar, culturally food can represent differences in status, wealth, or occasion (Murcott, 1988).

Levi-Strauss (1966) developed what he termed the "culinary triangle" to explain the universality of principles that govern human food consumption, preparation, and preservation. Using the tenets of raw, cooked, and rotten, Levi-Strauss indicated that though food availability varies in different parts of the world, similarities exist in the ways different cultures think about food. He argued that all people classify what they eat into different categories to be

prepared or eaten in different ways, at different times, and for different reasons (Murcott, 1988).

In contrast to Levi-Strauss, Douglas' work focused less on universal explanations and concentrated more on specific aspects within social systems and social significance that govern food and eating. Ranging from an analysis of religious dietary taboos to studies of food in American communities, Douglas proclaimed that food is used to signal people's relationships to objects, other people, and their own bodies (Douglas, 1972; Douglas, 1984; Murcott, 1988). She argued that food systems should be considered in the context of other family systems and that food practices are one part of an individual's total cultural experience (Murcott, 1988).

The structuralist approach has been criticized for relying primarily on personal experience or anecdotal reports, ignoring many of the practical aspects of food consumption, and disregarding interactions between culture and nature (Murcott, 1988). Developmentalist, Marvin Harris (1985) rejected semiotic and symbolic explanations and offered cultural materialist constructions based on economic and ecological utility (Counihan and Esterik, 1997). In his book "Good to Eat", Harris described how the prohibition of pork in Judaism and Islam emerged due to changes in human population growth and the availability of certain plant foods. Pig avoidance resulted because pork consumption no longer fulfilled its "ecological niche" (Simmons, 1961). He advocated that the ecological niche theory is further supported by the fact that pig avoidance was somewhat universal among many cultural groups sharing similar environments including pagan, Moslem, Jewish, Southwest Asian, and ancient Egyptian societies (Simmons, 1961).

Rozin (1983) argued that human food selection is determined by a combination of biological factors, culture, and individual experience. Biological factors, including genetically based differences in taste sensitivity or metabolic characteristics, are viewed to set limits for food preferences whereas culture determines the possible set of food experiences and the information available about food. Within the confines of biology and culture, food choice of each individual is believed to be unique due to differences in family's interpretation of culture and specific food experience. However, Rozin and Fallon (1981) indicated that in studying food selection, three basic principles must be recognized:

1. Primary determinants of food selection operate well before any actual choice of food is made. Food availability, which is mediated by cultural, geographic and seasonal factors, is the major determinant of what choices will be made. Food options that are presented to the individual eater are further influenced by economic factors. In most cultures, certain individuals (usually females) play a special role in what is offered to other members of the family by selecting and preparing the foods to be served. Some members of any group most often the young and old have many of their food decisions made by others.

2. Food selection occurs in rich context. First, there is a temporal context, including life history, daily or weekly cycles (different foods being appropriate for different meals), as well as the local

context of the individual meal. Second, there is the social context of food choice. Food a moral and social significance and food choices may change as a function of the social situation. Finally there is a set of available alternatives. What is eaten, or whether to eat are largely a function of the food alternatives and the relative attractiveness of available activities or objects unrelated to food.

3. Multiple factors are involved in the motivation of food choice. Preferences and likes of any particular individual can be motivated in different ways. Thus, a number of different processes can lead to development of liking any food.

Researchers in both anthropology and sociology have explored the role of food in mediating group relationships. An emphasis is placed on how food differentiates between groups and reflects social status within groups (Goode et al, 1984). Foodways serve to affirm ethnic identity within a group while providing a means of identifying and excluding outsiders.

A major focus of these studies has been understanding the symbolic significance of food and the importance of cultural communities in shaping food habits. Eating is viewed as more than a behavior to obtain nutrients, but as a means of expressing beliefs, beliefs, relationships, and ambitions (Singer, 1984). Singer (1984) studied the meaning of eating in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the role of food enculturation in the religious conversion process. Upon conversion, Krishna devotees were required to

completely abandon and restructure past behaviors. Singer found that as the conversion process progressed, the meaning of food was transformed into a symbol of worship and religious commitment.

Food symbolism was also significant in the conversion of individuals to vegetarianism. Beardsworth and Keil's (1992) interviews with 76 vegetarians emphasized the role of ethical considerations in food selection. Vegetarian typology ranged from least strict (occasional meat consumed) to most strict (only vegetable derived products consumed). Similar to religious conversion, study participants converted to vegetarianism through a gradual process or in response to a distressful or disgusting experience. Social interactions with family and friends served both as a catalyst for vegetarian conversion and as a barrier to change. Motivations for embracing vegetarianism were moral, health-related, gustatory, and ecological (Beardsworth and Keil 1992).

Sociologist, McIntosh (1996, p. 24) indicated that food serves to maintain social differentiation in culturally and economically diverse societies. He suggests that dietary complexity varies with the nature and degree of ethnic group incorporation into the dominant society:

> Complete assimilation [of diverse dietary practices] would mean the disappearance of each group's own cuisine. Complete separation would mean the ghettoization of cuisine. Under more pluralistic circumstances while each group maintains many of its customs, the more tolerant atmosphere encourages a greater participation of out-groups in an in-group's cultural practices. Thus, for example, in a situation of complete assimilation, no ethnic restaurants would exist; there would only be restaurants reflecting the dominant group's culinary heritage. Under complete separation, each ethnic group would maintain its own set of restaurants, serving its own cuisine with little patronage by non-members. Under greater pluralism, a greater variety of restaurants would be frequented by all"

Although many nutrition studies focus on individual food intake and preferences, sociologists argue that individuals are rarely free from social mediation in making food choices (Goode et al, 1984). Most food intake is performed in social situations where individual decisions are constrained by social codes and others' beliefs and actions regarding food. Certain cultural food systems within households regulate major food decisions at the individual level by "determining how food rules will be performed, by whom they will performed and in the cultural socialization of children" (Goode et al, 1984).

Brown and Mussell (1984) reported that researchers studying foodways must not only explore how societal and political structures shape personal or group food choice but also the availability of goods from which those choices can be made. Weber (1968) implicated the role of what he calls "life chances" in lifestyle behaviors or "life choices" (Cockerham et al, 1997). Personal or group food choices are indicated to be greatly influenced by the food available. Weber indicated that economic stratification and distribution of resources influence the quality and quantity of foods obtained. For example, food practices commonly associated with a certain ethnicity may actually be the result of limited access due to socioeconomic status (Mcintosh, 1996).

Other researchers have also identified factors that influence food choice. Krondl and Lau (1978) proposed a model of "food selection determinants" including cultural, social, personal, and environmental factors which may serve as a barrier between food consumption and the food supply. Krondl and Lau described nine factors that can influence individual food

selection: satiety, tolerance, taste, familiarity, health belief, prestige, and knowledge. Based on their studies, Krondl and Lau (1982) further concluded that individual food choice is influenced by societal factors, specifically those affecting availability and access. They stated that food use is not only governed by the financial resources but also the time, skills, and facilities available for food storage and preparation.

Randall and Sanjur (1981) reported similar food choice factors in their study of fruit and vegetable intake and beliefs. Their study of a group of women in upstate New York revealed that cooking skills, nutrition instruction, usual meal pattern, and method of preparation influences fruit and vegetable preferences and consumption.

Using a constructionist orientation and qualitative research methods, Furst, et al (1996). designed a model, which demonstrated the impact of life course on food choice. The model indicates that several "influences" on the food choice process including beliefs, personal factors, resources, social framework, and food context are generated during a person's life course. Influences helped to shape the individual's personal system for making food choices. Personal systems develop over time and mainly consisted of a negotiation of values. Values, which consisted of taste, price, health/nutrition, time/convenience, managing relationships, and quality, were derived from prevalent influences over the life course. Individuals used their personal system to negotiate within the larger food system.

Devine et al. (1998) also found that fruit and vegetable intake was influenced by past life-course events and experiences. Using qualitative methods, Devine et al. found that development of "food choice trajectories"

were affected by life experiences such as early food experiences (e.g. growing food); role transitions (e.g. childbearing, marriage); health and physical well-being (e.g. acute and chronic illness); ethnic traditions and identities (e.g. strength of that identification); resources (e.g. knowledge, financial capabilities); location (e.g. region); and the larger food and nutrition system.

3.2. Food Choice and Islam

Although many researchers have focused on religious dietary requirements (Shatenstein and Ghadirian, 1998; Chaudry, 1992; Fieldhouse, 1986; Harris, 1985), few have explored the factors that influence their implementation in daily life. Murphy (1985) conducted an ethnographic investigation exploring the meaning of food to North Indian Muslims in Delhi. Murphy found that handling and eating of food are important ways Muslims show submission to God. Islamic foodways were a metaphor for piety. He described how certain behaviors create distance from God, while others bring individuals closer to God. Results indicated that the Muslim food system followed the Shariah's (Islamic Law) principles of halal (lawful) and haram (unlawful). The categories of halal/haram were particularly concerned with meat which was the conceptual center of the food system (Murphy, 1985). In Murphy's study, Muslims believed that haram foods are unlawful because they are impure, thus impure foods are prohibited for consumption. Individuals avoided eating anything haram based on both its physical and spiritual effects. Consumption of Haram ki rozi ("forbidden substances), like haram foods were believed to cause spiritual degradation. Haram ki rozi consisted of foods that are naturally impure or haram and those that are treated as impure because they were obtain in a non-Islamic manner.

Consumption of these forbidden foods were believed to result in non-Islamic practices and conformity to dietary requirements was perceived to confirm human morality and self-control. It was believed that once closeness to God is reached, if the individual occasionally consumes an impure substance, piety will protect him/her from immoral behavior. Pious states are reached through overcoming the desires of physical gratification (nafs) such as through fasting and prayer (namaz). Closeness to God is also achieved by providing food to the poor. Charitable givers received rewards through favorable recognition of good deeds (barakat) by God.

Murphy (1985) reported that food also served as a symbol for identity. He found that in India, foodways generally are viewed as an important symbol of identity because of beliefs that food consumption affects a person's moral condition and behavior. These cultural beliefs were rooted in both Muslim and Hindu belief systems practiced in India (Murphy, 1985). Yet, although many of the components of the diet were similar, Muslims and Hindus perceived themselves and their dietary patterns as very different. Muslim distinguished their foodways using ingredients prohibited by Hindus (i.e. meat) and by unique preparation methods. A great importance was attached to the "Muslimness of food". One way Muslims distinguished themselves as Muslims was by eating food that differed from "Hindu food". Thus, Murphy concluded that the actual variations between foodways were less important than the fact that participants perceived food practices as their own.

3.3. Food Choice and African Americans

The literature that exists on the relationship between cultural factors and food choice in African Americans is greatly limited. Kumanyika (1985) indicated that African Americans can be characterized based on variations in dietary practices. Subgroups of possible interest included southern vs. non-southern born blacks, urban vs. rural, native-born vs. immigrant, and Christian vs. Muslim blacks. However, few studies have explored dietary habits by African American subgroup or the reasons behind these dietary differences. Much of the work related to the nutrition of African Americans has focused on describing food patterns or comparing their dietary behaviors and health status to that of the dominant group (Dacosta and Wilson, 1996; Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey, Warren, 1994). Although indicated by anthropologist Tony Whitehead (1984, p. 94) over ten years ago, the current research on African Americans food habits primarily considers, "what people eat, how much they eat, and what the biological consequences are, but not why people eat what they eat." The "why" is critical to our understanding of the relationship between food, culture, and health.

Different from other ethnic minorities in the U.S. (i.e. Asian, Hispanic, or Native American), African American dietary patterns are not directly linked with their country of origin but are associated more with the foods available during slavery and in the south (Airhihenbuwa et al. 1996; Kumanyika, 1985). Based on studies of African American Southerners, Whitehead (1992) concluded that although new foods and practices were introduced overtime, certain methods of food acquisition, food content, food responsibility, and food-related activities persisted among African Americans

since slavery. Characteristic foods patterns of African-Americans include inexpensive cuts of pork, dark leafy greens, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, and fried chicken (Sanjur, 1982). Common preparation styles involve frying, smothering and barbecuing meats, and use of black pepper, hot sauce, ham hocks, and salt pork for flavorings (Kittler and Sucher, 1996; Kumanyika, 1985; Sanjur, 1982). Studies have shown that Blacks as compared to Whites purchase and/or consume more pork, poultry, fruit drinks, and regular carbonated beverages but less bakery products, sugary products, dairy products, deep yellow vegetables, and coffee (LSRO, 1995; Axelson, 1986). However, some researchers have noted little difference in the so-called soul food diet of African Americans that originated in the south and the diet of Caucasian Southerners (Fitzgerald, 1979). Whitehead (1984) argued that actual dietary content is not important. The fact that two different cultural groups use the same foods and preparation styles is not as important as the different meanings associated with their foodways and their link to ethnic identity (Whitehead, 1984).

Jerome (1980) reported that the traditional diet of southern-born African Americans could be affected by northern migration. Studies of dietary acculturation in southern-born women in Milwaukee revealed changes in food sources, food preservation practices, use of commercially prepared foods, preparation methods, meal patterns, and traditional food beliefs (Jerome, 1969; 1980).

Adapting ecological models by Jerome and colleagues (1980) and de Garine (1971), Whitehead developed the Cultural Systems Paradigm which emphasized the foodways in sociocultural context of the historical process

(Whitehead, 1992). Similar to early functionalist traditions in anthropology, the Cultural Systems Paradigm advocates that certain food traditions exist to meet sociocultural, psychological, and biological needs (Whitehead, 1992).

In spite of the fact that other researchers have identified factors that influence food choice in African Americans, work in this area is greatly limited (Glanz et al., 1998; Airhihenbuwa et al., 1996; Bass, Owsley, and McNutt, 1985).

3.4. Religion, diet and, Health

Religion provides social and emotional support and serves as an avenue for many groups, particularly African Americans, to challenge aspects of their social and political environment (Wilmore, 1996). Despite its relevance, until recently, many disciplines outside of theology, tended to shy away from studying spiritual issues within the human experience (Stanfield, 1994). However, the importance of religion has recently emerged in the health intervention literature. Several church based intervention projects have been shown to be very effective in delivering health messages associated with heart disease and cancer in African American communities (Mittelmark et al., 1993; King, 1990) . Though many of these intervention programs focus on the social and structural benefits of the religious institutions, those that incorporated religious doctrine into health messages are limited.

Much of the research exploring the influence of religious/spiritual factors on diet and health has emerged within the fields of epidemiology, gerontology, and behavioral studies (Levin and Vanderpool, 1989). Much of the work in this area has been concerned with the impact of religion on well being and health in the elderly. In their review of the literature on

hypertension and religion, Levin and Vanderpool (1989) indicated that religions can influence health status by dictating health-protective regimens and govern lifestyle practices. Evidence suggests a direct association between religiously prescribed health behaviors and health outcomes (Levin and Schiller, 1987). Studies have shown reduced rates of chronic disease in several religious groups that have specific guidelines related to diet, alcohol, birth control, smoking, and sexual practices. In a review of the literature on cancer, Troyer (1988) found reduced rates of illness among groups which have doctrine related to diet, alcohol, and smoking behaviors including Seventh-Day Adventists, Amish, Hutterites, and Mormons. A similar advantage has been reported with respect to uterine cancer in Jewish, Mormon, Hutterite, Amish, Muslim, and Seventh-day Adventist women (Levin and Vanderpool, 1989).

Several religious groups have significantly different rates of hypertension and cardiovascular disease as compared to other populations (Levin and Vanderpool, 1989). Gopinath et al. (1995) found differences in coronary heart disease (CHD) rates in a random sample of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in Delhi. These researchers found that the prevalence of CHD on the basis of clinical history was lowest in Muslims as compared to the other groups.

The majority of studies that explore the relationship between religious practices and disease rates in African Americans have been conducted with the Seventh-day Adventists. Murphy et al. (1990) surveyed a sample of over 1,000 African American Seventh-day Adventists concerning health behaviors and health status. These African Americans reported lower rates of clinically

diagnosed diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol as compared to national rates for African Americans. Melby, Toohey, and Cebrick (1994) reported that the positive effect of religion on health outcomes in African American Seventh-day Adventists is influenced by the level of adherence to religious dietary recommendations. These researchers found significantly lower serum cholesterol and triglycerides levels in those African American Seventh-Day Adventists who practiced a vegetarian lifestyle as compared to those who did not. Thus, indicating that the protective effect of religion in African American Seventh-day Adventist may be the direct result of religious practices as compared to psychological well being.

3.5. African Americans, Religion and Islam

Although the majority of African American participate in Christian religions, Islam is has historically been a viable religious alternative within the African American community. Rapid growth in Islam over the past few years has made it the second largest religious group in the US. Growth in Islam has been attributed to the increasing immigration and conversion among African Americans. It has been reported that as great as 90% of all converts to Islam in the U.S. are Black, with many of the converts being former members of Christian churches (Tapia, 1994). Because of the diversity of Muslims groups in which African Americans participate, it is difficult to determine the exact number of African Americans that have embraced Islam. However, the African American Islamic population has been estimated by some researchers to be as large as 4 million (McCloud, 1995). The rapid rate of conversion has resulted in African Americans becoming the predominate ethnic group (42%) within the Muslim community in the U.S (McCloud, 1995). Some scholars

predict that if current rates of conversions continue, Islam will become the dominant religion in Black urban areas by the year 2020 (Tapia, 1994).

A limited amount of information has been written about the experiences of African American Sunni Muslims. Much of the literature on Sunni Islam has focused on African-American women (McCloud, 1995; Wadud-Muhsin, 1995; Dobie, 1991). Islamic scholar, Aminah Beverly McCloud (1995) indicated that since African-American women come to Islam from various educational, social, and economic backgrounds, understanding their previous life experiences gives insight into their life in Islam.

For many Sunni African American Muslims, the first contact with Islam was through movements where nationalism is focused. Conversion to Sunni Islam has presented new challenges for African American women because of possible conflict between current and previous social roles. For example, the image of the Muslim women as silent and submissive is in conflict with the traditional aggressive and vocal image of African American women (Hooks, 1993; McCloud, 1995).

McCloud (1995) indicated that even when African American women attempt to embrace the traditionalist view of females in Islam, different from many of their immigrant counterparts, economic factors can interfere their ability to maintain this image (McCloud, 1995). Different from many female Muslim immigrants, a long history of employment outside has been needed for African American women to survive economically. Geschwender and Carrol-Seguin, (1988), that in 1975, over half of African American women with their youngest child under 6 participated in the labor force. In 1988, the rate increased to 71.7%.

Based on interviews of African American Sunni Muslim women in New York City, Dobie (1991, p. 26) found that economic issues made it difficult for African American women to achieve their Islamic ideal:

> The popular image of Islam remains Middle Eastern; the women are ghostly figures -in purdah, in men's custody, publicly silent. The African American women I spoke to envisioned Islam differently finding in the same picture an image of women and children protected from violence and poverty. [They indicated], "according to the Koran, the women have no financial obligations to her family. She should be with her children." Though all but one of [the women] worked.

CHAPTER FOUR:
RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

4.1. The Research Objective

The objective of this investigation was to explore the relationship between social and cultural influences on food decisions and practices of African American Muslim women. This inquiry was guided by the two research questions:

1. How do religious doctrine, beliefs, values, perceptions, experiences, and attitudes influence food practices?

2. How do social and cultural contexts influence food beliefs and practices?

4.2. The Research Approach

The investigation was conducted utilizing a constructivist paradigm. The purpose of the constructivist approach is to explore the processes by which meanings are negotiated, sustained, and modified within a specific context of human action (Schwandt, 1994). In contrast to a conventional science approach, constructivist inquiry accepts that multiple realities exist. As indicated by Guba and Lincoln (1989), socially constructed realities result from an individual's attempt to make sense of their experiences. When instituting this paradigm, the aim of the researcher is to capture process, document variations, and explore important individual differences among experiences and outcomes. (Patton, 1990).

Although some quantitative methods can be used in constructivist inquiry, due to the nature of this approach qualitative methodology is usually the primary focus (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Since the human serves as the instrument of study, methods such as open-ended interviews, ethnography, focus groups, and participant observation allow individuals to express their self-defined reality in a holistic manner with limited manipulation.

Use of the constructivist paradigm was consistent with research goals in a variety of ways. First, constructivist inquiry can provide a more detailed understanding of individuals' thought processes by allowing them to report their own view of reality. The investigation is not limited by the researcher's conceptualization of the issues. Since the primary goal of this research was to gain a clearer understanding of the process the women used to construct their dietary decisions, it was essential that information be generated from the view of the participants. In addition, using a constructivist paradigm in this study was important because of the cross-cultural nature of the research and the limitation of the existing literature in this area.

Second, the constructivist paradigm assumes that meaning was developed and implemented in the context of a social and cultural system. Since dietary perceptions and behaviors are not constructed in isolation, within this investigation it is important to explore the context in which food decisions occur.

Whitehead (1984, p. 96) described the importance of using a holistic approach when studying cultural food practices:

> "Because meaning is contextual, the understanding of meaning necessitates the study of culture as a system. As such when food and food behavior take on meaning, as they do for all peoples, foodways become a part of a cultural system."

Third, the constructivist paradigm has been shown to be very effective in studying African Americans and other people of color because it allows participants to articulate holistic explanations about how they construct their realities (Stanfield, 1994, Azibo, 1992). Research indicates that people of color appear to view social, emotional, and spiritual characteristics as integral parts of a whole person and a link to their physical environment (Stanfield, 1994). Willis (1992, p. 268) summarizes four cultural characteristics which influence African American construction of perceptions that advocate using a constructivist approach:

1. Social/ Affective: people-oriented, emphases on affective domain, social interaction is crucial, social learning in common.

2. Harmonious: interdependence and harmonic/communal aspects of people and environment are respected and encouraged, knowledge is sought for practical, utilitarian, and relevant purposes, holistic approaches to experiences.

3. Expressive creativity: creative, adaptive, variable, novel stylistic, oral expression.

4. Nonverbal: nonverbal communication is important (intonation, body language, etc.), movement and rhythm components are vital.

4.3. Research Design

The research design for this investigation was guided by the approach described in Straus and Corbin (1990) for grounded theory development. Based on themes that emerge directly from the data, the purpose of the grounded theory approach is not to prove or confirm an existing theory but to formulate a theoretical interpretation of participants' reality. Guided by this

design, data analysis was conducted throughout the study and emergent hypotheses were used to guide subsequent data collection.

Individual interviews were selected as the primary methodology for this investigation because it allowed participants to express their views freely without being extensively restricted by the inquirer's preconceived definitions of dietary behavior. Secondary methods consisted of one focus group and numerous participant observations over a two-year period. The focus group, also allowed flexibility and was used to confirm and supplement information obtained in the interviews. Participant observations were employed to gain firsthand experiences about social and cultural networks that existed among individuals and groups within the community. Data generated from all collection methods were used to construct a theoretical model or "grounded theory".

4.4. Description of Research Site and Study Population

4.4.1. Research Site

Rochester, New York area was selected as the research site for this investigation. Located in Western, New York, Rochester has a population of approximately 1,002,410 persons with an estimated 93,000 being African Americans (U.S. Census, 1990). Approximately 40% of the African American women 25 years of age or older have not earned a high school diploma or higher and about 44% of the women 18 to 64 years of age have an income below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 1990). About 10% (11,000) of the population are Muslim (U.S. Census, 1990).

Rochester was selected as the research site for this investigation because of 1) the religious, economic and racial diversity in the city, 2) its close

proximity and convenient location to the researcher, and 3) its familiarity and relationships established by the researcher during a previous study.

4.4.2. Sample Selection and Procedures for Recruiting Participants

Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. The sampling frame was African-American women living in Rochester over 21 years of age who identified as themselves Muslim. Recruitment began in April 1996. The investigator made initial contact with the Muslim community by attending culturally related events in the Rochester area. Community leaders and activists, both Muslim and non-Muslim were used to provide information concerning recruitment locations and procedures, social networking, and contacting informants. Participants were recruited from three mosques in the Rochester area that had majority African American attendance. Although the remaining mosque had African-American attendees, the mosque population was primarily made up of Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants.

Potential participants were informed of the study in a variety of ways. Participants were initially recruited from two of the mosques with majority African-American attendance. Within these mosques the Imam (religious leader) gave permission and support to recruit study participants and conduct observations. The Imams' provided the researcher with a list of the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of women who participated in mosque activities. Participants from the remaining two mosques were identified by social networking and participant referral. Potential participants for the study were contacted by telephone or approached in person at mosque events. The researcher indicated that she was a student collecting data for a thesis project studying the process used by African-American Muslim women to make

decisions about food. Recruitment conversations consisted of an explanation of the overall project including the purpose of the study, topic, and expectations of both researcher and participant.

Because "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study", participants were selected to obtain diverse experiences, education levels, ages, and household compositions. To ensure recruitment of participants with a variety of perspectives, throughout the study participant characteristics were reviewed for social and demographic diversity. Thus, at various times during the study, African-American women with different characteristics and beliefs were targeted for inclusion in the study.

Recruitment and organization of the focus group was conducted by a Muslim woman who was very active in the Muslim community. Participants in the focus group were not apart of the main interview sample. Participant observations were conducted at all four of the mosques and other locations were Islamic events were held.

4.4.3. Participant Characteristics

A total of 22 African American Muslim women participated in the main data collection of the study. Table 4.1 presents a description of the women who participated in the main study. Demographic and social characteristics of participants in the focus group were similar (not presented). Approximately 77% of the sample was 45 years of age or younger. Only one participant was over 55 years at age 60.

Table 4.1 Demographic and Social Characteristics of 22 Study Participants

Characteristics	% of Participants (n)
Age	24-60 years of age
Marital Status	18 % (4) Single 60% (13) Married 26 % (5) Separated/Divorced
Children under 17	68% (15)
Single Parents	31% (7)
Employment	81% (17) Employed 4% (1) Inside home 18% (4) Retired/Disability/Housewife
Education	13% (3) High School or Less 60% (13) Post-High School 22% (5) 4-year Degree 4% (1) Post-College
Household Income	18% (4) Less than $10,000 18% (4) $10,000-$19,000 4% (1) $20,000-$29,000 30% (6) $30,000-$39,000 4% (1) $40,000-$49,000 13% (3) $50,000-$59,000 4% (1) $60,000 and above 9% (2) Missing
Islamic origin	64% (14) Converted 36% (8) Born Muslim
Ethnicity	96% (21) Southern Heritage 4% (1) Caribbean

4.4.3.1. Marital Status

The majority of the women in the sample (60%) were married at the time of the interview. Although in some cases polygamy is allowed in Islam, none of the women reported currently being in a polygamous marriage. Five of the women had been married previously and were divorced or separated. The remaining women (n=4) had never been married.

4.4.3.2. Children

Fifteen of the women (68%) had children under the age of 17. Of these, seven were single parents. The majority of these women lived alone with their children. Out of the women who had children, eight women in the sample had teenagers (ages 13-17), ten had young children (under 13); and five women had adult children.

4.4.3.3. Family

All of the participants who were born Muslim had at least one family member who was practicing Islam. All of these Islamic family members were either participants' parents or siblings. Of the participants who converted, about 20% had a Muslim family member. These Muslims family members were most commonly husbands, children, or siblings.

4.4.3.4 Religious/Spiritual History

The length of time participants had practiced Islam ranged from 1 ½ years to a lifetime. Eight of the women were born Muslim, of the other 14 participants, 12 were formerly Christian, one was a Jehovah's Witness, and one had had no formal religion. Nine participants first entered the Nation of Islam as adults and became Sunni during or not long after the mass

conversion of the movement in 1975. The remaining participants (20%) converted directly to Sunni Islam as young adults (late teens-early twenties). All but one of the participants who was born Muslim was under 32 years of age. The remaining participant who was born Muslim was approximately fifty years old. All of the younger participants who were born Muslim deviated from Islam during their teenage years and returned in their early twenties. While away from Islam, five of these participants experimented with Christianity. Thus the majority of participants (including participants who were born Muslim) had some previous experience with other religions.

In addition, the younger participants who were born Muslim had also had some involvement with the Nation of Islam, for most it occurred during early childhood.

Of the 14 participants with a non-Islamic religious background, 11 were no longer practicing any religion several years prior to their conversion to Islam. Although many of the women were not practicing any formal religion, the majority of the participants who converted to Islam or returned to Islam (n=15) indicated that they maintained a continuous spiritual connection with God. Many participants reported that they were "searching" for a religion that was compatible with their existing beliefs. Participants reported that their conversion or recommitment to Islam was initiated by a negative life experience (i.e. death, incarceration, armed forces), positive experience with Islam (i.e. visiting mosque, working with Muslims, studying Islam), or lifestage transition (i.e. marriage to Muslim, separation, or birth of a child/pregnancy). All participants were exposed to Islam by a friend or family member.

4.4.3.5. Education, Income, Employment

All but one participant had graduated high school. The majority (60%) had some college or trade school after high school. Twenty-three percent had a four-year college degree with one having post baccalaureate studies.

Although participants had a range of incomes, the majority can be considered low income based on their large household size. Only about 10% of the participants could be classified as middle income (US Census, 1994).

Eighty-one percent of the participants were employed. Forty-one of those working were employed in positions associated with Islam or in the mosque. One of the participants worked inside the home, two were on disability and one was retired.

4.5. Data Collection

The primary researcher collected all the data related to this investigation and had previous experience in conducting qualitative research and working with diverse religious and ethnic communities (Odoms, 1995). Prior to the study the researcher had limited involvement with Rochester's Islamic community. The researcher was introduced to the African-American and religious community in Rochester during a research project targeting African-American women and working as an outreach coordinator for a heart disease prevention program in African-American churches. The majority of the researcher's experience with Islam occurred while growing up and living in Chicago, the headquarters of the two largest African-American Islamic organizations. Similar to the study participants, the researcher was African American with a southern heritage and a background in Christian religious tradition. Although the researcher identified herself to study participants as a

Christian or as a non-Muslim, she made a special effort to maintain appropriate Islamic dress (e.g. head covering) and behavior (i.e. avoiding direct eye contact with men) throughout data collection.

Of the 22 women who participated in the study, 18 were completed two semi-structured interviews. The remaining four served as key informants. After completing the first interview, relevant information was collected from key informants individually during weekly or biweekly informal discussions (Table 4.2). Key informants were selected based on religious experience, role/position in the Muslim community, and willingness to discuss issues relevant to the study. The interview guide was developed using information obtained from the literature, results from previous studies, and the experiences of the investigator and her academic committee. The guide was then extensively reviewed by investigators experienced in this area of research and pretested with community leaders and African-American Muslim and non-Muslim women. The guide was appropriately modified based on suggestions. The interviews and informal conversations focused on life stage, social roles, nutrition, health beliefs, food choice and practices, cultural identity, religion, and traditions (see Appendix B). Permission for the interviews to be audiotaped was requested verbally and stated in writing on the consent form (See Appendix C). Upon approval from participant, interviews were audiotaped and fieldnotes concerning participants, interviews, or key informant meetings were taken by the investigator. During this time participants were informed of the purpose of the investigation, intended use of their responses, kept confidentiality of their response, and that they were allowed to withdraw at any time. All of the interviews were

Table 4.2. Data Collection Methods

Main Study	
Eighteen Study Participants	Series of Two In-depth Individual Interviews
Four Key Informants	One In-depth Individual Interview + weekly/bi-weekly conversations
Supplementary Study	
Five Focus Group Participants	Small Group Interview with African-American women who did not participate in individual interviews
Observations in Islamic and Rochester Community	Over 100 Observations including Islamic Orientation Classes, Prayers, Religious Services, Islamic Celebration and Events.

confidential. A code number was assigned to each interview respondent. Information identifying respondents was kept in a locked file, separate from interview data and made only available to the interviewer and her advisor. Participants received a gift certificate to a local supermarket or African-American bookstore for each interview. The focus group was conducted using similar procedures and a modified version of the in-depth interview (Appendix B). Observations were performed using a standard form designed specifically for this study (Appendix B). The Human Subjects committee at Cornell University reviewed and approved all study procedures.

4.6 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed throughout the data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory approach uses constant comparative analysis to develop "inductively derived" or "grounded theory". The purpose of the grounded theory approach is to formulate a theoretical interpretation of participants' reality based on themes that emerge directly from the data. Tapes and fieldnotes were reviewed to identify general themes that existed within the data and to formulate responses to be clarified in the second meeting.

After transcripts were completed, an in-depth analysis of interviews, the focus group, and fieldnotes was conducted to further identify and confirm themes within the data. Initially, the researcher read transcripts and fieldnotes several times. Transcripts were reviewed line by line to generate categories that reflected participants' descriptions of food beliefs and practices related to Islam. Nudist 4.0 (QSR, 1997) qualitative analysis program was used for data management, to identify discrete concepts within the data and assign categories to emergent constructs. Combining categories that pertained to the

same phenomena and/or developing sub-categories further developed groups or categories. Using new category codes the researcher re-labeled constructs. The category system was then reviewed and compared to the data numerous times to determine relationships between constructs. Summaries were generated for each participant and provided additional clarification of relationships of emergent constructs. Observations in the Islamic community were continuously conducted throughout data analysis. Observation reports were reviewed after leaving each event. Additional details were added to report when necessary. During data analysis observation reports were read in association with transcripts to provide information about the contexts in which food decisions were made. Emergent themes were arranged in a model to illustrate the relationships between each category, subcategory and contextual variable that emerged from the data.

4.7. Data and Data Analysis Quality Evaluation

Data quality was evaluated using the criteria described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) including prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, member checks progressive subjectivity, and confirmability/dependability.

The investigator's prolonged presence in the Rochester community resulted in a stronger rapport with the participants. By attending Islamic events, classes and worship services over the course of approximately two years, the investigator was allowed to become very familiar with people, terms, locations, and occasions. The majority of the interviews took place at either participants' homes or the mosque. As the study continued participants and researcher grew more comfortable with each other and the study process allowed diverse issues related to Islamic dietary practices to emerge.

Member checks were conducted during the second meeting with each interviewee and continued with participants if subsequent meetings were conducted. Issues were also discussed with participants during informal meetings, events, worship, and social gatherings. Participants were asked to confirm and elaborate on issues, ideas, experiences, and practices that came up in the interview. In some cases, new information was brought up outside of the interview and recorded in fieldnotes.

Peer debriefing took place with other researchers and community members throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. At various stages in the study the researcher had the opportunity to present and discuss findings with other professionals in nutrition. Opportunities included presentations concerning use of methodology and seminars with nutrition faculty and graduate students within the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University and the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Illinois. Information that emerged during data collection and analysis was also discussed with members and leaders in the Islamic community. Additionally, constructions that emerged were discussed with Muslim professionals and other professionals involved in the study of Islam.

Progressive subjectivity was used to ensure that the researcher's own conceptualization did not dominate constructions that emerged from the data. This was conducted by comparing a concept map that was designed by the researcher at the onset of the study based on a review of the literature, past studies, and personal experience (Appendix D).

A confirmabilty/dependability log was used to assure that the data, interpretations, and outcomes were grounded in contexts and not created by

the researcher. This enabled information to be tracked to their sources by documenting reasons specific study decisions were made. Although the data was not audited by an outside source, the researcher maintained a log reporting methodological changes and decisions. Fieldnotes were also used to document the researcher's perceptions concerning the interview. Observation reports further served to note emerging constructions.

CHAPTER FIVE:
RESULTS
THEMES AND CATAGORIES

5.1. Overview

Participants' expressed several themes during data collection that influenced their food decisions (Table 5.1). Themes that emerged from the data and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 5.1. As indicated in the model, participants ideals related to food and eating behaviors were based on their interpretation and understanding of Islamic dietary laws. Interpretation of dietary doctrine focused on beliefs about the spiritual unacceptability of food, the physical properties of food and the relationship between food and illness. Personal characteristics including, skills and resources, spiritual development and identity, social support and family relationships and past and current dietary considerations interacted with Islamic food ideals to impact food choice. Food decisions resulted in social, spiritual, psychological, and physical outcomes, which influenced the Islamic dietary ideals, and other personal characteristics used in future food decisions. The food decisions were affected by contextual factors including physical and social environments and historical and cultural contexts.

Table 5.1. Summary of Themes Related to Food Decisions of a Group of African-American Muslim Women

Themes	Categories	Examples
Islamic Dietary Ideals	Islamic Prohibitions and Requirements	Pork, Non-Halal, Blood
	Recommended Eating and Dietary Behaviors	Fasting, Moderation
Other Personal Characteristics	Skills and Resources	Finances, Transportation
	Family Relationships and Social Support	Immediate and Extended Family
	Identity and Spiritual Development	Muslim Identity, Spiritual Stage
	Life Transitions	Marriage, Divorce and Separation
	Past and Current Dietary Considerations	Ethnic and Cultural Traditions
Food Decisions	Implementing Islamic Ideals	Purchasing Halal
	Not Implementing Islamic Ideals	Eating Pork
Outcomes	Physical	Illness
	Psychological	Self-esteem
	Spiritual	Blessings
	Social	Conflicts with Family
Contextual Factors	Historical	Mass Conversion to Sunni Islam in 1975
	Cultural	Slavery and Southern Heritage
Environmental Factors	Social	Relationship with other Muslims
	Physical	Access to Goods and Information

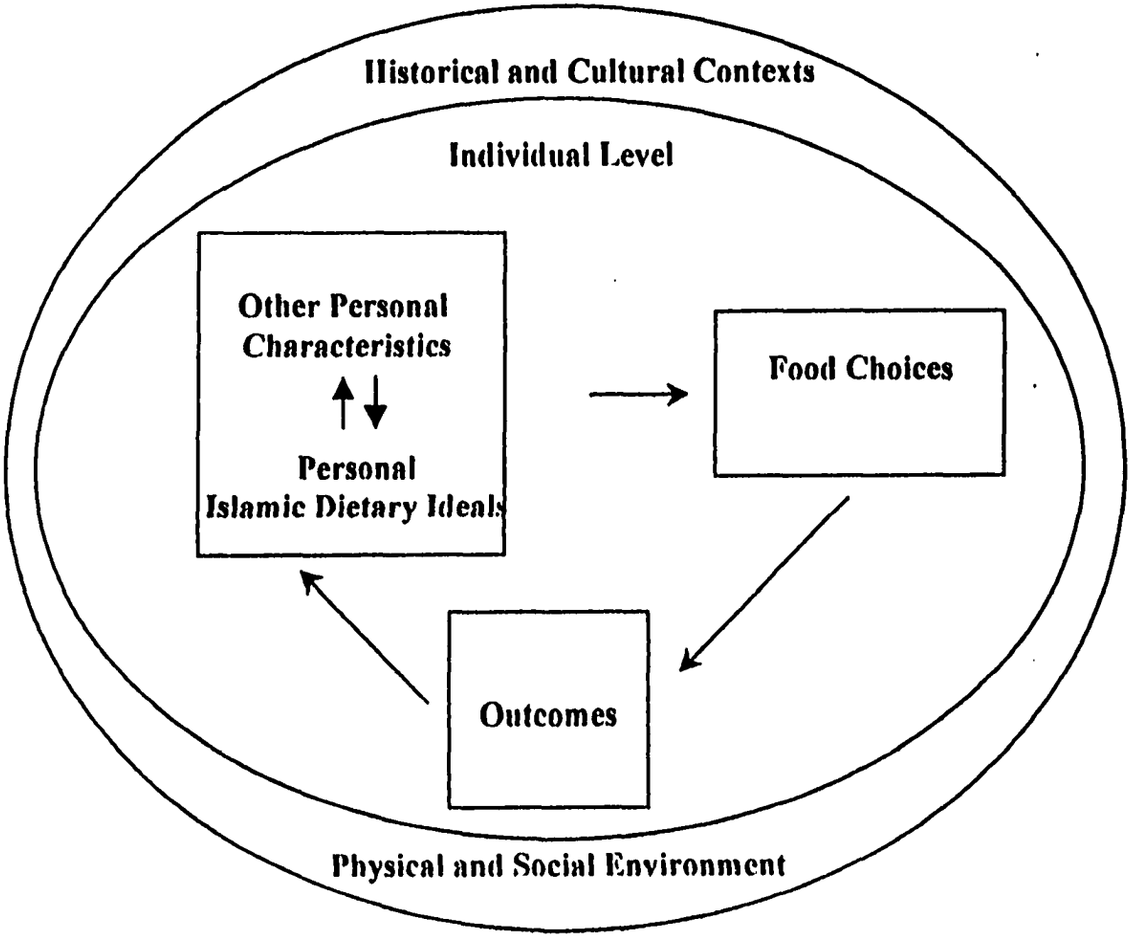


Figure 5.1. The role of Islam in the food choice process of African-American Muslim women

5.2. Islamic Dietary Ideals

The women in the study developed a number of dietary ideals related to Islam. Participants' Islamic dietary ideals were associated with 1) prohibited foods and dietary practices and 2) recommended eating and dietary behaviors.

5.2.1. Prohibited and Required Foods and Dietary Practices

Several themes emerged related to prohibited foods and dietary practices. Participants' food beliefs about dietary prohibitions focused on pork, alcohol, non-Halal meats, and marine animals.

5.2.1.1 Pork

All participants indicated that pork is strictly prohibited. This included consumption or any contact with pork or pork products:

> We don't eat pork. We can't even eat the bi-products of pork. Like some monoglycerides contain pork gelatin. If it contains pork we can't [eat it]

> We have to be careful with the lipstick that we use because some lipstick has pork in it.

Participants described several reasons why they felt pork was unfit to be used for food. First, all participants reported that consumption or contact with pork is spiritual unacceptable. Participants indicated that pork is explicitly prohibited in the Koran:

> Allah says in the Koran, the pig was made to clean up the earth. Not to be eaten.

Most all study participants reported that avoiding contact with pork is the most sacred dietary prohibition. One participant described that on the Day of Judgment God would excuse all dietary violations except consumption of pork:

> I don't think we're going to be judged by the food that we ate as long as it's not pork. You know what I mean? As long as it's not pork.

Second, participants reported that pork is prohibited based on the physical properties of the pig. Participants indicated that pigs are "poison" because of their inability to maintain cleanliness or to excrete waste.

> [The pig's] job is to clean up the earth and that's why he's gonna eat anything. Anything he eats is gonna get into you and into his meat. He cannot, excrete it. There's no sweat gland. Only the mucous glands that come out through his feet.

Third, participants' belief about pigs containing poisons caused them to associate pork with disease and illness:

> They were saying how [pork] causes arthritis and bursitis. The pig doesn't, excrete or they don't have a bowel movement, they just get bigger and bigger and bigger and sweat glands and all of that. So they have all this puss and dirt in em' and that's like, that's what you're eating!

Fourth, participants' indicated that pork can cause illness because it contains dietary components that are harmful to health, specifically fat and salt:

> When my father had the stroke and everything, it just reiterated to me and to say to them, you need to cut that pork out of your diet. Get that stuff out, it [puts] too much fat, salt, other poisons in your system. Eating that kind of thing, you shouldn't eat it.

The majority of study participants reported that pork consumption was only excused by God in extreme circumstances (i.e. to prevent starvation) or when consumed unintentionally. Only one participant reported that pork consumption is excused if served to a person accidentally. This participant indicated that you could eat a small piece in social situations to not offend your host:

> If you sit down at dinner and they serve you a plate with food already on it and it has pork on it, then its okay to go ahead and eat the pork out of respect but don't get seconds.

5.2.1.2 Alcohol

About ¾ of the participants indicated that alcohol was prohibited in Islam. Most participants discussed how Muslims should abstain from drinking. These participants reported:

> We shouldn't drink. Drink alcohol; eat swine or any [thing] haram or unlawful-animals or drink.

> No alcohol. That's not Halal. So as long as the meat is Halal and there's no alcohol in the meal [it's ok]

Only about 18% of the participants discussed the limitation of alcohol in recipes. These participants indicated that alcohol is prohibited in any form:

> Like one of the things that I can't have is [alcohol], even though some people will get it in baking. You have extracts that have alcohol, and that's prohibited. And it's like even though, the alcohol evaporates. I've chosen not go that way. You have to get natural vanilla beans, you know. and you have to find things that don't have that ingredient in it.

> We don't eat any alcohol. Nothing, I just went and got some flavoring, it can't have alcohol in it. I have to read any labels constantly for alcohol.... [Alcohol is forbidden] even if it's a life threatening.

5.2.1.3 Non-Halal Meat

The majority of participants reported that Muslims should eat meat that is halal or properly slaughter. Participants primarily cited that non-Halal meat was unacceptable to God. However, some participants reported that halal meat is healthier than non-halal meat because of the lack of stress put on the animal and the removal of the blood during the slaughtering. A few participants described how eating non-halal meat could cause people to take on the characteristics of the animal before it's killed:

> [Eating meat that is not properly slaughtered] does have an affect. Say if these animals have been killed in a vicious way. Some of the blood is still in that animal and you're getting, some of that blood and that's like stressed out blood and you began to have animal like qualities it reduces you in your nature.

Several of the women reported that Halal meat was best but not strictly required. These participants reported that since God is merciful, non-halal is acceptable in certain circumstances including during traveling and when finances are limited.

About 45% of participants reported that special consideration is given to the food of Christians and Jews (people of the book). As a result, several participants indicated that Muslims could substitute kosher meats for halal:

> Go Halal first, then kosher. If you don't have Halal, then you accept Kosher and then if you don't have or Kosher, then you go, just, as long as there's no pork.

A few respondents indicated that Muslims could eat meat produced by companies that do not also produce pork. The same participant as above reported that:

> Halal is very important but we are told in the Koran that you're allowed to eat the food of the people of the book. And people of the book being Jews and Christians. And so if it's like, for instance, something Louis Rich, [turkey] that's all they do. There's no way that the chicken and some pork fat [got] in the same vat together or whatever. That's all they do is turkey. Well, then, there's no problem with that.

Two participants indicated that you should avoid food from Christians and Jews because they are untrustworthy. These participants proclaimed that you should only eat food from "people of the book" in "extreme circumstances" because they have deviated from the original law of God.

5.2.1.4 Marine Animals

Participants varied on their beliefs related to acceptability of marine or sea animals. Most all participants indicated that eating fish and seafood was acceptable in Islam because it is reported in the Koran:

> Fish doesn't have to be slaughtered in the name of God. We can just eat any type of fish, not like with the Christians, like you are not supposed to eat crabs and things like this. We can eat and things like this. We can eat anything from the sea.

In contrast, three of the women believed that certain types of seafood not permitted:

> There's hadith, where they say the things that you should eat. It tells you what you should eat and what you should not eat. And you know like fish, you shouldn't eat no fish that doesn't have scales [or fish] in the bowels of the sea.

5.2.2. Recommended Eating and Dietary Behaviors

Several recommendations emerged from participants related to eating and health practices performed by Mohammed including fasting, eating in moderation, dining practices, and taking care of the body.

5.2.2.1. Fasting

Participants indicated Mohammed commonly practiced fasting. As a result, all Muslims are encouraged to fast. All participants reported that Muslims are required to participate in an obligatory fast during the month of Ramadan. During Ramadan, participants noted that Muslims fast during the day and congregate in the mosque in the evening:

> We have two holidays that we recognize. During, one of em' is our Eid (feasting or celebration) that we have after fasting after the month of Ramadan. So usually, you're fasting during the day and then if you're at the mosque while you're fasting there's going to be food in the evening.

5.2.2.2. Moderation

About ¼ of the participants indicated that food should be eaten in moderation. This participant reported that overeating makes you lazy when it comes time for prayer:

> The prophet tells us you should not fill your stomach. Your stomach is divided into 3 parts one part is for food, one part is for drink and one part is for prayer. Because if you fill your stomach up, you're not going to make the prayer before you sleep.

5.2.2.3. Eating Practices

All participants reported that Muslims should follow the example of Mohammed. However about 13% of participants in the study indicated that Muslims should follow dining practices similar to Mohammed. These participants described how the dining behavior of Mohammed influenced their eating practices:

> Because the Prophet did it [we eat] on what's called a magrib. And the magrib is just a cloth. It's basically to show humility. [Prophet Mohammed] he never ate at a table. He was a very humble man. If you don't eat on the floor it's not a sin but there's blessings in eating on the floor. I'm trying to acquire, as many blessings as I can you want to do that. It's also the Sunnah to eat with your fingers. So we don't use utensils most of the times.

5.2.2.4. Taking care of the body

A few participants indicated that Muslims are advised to take care of their body. The importance of caring for the body was related to beliefs that the body can testify against you in death if its not cared for properly in life. As a result, Muslims were encouraged to practice healthy behaviors. One participant described the things you should do to take care of your body:

> Definitely eat right. Because, in my religion, it does teach you that your body has a rights for you. If it's tired, you know, you go to sleep, you know. If you need to eat and nourish yourself,

> you do that. You don't just let yourself go. You're not really supposed to do that.

5.3. Other Personal Characteristics

Participants ability to incorporate Islamic dietary laws into their food decisions was influenced by other personal characteristics (i.e. considerations, values, and experiences) including, skills and resources, social relationships and family structure, life transitions, past and current dietary practices, spiritual development, and Muslim identity.

5.3.1. Skills and resources

Participants' food decisions were impacted by their skills and resources including finances, transportation, food availability, food preparation skills, and prohibited food and ingredient identification.

5.3.1.1 Finances

Finances had a major impact on participants' food decisions. For example, several participants indicated that consumption of halal meat is best but that a lack of financial resources limited their ability to purchase it:

> We're supposed to eat meat that's blessed with Allah's name on We're supposed to [eat halal]. Being realistic, a lot of times you can't afford halal. That's why you have to try to choose your foods carefully, you know. Try to eat as close as possible to it, as you can.

5.3.1.2. Transportation

Participants' implementation of dietary ideals was also influenced by access to transportation. This participant reported seeking alternatives to halal when transportation was limited:

> Just the other evening, I ran out of halal and I wasn't able to go out because I don't have the transportation at this point. So I had to go to the nearest store and buy a chicken.

Another participant indicated not purchasing halal because of transportation:

> There are times, I don't eat Halal. When I can't make it out of [work], or you know it would be just more convenient to go to the store. Because, a lot of times I'm here until this time at night and if I need to go to the grocery store, or if I need something to cook or whatever. I'll just have to go to Wegmans and settle for that.

5.3.1.3. Availability

Availability was also a major factor when choosing to follow Islamic dietary guidelines. For example, some participants indicated that they would buy certain foods or products non-halal if halal versions were not available. Specifically, some participants indicated that they purchased non-halal chicken wings because they were not available at the halal market:

> [I eat] mostly Halal. Non-halal, I might buy some chicken wings. Because they cook, they're easy and they don't have them in the Halal market.

This was also the case with eating halal away from home or during traveling. Since halal meats were commonly unavailable at restaurants, some participants chose food that was non halal:

> When you're traveling sometimes you can't find halal food on the road. You're gonna say, "Well I've been gone for two days. [Are you going to say], I'm gonna not eat this chicken? I want me some chicken. Kentucky here I come. " Kentucky whatever, it's out of necessity here. You're not trying to transgress down.

> You're trying to eat to survive or eat because you're hungry. It's not like; "I want to eat this Kentucky Fried chicken because I crave it. It's no; I'm out here, traveling on the road. I gotta eat.

5.3.1.4. Food Preparation

Food preparation skills were a major factor in guiding participants' food choice practices. Participants experimented with different foods and preparation practices:

> [I use] experimentation. Like I said, I love being in the kitchen, just experimenting. I don't really go by recipes or measurements or anything, I just pour until I think that's enough. Or, I'll think, oh yeah, let me put some raisins in here or something.

In addition participants substituted ingredients that were unacceptable with those that are appropriate in Islam:

> We used to use ham hocks and stuff, for flavoring. Well, we don't have ham hocks, OK? And so I said, what I will do. I would use my chicken and save the broth from it. My friends always tease me, "Oh, you save all the juice from everything!" My beef, whatever, I save the juice. When I bake chicken, I save the juice. Therefore, [when] I cook collard greens, I use the juice from my chicken to season my collard greens. And I just learned like a whole different way of cooking without the pork. But then my foods still taste the same. The same food without the taste of the pork and stuff.

5.3.1.5. Identification of Prohibited foods and ingredients

Participants' ability to identify prohibited products and ingredients influenced their food choice. All participants indicated that they read labels. The majority of participants learned how to recognize certain foods that were permissible based on package symbols such as "K" for kosher and ingredient

listings. In ingredient listing, participants primarily tried to identify pork, pork derivatives or alcohol:

> Sometimes you can get a list that tells you what a lot of ingredients are. But the basic thing you look for is lard. So once you don't see that, then you know. And there is a symbol on some things. The K with a circle around it means Kosher. With the U with the circle around it means Kosher.

5.3.2. Family relationships and Social support

Family relationships and level of social support influenced participants' food decisions. Participants' decisions concerning food and dietary practices were influenced by their immediate family, extended family and friends. Participants immediate families tended to be Muslim whereas most extended family members were non-Muslim. Friends of participants acquired after conversion were most commonly Muslim.

5.3.2.1. Immediate Family

Within the immediate family, the husband's beliefs and practices regarding food and women's roles impacted participants' food decisions. Husbands' had a major influence on deciding what type of food would be eaten in the home and how it would be prepared. One participant described how her husband's decision to eat only halal influenced her ability to eat away from home

> [My husband] was strictly, halal, halal, and halal, halal. I missed [going out] because we'd never go out to eat. When you're so used to going out here and going out there and eating, it's just like that has stopped. All my entertainment, so far as going out and eating. It would always have to be me here cooking at home.

Another participant described how differences in husbands' views could influence purchasing halal:

> [My husband's] OK with [not buying halal]. You know, a lot of husbands aren't OK with it. Like my son's grandfather, his family doesn't [go] out to the grocery store, they eat all Halal. Everything has to be Halal as far as the meats go. Otherwise, they don't eat it.

The husband's views about the roles of wives in Islam also influenced other eating practices. This participant reported how her husband's belief about the importance of family interaction during meal times sometimes entices her to eat more than anticipated:

> My husband he's very stern about having [you] to come sit with the family. So I cook and no matter how much I may have eaten he wants me to come to the table. The food smells good and I start to eat. I may say, " I already ate. We sisters went out to lunch and I am really full from the lunch." [He says], " A mother should be at the dinner table with her family. [I say] Ok fine, and then I eat.

The women in the study played a major role in ensuring their children maintained Islamic dietary laws. Participants evaluated food outside the home environment such as at school and in non-Muslim homes. This participant described informing the school of their children's dietary requirements:

> I've instilled in them from little babies, you know, not to eat the pork in school or whatever. And I made sure that, before they eat, school or whatever. And I made sure [of] that, before they eat. I registered them for a public school [and made sure] that they didn't serve them pork or whatever. And if they did, [I told them] what to look for. Different type smells or whatever. Which I don't think they've ever really smelled pork itself, you know. But, nine times out of ten they'll come tell me, "Ma, they had pork today at school.". They normally, used to send out a flyer, send flyers home with the whole menu for the whole month at the school. But I haven't been getting them lately for

> some reason or another. They'll give them cereal or substitute something for them. Because I have it down on record at the school that they don't eat pork.

Participants also discussed how mothers screened food at relative's homes when they were growing up. One participant described how her mother intercepted candy that contained pork:

> There was a candy, some type of jellybean, or something. But, my mother knew it was pork and my grandmother was trying to give it to me. And she was saying, these are just kids, they ain't never gonna know. I do remember my grandmother saying these ain't nothing but kids, they don't know the difference.

5.3.2.2. Extended Family

The definition of extended family varied from person to person and was based on the participants' living arrangements. Extended family consisted of those that were not residing within the immediate household and did not necessarily have to be a true blood relative. All participants came from extended families that were predominately non-Muslim.

Muslim extended family members provided participants with social support for Islamic dietary ideals and practices. Family members, who converted to Islam before the participant, made it easier because they had already introduced the religion to non-Muslims in the family. This was true for all participants who were born Muslim. These participants reported that many of their parents had faced a lot of opposition because they were first in their family to convert to Islam, they faced lot of opposition:

> At first, I don't remember it personally, but my mother did have a lot of problems with my grandma when she converted. [She

> said], "You ain't gonna eat stuff like that". It took years before she accepted it and respected it. Even to this day, I don't think she really accepts it, she has to [tolerate it].

Participants also received support from non-Muslim family members. Non-Muslim family members who practiced religions that had dietary requirements (i.e. Seventh day Adventist) were more accepting of participants' dietary beliefs and practices:

> Most of [my husbands' family] before they got married, never ate pork. They were Seventh Day Adventists and Seventh Day Adventists don't pork. That's why they're so understanding, his family.

Non-Muslim family members who previously had a positive experience with Islam also were more receptive to participants' dietary requirements:

> The teacher that he had that taught him was Muslim. He had a picture of him. We would always sneak and get that picture and look at him. Up there was a group of boys [picture]. They were down south at Arkansas. [My father] held on to that. He didn't per se accept the religion but he followed the ways of the Muslim. He quit eating the pork.

When the participant's behavior after conversion was similar to pre-conversion behavior, non-Muslim family members supported Islamic practices. Participants also received support when family and friends approved of their new behavior:

> One thing about my family, they respect [my religion], this is religion I decided on, they respect it. Because they see that I'm not out there drinking, I'm not smoking, I don't, you know, even though me and my husband are separated, they don't see me bringing all these men, or nothing, all into my kids life and everything. So they respect, you know, that may as so far so far

> as the food, they respect me and everything and then even towards the end, even though my father, he respect my religion

Likewise, family members who had no prior Islamic experience, a negative Islamic experience, perceived dietary beliefs as invalid, or viewed participants' new Islamic identity as unacceptable discouraged participants' dietary practices. One participant described how her brother responded to her change in behavior after her conversion:

> You're gonna be my sister, this is who you are and I'm not going to take you any other way, we used to smoke together, we used to drink together. Now all of a sudden you want to be some Muslim! What is a Muslim? No, He didn't agree with it.

Family members who did not agree with participants practicing Islam expressed their disagreement by discouraging or not accommodating Islamic dietary restrictions. For example, a participant described how her grandmother's view was influence by her limited experience with Sunni Islam:

> At first my grandmother did not take it seriously. "Yeah right", she just laughed at it all the time, " You gonna get out that. You'll get tired of that after while" Because a lot of them were familiar with the Nation of Islam. Muslims going around putting the bean pie in your face with the paper all the time. They said it was gonna be a passing fancy.

The same participant indicated that since her grandmother believed that consuming pork was not harmful, she challenged the participant's dietary restrictions:

> My grandmother would think I was going to go back to pork. She would try to sneak it in on me and I would get violently sick after the moment it was in there. I tasted it, "that's got pork in

> it". And she'd go, "You don't know what's in it."...She'd try to sneak something in there; pretend I don't know what I'm taking about. [Then she'd say], "Pork ain't gonna kill you.

Likewise, these non-Muslim family members encouraged participants to deviate from Islamic dietary practices by offering or feeding prohibited foods to their children:

> [My daughter] would just tell me the types of things that she would eat. When she would eat them I could pretty much tell that it was pork or like when [my mother in law] fried her chicken, she fried her chicken in lard and she's like, " you know she loves my chicken" and she'll always give [my daughter some chicken.

Families became more receptive of participants dietary beliefs and practices with time and as they gained more experience with Islam. This participant reported that her family was not accommodating after initial conversion but became more accommodating at family gatherings over time:

> I think [the acceptance] started in the last two years. They'll just set aside my greens. "[We] got your greens, no pork" and I'll say okay. But the turkey and all of that I'll eat.

5.3.2.3. Muslim Friends and Associates

Participants established close relationships with other Muslims in the community. This was especially important for participant's who received little family support. Other Muslims encouraged participants to adhere to dietary laws and provided social support for Islamic dietary practices. Muslim women commonly participated in food sharing at home and within the mosque:

> I love to cook! Normally, it's the females, we'll get together and everybody will pitch in, bring dishes and stuff for us, the family to eat. And mainly, it's not too often that we really have the males there. You know, it's not too often, mainly it just be sisters, you know. We'll get together and stuff.

In addition to sharing food, Muslim women also shared information. Participants reported that other Muslim women assisted them in understanding the dietary requirements in Islam:

> The woman that kind of, I would say, gave me direction. After I took my shahadah [a testament of faith], maybe a month later, she came to me and she said, " Do you know what? I was going to come over your house and I was going to take all that pork out of our refrigerator and just throw it in the garbage. And when she said that, it hit me and I was like I have to get rid of the pork and I did.

5.3.3. Identity and Spiritual development

Perceptions of identity and spiritual development had the most significant influence on participants' food decisions. Both participants that converted and recommitted themselves to Islam used Islamic dietary practices to express their Muslim identity to themselves and with others. Beliefs about the behaviors needed to maintain this identity was guided by the participants' stage of spiritual development. This study participant described how her family reacted when she informed them of her new Islamic identity and dietary practices:

> It wasn't positive, you know. And part of it could have been from me and my understanding when I came in at that time. Because one of the first things that I established was that I don't eat pork. So I wasn't going to eat, don't cook that for me, because I ain't eating it. And that was very strong.

Some participants reported beliefs that Muslims should completely abandon other cultural identities (i.e. ethnic, national, etc.) and primarily embrace their Islamic identity whereas other participants perceived that Muslims are allowed to incorporate all cultural identities. For example this participant indicated that it is not Islamic to focus on ethnic culture:

> When you say your shadadah, it is a testament of faith but more importantly it is a negation of everything else that's why we don't do birthdays. We don't do Kwanzaa...But in Islam one of the fundamental beliefs is that everything we do is for the pleasure and purpose of Allah. I can't get any blessings from celebrating Kwanzaa. Why? Because I'm not doing it for the pleasure of my lord. I don't celebrate the contributions of African Americans, [only] if they were Muslims because if I celebrate the contributions of an African- American who was enemy to my Lord, then what is that saying for me. In Islam that's forbidden.

Islamic identity was based on participants' beliefs about the roles and duties of a Muslim. Role perceptions were shaped by participants' beliefs about their level of spiritual understanding. Participants developed spiritual understanding through information, experience, and faith. Information was obtained through reading religious texts and materials and from other Muslims; experience was based on interactions with other Muslims and prohibited food; and faith was related to the participants' awareness and closeness to God. Participants described increasing in spiritual development as gaining "knowledge". A participant indicated that as her knowledge increased, she could no longer eat meat that was not halal:

> [A] long time ago when I was making a change over from regular meats, I thought it was just fine with just eating chicken anything as long as it wasn't pork. Because where my

> knowledge was at. As my knowledge increased, then I came into the understanding that I needed to get meat that was prayed over and killed or slaughtered a certain way. So then I began to change over and it became gradual, but then you find yourself, maybe you were used to Burger King or you were used to McDonalds so you still ate some of those things. But then you get to the point where you say, "Look I'm not supposed to be doing that. That is not what is permissible to me. If I want to obey what my Creator has said, I am to eat only what he has said for me to eat."

Another participant indicated that after converting she still practiced certain prohibited habits but stopped them after developing spiritually:

> Yeah, still eating the pork, I had a cigarette habit, so I smoked for a while [too]. But like I said, after my knowledge started growing and my faith stared increasing. I don't need it.

5.3.5. Life Transitions

The women in the study experienced several role transitions throughout their lifetime. Food decisions were guided by transitions through life including marriage, divorce, and transition into teen years.

5.3.5.1. Marriage

Marriage and courtship impacted many participants' food decisions because they were introduced to Islam by their significant others and husbands. For example, this participant described practicing Islamic food prohibitions after marrying a Muslim but before converting to Islam:

> Well, as soon as I married my husband, I started eating all halal meat. So as, you know, as soon we got married, I started eating. Couldn't buy no meat or anything from the store. And so I started right away eating halal meat.

Marriage was also a factor in shaping food choice practices for participants who were Muslim prior to marriage. Participants who married men who were also Muslim reaffirmed their commitment to Islam and exchanged information with their husbands about Islamic dietary practices. This participant described how she was introduced to halal meat after getting married:

> At the time [I got married] I wasn't eating Halal. I wasn't practicing so I was eating from McDonalds. [My husband] was practicing and I was getting into it. But I wasn't eating [halal]. I didn't even know about halal food.

When participants married non-Muslims, at times participants' Islamic dietary practices clashed with their husbands eating habits and resulted in family conflicts:

> Well, it was difficult, like I said, because I had my certain types of foods that I ate, he had his certain types of foods that he ate. Mostly he likes fast foods, like hamburgers and cheeseburgers, type of things. He liked his grits and eggs and bacon and sausage and stuff like that. [I never cooked pork]. For a while I tolerated it and he had his own separate pans for his sausage and his bacon.

5.3.5.2. Divorce and Separation

Divorce and separation had a major impact on Islamic food decisions. After their separation, some participants deviated from food practices that had been encouraged by their ex-spouses. One participant described how she started buying kosher meats after being separated:

> I buy [kosher] more now because my husband. Even though Kosher is Lawful to us, they stay, some Muslims don't even want to touch kosher food, you know what I'm saying? And they're going to stay away from it so now that me and my husband isn't together, now I buy more Kosher lunch meat for us, And turkey, if it's Kosher, like turkey sausage.

Separation from spouses also caused participants to take on additional roles. These additional roles had an impact on financial resources. One participant described how her separation placed limitations on her time and financial resources:

> Before, he would help out a lot. Doing things and help [ing]. And now it's all my responsibility. Everything in the house I have responsibility totally all myself. I pay the bills, and see after my daughter. It made me feel like I don't have any time. Before I was working part time and then I had to get a full time job. Plus I have another job to supplement the income. And that's like extra money that I stash for emergencies. So I'm working more and my hours, you know, like today, I'll get off maybe at 10:00.

Another participant reported a changes in food preparation after separation:

> It's different in that you don't cook as much. And because having that other person in the household brings about a certain balance in the household. And then there's a lot of things that you like to do that you stop doing. But, for me it's just a matter of getting into the swing of things. Because, again, taking on the additional responsibility as far as being outside of the home, then that means food preparation has to take place prior to leaving the home in order for you to have a decent meal to come home to. Because, most likely, if you work very hard, you're going to be very tired when you come in and not feel like it.

5.3.5.3. Transition into teenage years

All participants' 32 years of age and under who were born into Islam departed from the religion during their teen years. Some left Islam in search

of other religions, while others left to obtain more freedom. After leaving the religion, participants deviated from certain Islamic dietary practices but still maintained others. The belief that pork is unfit to be used for food was still maintained by participants while they were away from Islam. However, adherence to other Islamic behaviors varied. The majority of these participants reported participating in non-Islam behaviors they perceived were popular during teen and young adult years, for example, drinking alcohol:

> The best way to explain this is the only thing that I continued to do was not eat pork. That's it. I didn't cover my hair. I always just was still conservative. My skirts went at least past my knees. But in Islam you have to be covered all the time and I didn't do it. I'd wear my low cut blouses. I went out all the time to nightclubs, I smoke and drank and did a lot.

5.3.6. Past and Current Dietary Considerations

Various past and current dietary considerations influenced participants' food decisions. These considerations consisted of practices and beliefs related to ethnic and cultural traditions, past food experience in the Nation of Islam, personal dietary restrictions and perceptions of taste and appearance.

5.3.6.1. Ethnic and cultural traditions

Ethnicity and culture influenced the ways participants incorporated Islamic dietary laws into their food choice behaviors. The majority of participants had a southeastern background and possessed traditional African American dietary patterns that were present in that region including use of pork and pork products. All participants were raised in families or had friends who practiced traditional African-American dietary patterns. Thus, after

converting to Islam, several participants had to change food practices that were part of their cultural heritage. In some cases traditional practices were in contrast to Islamic dietary laws:

> I had a friend this morning call me right before I was leaving at the house and, they were like, "I'm going to get some hog-head cheese, Do you want some?" I was like, I don't (!) think so. What is that anyway? They were saying that it was like the hog's head cut up and ground with al these other types of meat and I was like, where does the cheese come from? So I [said], no I don't think so.

African American ethnicity and culture also influenced participants' way of preparing food. The participants who used traditional African-American food preparation styles continued their way of cooking:

> So I guess I did make the transaction from American, African style and then Islamic style. But then I all balled it up in one and it, I, like a Southern cook. I cook like I'm a Southern cook. OK? But I don't use the pork continents or anything like that. But my cooking is like a Southern cook.

For participants who were born Muslim Islamic dietary practices were not differentiated from the ethnic and cultural eating habits they learned growing up. These participants indicated that in their immediate households traditional dishes that may have normally contained pork (e.g. greens) or non-halal meat were prepared in accordance with the Islamic dietary laws.

5.3.6.2. Nation of Islam Beliefs and Practices

Past practices in the Nation of Islam influenced participants' current food decisions. Since many African American Sunni Muslims were a part of the Nation of Islam, certain Nation of Islam dietary beliefs and practices were continued by African Americans in Sunni Islam:

> Cornbread is hard to digest. So it all depends. There are some things that I still don't eat today. A lot of peoples went back to eating everything except the pork. There are some things I still (!) don't eat. As a matter of fact, I don't eat a lot of fried food because it's bad for you.

Certain Nation of Islam practices became a part of the African American Sunni Muslim community. This participant indicated that although she did not have any experience with the Nation of Islam, she adopted some of the practices from other Muslims:

> It's basically the same anywhere you go. [For] most Muslims, the bean pie. Something with beans. Because, when they were back in the Nation of Islam, that was one of the main staples. You didn't eat anything that was white. And beans and fish where your main stays. Many people have bean pie, bean soup, bean, bean, bean. And that's my first time eating beans when I came here.

Other participants indicated that they consciously rejected Nation of Islam dietary practices because they are not consistent with beliefs in Sunni Islam:

> In the Nation they believed that Fard Muhammad was God. And they followed Elijah Muhammad as a prophet of Allah. They did everything based on his so-called divine commandment. Beans all the time. I don't think that's very divine to ascribe beans all the time. We had bean soup, bean cake. [They steamed food] maybe that was fine or whatever but it wasn't divine and I don't see any need that. I don't even buy whiting. I don't. I really have a problem with that whole thing. I just have a problem with it so I don't.

For some participants food preparation skills were related to their experience in the Nation of Islam. One woman described how her mother's involvement with the Nation of Islam influenced her cooking abilities:

> Because in the Nation of Islam, and they carried that over, you need to learn how to cook. They had recipe books and everything. You needed to know how to cook because they wanted you to prepare things in a certain ways. So we always learned how to make things from scratch.

5.3.6.3. Past and Current dietary Considerations and Concerns

Some participants had dietary practices prior to converting to Islam that influenced food decisions. Two of the participants were practicing vegetarianism. Many of the dietary laws in Islam did not affect these women because they were concerning meat:

> As long as the meat is Halal, then Muslims eat it. But since I don't eat meat at all, then there's no conflict for me. Because most of them are around meat.

This same participant also indicated that she commonly fasted even before becoming Muslim. She explained how she incorporated another type of fast with her last Ramadan:

> It wasn't so bad because, it was strange, at the same time that I was fasting for Ramadan, I was [also] doing a total cleanse of my body in which I didn't eat anything for seven days. So, to be able to do that, I think I accomplished something.

Some participants had given up pork before converting to Islam for other reasons. This participant described that she stopped eating pork before becoming Muslim because it caused her to become ill:

> One day [when I was growing up] we were eating some pig ears and I looked down. My mother was eating and I saw the hair on it and I got sick. I said you'd never get me to eat this pig. But once in a while I would try to eat a ham sandwich and would get really sick. I was eating salami and I started throwing up really fast. So I stopped completely eating pork.

Several participants reported that they were concerned about chemicals or preservatives in food. These participants indicated that they prefer food that they perceived as "natural" or "organic":

> One of the biggest things, [I am concerned about] preservatives, because I always, you know, read the can and knowing this, and I don't like foods that have preservatives and I rather buy the all natural. Like for instance, you go in Wegmans [supermarket], instead of going down a certain aisle, you go straight to the old world section where they usually have all the natural stuff.

> We buy 75-80% of our food organically grown, and the other thing that we do is even our lotions and our deodorant and our toiletries are shampoos. We by it organically.

In addition, these participants indicated that they were concerned about chemicals in the food because they believed they cause illness:

> I think it's all diet and environment. I think [diseases like diabetes and cancer] are all caused by that. Not only how you eat Okay, but the source of our foods, the chemicals that are in the atmosphere...Chemicals in our water (!). Chemcials that we use to preserve foods.

> Even the water, per se, is polluted. Everything is polluted now. And there's a lot of chemicals in it and you're not getting anything healthy. We used to get healthy food, you know the way they grow it. But now even the beef... Beef is bad too and chicken is nasty, they put chemicals in it.

5.3.6.4. Perceptions of taste and appearance

Taste and appearance played a role in participants' food choice practices. For example, some participants felt halal was a higher quality meat and were turned off by the appearance of non-halal meat:

> Oh, it was way better. Because you see, regular chicken wings, you see blood, like from the grocery store. When you saw halal, no blood, like it was drained. It's cleaner, it look so good. When I first seen halal meat, it looks good enough to eat raw.

Some participants reported that they deviated from Islamic food requirements because of taste. For example, this participant described craving non-halal fast food:

> Every once in a while I will eat from a fast food [restaurant] or something. Just an urge to eat something, fast food, the fast foods, just the taste for it, the salt or something

5.4. Islamic Food Decisions and Choices

5.4.1. Food Prohibitions

5.4.1.1. Pork

None of the participants reported currently consuming pork. Pork consumption was largely influenced by the belief that contact with pork is the most serious violation in Islam and is punishable by God and that pork consumption caused illness. Although the majority of participants indicated that they had not intentionally used pork after Islamic conversion, two participants reported consuming pork after becoming Muslim. One participant indicated she did not fully understand the importance of the pork prohibition until another Muslim explained it to her. The second participant believed that pork was unlawful but ate it because of her taste preferences. This participant consumed pork at the home of a non-Muslim relative. The pork was part of a traditional African-American dish:

> I came over here to visit my father and I love collard greens, right? And he had ham hocks in it. So I [thought] I'm going to eat a little bit. Well, you know, nobody [was looking]. I got real

> sick. So, just like, you think nobody's going to see you. You think nobody doesn't know. `But I had got really, really sick. from it because I thought that it wouldn't hurt me because I had just really gotten into religion but I had already started training, breaking myself away from the pork altogether.

5.4.1.2. Halal

Participants could be divided into four categories regarding consumption of halal or non-halal meat: sporadic halal use, consistent halal use with exceptions, consistent halal use without exceptions, vegetarian. First, most of participants used halal meat sporadically. The major barriers to eating all halal meat were transportation (no transportation to halal market), finances (halal is too expensive), availability (preferred version of food not available halal) and spiritual beliefs (halal is not strictly required by God). Second, many of the participants consistently consumed halal meat but reported deviating from halal only during times when it was not available (i.e. traveling). These participants indicated that God allowed certain exceptions to eating halal. Third, a few of the participants indicated that they consumed only halal. These participants' decision to eat halal was based on spouse's influence (husband required only consumption of halal meat in the household), Muslim Identity (belief that halal is required for Muslims), and spiritual development (the strong belief that halal meat is required by God). Lastly, participants who were vegetarian did not have to consider the prohibition of non-halal meat.

5.4.1.3. Alcohol

None of the participants reported currently drinking alcohol because they believed it was forbidden by God. The majority of participants' 32 years

of age and under who were that were born Muslim deviated from this prohibition during teen years.

Use of alcohol in recipes was influence by participants' ability to identify alcohol in products. For example, one participant reported that she was unaware that certain extracts contain alcohol until informed by a Muslim relative. In addition, other participants' reported using extracts with alcohol because they had not identified a proper substitute, believed that alcohol dissipates during cooking, and/or believed that God did not strictly require elimination of alcohol in baking.

5.4.1.4. Marine Animals

Consumption of fish and seafood appeared to be influenced primarily by beliefs about its acceptability by God. . The majority of participants consumed most types of seafood because they believed everything in the sea was viewed as permissible.

5.4.2. Recommended Eating and Dietary Behaviors

5.4.2.1 Fasting

All participants reported fasting during Ramadan. The Ramadan fast was greatly influenced by participants' Muslim identity and social support. Participants indicated that Ramadan is required and is practiced by Muslims all over the world. Thus, they indicated having support from Muslims in the immediate Islamic community (i.e. group fast breaking dinners and potlucks, special group prayers) and identifying with the Muslim community world wide (i.e. media coverage of Ramadan activities around the world, communicating with Muslims in other cities and regions).

5.4.2.2. Moderation

A few participants reported consciously attempting to eat in moderation. Those who reported that moderate eating was required indicated having a difficult time because of taste preferences and social influences. Several of these participants reported continuing eating food because it tasted good. Participants also reported the availability of junk food in households with children and social aspects of eating (i.e. eating with family or friends) caused them to overeat:

> We were taught in our religion that he body will bear witness against you during judgment if you don't take care of it. So you want to get that body right... Because again, the Prophet tells us you should not fill your stomach. Your stomach is divided into 3 parts, one part is for food, one part is for drink and one part for prayer. Because if you fill your stomach up, you're not going to make the prayer before you go to sleep. So that's something I got to work on, I used to be very good at it, but as time went, [and I got] older and I had my children, I became obsessed with food. Unfortunately, I didn't get rid of the obsession.

Fasting during Ramadan was another factor that appeared to influence eating behavior. The same participant as above indicated that after her first Ramadan she was less selective about food and this may have influenced her ability to eat in moderation:

> I think Ramadan might have affected me. I stopped being so picky after going through Ramadan. And that was mainly because during that time I first joined the fast was about 15 hours a day. So I definetely dropped the pickiness.

5.4.2.3. Dining Practices

Very few participants reported that they imitated the dining practices of Mohammed (i.e. eating with fingers, eating sitting on the floor). Participants

who adopted these practices were influenced by their perceptions of Muslim identity and spiritual development. These participants believed that it was extremely important for Muslims to emulate many of the behaviors of Mohammed. These participants' believed that by acting as Mohammed they would be rewarded or receive blessing from God.

5.5. Physical, Spiritual and Social Outcomes Related to Food Decisions and Choices

Participants that their food choice practices had several physical, spiritual, psychological and social implications resulted based on participants' food choice practices. Outcomes of food decisions in turn influenced participants' Islamic dietary beliefs and personal characteristics.

5.5.1. Physical Implications of Food Decisions

Many participants believed that consumption of certain types of prohibited foods, specifically pork, caused them to have a physical reaction. Several of the participants indicated experiencing illness after coming in contact with pork:

> In the neighborhood, when they start cooking that stuff, you smell that pork, I get a headache. And [another sister] says she get a headache, get dizzy and everything.

Experiencing an illness reinforced beliefs about prohibited foods:

> I got sick, I know it was pork. You stop eating that stuff. Once it's out of your system, you try to put it back in it kills you.

> That food [pork] was making me sick and when I cut out the pork from my diet, the migraines subsided. Now I may get them once a month, but I used to get them for weeks at a time and I don't get them anymore.

A number of participants also reported that they believed adherence to Islamic dietary practices made them less susceptible than other African-Americans and/or their family members to developing chronic disease. These participants indicated that the reduced risk was primarily based on them eliminating pork from their diet. When a participant was asked whether her mother's "heart condition" or her father dying of cancer influenced her eating practices, she indicated:

> No, not really because of the things we do eat, being in Islam. You know, like I've been away from the pork. So far as that is concerned with that as for health because my family used to eat it, that doesn't really [concern me]. I never changed anything.

The prevalence of chronic disease among African-Americans also reinforced beliefs about the physical implications participants associated with prohibited foods. Specifically, a number of participants indicated that chronic disease rates in African-Americans were the result of a high consumption of pork:

> As Afro-Americans we have more high blood pressure thatn anybody because of the pork.

Participants' also attributed disease experienced by friends and family members to consumption of pork:

> The Koran came out saying pork is forbidden to eat. You know and so a lot of people today, don't want to give it up because they like that taste, they like that smell. My girlfriend said, "But I just like that pork" And I said, "Look at what its doing. It's giving you high blood pressure. It's killing you."

5.5.2. Spiritual Implications of Food Decisions

Following Islamic dietary ideals provided participants with spiritual satisfaction because of their beliefs that dietary requirements were recommended by God. Participants believed that spiritual rewards could be received immediately. For example, some participants reported they would receive "blessings" for adherence to dietary laws. Other rewards were believed to be received after death. Participants indicated that God would reward or punish them on the day of judgment based on adherence to dietary practices.

5.5.3. Psychological implications of food decisions

In some cases, participants maintained food ideals because it gave them the self-efficacy needed to adapt healthy behaviors they had previously attempted. Participants indicated that health practices recommended in Islam (i.e. eating in moderation, taking care of the body) encouraged them to start or maintain healthy lifestyle practices. Practicing Islam also caused some participants to make healthy lifestyle changes by providing them with a sense of purpose. This participant described how conversion to Islam raised her self-esteem and helped motivate her to lose weight:

> [My weight gain] started after having children and going through trials and tribulations with my ex-husband. I didn't care any more, you know. You hurt me so, you know, I'll eat, Stuff like that until I had got a low self-esteem, I had a low self esteem back then. And where a lot of praying came in for me. Praying to Allah and, you know, asking him for strength and motivation and to get myself back together, you know. And give me my self-esteem back

Some participants also indicated that Islam made them more concerned about other dietary issues, because they had to watch out for prohibited foods:

> Most people, when they become Muslim it's like a cleansing everybody all of a sudden becomes a health nut. Most Muslims drink, tea honey the whole thing or they don't want raw sugar, they want turbinado. You get more into a lot of food and diet because of the fact that you can't eat pork. You gotta watch everything you eat because you have to learn the names of what pork is. Pork has different names besides pork. So you look. You gotta realize, you gotta also understand the symbols on the packages. You have to understand a lotta things on packaging and what it means in order to eat it. So, people start getting healthy if they start reading packaging. "It's got all this? Nope. None of this" And start cutting it out. Cutting it out the diet.

5.5.4. Social Implications of Food Decisions

Following Islamic dietary ideals had several negative and positive social implications for participants. Islamic dietary laws were a form of fellowship with other Muslims. Islamic food decisions allowed participants to identify with a larger group of Muslims who followed similar practices. Participants established relationships and interacted with other Muslims around food and exchanged food-related information.

However, Islamic dietary practices also created conflict between Muslim participants and their non-Muslim families and friends. For some participants following dietary requirements in Islam caused arguments at family functions. Some participants indicated that conflicts caused them to lose contact with certain family members and/or to stop attending family gatherings. Differences between Islamic and traditional African American dietary practices was one such issue that caused conflict:

> I have a brother that shied away from my house because he says, when I come to visit, what's wrong with having some bacon. And I say, well, I don't eat bacon.

5.6. Contextual and Environmental Factors

The food decisions of the women were not conducted in isolation. Several aspects of the environment shaped both cognitive processes and practices around food. These contextual factors included historical and cultural contexts and physical and social environments.

5.6.1. Historical and Cultural contexts

The history of Islam in the African American community provided a context for participants' food choice practices. The first Islamic movements were a combination of traditional Islamic doctrine and a nationalistic perspective. Although a limited number of African American Muslims practiced orthodox Islam during the time of the early movements, in 1975, the largest Islamic organization of African American Muslims, the Nation of Islam (NOI), had a mass conversion to Sunni Islam. All but two of the study participants or their parents had some involvement with the Nation of Islam. Most of these participants became Sunni Muslim during the 1975 mass conversion of the group. For example, this participant described how the transition occurred:

> I became a Universal Muslim in 1975 when Imam W.D Muhammad took office. Before that I had a brief encounter with the Nation of Islam. Didn't last long because Elijah Muhammad died...After Elijah Muhammad died, After then, Imam W.D. Muhammad came into office and he started teaching and it sounded intelligent to me. It made more sense to me.

The history of African Americans also influenced participants' food choice process. Many African American cultural dietary patterns emerged out of slavery. As a result, at different times in their lives, participants ate traditional African-American foods or "soul food" that emerged from slavery and their southern heritage:

> [Growing up we had] your traditional soul food. A lot of pork, a lot of smoked meats. Corn bread and collard greens. Other than collard greens there wasn't a lot of green vegetable. There was a lot of corn. There were beans. Sometimes we'd have snap beans.

5.6.2. Environmental Context

Both the social and physical environments influenced food choices made by participants. The social environment was created by the participants' interaction with family, friends, coworkers, and the religious community. The physical environment consisted of the city of Rochester, neighborhood, Islamic institutions, and grocery stores

Several aspects of the participants' food attitudes and selection. Social contexts included both Muslim and non-Muslims. Participants who had strict interpretations of dietary doctrine and believed that adherence to dietary laws was mandatory purposely included individuals with similar beliefs and practices in their social environment. The individuals in the social environment of these participants most commonly consisted of other Muslims. The social environment of those participants who had more flexible perceptions about Islamic dietary adherence included individuals with diverse dietary beliefs and practices and commonly included both Muslims and non-Muslims. One participant indicated that she primarily interacts with

Muslims because extended contact with disbelievers may cause her to adopt behaviors that were not Islamic:

> I'm not trying to be like [disbelievers]". [Disbelievers] can "not remind you do perform you prayers when pray times come in or what you need to do as a Muslim.

Islamic dietary perceptions and practices were also influenced by the physical environment, which consisted of the city of Rochester, neighborhood, Islamic institutions, and grocery stores. Physical environment influenced participants access to food. Participants indicated that since there was only one halal market in the Rochester area their choice of products were limited. Some participants also indicated that since the market was located outside the city, at times a lack of transportation made it difficult for them to purchase halal meat. Participants reported that they were made aware of a variety of products from Muslims in other geographical areas but that they did not have access to them in their area:

> We gave [the owner of the halal market] the address of the people [who make beef strips]. It doesn't make any sense. We have this available to us. We should be able to have it in our meat market. So we gave him the name and everything and he started ordering the beef strips. The turkey sausage, so you can get that there now at our Halal market, OK. [They] offer, it was like smoke chicken sausage. Because in New York, I forget the other places where they have more like kosher stores and stuff. So they were able to have more. And here, all we had really, one halal market.

CHAPTER SIX:
DISCUSSION

6.2. Theoretical Implications

Though little data exists on observance of dietary rules and practices within religious groups, several studies have observed that religious recommendation regarding lifestyle can have a significant influence on health behaviors and health status (Shatenstein and Ghairian, 1998; Levin and Vanderpool, 1991). Melby et al. (1995) reported that African American Seventh-day Adventists who adopted the recommended vegetarian lifestyle had a lower prevalence of risk factors for chronic disease as compared to Seventh-day Adventist that were non-vegetarian. The current study describes factors that influence the interpretation and practice of religious dietary requirements.

Specifically, this study examines the role of Islam in the food decisions of African American Muslim women. In this group of participants, religion had a significant impact on dietary beliefs, practices and behaviors. Other researchers have reported similar findings (Shatenstein and Ghairian, 1998; Levin and Vanderpool, 1989).

As illustrated in the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Six, study findings revealed several key concepts and conceptual relationships concerning food choice in this group of women.

6.1.1. Study participants beliefs about the spiritual acceptability of food appeared to be an important factor in the food choice process.

The belief that certain foods were spiritually acceptable appeared to be an important influence on food choice behavior. Evidence suggests that

religion can influence health by providing doctrine that encourages healthy lifestyle practices, specifically those related to diet (Ellision and Levin, 1998; Jarvis and Northcott, 1987). In the current study, participants' ideals about food acceptability were primarily based on their interpretation of dietary requirements specified in the Koran and the Sunnah. Food and behavioral practices were believed to be made permissible or forbidden by God and given to man through Mohammed and his followers. Beliefs about the spiritual acceptability of food provided the primary basis for participants' Islamic dietary ideals. Although Islamic dietary ideals were also shaped by other beliefs, including perceptions of the physical properties of food and the relationship between food and illness, these beliefs provided an explanation or justification for God's dietary commandments. In other words, the women believed that God commanded them not to eat certain foods to protect them from illness or because the food was unclean.

6.1.2. Prohibition of Pork was perceived as the most serious dietary requirement.

The existence of the pork taboo in religion and ancient societies has been widely noted by a number of scholars (Harris, 1985; Simmons, 1961). Study participants indicated that consumption of pork was the most serious dietary violation in Islam. The perceived seriousness of the pork violation was illustrated by the fact that none of the participants currently reported consuming pork. The majority of participants reported that they gave up pork immediately after converting to Islam. Participants' provided detailed explanations why pork is forbidden including factors related to cleanliness, food properties, animal characteristics, and it's ability to cause illness.

Islamic beliefs and practices regarding pork conflicted with traditional African-American dietary practices. Pork is used in many of the dishes and recipes that are a part of traditional "soul food" cooking (Kittler and Sucher, 1998). Many of the participants indicated that they regularly ate pork growing up. Participants also reported that it was currently often eaten by non-Muslim family members and associates. In many cases, family members expressed disagreement or questioned the validity of participants' beliefs regarding pork or fed them pork intentionally.

6.1.3. Outcomes of food decisions and choices reinforced beliefs about forbidden foods and practices.

Negative physical outcomes that resulted from contact with forbidden foods reinforced participants' Islamic beliefs about the relationship between food and illness. Positive psychological (self-efficacy, self-esteem) outcomes enhanced participants perceptions about certain dietary behaviors. Participants' Islamic food behavior had both positive and negative social implications. Whereas Islamic dietary ideals helped participants establish connections with other Muslims, in many cases participants' dietary behaviors caused conflicts with family members. As a result, in contrast to general studies of African-Americans which emphasize the importance of large extended family networks in providing social support (Stack and Burton, 1993; Taylor et al., 1990), many of the participants primarily depended on non-kinship networks for emotional and instrumental assistance.

In contrast to other cultural dietary behaviors where implications are believed to exist only during life, implications of religious dietary behaviors are perceived to persist into death. Beliefs about receiving rewards or

punishment from God provided an incentive for participants to follow Islamic dietary recommendations and requirements. Participants' believed benefits or suffering would not be limited to this life but would extent to the after life. Participant's behavior was influence by beliefs that not adhering to dietary practices would result in them not going to paradise after death.

Based on their relationship with God and the religious community, participants perceive that certain types of religious behaviors were expected for Muslims. As described by social exchange theory, individuals perceive that the lack of adherence to religious norms will result in costs (i.e. punishment from deity, illness, sanctions by group members or others), whereas adherence to norms will product rewards (i.e. blessings, praise, health) (Wimberely, 1989). Many behavioral models that have been used to examine health behavior (i.e the theory of reasoned action and the health belief model) are limited when applied to religious contexts because they primarily focus on an individual's perception of the threat of disease. Although the theory of reasoned action does consider normative influences, in religious contexts, health goals are considered secondary. The individual's primary goal in seeking preventative behavior is too avoid the repercussions of God.

6.1.4. Islamic dietary ideas interacted with other personal characteristics to influence participants' food decisions and choices.

Although participants developed ideals related to Islamic dietary requirements, beliefs about the foods prohibited or permissible in Islam did not directly result in food choice behavior. Decisions regarding the implementation of these beliefs into daily dietary practices were shaped by

several other personal characteristics, including skills and resources, social relationships, and life transitions.

A number of the other personal characteristics have also been noted in other studies. Several researchers have reported that factors such as taste, availability, knowledge, life course and ethnicity play a role in shaping food behaviors (Devine, et al. 1999; Devine, et al. 1998; Furst, et al., 1995; Krondl and Lau, 1983; Randall and Sanjur, 1981). In their conceptual framework, Furst et al. (1995) described similar relationships between influences (beliefs, personal factors, resources, social framework and food context) that contribute to an individuals personal system for making food choices.

Devine et al., 1999 conducted a similar study in the Rochester, New York area that focused on the role of ethnicity in food choice. Based on their study of food choice in three ethnic groups (African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian), she and her colleagues reported that ethnic ideals interacted with other factors, specifically identity and social roles to influence the food choice process.

Factors reported to be directly related to the dietary practices of African Americans also emerged in this study. Airhihenbuwa et al. (1996) and Whitehead (1984) described the importance of slavery and southern heritage in influencing food preparation styles and dietary practices of African Americans.

6.1.5. Islamic food requirements were used as a symbol of identity.

Participants within the study used dietary practices to demonstrate their Islamic identity. Evidence suggest that food selection has more to do with self-concept and identity than with actual nourishment (Sadalla and

Burroughs, 1981). Food commonly serves as a basis for collective identity by defining the differences between "insiders" and "outsiders" (Fischler, 1988). After converting to Islam, the majority of participants used food prohibitions to introduce their Islamic identity to others. In addition, when non-Muslim family members did not agree with conversion to Islam they used dietary practices to express their disagreement by feeding participants or their children forbidden foods.

Murphy (1985) described uses of identity in Indo-Muslim culture in New Delhi. Similar to the Muslim women in the current study, Indo-Muslims used dietary practices and behaviors to differentiate themselves from individuals and groups with different beliefs (Hindus) but a similar ethnic (India) background. However, unlike in Murphy's study, the majority of participants in this study were not born Muslim but converted to Islam. As a result, Muslim identity was not only used to establish differences between themselves and others but to differentiate between their current Muslim and previous non-Muslim identity. Markowitz (1996) and Singer (1988) reported a similar use of identity in their studies of African American Hebrew Israelites living in Israel.

Identity perceptions of participants ranged from balancing African-American and Muslim identities to wanting to be identified only as Muslim. Issues of identity may be more important for African-American as compared to other Muslim women because of their multiple minority status. For example, African-American Muslims are predominately men, the African-American community (and America in general) is predominately Christian, and America is predominately Caucasian. Many of the participants converted

to Islam after a negative life experience or during a search for religious identity. It is possible that in an effort to separate from negative experiences associated with their ethnic identity, as in other religions, Islam may have allowed them to reinvent themselves into a new identity based on God's perception not human perception. Wimberley (1989) indicated that the greater the importance of an individual's religious identity, the greater the chance they will adhere to religious rather than conflicting norms. Participants in the study who held strict beliefs of maintaining Muslim identity strongly considered Islamic dietary beliefs in their food decisions. However, study findings indicated that traditional African-American foods, for example fried chicken, collard greens, and baked macaroni and cheese, were common among many women in the study regardless of identity perception. Preferences for ethnic foods appeared to be related more to the "foods eaten growing up" than to maintain ethnic identity.

6.1.6. Social environments commonly consisted of people with similar beliefs about Islamic dietary ideals.

Stryker (1994) indicated that people live their lives not in the context of the larger society but rather in discrete social networks. Within a religious group, each individual member is expected to perform certain normative religious behaviors and adhere to certain beliefs (Styrker, 1994). In this study, participants established and maintained social networks with individuals who had similar beliefs about the role of Islamic dietary ideals in maintaining a Muslim identity. Participants who strictly adhered to Islamic dietary ideals maintained social relationships primarily with Muslims who held similar dietary beliefs. Participants who held more flexible beliefs had diverse social

environments including Muslims and non-Muslims who held a number of dietary beliefs.

6.1.7. Muslim women obtained and shared information, advice, and support about dietary practices from other Muslim women.

Muslim women within the Islamic community studied and exchanged information and advice about Islamic food prohibition, food availability, and food preparation techniques. Muslim women also commonly shared food at each other's homes and prepared food together in the mosque.

Sharing information, advice and support with other Muslim women assisted study participants in becoming socialized to the norms of the religious community. Similarly, Markowitz (1996) and Singer (1988) indicated that converts to the Hebrew Israelite nation learned religious practices by interacting and exchanging information with other members in the religion.

6.1.8. Islam dietary recommendations had both a positive and negative effect on participants health perceptions.

Participants were able to adopt healthy behaviors or stop unhealthy behaviors (i.e. smoking) that were not in accordance with Islamic beliefs. In addition, participants indicated that the meaning and purpose they found in Islam resulted in more concern about their health. These participants reported that Islam enabled them to make behavior changes they were not able to accomplish in the past. However, in some cases participants perceived that they had a lower risk of chronic disease as compared to non-Muslim African-Americans because they followed Islamic recommendations, specifically not eating pork. This belief was particularly related to perceptions of the relationship between pork and illness.

6.1.9. In contrast to other nutrition acculturation studies, acculturation of study participants resulted from cognitive change vs. a physical change.

Acculturation has become of growing interest to nutrition educators and researchers. Nutrition studies have primarily focused on the affect of acculturation to American culture has on the diet and health of immigrant populations. Sanjur (1995) described how the acculturation process influenced the eating behaviors and disease patterns of Hispanics immigrants in America. Very few studies of diet and health examine the affect of acculturation on the food patterns of African Americans. Although Jerome (1980) found that acculturation had an influence on the dietary patterns of blacks who migrated from the south to the north, changes in the diet were initiated because of a change in geographic location. In the current study, the acculturation process for participants started after a cognitive change or change in beliefs. Although certain issues may be similar (i.e. limited access to appropriate foods), in acculturation resulting from a change in physical location, individuals may resist dietary change in an effort to maintain former identities. In contrast, when acculturation is initiated as the result of a cognitive change, new dietary behaviors may be aggressively embraced because individuals perceive them as essential to establishing a their identity.

6.2. Methodological Implications

6.2.1. Study Design

The objective of the study was to explore the role of Islam in shaping the food related decisions of African American Muslims. Using a grounded theory methodology, this investigation primarily focused on developing a theoretical framework to illustrate and explain the factors involved in that

process. The research question was investigated using a constructivist paradigm because its flexibility allowed the researcher to investigate the phenomena from the perspective and within the environment of the study participants. The use of qualitative methods, specifically, semi-structured open-ended interviews, allowed participants to continuously reflect on their experiences and provided the researcher with in depth descriptions of the participants thought process regarding the issues of interest. Supplementary qualitative methods, which included observations and a focus group, enabled the researcher to gain insight into the contextual factors in which food decisions were made and confirmed information that emerged in the interviews. The wealth of information regarding both participants' personal views, experiences and contextual factors could not have been obtained with less flexible methods. The flexibility of the methods allowed participants to not only report specific concepts that influence food decisions but explain relationships between those concepts.

Critics of qualitative methods suggest that interviews can elicit idealized accounts of past situations and experiences that deviate from actual behavior (Jarrett, 1994). However, triangulation of methods and extensive amount of time in the research setting provided a way to contrast and confirm information obtained during the interviews.

The qualitative nature of the study also allowed the researcher to identify words and terms used by participants to define several concepts related to the dietary practices in Islam. Understanding terminology used by participants was especially important because of differences between in the religious culture of the participants and the researcher. Although study

participants and the researcher had a similar ethnic heritage, after converting to Islam, participants adopted Arabic terms and words to describe issues related to their food decisions. The emergent nature of the grounded theory approach enabled many of the words and terms mentioned by participants early in the study to be used in the later data collection and data analysis.

Although this design has been shown to be effective in obtaining insight into the African American experience (Stansfield, 1994), research using this paradigm to study nutrition issues in African Americans is limited. Much of the nutrition literature on African Americans has focused on describing general diet and disease patterns using more positivist paradigms (Jerome, 1980; Whitehead, 1984).

In addition, this study design has been widely employed in anthropology to study the influence of religion on various dietary practices (Markowitz, 1995; Singer, 1984;). As illustrated by this investigation, qualitative study designs can be effective in conducting cross-cultural research on food-related perceptions and behaviors. These types of methods allow participants to express their own constructions without being restricted to views of researchers that have limited familiarity with the dietary culture. Though in this project cultural differences between the researcher and the respondents were religiously based, such methodologies have been shown to be important in research where researcher and respondents differ by race and socioeconomic status (Devine et al., 1998).

6.2.2. Data Quality

Data was evaluated using four methods described by Guba and Lincoln (1985) included peer debriefing, member checks, prolonged engagement, progressive subjectivity, and conformability/dependability audits.

Peer debriefing was conducted throughout the study. As ideas and constructions emerged, issues related to data collection and analysis was discussed with peers from the field of nutrition and the Islamic community. This allowed study constructions and conclusions to be reviewed at different time points by researchers, practitioners, and students in diverse areas of nutrition.

Feedback related to the study concepts and constructions were also obtained from Islamic leaders within the study community and Muslims outside the geographic area. These processes allowed the analytical findings to be evaluated by both lay individuals professionals in the religious community.

The investigator prolonged presence in the Rochester community resulted in a stronger rapport with the participants. Participants were provided opportunities to discuss and verify information. By attending Islamic events, classes and worship services over the course of approximately two years, the investigator was allowed to become very familiar with people, terms, locations, and occasions. Multiple meetings with participants improved the accuracy and completeness of the information obtained. As the study continued participants and researcher grew more comfortable which allowed diverse issues related to Islamic dietary practices to emerge.

It is especially important for researchers to evaluate their own biases and constructions when using a constructivist paradigm and grounded theory

because the purpose of the researcher is to record reality from the view of the study participants and develop theory that is grounded in their responses (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Study findings were compared to a theoretical framework developed prior to data collection based on a review of the literature and the experience of the researcher (Appendix D). Although certain concepts that emerged during the investigation confirmed those within the researcher's framework, the model generated from participants' responses included different concepts and conceptual relationships.

6.2.3. Limitations of data collection

Although several methods were used to ensure data quality, methodological limitations still exist. It is possible that participants provided socially acceptable responses. Because positive relationships were established with participants throughout the investigation, some participants may have provided answers to please the researcher. However in several cases, information provided by participants was confirmed through observations.

Although all participants were ensured confidentiality, some participants may have had concerns about confidentiality because of the constant contact with many members and leaders in the Muslim community. However, participants never raised issues of confidentiality to the researcher.

6.2.4. Study sample

The study criteria were successful in recruiting a sample of African American Muslim women with diverse socioeconomic, educational and household characteristics. Although responses were obtained from only a limited number of participants, as with most qualitative studies this investigation obtained rich detailed information.

All study respondents resided in Upstate New York, the location where the study was conducted. As a result, specific findings should be challenged to determine if they apply to African American Muslim women in other locations and with other demographic and social characteristics.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Overview

Using a constructivist paradigm, the purpose of this investigation was to understand the food choice process of a group of African American Muslim women. This study used multiple qualitative methods (interviews; participant observations, and a focus group) and a grounded theory framework to describe the views, experiences, attitudes and beliefs of 22 study participants collected over a two-year period. Information obtained from participant's lead to the construction of a conceptual model to illustrate the concepts and relationships involved in their food decisions. Study findings provided an in-depth analysis of how multiple aspects of culture can influence food choice beliefs and behaviors. Results of this investigation can be used to improve nutrition education for diverse populations.

7.2. Major Findings

The major findings of this investigation were the identification of factors related to Islam that influenced food decisions of a group of African American Muslim women. Islamic dietary ideals (i.e. food prohibitions and ways of eating) had a major impact on participant's food beliefs and practices. However, food decisions and choices were not based on Islamic food Ideals alone. Islamic food ideals acted with other personal characteristics, including skills and resources, life transitions, past, and current dietary considerations, social support and family relationships, spiritual development and Identity. Participants' food decisions and choices resulted in physical, spiritual, psychological and social outcomes. The outcomes of participants food

decisions and choices contributed to the Islamic dietary ideals and personal characteristics used to shape future decisions about food practices. A conceptual framework that illustrates this process is presented (Figure 6.1).

7.3. Implications

The findings that emerged from this investigation provided several directions for future research and practice. Although, the use of a constructivist approach and grounded theory framework provided detailed insights into the food decision making process of a selected group of African American Muslim women, concepts that emerged should be tested, clarified and further defined using multiple (i.e. qualitative and quantitative) methodologies.

7.2.1. Research

Although race and ethnicity has been of growing interest in nutrition research, much of the work focused on African Americans has ignored diverse aspects of culture that could possibly influence diet and health behaviors. Although there is little debate that Africans share a certain number of underlying cultural understandings and assumptions (Mintz, 1995), diverse subgroups have always existed among Africans both before and after they arrived in the Americas. Enslaved Africans were drawn from different parts of the African continent, from numerous ethnic and linguistic groups, and from different regional societies (Mintz, 1995). Similarly, while 20th century African Americans share a number of behavioral and cultural patterns, they can be divided into various subcultures when considering variations in religion, country of origin, economics, and region.

Sociologist John Stanfield (1994), argues that historical views of race result in an oversimplification which cause people of color to be viewed as monolithic groups. Ignoring the heterogeneity of racial and ethnic groups in research leads to a failure to observe significant variation in health status and behavior that can be tied to biological and sociocultural characteristics in certain populations (Kumanyika and Golden, 1991).

To gain a clearer understanding of the dietary practices and patterns of any ethnic group, studies need to move beyond an oversimplification of "culture". Researchers need not depend primarily on genetic and/or historical paradigms to operationalize race, ethnicity or culture. Study finding suggest that to design culturally appropriate nutrition education and intervention, programs researchers interested in understanding food choice in diverse populations should identify those factors that provide meaning, shape identity, and as a result, guide behavior.

The findings in this study illustrate that the inclusion of contextual factors is essential to gain a better understand of the overall process involved in food decision making. Hertzler and Newman (1992) suggest that focusing on traditional ethnic or religious dietary patterns in isolation may lead dietitians to overlooking differences within culture. Mainstream nutrition educators have focused primarily on modifying individual behavior and negated the affect of social, physical and cultural context in the consumption of food. (Travers, 1997). Stokols (1992) argues that health status and health behaviors should viewed as the result of interaction of multiple factors that are both contextual including physical (i.e. geography, technology) and social

(e.g. culture, economics, politics) environments and personal factors including biological heritage.

This research contributes to the limited literature on food choice in African Americans and focuses on a subculture within the African-American population and Islamic population that has not been widely examined. Understanding how religion influences food choice practices of African-Americans may provide insights into effective strategies to address the high chronic disease morbidity and mortality rates in this community.

Evidence suggests that variations in the effect of religion on health can be attributed to differences in adherence to doctrine concerning positive lifestyle behaviors (Jarvis and Northcott, 1987). This study provides insights into factors that influence incorporation of religious practices into daily life. Additional research needs to be conducted to further determine both positive and negative effects of religious dietary behaviors on health. To gain a clearer understanding of the factors that influence food choice in African American Muslim women the following research questions should be pursued:

1. What other issues are related to the influence of religious identity on food choice?
2. What is the relationship between religious identity and perceptions of illness and health?
3. What are the positive and negative effects of religious dietary recommendations and practices on health perceptions?
4. What is the nutritional and/or health status of African-American Muslim women compared to non-Muslim African-American women?

5. What other factors within the social and physical environment influence the food choice process of African-American Muslim women?
6. Do the findings and conceptual model apply to other African American Muslim women including women with different demographic and social characteristics (e.g. region, education, age, socioeconomic, health status and religious background)?
7. How do the factors involved in the food decision process of African American Muslim women compare to Muslim women from other ethnic and cultural groups?
8. How do the factors involved in the food decision process of African American Muslim women compare to African American women both who participate and do not participate in religious groups?
9. How does the influence of Islam on the food decisions of African American Muslim women compare with the importance of other food considerations (e.g. cost, taste, regional food practices, life course, etc.)?

7.2.2. Practice

Although religious institutions have been shown to be effective to targets for health education programs, particularly in African-American communities, most studies have focused Christian churches. Few studies, if any, have focused on mosques or Muslim populations. Different from Christianity , Islam has specific Islamic dietary guidelines that can be used to encourage health behaviors. In planning nutrition programs for this community, health practitioners need to consider the religious goals and perspectives of this client group. Study findings suggest that although

maintaining Islamic requirements are important to these Muslim women, their food preferences are similar to other subcultural groups in the African-American community. As a result, nutrition education needs focus on how to make traditional African-American dishes healthier while using ingredients that are halal. For example, Muslim women that perceive halal meat as expensive may be receptive to receiving information on how to prepare traditional dishes without or with less meat. Participants in the present study also acquired skills such as reading labels, making acceptable substitutions, and identifying ingredients, that can be helpful educating them about nutrition. Although this study suggests that Islamic dietary requirements may present a barrier to a healthy lifestyle by providing perceptions that not eating prohibited foods (i.e. pork) reduces the risk for chronic disease, health practitioners should emphasize doctrine that is promotes overall health (i.e. taking care of your body) and incorporate messages related to reducing risk factors for chronic disease (i.e. lowering fat in diet, reducing obesity).

In this study, participants adhered to Islamic dietary laws because they perceived that they and other Muslims are obligated to obey God. Health practitioners can work with clients to place health goals in the context of larger religious goals. For example, African-American Muslim women can be encouraged to stay in good health so they perform the standing and knelling required during prayer.

In regards to nutrition intervention implementation, because Muslim women are required to limit interactions with men. Interventions designed for Muslim women should include women only. In addition, if the targeted population is similar to the sample in this study, issues important to low-

income participants, such as transportation and affordable child care may be important.

Appendix A
HISTORY OF ISLAM IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

> The year was 1930, Mr. Muhammad said he'd come to save the lost-found tribe of Shabazz. Came to save us-the so-called Negro, here in the wilderness of North America. He said all we Negroes had to do was follow his program. We could rule the world starting with this country. We the original man. Maker, owner, cream of the planet earth. Father of civilization. God of the universe.
>
> -Sonsyrea Tate,
> Little X: Growing up in the Nation of Islam

Several African American Islamic movements have emerged in the last century. McCloud (1995) reports that the African American Islamic population makes up the largest ethnic group of Muslims in the United States and is distributed across at least seventeen distinct communities. This chapter will provide a brief historical view of selected Islamic movements as they relate to the population being studied, African American Sunni Muslims.

The Moorish Science Temple

Although historians report a significant Islamic presence among enslaved Africans brought to the Americas in the 16th and 17th century, the first American mass movement of Islam emerged in 1913 under the leadership of Noble Drew Ali. Ali reported that he had been chosen in a dream to restore the black community to their true religion, nationality and genealogy (Lincoln, 1994; Turner, 1997). Because he professed that African Americans were the descendants of "Asiatic" Moors, he labeled his community, "Moorish Science".

Followers were instructed to reject labels such as "Negro" and "Colored" given to them by White America and refer to themselves by names that reflected their Moroccan heritage. As a result, members of Ali's community were encouraged to identify themselves as "Moorish" and change their American slave names to common Moroccan surnames, El and Bey (McCloud, 1995). Within a decade of its conception, the Moorish Science Temple grew to include fifteen temples across the United States with close to 30,000 followers. Using doctrine based on a combination of traditional Islam and cultural nationalism, Noble Drew Ali provided a framework for the later Islamic movements discussed.

The Nation of Islam

In 1930, W.D. Fard, arrived as a door-to-door silk peddler in a poor African American community in Detroit. With a message similar to Noble Drew Ali, Fard reported that he was a prophet of Allah who had come from the Holy City of Mecca to resurrect the lost-found nation of the tribe of Shabazz. Fard's initial contact with African Americans was through selling his goods. However, as more people became receptive to his ideas, he eventually established a temple to hold meetings. Not long after, a second temple was established on Chicago's south side.

In addition, to setting up temples for formal worship, Fard also founded a elementary and secondary school, established an organization to teach young Muslim women how to be proper wives and mothers [Muslim

Girls Training], and organized a military force to protect the movement [Fruit of Islam] (Lincoln, 1994).

Not long after its inception, one of Fard's followers, Elijah Muhammad was appointed the Minister of Islam to provide leadership to the organization. Shortly after Muhammad's appointment, W.D. Fard mysteriously disappeared. His disappearance led to his deification by Muhammad, who preached that Fard was " Allah in person". Thus, Muhammad reported that he himself had been chosen as a "Messenger of Allah" sent to educate the "American so-called Negro".

Under Muhammad's leadership, The Nation of Islam rapidly progressed and soon became the media's prototype of Islam for the African American community (McCloud, 1995). However, doctrine that encouraged separatism, promoted black men as gods, and named white people as devils made the Nation of Islam just as controversial as it was recognized (Lincoln, 1989).

Muhammad (1967) encouraged the African American community to turn away from "the white man's religion" and turn to Islam, the true religion of the black man:

> There is no hope for us in Christianity; it is a religion organized by the enemies (the white race) of the Black Nation to enslave us to the white race's rule. But our unity under the crescent with

our Allah's guidance can get us anything we desire in the way of help and some of this earth that we can call our own.

As indicated by Mahmoud (1996, p.113), the Nation sought to accomplish a mission similar to other early Islamic movements:

1. Reverse the effects of enslavement by introducing an alternative set of values about self (renaming, alternative explanations of history, self-pride, nationalism and loyalty) to a people long alienated and denied access to full citizenship.
2. Introduce an alternative social milieu in which to practice these values and set goals that expanded the aspirations of the people
3. Develop a family life and model roles of ideal male and female behavior.
4. Establish bases of economic independence from the dominant culture.
5. Protest and reject the oppression of African American people.
6. Educate children and indoctrinate them with these values, so that they would base their lives on these principles.

Many African Americans responded to Muhammad's message. The Nation also gained national attention primarily due to the outspoken nature of Muslim leaders, such as Malcom X and the recognition of Heavyweight

champion, Muhammad Ali. However, the majority of his followers possessed certain characteristics (Lincoln, 1994):

1. The membership was young. Up to 80 percent of a typical congregation was between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five.
2. Membership was predominately male. The Muslim temples attract more men than women, and men assume the full management of temple affairs. Women were honored, and they performed important functions within a defined role.

3. The membership was essentially lower class. Muslims were fully employed, yet many lived and met in the most deteriorated areas. Recruitment for the movement took place predominantly among low-income groups.

4. The membership was almost solely African American. Very few members were from Caribbean or African groups.

5. Membership was predominately ex-Christian.

After joining the Nation of Islam, followers had to make a complete lifestyle change. Individuals had to "cleanse the spirit, mind and body" by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco and drug use, fornication, and gambling (McCloud, 1995). In addition, members had to adhere to a strict code of dress and social behavior. Partying, dancing and similar activities were prohibited.

The Nation also required its members to reject many traditional African American foods. Foods such as pork, sweet potatoes, black-eyes peas, cornbread, and collard greens were considered to be remainders of slavery and, thus "fast roads to death" (Muhammad, 1967). A list of food restrictions were described by Muhammad (1967) in the Nation's dietary guide, "How to Eat to Live" (Table 1.1). According to Muhammad, the high disease rates among African Americans could be attributed to the consumption of forbidden foods.

In addition to recommendations for specific foods, Nation of Islam doctrine encouraged followers to adhere to a special dietary schedule and maintained that a person following this dietary regime could live for 100 years:

> Rest, given to the digestive system of our bodies, is the thing that prolongs our lives. In this period of rest (24 hours), the poisons that we ate in the previous meal are not capable of doing us any harm (when it is minor food poison), for the idleness of the stomach destroys this poison that would upset us or shorten our lives to a great extent. Therefore, we live a longer life if we eat correctly and do not eat three meals a day. Only one meal a day is sufficient for adults no matter what their occupation may be.

Muhammad (1967) also offered financial incentives for following "Allah's" dietary recommendations:

> In prolonging your life by abstaining from the pig, alcoholic drinks and tobacco, you will also be adding money to your savings by hundreds and thousands of dollars. You will be

Table 1.1. Foods forbidden in the Nation of Islam (adapted from How to Eat to live, Muhammad, 1967).

Do not eat the swine flesh. It is forbidden by the divine law of Allah (God).

Do not eat field peas, black-eyed peas, speckled peas, red peas or brown peas.

Do not eat lima beans, or baby limas. Do not eat any bean but he small navy bean-the little brown pink ones, and the white ones.

Do not eat corn bread because it is very hard on the stomach, and not easily digested. Eat whole wheat bread, but not the whole grain. The whole grain is too hard to digest. Never eat freshly cooked bread. It rises and buckles in the stomach. Eating freshly cooked bread will shorten you life.

Do not eat the rich soy bean flour. Neither the flour nor the oil from the soybean is good for our stomachs.

Do not eat the vegetable kale, nor sweet potatoes. These are for people who live in frigid zones, or for people who cannot afford other vegetables.

Do not eat the scavengers of the sea such as oysters, crabs, clams, snails, shrimp, eels or catfish

Do not eat wild game such as deer meat, baby pigeons, coons, possums, turtles, turtle eggs, or frog legs.

> depriving those pig raisers, tobacco growers and alcoholic distillers of millions of dollars of which they rob you as they hasten you to your grave.

Because discipline was emphasized in the Nation, the organization gained respect from many in the wider African-American community. As described by former Nation member Sonsyrea Tate in her book Little X:

> The non-Nation people seemed to revolve around us like we really were gods and goddess of the universe. Passersby stepped out of the way for Muslim women in long, solid-colored, straight skirts and headpieces. They seemed to practically bow to the [Fruit of Islam] brothers who controlled the area

Because of its role in the African American community, scholars have labeled the Nation of Islam one of the most important Pan-African organizations of its time (Lincoln, 1994; Turner, 1997). At the time of Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, after 40 years in leadership, the Nation had seventy-six mosques located in the U.S. and abroad, approximately one million followers, thousand of acres of farmland, a widely circulated newspaper, and several housing complexes and businesses, including restaurants and grocery stores.

The American Muslim Mission

After the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, under the leadership of his son, Warith Deen (W.D.) Muhammad, the Nation of Islam embraced the beliefs of the larger Sunni Islamic community. As a result, W.D. Muhammad reformed all beliefs and practices which he considered in violation of orthodox Islam, including accepting of whites into the movement, upgrading

the roles of women, and building alliances with other Muslims around the globe (Lincoln, 1989). W.D Muhammad reconstructed organization was eventually renamed the World Community of Islam in the West and at present, contains an estimated 100,000 followers (Lincoln, 1994; Turner, 1997).

Although the focus of this discussion is on individuals that practice Sunni Islam, it is important to note that many African Americans also participate in other Islamic groups. One of the most visible Muslim organizations is the "reconstructed" Nation of Islam. Dissatisfied with the new direction, in 1978, under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan, some of the original members left the organization and re-established the Nation of Islam that was based on Elijah Muhammad's original teachings.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Women's Roles

What are some of the roles and responsibilities you have in and outside your home?

Have these roles changed recently?

What is the most important role?

Dietary Practices

Who does the food shopping?

When you shop, what types of things do you think about when you purchase food?

What types of food items do you commonly buy?

Where do you normally eat breakfast, lunch, or dinner?

How often do you eat away from home?

How do you decide where and what you will eat?

When you eat at home, who prepares the meals?

Who usually eats with you?

How do you decide what dishes you will prepare?

Tell me some of the dishes you often prepare?

If I was coming to your house for dinner/ eating out together tell me what I would expect.

How did you learn to cook?

Cultural Influence and traditions

What part of the country are you from? Are your parents from?

Do you think that influenced the way you eat?

What are some of the foods you ate growing up?

What are some of your traditional foods or family foods?

Are there special times when those foods are eaten?

How do you think being (ethnic group) affects the way you eat?

Changes

How are your eating habits different from when you were growing up?

Do you eat differently since you: got married, had children, etc.

How has your diet changed over the past few years?

What caused your dietary habits to change?

How did you learn to eat or prepare food after you made the change?

Did others (friends, family, etc.) support you in that change?

Conflict

How do you think others would act if you changed the way you eat?

How does your eating compare to others in your family?

Do family or friends express opinions about the way you eat?

What do you do when you are served a meal at family members or friends homes who eat different from you?

Have you ever had a disagreement about food with your family or friends? Tell me about that.

Food and Health

How would you describe your health right now?

Do you have any health conditions which affect your daily life?

At this time, do you have any specific concerns related to food and health?

Have your food and/or health concerns changed over time?

Have any of the member of your family had-heart disease, diabetes, cancer, etc.)?

What do you think puts people at risk for some of these diseases?

Do you believe you are at risk for these or any other diseases?

Do you believe you can influence your risk of getting one of these diseases?

Weight

Some women have trouble maintaining a weight they feel comfortable with. Has your weight ever been something that you were concerned about?

How has weight concerns affected the way you eat?

Do you think our society puts too much pressure on women to be thin or to look a certain way?

What do you think about that?

Were or who does the pressure come from?

Do you think the African-American community has the same types of views?

Women and Nutrition

Do you think women have special responsibilities in the area of food and nutrition? For yourself? Your family?

What kinds of things do you think people should do to stay healthy?

Are there things that you wish you could change to be healthier?

What keeps you from doing those things?

APPENDIX C
Consent form

AFRICAN AMERICAN FOOD PRACTICES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS INTERVIEW

I am willing to participate in an interview about food and health on

_____. at _____ am/pm in _____

I understand that my responses will be taped/not taped but my name will never be mentioned in reports of this interview.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time.

I understand that I do not have to answer any question that makes me uncomfortable

The information obtained will be used to communicate food and nutrition issues to consumers more effectively.

Signature:_____

Observation Form

Dissertation Research Observation Sheet

Place:

Event:

Time of Day:

Weather:

Layout of Room:

Descriptions of Participants:

Participant(s) Role:

Participant's Room Location:

Entrances and Exits:

Event:

Type of Event:

Reason for Event:

Program During Event:

Food:

Role of Food in Event:

Type of Food:

Server of Food:

Food Rituals:

Clean-Up:

Demographic Information Sheet

Please complete the information listed below. Your name will not be used. This form will be identified by a number, so the information can not be linked to you.

1. Age_____

2. Marital Status (circle)

Single Married Divorced Widowed

3. Household Income

1=less than $10,000
2=$10,00-$19,999
3=$20,000-$29,999
4=$30,000-$39,999
5=$40,000-$49,000
6=$50,000-$59,000
7=$60,000 & above

4. How many people does that income support?_____

5. How many people live in your household?_____

6. How many are adults?_____

7. How many are children under 17?_____

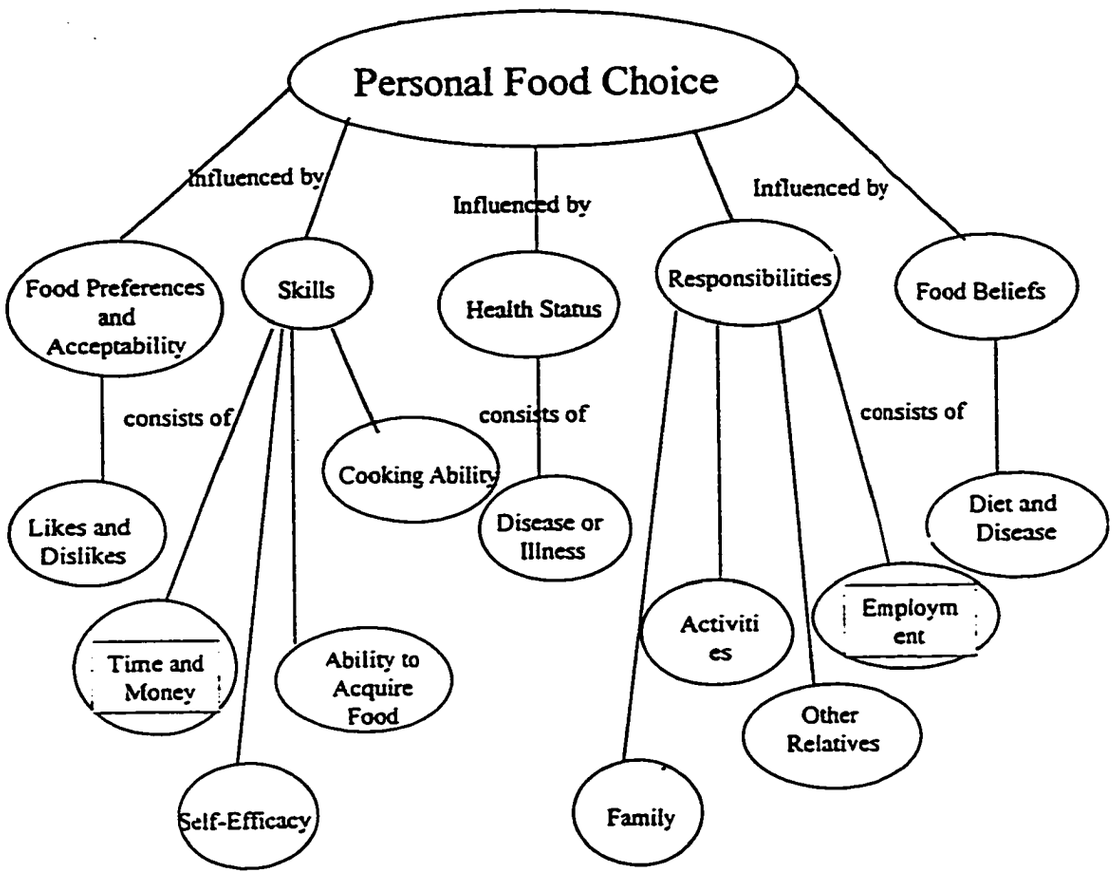
6. Education

1=8th grade or lower
2=some high school
3= graduated high school

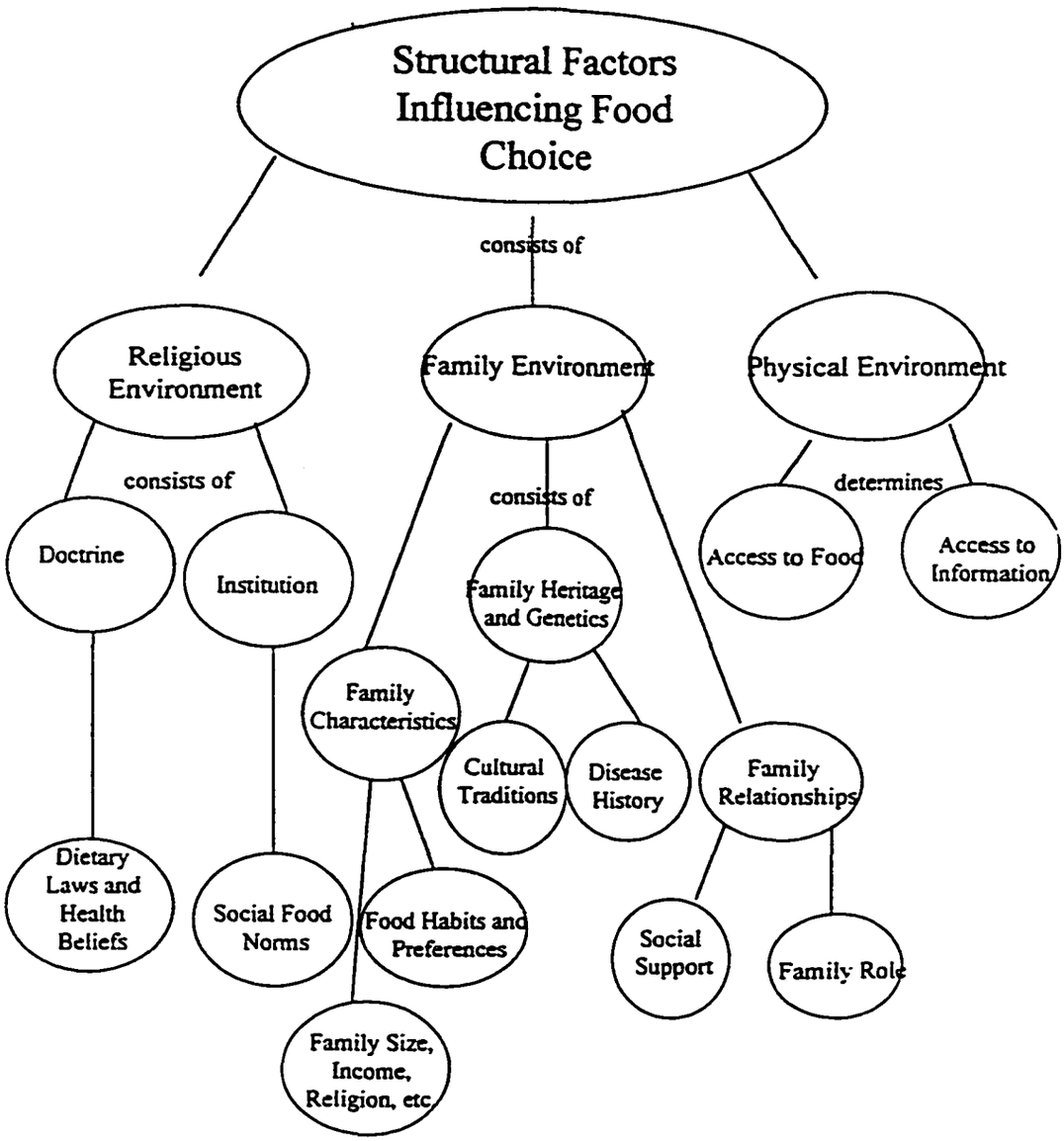
4=attended trade or professional school after high school
5= attended some college or completed an Associate Degree
6=graduated a 4-year university or college
7= some post-bachelor study in a graduate or professional school
8=obtained a graduate degree

Thank You for your time.

APPENDIX D
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (BASED ON LITERATURE REWIEW)



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (BASED ON LITERATURE REWIEW)



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